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BB to outline merger process for five ailing Islamic banks

It will detail funds needed, fate of shares

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Bangladesh Bank will send a letter to the government soon, detailing how to merge five troubled Islamic banks in what officials say is the formal start of implementing the sector's long-discussed consolidation plan.

The letter will specify the funds required for the process and the fate of the banks' shares, according to a decision taken at a meeting at the central bank yesterday.

At a press conference, central bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur said discussions on mergers were ongoing and an official announcement would be made in due course. He reassured depositors there was no cause for panic, as all funds would be returned.

Under the newly enacted Bank Resolution Ordinance 2025, the BB has initially decided to merge Social Islami Bank, Global Islami Bank, First Security Islami Bank, Union Bank

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Palestinians scramble to collect aid supplies from trucks that entered Gaza through Israel, in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Fighting across Myanmar border worries locals

BGB on high alert in Bandarban over fears of entry of Arakan Army soldiers

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MOKAMMEL SHUVO

A tense situation is prevailing along the Bangladesh-Myanmar frontier after an armed member of the Arakan Army (AA) entered Bangladesh on Monday, hours after prolonged bursts of gunfire from the Myanmar side in Bandarban's Ghumdhum border.

The gunfight, which began around 10:00pm on Sunday, is believed to have been between AA and rival armed groups allegedly backed by Myanmar's junta.

No casualties were reported on the Bangladesh side, but the sounds of heavy weapons rattled residents in Ghumdhum, Chakdhala and surrounding areas.

Some dozen armed AA members are currently positioned near the Naf river in Myanmar's Laldwip area and waiting for an opportunity to cross into Bangladesh to take shelter. The Daily Star has learnt from people with knowledge of the matter.

Their location has been pinpointed about three kilometres east of the Dumdumia Border Outpost (BOP) under Teknaf Battalion 2 of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) on the Myanmar side.

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SURVEILLANCE BY AL GOVT Spending spiked before last three elections

Says Tech Global Institute report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the run-up to Bangladesh's last three national elections, state spending on surveillance technologies surged dramatically, according to a report by Tech Global Institute, titled "The Digital Police State: Surveillance, Secrecy and State Power in Bangladesh".

The report estimated that at least \$20 million was spent on surveillance systems in the 12 to 18 months preceding the 2018 and 2024 general elections.

"AL's [Awami League] use of surveillance played a key role in securing three consecutive election victories in 2014, 2018, and 2023, each marked by credible allegations of widespread electoral irregularities," claimed the report. "Its principal rivals, including BNP and JIB [Jamaat-e-Islami], along with dissidents, students, and activists, were subjected to intensive and invasive surveillance, often leading to arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings."

Before the 2018 polls, spending largely focused on geolocation trackers and related software. By 2023, the focus shifted towards more intrusive spyware, capable of remote eavesdropping, full device access, and large-scale data extraction.

Procurement records and training logs from 2022 to 2024 reveal a strong emphasis on tools designed to extract data from encrypted platforms, including Messenger, Telegram, WhatsApp, and Viber.

The report found that many purchases were aimed at bypassing end-to-end encryption or deploying malware to enable remote device access, allowing direct retrieval of app-based communications.

TGI found that the most significant spike came in

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Educationist Mahfuza Khanam passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned educationist, social worker, and women's rights advocate Mahfuza Khanam passed away in Dhaka yesterday. She was 79.

Mahfuza was also a freedom fighter and a former vice-president of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU).

She died at Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College Hospital on Eskaton Road around 12:00pm, her family told this newspaper.

Mahfuza had gone for a swim at the Officers' Club on Bailey Road around 10:00am when she collapsed. She was rushed to the hospital, where doctors declared her dead. She had suffered a heart attack.

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83% in favour of caretaker govt system

Shujan survey finds 63% want rotating reserved seats for women in lower house, and 69% favour 30 reserved seats for women in upper house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eighty-three percent of people are in favour of forming an election-time caretaker government for 120 days during the national polls.

They want a provision for the caretaker government system in the constitution. Moreover, 79 percent want irregularities and fraud in the last three general elections to be investigated and those responsible to be held accountable.

These findings come from a public opinion survey conducted as part of the process to finalise the National Charter proposed by Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), a civil society platform.

Ekram Hossain, a member of Shujan's national committee, presented the survey results at a press briefing at the Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday.

