



DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 25, 2025

SECOND EDITION

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 333

POUSH 10, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

RAJAB 4, 1447 HIJRI

12 PAGES PLUS LIFESTYLE: TK 15.00

Tarique on his way home

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman steps onto Bangladeshi soil today after more than 17 long years in exile in London, marking the most significant political homecoming in recent history.

For the BNP, his long awaited return symbolises renewal -- a turning point that could reenergise the party's political base and reshape its future trajectory.

Many people view this as a crucial step in uniting the people amid the current volatile situation and steering the nation towards a credible election, said Mahdi Amin, adviser to the BNP acting chairman, in a Facebook post.

"That is why Tarique Rahman's return is not just a personal homecoming -- it has become a symbol of the people's deep hopes and expectations for Bangladesh's freedom, sovereignty and democracy," he added.

Tarique's daughter, Zaima Zarnaz Rahman, will accompany him. His wife, Zubaida Rahman, who returned to London on December 20 after a two-week stay in Dhaka with her ailing mother-in-law, will also travel. The family's pet cat, Zeebu, will also travel with them, along with their two close aides, Abdur Rahman Suny and Kamal Uddin.

They departed London from Heathrow Airport at 6:30pm British time on Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight number BG 202. The flight will land at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka via Sylhet at 11:45am.

After landing, Tarique will be received by members of the BNP standing committee.

He will then travel in one of the two bulletproof vehicles imported for him to a reception in the 300 Feet area of Purbachal, chosen over Suhrawardy Udyan and Manik Mia Avenue to minimise inconvenience for Dhaka residents. Party leaders and activists will line both sides of the road to greet him.

"It will be a brief programme. There, he will express gratitude to the people of the country and offer prayers of thanksgiving to Almighty Allah," said BNP Standing Committee member Salihuddin Ahmed.

BNP standing committee members, leaders of political parties that joined the simultaneous movement and prominent figures will be present on stage, but only Tarique will address the crowd.

Following his address, Tarique will go to Evercare Hospital to visit his ailing mother, former prime minister Khaleda Zia, who has been undergoing treatment there for over a month now.

After meeting his mother, he will go to Firoza, the Zia family's residence at Gulshan-2, via Airport Road and Kakoli Mor.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



PHOTO: COLLECTED

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, his wife Zubaida Rahman, and daughter Zaima Rahman share a moment at Heathrow Airport before departing from London yesterday evening.

BNP gives 10 more seats to its allies

Two allied leaders join party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP has reached an electoral understanding in 10 constituencies with several allied parties that took part in the simultaneous movement against the previous regime.

Of these, two leaders of allied parties formally joined BNP yesterday, while another is expected to, and will contest the upcoming parliamentary election using the BNP's electoral symbol, the paddy sheaf.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir announced the list at a press conference at the party chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday.

He said his party would not field candidates in constituencies covered by the seat-sharing arrangement and confirmed that

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Seat-sharing strains new alliance

NCP, AB party seek deals with BNP, Jamaat

SHAMIMA RITA

A disagreement over seat-sharing has emerged among the newly formed alliance comprising the National Citizen Party, Amar Bangladesh Party and Bangladesh Rastro Songskar Andolan.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Islamist bloc wrangling over seat-sharing

Jamaat says candidate list almost ready, refutes claims of rift

MAMUNUR RASHID

The eight-party bloc, which includes Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Andolan Bangladesh, has yet to agree on seat-sharing for the general election, with the deadline for nomination papers set for December 29.

However, its leaders refuted speculations of rift over the deal and said the candidate list will be announced soon.

The bloc plans to contest the polls under what it calls a "one-box policy", fielding a single candidate in each

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Crude bomb from flyover kills man

Why do bombs fall on people: father

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was killed yesterday when a crude bomb, reportedly hurled from the Moghbazar Mouchak flyover, struck him on the head on New Eskaton Road in Dhaka.

The victim, who died on the spot, was identified as Siam Majumder, 21, a worker at a local motor parts shop. The incident occurred around 7:00pm, according

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

INDIA-BANGLADESH TENSIONS Crisis Group calls for restraint in rhetoric

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As Dhaka-New Delhi relations lurch towards a crisis, India should avoid "provocative" statements that could be perceived in Bangladesh as "meddling" in its upcoming polls, the International Crisis Group has said.

