



## Pry teachers suspend strike

Say move made considering students' welfare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Assistant government primary schoolteachers suspended their "complete shutdown" last night.

In a press release, Prathomik Shikhhok Dabi Bastobayon and Songothon Oikya parishads, which jointly held the programme across the country, said the decision was made considering the welfare of students.

It added that the suspension would come into effect from Sunday and continue until year-end exams are over.

Future programmes will be announced following discussions between the two platforms, the release said.

In another development, Mohammad Shamsuddin, a convener of the Prathomik Shikhhok Dabi Bastobayon Parishad, has been transferred to Dakshin Char Lakshmi Government Primary School in Lakhimpur's Raipur from Kripalpur Government Primary School in Noakhali.

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An activist of Bangladesh Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal loses balance during a scuffle with police at the Kakrail intersection yesterday. The law enforcers charged batons to disperse JASAD activists who were attempting to march towards the Chief Adviser's Office to protest the leasing out of the Chattogram port and terminals to foreign entities.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## NEW MOORING TERMINAL HC delivers split verdict on DP world deal

One judge says agreement illegal, the other says writ invalid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday delivered a dissenting verdict on a writ petition challenging the legality of the government's move to start the process of awarding a contract to UAE-based DP World for container handling at the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) in Chattogram.

Justice Fatema Najib, senior judge of the two-judge bench, declared the government decision illegal, saying it was taken "in violation of the relevant law and policy".

On the other hand, junior judge Justice Fatema Anwar rejected the writ, saying the petitioners had no jurisdiction to file it as they are not personally aggrieved by the decision and could not show any proof of a security threat linked to it.

The HC bench will now send the petition along with the dissenting verdict to the chief justice for a decision.

After receiving the documents, Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed will assign another HC bench to hear and settle the petition, Additional Attorney General Aneek R Haque and Barrister Kayser Kamal, one of the lawyers for the writ petitioners, told The Daily Star.

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## 3-year-old boy earns official chess rating



AFP, New Delhi

India's Sarwagya Singh Kushwaha has become the youngest player in chess history to earn an official FIDE rating at the age of three years, seven months and 20 days.

The chess prodigy edged out the previous record of compatriot Anish Sarkar, who was three years, eight months and 19 days when he reached the milestone in November last year.

Kushwaha, who is enrolled in nursery school in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, holds a rapid rating of 1,572. To achieve a rating from FIDE, the International Chess Federation, a player needs to beat at least one FIDE-rated player.

A rating is a score that measures a chess player's strengths based on their performances and is not the same as a ranking. World number one Magnus Carlsen is the top in rapid chess with a rating of 2,824.

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## Digital Bangladesh vision was just a political slogan

Says government-commissioned white paper on ICT

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The Awami League's flagship Digital Bangladesh vision functioned largely as "an architecture of political slogan" rather than a coherent national digital strategy, according to a government-commissioned white paper.

The much-publicised promise of technological modernisation, efficiency and a digitally empowered citizenry ultimately operated as a fragile digital façade, weakened by systemic governance failures, corruption, irregularities and political capture, it said.

The White Paper, headed by M Niaz Asadullah, was recently submitted to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus but has not yet been released publicly. The Daily Star has reviewed a copy of the document.

The task force reviewed 52 ICT Division (ICTD) projects and examined extensive datasets, including more than 6 lakh e-GP tenders and over 30,000 software-system log records.

Its central assessment is that political influence and governance failures consistently undermined the country's digital push.

"Over time, that promise became overshadowed by mounting public concern over corruption, irregularities and systemic governance failures," the report said.

Despite the rapid expansion of connectivity, training centres and

infrastructure after 2009, the growth exposed a persistent mismatch between political ambition and institutional capacity.

As a result, strategic decisions were often aligned with partisan considerations rather than development priorities.

Flagship connectivity projects such as Info-Sarker II and III became a "textbook case of triple rent seeking", where public investment generated long-term rent streams for an existing private duopoly.

For example, of the 52 ICTD projects, at least 12 major projects and 65 components were named after political personalities or used directly for political branding, said the white paper.

It said site selections were frequently influenced by partisan interests and the ICT Masterplan 2019 formally adopted the ruling party's election manifesto as a policy reference.

Narratives of progress were also found to rely on unverified or manufactured statistics on exports, employment and

claims of large financial savings in digital public services, many endorsed by donor-funded entities.

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The initiatives were often facilitated through National Priority Project status, which enabled the bypassing of legal procedures and the granting of lopsided revenue arrangements.

A major institutional failure was identified in the Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority, whose mandate for innovation and industrial diversification was gradually redirected towards political spectacle and patronage.

The agency's activities increasingly followed a "logic of partisan visibility and patronage distribution", with parks and training centres launched without credible assessments of market demand, utility readiness or tenant capacity.

The task force highlights structural vulnerabilities in procurement and financial management across the ICT sector.

It points to syndicates of vendors, consultants and public officials that manipulated tenders, inflated costs, duplicated services and misappropriated funds.

Analysis of hardware components

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## ICT issues arrest warrant for Joy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday took cognisance of formal charges in two cases against Sajeeb Wazed Joy, former ICT adviser to deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and three others.

The three accused are former state minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak, ex-law minister Anisul Huq, and then premier's private industry and investment affairs adviser Salman F Rahman.

Joy and Palak have been named in a case filed over alleged crimes against humanity committed during the July-August uprising.

Anisul and Salman are accused in the other case on charges of similar offences.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder issued an arrest warrant for Joy, the son of Hasina, and ordered a report on its execution by December 10.

It also issued production warrants for Anisul, Salman, and Palak, all currently in custody.

The four are among 46 individuals who were initially accused in a case. Of them, at least 19 are high-profile

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## Putin in India for defence, trade talks



AFP, New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin landed in India yesterday for a two-day visit aimed at deepening defence ties, as New Delhi faces heavy US pressure to stop buying oil from Moscow.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was at the airport to welcome the Russian leader in person, greeting him on the red carpet with a hug, before riding together in the same car.

Putin, on his first visit to India since the Ukraine war, is accompanied by his Defence Minister Andrei Belousov, with possible deals on fighter jets and air defence systems expected to be discussed.

In an interview with India Today, Putin said he was

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A discarded fishing net clings to a coral in the Bay of Bengal off Saint Martin's Island, posing a grave threat to its survival. Beneath these waters, abandoned nets have become deadly traps, entangling coral colonies across the seabed. Corals, crucial to the marine ecosystem and home to countless species, are being starved of sunlight and oxygen as these nets block their growth -- slowly suffocating an oceanic world that depends on them.

PHOTO: SHARIF SARWAR

## BRIBERY CASE Trump pardons Democratic congressman

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump has pardoned a Democratic member of Congress in a bribery case, saying the justice system had been "weaponized" by his predecessor Joe Biden.

"I am hereby announcing my full and unconditional PARDON of beloved Texas Congressman Henry Cuellar ... I don't know you, but you can sleep well tonight -- Your nightmare is finally over!" Trump said on his Truth Social platform on Wednesday.

Cuellar and his wife had been facing several charges of conspiracy and bribery based on accusations from prosecutors that they had accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of bribes from an oil and gas company partly owned by the government of Azerbaijan.

The couple have denied the charges for which they were facing trial in April.

"I want to thank President Trump for his tremendous leadership and for taking the time to look at the facts," Cuellar said in response to the pardon in a post on X on Wednesday.