



"I cannot explain the level of indifference and inaction we see by too many in the international community - the lack of compassion..."

Guterres on starvation crisis in Gaza

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## PATENT WAIVER TILL NOV 2026 Local pharmas may miss window for 15 costly drugs

More than 600 applications pending with govt body for registration for over a year

JAGARAN CHAKMA and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh's pharmaceutical companies risk losing the chance to produce at least 15 costly biologic drugs royalty-free, as registration applications for more than 600 new medicines remain stalled for over a year due to regulatory hurdles, say industry leaders.

Around 50 pharmaceutical firms have applied to the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) for registering 617 new medicines that include biologic drugs used for treating cancer and chronic diseases.

The companies are set to lose patent protection ensured by a waiver under the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) in November 2026, when Bangladesh transitions to a developing country, say industry insiders.

"If we can't secure registration soon, we'll miss the opportunity to manufacture these drugs royalty-free once Bangladesh graduates from Least Developed Country [LDC] status next year," Abdul Muktedir, president of Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, told The Daily Star.



After five days of treatment, 12-year-old Ayan Khan, one of the survivors of last week's jet crash, is going home with his grandmother after he was discharged from the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery yesterday. He was one of two Milestone school students released from the hospital yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## CA to unveil election date within 4 to 5 days

Says Mostofa Jamal after Yunus met 11 parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has sought cooperation from all political parties for holding a free and fair election, and assured them of announcing the date of the next parliamentary polls within four to five days.

In a meeting with 11 parties and one alliance yesterday, he also warned that "defeated forces are trying to disrupt the election process by creating unrest".

Yunus emphasised that all anti-fascist forces must unite to resist these attempts.

Mostofa Jamal Haider, leader of the 12-Party Alliance and chairman of Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar), said, "The chief adviser categorically said he would announce a specific timeline and date of the election within the next four to five days."

"There can be no better news than this," Haider said while talking with reporters after the meeting at the chief adviser's official residence Jamuna.

Haider said holding a national election

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**If we can't secure registration soon, we'll miss the opportunity to manufacture these drugs royalty-free once Bangladesh graduates from Least Developed Country [LDC] status next year.**

ABDUL MUKTADIR, president of Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries

In March this year, the interim government decided to proceed with the country's scheduled transition from a LDC to a developing nation on November 24, 2026.

Patent protection typically lasts 20 years from the date of a drug's development. Five to 10 years have already passed since the development of some of the 15 drugs, leaving Bangladesh with a 10 to 15-year window for royalty-free production, Muktedir said.

"This window is critical. If we miss it, we must pay royalties to patent holders, meaning patients will have to shoulder the burden of inflated prices for these life-saving medicines," he added.

The Drug Control Committee, which gives final approval for new medicines, hasn't convened for the last two years - the primary cause of the backlog. No steps have been taken yet to reconstitute the committee since the fall of the Awami League government, said several officials at DGDA and health ministry.

The registration process for a new medicine begins with a review by a technical sub-committee, chaired by the DGDA director general.

If the sub-committee recommends approval, the proposal is forwarded to the health secretary-led Drug Control Committee comprising government officials, experts, and industry representatives.

The sub-committee last held its meeting in March 2024, said DGDA officials.

Contacted, Prof Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry, said the previous committees required reconstitution due to their shortcomings. But that didn't happen, halting the drug registration process.

He maintained that the suspension has not created any crisis or deprived people of essential medicines.

"The committees will be reconstituted soon and hold meetings to decide on pending applications," he told The Daily Star recently.

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## You can't run the state with hired people

Says Fakhru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said Bangladesh is yet to see good governance and the police force are not showing signs of improvement.

He made the comment after a businessman complained that he had to pay more bribes now to get things done.

"If you had to pay Tk 1 lakh in bribes previously, now it's Tk 5 lakh," he said while speaking at the launch of a book titled "Economy, Governance, and Power: A Portrait of Everyday Life", written by economist Hossain Zillur Rahman, also a former adviser to a caretaker government.

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed also attended the event held at the CIRDAP auditorium.

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## Govt aide pushes 5G project amid graft probe

Activities of Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to chief adviser, raise concerns over conflict of interest, executive overreach and violations of procurement rules

MAHMUDUL HASAN

A special assistant to the chief adviser is pressing for a controversial 5G infrastructure project, despite an active investigation by the Anti-Corruption Commission into alleged legal violations in the tender process.

Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, who took charge on March 5 with executive powers over the telecom ministry, requested the ACC to facilitate the project and asked the state-owned BTCL - the implementing agency - to proceed with equipment purchase, according to documents seen by The Daily Star.

This intervention has sparked concerns over conflict of interest, disregard for procurement law, and a revival of past practices of executive interference in state contracts.

In the letter dated June 22, 2025, Taiyeb told the ACC chairman, "It is

imperative to continue the activities of the project titled 'Development of Optical Fiber Transmission Network of BTCL for 5G Readiness' in national interest, and also to prevent delays in 5G readiness, avert technological setbacks for BTCL, ensure ADP implementation rate, and operationalise equipment installed under a related BTCL project."