Bangladeshi political parties, meanwhile, should refrain from taking "rhetorical shots at New Delhi in order to score nationalist points with voters", the Brussels-based think tank said in its latest report on Bangladesh.

Published on Tuesday, the report examines the increasingly acrimonious ties between the two South Asian neighbours and offers recommendations to defuse rising tensions.

It said India's "initial unwillingness" to engage with the interim government, its decision to provide refuge to deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and negative coverage of developments in Bangladesh by Indian media had "raised hackles across the border".

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

বাংলাদেশ নির্বাচন কমিশন
নির্বাচন কমিশন সচিবালয়
আগারগাঁও, ঢাকা
www.ecs.gov.bd

তথ্য
কমিকা-২

গণভোট ও অয়োদশ জাতীয় সংসদ নির্বাচন ২০২৬

"আপনি কি জুলাই জাতীয় সনদ (সংবিধান সংস্কার) বাস্তবায়ন আদেশ, ২০২৫
এবং জুলাই জাতীয় সনদে লিপিবদ্ধ সংবিধান সংস্কার সম্পর্কিত
নিম্নলিখিত প্রশ্নাবস্মুহের প্রতি আপনার সম্মতি জ্ঞাপন করিতেছেন?"; (হাঁ/না)

(ক) নির্বাচনকালীন তত্ত্বাবধায়ক সরকার, নির্বাচন কমিশন এবং অন্যান্য সাংবিধানিক প্রতিষ্ঠান জুলাই সনদে বর্ণিত প্রক্রিয়ার আলোকে গঠন করা হচ্ছে।

(খ) আগামী জাতীয় সংসদ হইবে দুই কক্ষ বিশিষ্ট ও জাতীয় সংসদ নির্বাচনে দলগুলোর প্রাপ্ত তোকের অনুপাতে ১০০ সদস্য বিশিষ্ট একটি উচ্চকক্ষ গঠিত হইবে এবং সংবিধান সংশোধন করিতে হইলে উচ্চকক্ষের সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ সদস্যের অনুমোদন দ্বারকার হচ্ছে।

(গ) সংসদে নারীর প্রতিনিধি বৃক্ষি, বিরোধী দল হইতে ডেপুটি শ্রীকার ও সংসদীয় কমিটির সভাপতি নির্বাচন, মৌলিক অধিকার, নির্বাচন বিভাগের শারীনতা, শ্বাসনমজ্জির মেয়াদ, রাষ্ট্রপতির ক্ষমতাসহ তফসিলে বর্ণিত যে ৩০টি বিষয়ে জুলাই জাতীয় সনদে ঐকমত্য হইয়াছে- সেগুলো বাস্তবায়নে আগামী সংসদ নির্বাচনে বিজয়ী রাজনৈতিক দলগুলো বাধ্য থাকিবে।

(ঘ) জুলাই জাতীয় সনদে বর্ণিত অপরাধের সংস্কার রাজনৈতিক দলগুলোর প্রতিশুতি অনুসারে বাস্তবায়ন করা হচ্ছে।



@BangladeshECS @BangladeshECS @BangladeshECS @BangladeshECS @BangladeshECS

You remain our guiding star



Fazlur Rahman

(1947-2023)

Founder Chairman & Managing Director

Our deepest gratitude in remembrance
on his second death anniversary

citygroup



Khuda Baksh resigns from CA's special assistant post

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Khuda Baksh Chowdhury, special assistant to the chief adviser at the Ministry of Home Affairs, has resigned from his post.

The president has accepted his resignation.

The announcement was made last night through a gazette notification signed by Cabinet Secretary Dr Sheikh Abdur Rashid and issued by order of the president.

According to the notification, Chowdhury's resignation takes effect immediately, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said.

No details were disclosed regarding the reasons behind the resignation.

Khuda Baksh, a former inspector general of police, was appointed special assistant to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on November 10, 2024.

Tarique on his way home

FROM PAGE 1

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has taken multi-layered security measures to prevent any untoward incident.

An additional 500 traffic police will be deployed to manage traffic during the gathering.

