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CA urges armed forces to play 'historic role' in polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday lauded the enduring contributions of the Bangladesh Armed Forces to national security, development, and nation-building.

Recalling the forces' support to citizens during crises, he called on them to play a historic role in the upcoming national polls and referendum in February.

"I am proud to notice the progress of the armed forces and their enduring contributions to our national security, development, and nation-building activities. Your commitment to safeguarding our nation has been exemplary," he said while addressing the graduation ceremony of the National Defence Course and Armed Forces War Course 2025 at the National Defence College



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Sugarcane being unloaded from a buffalo cart at a centre in Charghat upazila, Rajshahi, for weighing before being sent to Rajshahi Sugar Mills Ltd. In Charghat and Bagha upazilas, farmers continue to use buffalo and bullock carts to transport their produce from fields to sugarcane centres as they are cost-effective.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

HASINA'S CASE Deputy registrars sent to bring defence lawyer to hearing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday sent two deputy registrars to the chamber of Senior Supreme Court lawyer ZI Khan Panna, appointed earlier as defence counsel for deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina in an enforced disappearance case, after he failed to appear during the charge framing hearing.

Visibly displeased, the tribunal first halted the proceedings before ordering the deputy registrars to "go in person" to Panna's chamber and ask him to appear "immediately".

The hearing began with Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam opening submissions against 17 accused, including Hasina. But tribunal Chairman Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder abruptly stopped him, asking, "Has one defence lawyer withdrawn?"

Tribunal member Justice Md Shofiul Alam Mahmood followed up with, "Why he is not present today?"

Tajul informed the tribunal that Panna had written to the registrar seeking to withdraw from the case.

Justice Shofiul said such a withdrawal requires

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Govt vehicle runs over 2-yr-old kid, kills her

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

A two-year-old girl was crushed to death yesterday by a government vehicle in Cumilla's Homna upazila.

The accident occurred around 9:30am in front of the Tulip Administration Institute inside the Upazila Parishad compound.

According to family members and eyewitnesses, the child had come to the compound with her mother in the morning when the assistant commissioner's official vehicle entered the premises at high speed and ran over her, killing her on the spot.

"The vehicle was coming at a very high speed. In an instant, my precious Faiza was gone," said the child's mother.

Assistant Commissioner (Land) Ahammed Mofasser and the newly appointed Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shahidul Islam rushed to Homna Upazila Government Hospital after hearing the news.

"I was not in the vehicle at the time of the incident - I rushed here as soon as I heard the news. This child could have been my own. As a father, I will extend full cooperation to ensure the highest legal action," Mofasser told journalists.



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Telecom white paper exposes deep-rooted graft

MAHMUDUL HASAN

Bangladesh's telecom sector is suffering from entrenched corruption, systemic irregularities and a governance breakdown that has weakened regulatory credibility, distorted markets and wasted public resources, according to a government-commissioned white paper.

Prepared by a seven-member committee headed by Buet Professor Kamrul Hasan, the white paper paints a bleak picture of a sector "structurally misaligned, operationally compromised and failing to deliver trusted, affordable connectivity".

Formed on April 20, the committee reviewed governance practices across 10 entities under the Posts and Telecommunications Division (PTD).

It found that policy neglect, unchecked favouritism, politicised appointments and procurement manipulation had accumulated over the years.

The document, based on a forensic review of 10 key entities under the PTD, exposes a systemic "governance capture" that has crippled regulatory authority, bled state-owned enterprises and defrauded the public.

From the highest regulatory body to project implementation cells, the sector operates on favouritism, bypasses competitive processes and treats public resources as a vehicle for patronage.

"These structural deficiencies produce systemic risks to meritocracy, institutional credibility, service delivery and long-term sector reform."

The chaos is "symptomatic of misaligned institutional architecture rather than isolated incidents".

At the heart of the crisis is the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the agency tasked with regulating the sector.

The white paper found the BTRC itself to be a primary source of irregularity, with its credibility shattered by its own actions.