The survey, conducted between May and July this year, gathered responses to 40 questions from 1,373 people across the country, in addition to feedback from 15 citizen dialogues. Of the respondents, 335 were women, 1,033 men, and five were from the third gender.

When asked whether the current government

is neutral, Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said, "This government does not represent any political party. It is a non-partisan government."

According to the survey, 69 percent support a bicameral legislature, while 63 percent favour rotating reserved seats for women in the lower house, and 69 percent want 30 reserved seats for women in the upper house.

Seventy-one percent favour proportional representation (PR) system in the upper house, 86 percent want the deputy speaker of the House to be appointed from the opposition, and 82 percent want the deputy speaker of the upper house to be from the opposition as well.

Eighty-seven percent support a provision barring the same individual from holding the posts of prime minister, leader of the house, and party chief simultaneously.

Eighty-nine percent favour limiting the prime minister's tenure to a maximum of two terms. Eighty-seven percent support a cabinet-led government, while 88 percent favour increasing the power of the president.

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MOB ATTACK IN RANGPUR Cops forced to retreat without rescuing victims

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

When the mob was fatally beating two people on suspicion of van theft in Rangpur on Saturday night, some policemen went there but they left the scene without rescuing the victims.

Around one hour later, police accompanied by security forces went there again and rescued the victims in an unresponsive state.

Ruplal Robidas and his relative Pradip Lal Robidas died. The Daily Star's correspondent talked to around a dozen witnesses and police also confirmed the account.

"After the chaos began, some 12 to 14 policemen came here in two police vans. But they failed to control the mob and rescue the two. The policemen left the scene after a few minutes," said an eyewitness seeking anonymity.

The witness had seen Sub-Inspector Abu Jobayer of Taraganj Police Station at the scene.

Contacted, Abu Jobayer, who is also the investigation officer of the case, said, "I cannot remember whether I was present there at that time."

Jobayer admitted that some policemen were present there, but he refused to name any.

Seeking anonymity, another eyewitness said, "Agitating people had surrounded the two men. They

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Israeli planes, tanks bombard Gaza City

20 killed; Hamas leader arrives in Cairo to revive ceasefire talks

AGENCIES

Israeli planes and tanks bombarded eastern areas of Gaza City yesterday, killing at least 20 people, witnesses and medics said, with Hamas leader Khalil Al-Hayya arrived in Cairo for talks to revive a US-backed ceasefire plan.

The latest round of indirect talks in Qatar ended in deadlock in late July with Israel and Palestinian group Hamas trading blame over the lack of progress on a US proposal for a 60-day truce and hostage release deal.

Israel has since said it will launch a new offensive and seize control of Gaza City.

Witnesses and medics said Israeli planes and tanks pounded eastern districts of Gaza City again overnight, killing seven people in two houses in the Zeitoun suburb and four in an apartment building in the city centre, reports Reuters.

In the south of the enclave, five people including a couple and their child were killed by an Israeli airstrike on a house in the city of Khan Younis and four by a strike on a tent encampment in nearby, coastal Mawasi, medics said.

Five more people, including two children, have died of starvation and malnutrition in Gaza in the past 24 hours, the territory's health ministry said. The new deaths raised the number of deaths from the same causes to 227, including 103 children, since the war started, it added.



To deceive buyers, a group of unscrupulous traders use toxic red dyes to make fish appear fresher than they are. Consuming fish soaked in such chemicals can be hazardous to health. The photo was taken recently at Fishery Ghat in Chattogram city.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

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Atpara UNO sued for beating youth

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A case has been filed against Ruel Sangma, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Atpara in Netrakona, on charges of beating a young man during disorder in distribution of rice among the poor before Eid-ul-Fitr.

Although the incident occurred around four and a half months ago, it drew public attention recently after a video of the UNO taking a baton from police and beating 18-year-old Durjoy went viral on social media.

Durjoy, the son of day labourer Shahid Mia from Bishnupur village of the upazila, went to Baniajan Union Parishad office on March 24 to collect rice on behalf of his mother.

Each of 2,037 beneficiaries in the area was being given 10 kg of rice under the government's Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme during Ramadan, according to the case filed in a court by Upazila Jubo Dal Joint Convener Raihan Kabir last Sunday.

Disorder broke out due to people breaking the queue. At the same time, the UNO arrived at the scene