Additional police will be deployed to the airport area, Purbachal, and Firoza.

The security arrangements have been divided into three specific zones based on the gatherings. Special cards are being issued to those allowed to enter the red zone, and no one will be permitted entry without the card. A separate card will also be required to access the yellow zone and only cardholders will be allowed entry.

The DMP urged commuters to avoid the Purbachal Expressway from Mohakhali to Abdullahpur and the Kuril-Malibagh stretch from 4:00am to 10:00pm tomorrow and use alternative routes.

As part of security measures, 2,500 police members will be deployed, said a senior DMP official asking not to be named.

The party expects around 50 lakh people to gather in Dhaka on the day.

The overall responsibility for Tarique's security from the airport to Gulshan has been given to AKM Shamsul Islam.

Party-based security arrangements will be used to the fullest extent including the Chairperson's Security Force (CSF), Shamsul said at a briefing yesterday.

"Then there are our party leaders and activists, and above all, the general people of Bangladesh. This is the main foundation of our security. From the government's side, we are receiving the highest level of cooperation," he added.

The government has ensured the required security measures for Tarique's homecoming, said Shafiqul Alam, the chief adviser's press secretary.

"From our side, we have made the highest effort to ensure foolproof security," he said.

Centred on the 300 Feet area, party leaders and activists had already begun streaming into the venue last night.

Around 1,000 speakers are being installed across the airport



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus cuts a cake and exchanges Christmas greetings with representatives of the Christian community at the state guest house Jamuna yesterday.

PHOTO: PID



Tarique Rahman inside the plane.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

and outside the capital were taking positions in the 300 Feet area from yesterday, the party said.

The BNP leaders and activists held celebratory processions in Dhaka and across the country.

Party activists and supporters from many districts arrived in Dhaka last night, using buses, cars and launches arranged by the party.

The Bangladesh Railway will operate 10 special trains to bring BNP supporters to the capital, earning around Tk 36 lakh in fares.

Some 20 medical camps complete with doctors, paramedics, medicines and ambulances are being set up across Dhaka. There will be a six-bed temporary field hospital in the 300 Feet area, with an ambulance with ICU facilities. The party has installed mobile toilets and will be providing drinking water. Several thousand volunteers will be engaged in the whole service.

Separate bus parking has been arranged at the main entrances to the capital to avoid traffic. To facilitate the movement of patient-carrying ambulances and international

passengers, help desks have been set up in Kakoli Mor, and in front of the airport and Abdullahpur.

The Directorate General of Health Services has directed all medical colleges and specialised hospitals to be prepared to deal with any situation as a huge number of people will gather in Dhaka. The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

Dhaka Civil Surgeon and DGHS's divisional director have been asked to deploy additional medical teams.

In separate letters, hospital authorities across the country were asked to keep their emergency department and ambulance ready for three days starting today.

Also at yesterday's briefing, Salahuddin outlined Tarique's itinerary for the first two days following his return.

On Friday, after Juma prayers, Tarique will visit the grave of his father, President Ziaur Rahman, at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital. He will then go to the National Martyrs' Memorial in Savar to pay tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War.

Two more programmes are planned for Saturday. Tarique will complete the formalities related to his national identity card. It will be decided later whether he will personally go to the Election Commission office in Agargaon for this purpose. All procedures required for voter registration will be completed on the same day.

Later, he will visit the grave of Sharif Usman Hadi at Dhaka University. After paying respects there, Tarique will go to the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation in Shyamoli to visit those injured in the July uprising who are undergoing treatment there.

After his return, Tarique will regularly work from the BNP chairperson's office in Gulshan, where a new office has been prepared for him on the second floor. A separate chamber has also been set up at the party's central office in Naya Paltan.

During the 1/11-backed government, Tarique was arrested on March 7, 2007. He was granted bail on September 3, 2008, and left for London with his family for medical treatment.

Separate bus parking has been arranged at the main entrances to the capital to avoid traffic. To facilitate the movement of patient-carrying ambulances and international

RUSSIAN INVASION Zelensky reveals US-Ukraine plan to end war

Two police officers killed in explosion in Moscow

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine won some concessions in the latest version of a US-led draft plan to end the Russian invasion, revealed by President Volodymyr Zelensky, though key questions remain over territory and whether Moscow could accept the new terms.

