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If the state
cannot govern,
violence will

P6



An icon that
transcends
music

P8



Two forgotten
kingdom of
Bengal

P10



Women's
Kabaddi World
Cup begins in
Dhaka today

P11

ICT to deliver judgment on Hasina today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal 1 is set to deliver its verdict today in a case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and two of her aides over alleged crimes against humanity during last year's July uprising.

Hasina, 78, has defied the tribunal's orders to return from India to face trial on charges of ordering a deadly crackdown that led to the student-led uprising that led to her ouster on August 5 last year.

Her co-accused are former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, also a fugitive, and former police chief Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, who is in custody and has pleaded guilty. Mamun has also become a state witness, the first accused to do so since the tribunal was set up in 2010.

The court is expected to sit at 11:00am, said Prosecutor Gazi Monawar Hossain Tamim.

Prosecutors have filed five counts against the accused, including failure to prevent murder, amounting to crimes against humanity under Bangladeshi law. They have sought the death penalty if the accused are found guilty.

Prosecutors also asked the tribunal to confiscate the three



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All major parties bound for polls

MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR and MAMUNUR RASHID

Once seemed like an endless deadlock, the long political storm surrounding the July charter's implementation is finally subsiding as Bangladesh's major parties retreat from their hard-line stances.

The Jamaat-e-Islami and its allies are the latest to soften their tone. Yesterday, they chose to refrain from announcing a pre-scheduled indefinite sit-in to press their five-point demand, which included a referendum before the national polls.

Earlier, the BNP and the National Citizen Party have also changed their tune.

For ordinary citizens, this change in the mood offers a sense of relief.

The speeches, the press briefings continue, but behind the scenes, parties are turning their attention to the ballot box. From strategy sessions to mobilising supporters to finalising candidates, preparations for the next election are in full swing.

"Despite much confusion, frustration, and uncertainty, a possibility has now emerged that the election will take place in February 2026," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

He urged political parties to support the election process, warning that certain quarters were deliberately trying to create uncertainty. "By raising various demands, they seek to disrupt, halt, or delay the election," he said at a programme marking the 49th death anniversary of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani at the Jatiya Press Club.

Fakhrul said a certain quarter is plotting to create chaos on Monday, centring the verdict on what he termed the "fascist Hasina's massacre".

He cautioned that some groups may exploit political divisions and instability to create disorder. Therefore, he stressed, all political parties must act responsibly regarding the election.

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"Additional personnel have been assigned to strategic locations, including Dhaka, while special teams are on standby."

Police spokesperson
AHM SAHADAT HOSSAIN

programmes centring around the ICT verdict due today.

Also yesterday, the Supreme Court sent a letter to the Army Headquarters, requesting troops to be positioned around the tribunal complex ahead of the verdict, SC spokesperson Moajjem Hussain told this newspaper.

The Awami League, whose political activities remain suspended, had earlier announced a "Dhaka lockdown" for last Thursday. It later unveiled a four-day programme, including a two-day "complete shutdown" from yesterday.

Meanwhile, the eight-party alliance, including Jamaat-e-Islami, plans to take to the streets today.

At a press conference yesterday, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said they had participated in earlier programmes and would do so again, adding that "the nation will not allow any scope for sabotage in favour of fascism".

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MULTIPLE INDICATOR CLUSTER SURVEY (MICS) 2025

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Unicef

Sample size: Nearly 63,000 households

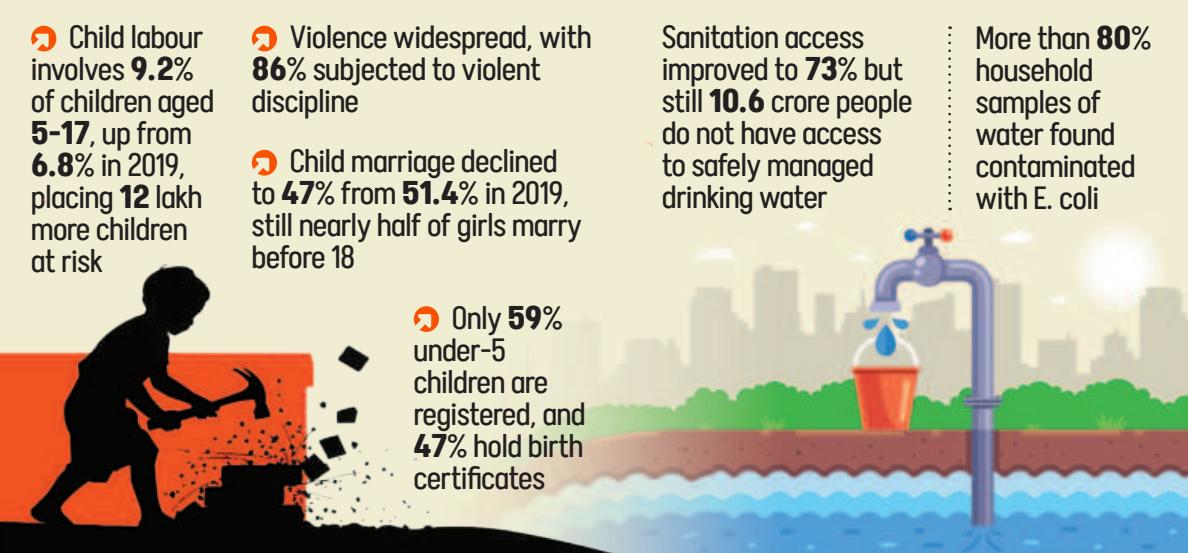
Primary school enrollment 80% but attendance drops sharply at higher levels

