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## Ex-secy alleges corruption by govt advisers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former secretary ABM Abdus Sattar yesterday alleged that several advisers of the government are involved in widespread corruption. Although he indicated one or two ministries, he did not mention any specific names. However, he claimed to have evidence to support his allegations.

Currently the general secretary of Dhaka Officers Club, Sattar was speaking as a guest at a seminar titled "Expectations of the July Uprising and the Future of Public Administration", organised by the Bangladesh Administrative Service Association (BASA), a platform of administration cadre officials.

The event was held at the BIAM auditorium in the capital.

Sattar, who is also serving as personal secretary to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, began his speech with harsh criticism about corruption within the administration cadre. He then said, "Our (civil servants') character may have already deteriorated. But those who have come to power today through

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Palestinians check the devastation following an Israeli strike that hit Gaza City's southern al-Zeitoun neighbourhood yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## 4 arrested over journo murder in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Four people were arrested yesterday in connection with a case over the murder of a journalist in front of a crowded market in Chandana Chowrasta of Gazipur on Thursday night.

The arrestees are Faisal alias Ketu Mizan, his wife Golapi, Swadhin and Al Amin, said GMP Additional Police Commissioner Mohammad Zahidul Hasan.

He said police will hold a press briefing today over the matter.

Asaduzzaman Tuhin, 40, who worked as a staff reporter of Mymensingh-based daily Pratidin Kagoj for around five years, was killed with sharp weapons by a group of miscreants around 8:00pm on Thursday.

Quoting witnesses, Shaheen Khan, officer-in-charge of Basan Police Station, said Tuhin got involved in an altercation with four to five youths at a tea stall near the Masjid Market in the Chandana Chowrasta area.

At one point, the youths stabbed him with sharp weapons. He died on the spot.

Md Selim Mia, brother of the victim, filed the case against unidentified persons, said the OC.

Meanwhile, journalists formed human chains in Dhaka, Tangail and Mymensingh, protesting the murder of Tuhin. They demanded exemplary punishment of the perpetrators.

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## Onion, vegetable prices soar amid rain, supply crunch

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

After a brief respite over the past few months, the prices of onions, vegetables, eggs and fish have risen again in the capital's kitchen markets, placing additional financial strain on low- and fixed-income families.

Traders blamed the ongoing heavy rains, which have inundated many farmlands, as the main cause behind the price hike of various essentials, particularly vegetables.



Buyers at kitchen markets in Farmgate, Kazipara, Shewrapara, Karwan Bazar, Ibrahimpur and Kachukhet reported that prices of staples such as onions, vegetables, eggs and fish were higher than last week.

Saifur Rahman Chowdhury Sujan, general secretary of the Karwan Bazar Brihattar Paikari Kacha Bazar Arot Byabasayi Malik Samity, said that recent incessant rainfall across the country had flooded many vegetable farmlands, resulting in reduced supply and price increases.

Sajib Sheikh, proprietor of the wholesale onion shop Matri Bhandar at Karwan Bazar, said over the last two weeks, the wholesale price of locally produced onions rose by Tk 20 to Tk 22 per kilogramme.

He said two weeks ago, such onions were sold at Tk 46

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## Global outcry as Israel to 'take control' of Gaza City

AGENCIES

Israel's military will "take control" of Gaza City under a new plan approved by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet, touching off a wave of criticism yesterday from both inside and outside the country.

Nearly two years into the war in Gaza, Netanyahu faces mounting pressure to secure a truce to pull the territory's more than two million people back from the brink of famine and free the hostages held by Palestinian militants.

Israel's foe Hamas denounced the plan to expand the fighting as a "new war crime", while staunch Israeli ally Germany took the extraordinary step of halting military exports out of concern they could be used in Gaza.

Under the newly approved plan to "defeat" Hamas, the Israeli army "will prepare to take control of Gaza City while distributing humanitarian assistance to the civilian population outside combat zones", the premier's office said yesterday.

Before the decision, Netanyahu had said Israel planned to seize complete control of the Gaza Strip, but did not intend to govern it.

"We don't want to keep it," the premier told US network Fox News on Thursday, adding Israel wanted a "security perimeter" and to hand the Palestinian territory to "Arab

forces that will govern it properly without threatening us".

Israel occupied Gaza from 1967, but withdrew its troops and settlers in 2005.