The 20-point plan, agreed on by US and Ukrainian negotiators, was being reviewed by Moscow, but the Kremlin is unlikely to abandon its hardline territorial demands for full Ukrainian withdrawal from the east.

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, sources in the NCP said the party has asked for at least 20 seats from BNP and Jamaat each. While BNP is not willing to give up more than six to seven seats, Jamaat is ready to offer around 30.

However, party sources added that NCP is more interested in an alliance with BNP.

Among the 20 seats NCP sought from BNP are Dhaka 9, Dhaka-10 and Dhaka-11 under a seat-sharing agreement. Negotiations are ongoing as BNP has already announced nominees for these seats.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"NCP is a major party in this alliance. If NCP reaches an agreement with another alliance, this coalition will automatically dissolve. The fate of the alliance will be decided tonight [last night], with a formal announcement to follow later."

Meanwhile, two police officers were killed in an overnight explosion in Moscow when they tried to stop a suspicious person, Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement yesterday. The blast occurred close to the site where a Russian general was killed earlier this week.

Sarwar Tushar said, "Overall, discussions are ongoing. I hope we can reach a final decision soon."

Following the formation of the alliance, NCP on December 10 announced its nominees for 125 constituencies.

However, Rastro Songsksar Andolon Joint General Secretary Didar Bhuiyan told this correspondent, "NCP informed us about this on Monday night. We're not willing to share seats with either

BNP or Jamaat.

"

Unite to protect press freedom Say journos; DRU protests attacks on Star, Prothom Alo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalist leaders yesterday termed the recent attacks on the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo direct assaults on free and independent journalism, demanding swift justice and exemplary punishment for those responsible.

They made the remarks while participating in a human chain organised by the Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) on its premises, calling on journalists to remain united so that vested interests cannot attack media workers or press institutions in the future.

Speakers said attacks on the media are not new, noting that previous incidents, including the shutdown of newspapers, went unpunished, which emboldened miscreants to target The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.

The protest was held against the attacks on the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, the harassment of New Age Editor Nurul Kabir, and what organisers described as a "false

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Journalists form a human chain in front of the Mymensingh Press Club in the city yesterday, protesting the recent mob attacks on the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.

PHOTO: STAR

'Revise schedule, keep Feb 12 vote date unchanged'

NCP urges EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party yesterday urged the Election Commission to rethink the election schedule without changing the polling date, insisting the 13th parliamentary election be held on February 12 as planned.

NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwari and Joint Member Secretary Zahirul Islam Musa briefed journalists after meeting Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin at the Election Building in Agargaon, Dhaka.

Patwari said the EC had announced several dates for nomination submission and withdrawal, and the party requested reconsideration of those. He clarified they did not seek changes to the voting day but asked for flexibility if documents cannot be submitted on specific dates.

He said the judicial process over the killing of Sharif Osman Hadi remains incomplete, the perpetrators stay unidentified, and instability persists. "Given this situation, we told the EC the election scheduled for February 12 must be completed on that date."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8

Govt passes stricter tobacco

FROM PAGE 12
the consumption of tobacco products in public places alongside smoking.

The incorporation of nicotine pouch as tobacco product comes after the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority in April approved the Bangladeshi arm of global tobacco company Philip Morris to set up a factory in Narayanganj to produce nicotine pouches, triggering widespread criticism and protest from anti-tobacco campaigners.

The new law bans the production, import, sale and use of electronic nicotine delivery systems like e-cigarettes and vaping, as well as banning the sale of tobacco products within a 100-metre radius of educational institutions, hospitals, playgrounds and children's parks.

It also increased the fine for smoking in public places from Tk 300 to Tk 2,000 and repealed the provision that allowed "smoking zones", meaning there will no longer be such zones in public places or transport.

All kinds of advertisements, including those on the internet, for tobacco products have been banned.

Prominent anti-tobacco campaigner Sohel Reza Choudhury welcomed the approval of the ordinance, saying it would contribute to public health.

He urged that the law be enforced strictly.

Replying to a question, Sohel, who is also the head of epidemiology and research at the National Heart Foundation Hospital

and Research Institute, said it would have been better if their proposals had not been omitted and went on to express hope that the government would consider them in the future.