BTRC's practices have eroded institutional integrity and diminished the credibility of sector oversight.
The white paper read

The commission was accused of "non-competitive recruitment, misclassification of candidates, excessive age relaxations, improper absorption of project-funded staff, re-employment of retirees and conflicted commissioner appointments".

By blurring the lines between regulator and employer, the BTRC created a self-serving system.

"BTRC's practices have eroded institutional integrity and diminished the credibility of sector oversight," the report said.

The irregularities at the top set a precedent for the entire ecosystem.

The malaise spread through state-owned

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30 people pushed in from India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Border Guard Bangladesh detained 30 Bangladeshis early yesterday after they were pushed into the country by the Indian Border Security Force through the Gangni border in Meherpur.

Mohammad Ali, company commander of the Tetulbaria BGB camp, said the detainees are residents of various districts across Bangladesh. Among them are 10 women and four children.

Quoting the detainees, Mohammad Ali said they entered India illegally through different border areas with the help of brokers at various times. They were later arrested by Indian police and imprisoned in Kolkata.

BSF members sent them back via the Tetulbaria border.

After completing legal formalities, the detainees were handed over to Gangni Police Station, he added.

Boni Israel, officer-in-charge of the station, said the 30 people were verified as Bangladeshis. "Further actions will be taken as per legal procedures."

Sick young ants invite destruction to save colony



AFP, Paris

Sick young ants release a smell to tell worker ants to destroy them to protect the colony from infection, scientists said Tuesday, adding that queens do not seem to commit this act of self-sacrifice.

Many animals conceal illness for social reasons. For example, sick humans are known to risk infecting others so they can still go to the office - or the pub.

Ant colonies, however, act as one "super-organism" which works to ensure the survival of all, similar to how infected cells in our bodies send out a "find-me and eat-me" signal, according to an Austria-led team of scientists.

Ant nests are a "perfect place for a disease outbreak to occur because there are thousands of ants crawling over each other," Erika Dawson, a behavioural ecologist at the Institute of Science and Technology Austria and lead author of a new study, told AFP.

When adult worker ants get an illness that could spread through the colony, they leave the nest to die alone. Young ants, known as pupae, in contrast are still trapped inside a cocoon.

Scientists had already figured out that when these pupae are terminally ill, there is a chemical change that produces a particular smell.

SURVEILLANCE FEARS India revokes order to preload app on phones after outcry

REUTERS, New Delhi

India yesterday revoked its order to smartphone makers to preload a state-run cybersecurity app days after the plan triggered a major backlash from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's opponents and privacy activists over surveillance fears.

The Indian government had confidentially ordered companies including Apple, Samsung and Xiaomi to preload new phones with an app called Sanchar Saathi, or Communication Partner, within 90 days, Reuters was first to report on Monday.

"Government has decided not to make the pre-installation mandatory for mobile manufacturers," India's communications ministry said in a press statement.

The move comes after days of protests from opposition parties over the issue, while newspaper editorials joined privacy advocates in denouncing the move. The government also found itself at odds with phone manufacturers, as Apple and Samsung had plans to not comply with the directive, sources said.

The plan had become a hot issue on Indian prime time news, with politicians and privacy advocates sparring over its pros and cons.

The government had said the app only helps track and block stolen phones and prevents them from being misused.



Students block the Science Lab intersection yesterday, demanding the immediate issuance of an ordinance for Dhaka Central University, which comprises seven government colleges in the capital. The blockade disrupted vehicular movement and caused traffic jams in the area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

No conspiracy in collapse of China spy case: UK inquiry

AFP, London

A high-profile case against two British men accused of spying for China collapsed because of "systemic failures" and not a government conspiracy, a UK parliamentary inquiry concluded yesterday.

The handling of the case against Christopher Cash and Christopher Berry was at times "shambolic" and reforms are needed to prevent "similar issues" happening again, the cross-party committee of MPs and members of the House of Lords said in its report.

Ex-parliamentary researcher Cash and China-based Berry, both of whom deny wrongdoing, had been accused of passing secrets to Beijing between 2021 and 2023.

The inquiry was launched after the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) dropped the charges against the two men in September, saying the government had failed to provide evidence that China was a national security threat.