About 6-7% of primary age children remain out of school

Neonatal mortality remains high at 22 per 1,000 live births

C-section rate rises to as high as 75%

More than 80% household samples of water found contaminated with E. coli



Population control in reverse gear after decades

Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2025 finds sudden rise in fertility rate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's fertility rate rose to 2.4 percent in 2019 to 47 percent, yet nearly half the girls marry before 18.

From 6.3 in 1975, the fertility rate steadily fell, largely due to government policies and programmes, and stagnated at 2.3 in 2012. This recent rise could have far-reaching implications.

The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2025, the most comprehensive survey on women and children, highlighted progress and challenges in health, nutrition, protection, and development.

Conducted in nearly 63,000 households over one year, the survey report released yesterday showed progress made in reducing mortality of children under five years old, significant gains in births at institutions, births attended by skilled professionals, and improvements in sanitation.

It underscored the rate of child motherhood, severe short-term undernutrition, high child marriage

rate, and maternal anaemia as areas of concern.

Child marriage declined from 51.4 percent in 2019 to 47 percent, yet nearly half the girls marry before 18.

Child labour now affects 9.2 percent of children aged 5 to 17, up from 6.8 percent in 2019, the year of the previous survey. This translates to 12 lakh more children at risk. At least 86 percent children were subjected to violent discipline.

The survey, while concluding, said the country is moving forward, but to accelerate the progress and to ensure no child is left behind, it must focus more on quality, safety, inclusion, and protection.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, with technical and financial support from UNICEF, conducted the seventh round of the survey.

BIRTH RATE RISE
The fertility rate for women aged 15 to 49, in the three years preceding the

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Unsafe levels of lead found in 38% kids aged 1 to 5

Finds MICS survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A new study has revealed that 38 percent of the surveyed children aged 12-59 months have blood lead levels above the safe threshold -- a finding that indicates serious health risk among children.

Nearly 8 percent of the surveyed pregnant women also had blood lead levels above the threshold.

The study showed that three divisions -- Dhaka (65.2 percent), Sylhet (46.7 percent), and Chattogram (42.1 percent) -- recorded the highest proportions of children with high blood lead levels, exceeding the national average of 38.3 percent.

Among children with high blood lead levels, the majority (52 percent) were in the richest quintile, compared to the poorest quintile (30 percent).

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GAP ROLLOUT New promises for safe food production

Experts stress the need for sustainability

MOSTAFA SHABUJ, Bogura

Sohel Rana had been growing mangoes since 2013 in traditional methods, often applying excessive chemical fertilisers and pesticides. He was aware of the health risks and the adverse effects on the soil, but he did what he needed to do for a greater yield. And until last year, the farmer from Naogaon sold his produce in the local market for a marginal profit.

All that has now changed. This summer, he took part in a mango exhibition in Qatar with 4.5 tonnes of Amrapali, Banana Mango, and Bari-4 mangoes, making a profit of Tk 16 lakh, thanks to the high quality and global demand for farm products grown under Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

"We have been hearing about GAP in various agriculture-related meetings and seminars for a long time, but there was no such

traceability of the product, regulation, and sustainability through detailed record-keeping. Traditional farming on the other hand is often less formal and adaptable to local conditions without standardised oversight.

The Bangladesh GAP initiative is a five-year programme being implemented by the government, the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Sohel Rana, however, is not the only farmer expecting high profits from local and global markets from safer farm products.

Since the launch of the project just two years ago, about 200,000 farmers have received training on GAP farming, which promotes ethical practices in agriculture, covering aspects from land preparation to post-harvest handling.

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GAP farming follows a structured, documented system

Fertilisers, pesticides are applied under expert supervision

2 lakh farmers and 1,400 agriculture officers trained so far

Govt to bring 3 lakh hectares under GAP farming, train 10 lakh farmers by 2028