Last year, an estimated 3.71 crore people of 15 years old or above consumed various tobacco products in Bangladesh, while 1.97 crore people smoked, according to a World Health Organisation report published in October.

The Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act was enacted in 2005 to curb tobacco use in Bangladesh, with a ban on smoking in public places as one of its key features.

The law was strengthened in 2013 through amendments but anti-tobacco campaigners had been calling for further amendments to make the law more stringent and to close loopholes that tobacco companies exploit to promote tobacco use.

An amendment proposal for the act was placed before the then cabinet in October 2023 but was sent back for further review.

Another proposal was submitted to the incumbent advisory council in November last year, but it was not approved.

Instead, a committee led by Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed was formed to review it further.

Shafiqul Alam, the chief adviser's press secretary, while announcing the decision on November 7 last year, said: "On one hand, tobacco use has many adverse health effects. On the other, the cigarette

industry contributes significantly to revenue. So, a decision has been taken to revisit the law, considering all these perspectives."

PROVISIONS EXCLUDED

The committee held three meetings with the last meeting held on December 4, where six decisions were taken and the draft ordinance was modified accordingly, according to health ministry officials.

The meeting decided to omit the draft provisions of banning the sale of tobacco products through hawking, the sale of such product without registration; a ban on flavored tobacco products and a prohibition on the sale of loose or unpackaged tobacco products.

The draft ordinance had proposed printing pictorial health warnings covering 90 percent of the surface area on all packaging, wrappers, cartons, bags and containers – up from the current 50 percent. But the meeting decided to make it 75 percent.

Besides, the meeting also decided to incorporate nicotine pouches under the definition of tobacco products, the ministry sources said.

The omission proposals came from the National Board of Revenue and the finance ministry as the measures could reduce revenue generation and thus the opposition from the health ministry was ignored, said an official of the health ministry seeking anonymity.

Health Secretary Saidur Rahman could not be reached for comment.

'No more internet blackouts'

FROM PAGE 12
uploaded on the telecom ministry's website.

The original proposals aimed for a multi-agency structure to oversee the central interception platform, involving one representative nominated by the president, one by the prime minister and one by the speaker of parliament, along with a retired judge from the High Court Division and a retired district and sessions judge.

Some safeguards have been introduced into the surveillance mechanism, which were absent in the previous law, said Abu Nazam M Tanveer Hossain, a telecom policy expert.

However, the quasi-judicial body mentioned here includes positions that are an integral part of the government and may not ensure independent assessment," he added.

While the controversial National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre will be abolished, a Centre for Information Support will be established under the home ministry. The centre will be able to carry out interceptions only upon requests from authorised agencies or pursuant to orders from the court and the council.

Lawful interception can be carried out for the purposes of national security, maintenance of law and order, emergency life-saving needs, judicial or investigative requirements and cross border matters.

Such interception will be conducted only by agencies specified in law and strictly within their respective jurisdictions, Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser with executive power over the ministry of posts,

telecommunication and ICT, told The Daily Star.

Breaking away from the framework of the controversial 2010 amendment, the independence and accountability of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) have been ensured, with a clearer balance established between the powers and functions of the ministry and the regulator, said the telecom ministry in a statement.

Previously, the ministry approved all licence issuance. Under the new arrangement, the ministry will approve only a limited number of nationally significant licences based on independent studies, while the authority to issue all other licences has been restored to the BTRC.

Important national licences refer to the licences of telecom operators, tower companies, fibre optic network providers and satellite and submarine cable companies, enabling the government to issue the most critical licences in the sector.

In addition, an accountability committee has been formed under the chairmanship of the president of the parliamentary standing committee on posts and telecommunications.

The time required from licence application to final decision has been reduced. High and recurring penalties prescribed under the earlier law have also been lowered, a move expected to make the telecom sector more investment-friendly.

The BTRC will now be required to hold public hearings every four months, publish follow-up actions on its website, and enforce

provisions to prevent conflicts of interest.

The use of SIM and device registration data to surveil or harass citizens without due cause has been made a punishable offence.