He further argued that Huawei, the supplier of 5G equipment, is among the world's leading companies in the sector, and private transmission companies in Bangladesh are already using these devices.

Taiyeb's meddling in the BTCL project goes against Rule 11 of the Public Procurement Rules 2008, which says the company's board is the highest authority to make decisions on contract-related issues.

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## MILESTONE TRAGEDY 2 more die of burn injuries

Two students discharged from burn institute

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more victims who suffered severe burn injuries in last week's jet crash on the Milestone School and College campus in Uttara's Diabari died yesterday while undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

The deceased are Jarif Farhan, 13, a seventh-grade student of the school's English version section, and Masuma, 38, a school staff member who worked as an assistant.

Including the latest fatalities, the total number of deaths from the jet crash now stands at 35, according to the health ministry.

Meanwhile, two injured students were discharged from the hospital yesterday as their condition improved, Prof Nasir Uddin, director of the burn institute, told reporters.

Ayan Khan and Rafsi, both 12-year-olds, are the first Milestone school students to be released from the burn institute.

After the deaths and discharge, a total of 46 crash victims are now undergoing treatment at four hospitals, including 36 at the burn institute.

Of the 36 patients, the conditions of four were stated to be critical and nine severe. Prof Nasir hoped that 10 more patients would be discharged this week.

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## SAD leaders, among 5, held on extortion charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five people, including leaders of Students Against Discrimination, were arrested on extortion charges in the capital yesterday.

They are Ibrahim Hossain Munna, 24, SAD's Dhaka city unit convener, Abdur Razzak Riyad, 25, acting convener at the central committee of SAD's combined private university unit, SAD members Sakadoun Siam, 22, and Sadab, 21, and one Amirul.

They were apprehended from a flat on Road 83 in Gulshan - the residence of former Awami League lawmaker Shammi Ahmed.

Gulshan Police Station's Officer-in-Charge Hafizur Rahman confirmed this to The Daily Star.

"Identifying themselves as members of Students Against Discrimination and Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad, the five went to Shammi Ahmed's residence and demanded Tk 50 lakh on July 17. As she was not home at the time, they made the demand to her husband," said the OC.

That day, the group left after taking Tk 10 lakh. Yesterday evening, they returned to collect the remaining Tk 40 lakh, he added.

"Alerted by the family members, we rushed to the scene and detained all five." The OC said Shammi's husband Abu Zafar will file an extortion case in this regard.

Meanwhile, SAD expelled Ibrahim Munna, Sakadoun and Sadab from the organisation for violating discipline.

## New flashpoints emerge in Thai-Cambodia conflict Death toll 33; Malaysia urges ceasefire



People rest in a temporary shelter in Thailand's Srisaket province yesterday, following a third consecutive day of heavy artillery exchanges between Thailand and Cambodia. PHOTO: REUTERS

REUTERS, Sisaket

Fighting on the Thai-Cambodian border extended into a third day and new flashpoints emerged yesterday as both sides said they had acted in self-defence in the border dispute and called on the other to cease fighting and start negotiations.

At least 33 people have been killed and more than 138,000 people displaced in the worst fighting between the Southeast Asian neighbours in 13 years.

There were clashes early yesterday, both sides said, in the neighbouring Thai coastal province of Trat and Cambodia's Pursat Province early, a new front more than 100 km (60 miles) from other conflict points along the long-contested border.

The two countries have faced off since the killing of a Cambodian soldier late in May during a brief skirmish. Troops on both sides of the border were reinforced amid a full-blown diplomatic crisis that

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Immigration 'killing' Europe, says Trump

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Why can't we prevent drowning fatalities

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Bangladesh in the age of global economic flux

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"নির্বাচন পর্যবেক্ষক নীতিমালা ২০২৫" অনুসারে "পর্যবেক্ষক সংস্থা" হিসেবে নিবন্ধনে আগ্রহী যোগ্যতাসম্পন্ন বেসরকারি সংস্থাসমূহের কাছ থেকে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে। নিবন্ধনে আগ্রহী সংস্থাসমূহকে রবিবার, ১০ আগস্ট ২০২৫ তারিখ বিকাল ৫.০০ টার মধ্যে নির্ধারিত স্থানীয় পর্যবেক্ষক নিবন্ধনের আবেদন ফরম (EO-1) এ সিনিয়র সচিব, নির্বাচন কমিশন সচিবালয়, আগারগাঁও, ঢাকা বরাবর আবেদন দাখিল করতে হবে। নির্বাচন পর্যবেক্ষক নীতিমালা ২০২৫, নির্বাচন পর্যবেক্ষক সংস্থা নিবন্ধন সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি এবং আবেদন ফরম (EO-1) নির্বাচন কমিশন সচিবালয়ের জনসংযোগ শাখায় (কক্ষ নং-১০৫) এবং নির্বাচন কমিশনের ওয়েবসাইট www.ecs.gov.bd তে পাওয়া যাবে।

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