Netanyahu's office said a majority of the security cabinet had adopted "five principles", including

- » Germany suspends arms exports to Israel
- » Hamas says Israeli plan "means sacrificing the hostages"
- » Palestinians fear another forced displacement

demilitarisation of the territory and "the establishment of an alternative civil administration that is neither Hamas nor the Palestinian Authority".

The new plan triggered swift criticism from across the globe, with China, Turkey, the UK, EU and the UN's rights chief issuing statements of concern. Arab nations also condemned the plan.

UN human rights chief Volker Turk said the plan must be

"immediately halted".

Israel should instead allow "the full, unfettered flow of humanitarian aid" and Palestinian armed groups must unconditionally release hostages, he added.

"The Israeli government's decision to further extend its military operation in Gaza must be reconsidered," EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said on X.

China condemned the move. "Gaza belongs to the Palestinian people and is an inseparable part of Palestinian territory," a foreign ministry spokesperson told AFP.

In a major shift, meanwhile, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced his country was halting military shipments to Israel, saying it was "increasingly difficult to understand" how the new plan would help achieve legitimate aims.

"Under these circumstances, the German government will not authorise any exports of military equipment that could be used in the Gaza Strip until further notice," he said.

Reactions in Israel were more mixed.

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid denounced the cabinet's move as "a disaster that will lead to many other disasters".

He warned on X that it would result in "the death of the hostages, the killing of many soldiers, cost

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## AL discreetly sets up 'party office' in Kolkata

Reports BBC Bangla

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the bustling outskirts of Kolkata, a commercial complex has begun drawing unfamiliar visitors for the last few months.

Many of these individuals, just a year ago, were among the most powerful figures in Bangladeshi politics – the senior and mid-level leaders of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations.

According to a BBC Bangla report, the Awami League has set up a "party office" on the 8th floor of this complex.

The report said AL leaders began to come to India after former prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled to India on August 5, 2024, in the face of a mass uprising.

Hasina is believed to be somewhere near Delhi, and many senior AL and its affiliated bodies' leaders, including former ministers, have rented homes in and around Kolkata.

Initially, they used their homes for informal meetings and organisational tasks, while larger meetings were held in restaurants or rented banquet halls.

The 500-600 sq ft office now serves as a regular venue for party meetings.

According to the report, the office has no signboards or portraits of Sheikh Hasina or Bangladesh's founding president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, either inside or outside.

"There are no typical party office files here, this needed a discreet space for regular meetings, and this commercial

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**About six months ago, party sources estimated that around 200 people, including at least 70 MPs, district-level party leaders, upazila chairmen, and mayors, had fled to greater Kolkata.**

## Rare 'Hobbit' first edition auctioned for £43,000

AFP, London

A rare first edition of JRR Tolkien's "The Hobbit" sold for 43,000 pounds (\$57,000) at auction on Wednesday, after it was found during a house clearance in southwest England.



Purchased by a private collector in the United Kingdom, the book is one of 1,500 original copies of the British author's seminal fantasy novel that were published in 1937.

Of those, only "a few hundred are believed to still remain", according to the auction house Auctioneum, which discovered the book on an bookcase at a home in Bristol.

Bidders from around the world drove the price up by more than four times what the auction house expected for the manuscript.

"It's a wonderful result for a very special book," said Auctioneum rare books specialist Caitlin Riley.

"The surviving books from the initial print run are now considered some of the most sought-after books in modern literature," Auctioneum said in a statement.

Auctioneum unearthed the book during a routine house clearance after its owner passed away.



Coal is being illegally produced using specially designed clay furnaces to burn timber collected from nearby villages. The process not only strips the landscape of green trees but also fills the air with black smoke. The photo was taken in Siddhipasha of Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Japan daily sues 'free-riding' AI firm Perplexity

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper, one of the world's biggest by circulation, is suing US-based AI firm Perplexity for allegedly "free-riding" on its content on its search engine.

The lawsuit filed Thursday is one of a slew by media companies worldwide against AI firms using their material and is the first by a major Japanese news organisation, Yomiuri said.

It accuses Perplexity of "free-riding" on the results of the activities of news organisations, which have invested a great deal of effort and expense".

A spokesman for the paper added that this "could have a negative impact on accurate journalism... and shake the foundations of democracy".

The lawsuit filed in Tokyo seeks damages of 2.2 billion yen (\$14.7 million), equivalent to 120,000 Yomiuri articles used "without permission" between February and June.

It is also seeking damages for lost advertising revenue, saying that

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