The regulator should regain the full autonomy granted under the original 2001 Act, which was formulated through consultations with globally renowned bodies, said BTRC Chairman Md Emdad ul Bari.

He warned that certain new provisions introduced in the name of accountability would undermine the BTRC's independence and obstruct its smooth and effective functioning.

Ataur Rahman

FROM PAGE 12
of the Special Powers Act, 1974, issued a 90-day detention order against Ataur.

Upon receipt of the order and with the DMP's help, Tongi East Police Station arrested him and sent him to jail, the release added.

Abdullah Al Mamun, senior jail superintendent of Kashimpur High Security Central Jail, told this newspaper that Ataur has been kept at Kashimpur Central Jail 1.

Ataur's followers claimed on social media that he was travelling in a bus heading for Bhairab from Narasingdi on Tuesday night, which was halted for his detention.

His social media profile identifies him as the founder of the Prisoners' Rights Movement and Ameer Azadi Andolon Bangladesh. He has also been seen taking a leading role in mobilising protests under the banner of "Tawhid Janata" on several occasions.

National unity key

FROM PAGE 12
between pledges and outcomes, he added.

Debapriya said while public focus has shifted to the election, fundamental questions about acceptable participation and turnout remain unanswered.

He also cautioned that unless election expenditure is strictly controlled, post-election corruption would be unavoidable as winning candidates seek to recoup campaign costs from public resources.

"Public security has emerged as another priority for the government. There is public anxiety regarding what will happen in vulnerable areas once short-term security deployments are withdrawn."

He said a vast amount of firearms was looted on August 5, 2024, and claimed that a large quantity of weapons entered from India. Therefore, the government must focus on arms recovery with the assistance of the army, Debapriya added.

Kazi Maruf Islam, professor of Dhaka University's development studies department, said the country is exhibiting signs of a transition trap, where institutions are reconfigured in form but not in substance.

Warning of a growing religion-centric authoritarianism, he said holding a credible election is essential to restoring a democratic environment.

Presenting the keynote paper, Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar, who led the Electoral Reform Commission, said

Bangladesh's democratic crisis over the past decade stemmed largely from the collapse of the electoral system. He criticised changes to the legal framework governing party nominations, saying that the original proposal requiring nominations from grassroots panels elected through secret ballots had been diluted.

Abdul Alim, a member of the reform commission, said, "Ahead of the election, our immediate duty is to ensure the security of candidates and voters, compel everyone to abide by the code of conduct, and disseminate the information provided in the affidavits to the voters."

Chairing the session, Justice MA Matin, vice-president of Shujan, said that sustained public vigilance is essential to ensure accountability.

Commission member Jasmin Tuli, Dhaka University Prof Mohammad Jasim Uddin, and North South University Prof Waresul Karim, among others, also spoke at the event.

One suspect

FROM PAGE 12
assistant commissioner of DMP.

Based on Himon's information, police recovered a foreign-made pistol and three rounds of ammunition from Adabor.

"Himon is an active member of the Jubo League in Adabor. We believe his interrogation will lead us to whereabouts of Alamgir and others," Abdullah said.

আন্তর্জাতিক অপরাধ ট্রাইবুনাল
INTERNATIONAL CRIMES TRIBUNAL

TAYIM'S KILLING ICT-2 presses charges against 11 former cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday pressed charges against 11 former police officers over the killing of Imam Hasan Bhuiyan Tayim, a 12th grader, in Dhaka's Jatrabari on July 20 last year.

The three-judge tribunal took the charge into cognisance, issued arrest warrant against the fugitive accused, and ordered relevant authorities to produce the accused, including two already in custody, before the court on January 5 next year.

Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam, while reading out portions of the formal charge, gave a harrowing account of the incident.

A group of armed policemen had forced open a tea shop in Jatrabari's Kajla area around 12:00pm on the day, where several protesters -- Tayim, Md Rahat Hossain, Shahriar Azad -- and shopkeeper Liton, were hiding.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

A call for unity, peace and tolerance

All vulnerable groups, minority communities must feel secure

As Christians across the world celebrate Christmas and the birth of Jesus Christ, the message of peace, humanity, and compassion as preached by all major religions could not be more urgent. In the wake of the barbaric killing of Dipu Chandra Das, a member of the Hindu community, and the hate crimes committed against religious minorities, cultural institutions, newspapers, and other establishments, there is a need for deep soul-searching. Why have these incidents taken place? How did our pluralistic, syncretic, and religiously harmonious society become so fractured by vicious intolerance of the other? No doubt it reflects the global trend of majoritarian religious intolerance. But that cannot excuse us, Bangladeshis, to sink into this abyss of hatred and mindless violence.

The government's failure to stop mob violence has created a sense of impunity among criminals, a dangerous development that can spiral out of control. It is believed that most of these incidents are aimed at creating chaos and thwarting the upcoming elections. To achieve this goal various groups are weaponising religion and prejudice to inflict maximum harm to the nation.

Since the state is responsible for the security and safety of all citizens, the government's role is the most critical. Arresting the criminals directly involved in crimes such as killing, arson, and vandalism is mandatory. But more important is the need to prevent them from taking place with the help of intelligence gathering and action against those who instigate, mobilise and enable others to carry out such hate crimes. The government must realise that its image and that of the country have taken an enormous hit as a result of these incidents. Most importantly, it has created a sense of insecurity among people, especially from religious and ethnic minorities.

To restore confidence and security, the government must take decisive steps. It must use the full force of state machinery to investigate past and present hate crimes and identify the real conspirators. There should not be any careless blame game like before. The practice of catching only the foot soldiers of a crime without apprehending the kingpins, or arresting individuals merely based on their political affiliation, must stop. The same goes for allowing identified actors to be released due to political pressure.

Here, all political parties must work together and with the government to maintain the security of all vulnerable groups. We have seen, in the days following August 5 when there was no government and lawlessness was rampant, communities rose to the occasion to protect themselves. Temples and churches were protected by students of madrasas along with others. It is this sense of unity, camaraderie, tolerance of difference, and compassion that all major religions are based on, which must be garnered and spread across the country. Our aspirations of a truly democratic transition depend on this.

Poll concerns must be addressed seriously

EC must ensure proper enforcement of law and electoral code

The concerns raised by returning officers and field-level police officials at a meeting with the Election Commission should be taken as a serious warning. Among other challenges, they highlighted the use of illegal firearms, abuse of social media, indiscriminate bail for listed criminals, and weak border security. These form a combustible mix in a volatile socio-political climate, posing a serious threat to our hope for a free, fair, and inclusive election. Clearly, what's important is not only acknowledging these risks, which the top brass often seem unwilling to do, but also acting decisively on them.

In this regard, we acknowledge the chief election commissioner's assurance that the commission "will stand by" officials in charge of conducting elections, directing them to apply the law equally to everyone. Meanwhile, the inspector general of police claimed that police have sufficiently rebuilt their capacity, pledging to counter all attempts to create unrest. "If we cannot establish order, it will not be possible to provide full support to the commission during the polls," he said. These assurances, however, will mean nothing if they are not matched by visible enforcement. And right now, we need some serious enforcement on the ground.

Recent weeks have seen a disturbing spike in political and mob violence. A leader of National Citizen Party (NCP) was shot by miscreants in Khulna on Monday. Earlier, an MP aspirant from Dhaka 8 constituency, Sharif Osman Hadi, suffered a critical head injury after being shot from close range and eventually died on Thursday, which then unleashed a wave of violence and arson attacks. Around the same time, a BNP leader's house in Lakshimpur was set on fire, leading to a seven-year-old being burnt to death. These incidents have understandably heightened concerns about whether the February 12 polls can be held on time and without intimidation. The EC must remember that polls derive legitimacy not just from the ballots cast, but also from voters' confidence that their choice can be exercised safely.

When it comes to holding a fair election, the work starts much earlier, right on the campaign trail. A vital task for the EC here is to ensure proper enforcement of the electoral code. Allegations about MP aspirants, especially from major parties, spending crores of taka even before the election schedule was announced risk distorting competition and marginalising candidates without deep pockets. Such activities, if left unaddressed, could compromise the level playing field, fuel criminal patronage networks, and encourage further violence.

We, therefore, urge the EC to take the dual challenge of ensuring law enforcement and proper electoral conduct with equal seriousness. The recommendations presented by officials at Monday's meeting deserve serious consideration. The EC, the administration, and the police all must do their part properly.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

December 25 becomes Christmas

On this day in 352, Pope Liberius celebrated the first official Christmas mass in Rome. The birth of Jesus Christ had been celebrated as many as two centuries earlier, but it was this mass that ensured Christmas's place on December 25 in the Roman Catholic calendar.

EDITORIAL

Temporary solutions do little to help Rohingya women



A CLOSER LOOK

Tasneem Tayeb
is a columnist for The Daily Star.
Her X handle is @tasneem_tayeb.

TASNEEM TAYEB

Every so often, news reports surface to remind us of the painfully perpetual existence of the Rohingya crisis in our very own backwaters. It merely recedes from view from time to time. The headlines change, the focus areas shift, but the lives of the Rohingya at the centre of the news stories remain suspended in the same uncertain void—one shaped by displacement, abuse, repression and a future that continues to remain elusive.

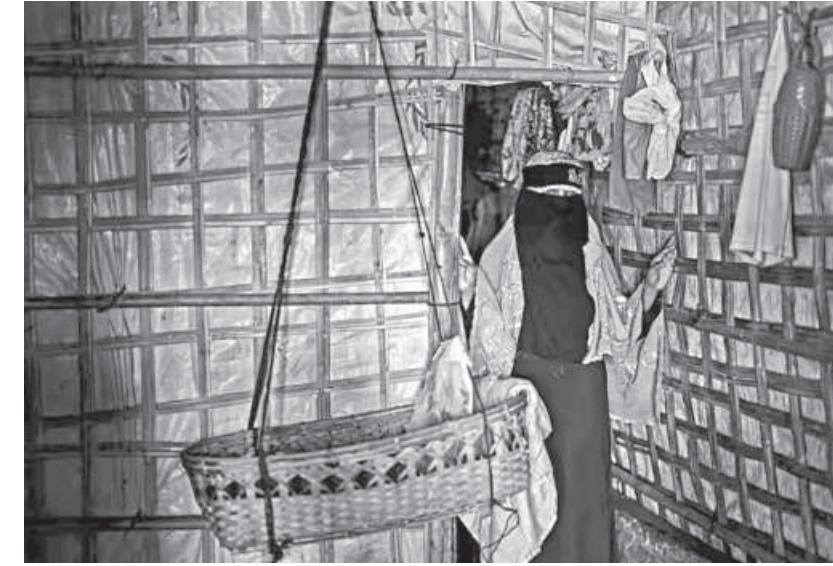
The latest media reports from Al Jazeera and other international news outlets draw attention to a rise in early marriage among Rohingya girls, linking it to shrinking humanitarian aid, school closures, and the gradual dismantling of protection programmes in the refugee camps in Bangladesh. The concern is justified. The pattern is disturbing. But it is also unsurprising and predictable.

For Rohingya women and girls, vulnerability has been constant, layered, and cumulative. Long before aid reductions became the focus of international reporting, their lives were already defined by statelessness, restricted movement, limited access to education and work, and the persistent uncertainty of camp life. What we are witnessing now is not the emergence of a new crisis, but the intensification of an old one.

Early marriage, in this context, is frequently framed as a cultural practice of the Rohingya community resurfacing under pressure. It is an over-simplified explanation. By directly linking the problem to the Rohingya community, this narrative framing allows external actors to observe the situation from a safe distance with concern, while remaining unimplicated. Yet, such narratives hide more than they reveal. When families are forced to make decisions under conditions of protracted insecurity and exploitation, those decisions are rarely about culture or tradition. They are about real-life risks, survival, and the erasure of options.

When food rations are reduced and schools close, survival becomes a real

threat. For many families, marrying off a daughter is seen not simply as an economic relief, but as a form of protection: from trafficking, from uncertainty, and from sexual violence in overcrowded camps, where privacy is scarce and accountability non-existent. In spaces where adolescent girls and young women face harassment day in and day out—many avoid going to the bathroom after dark in fear of criminal gangs—marriage is often seen as a shield, which is mostly illusory. That reality becomes visible later.



Begum, a 35-year-old mother of seven children, is marrying off one of her daughters, following the funding shortage, which shuttered thousands of schools in the refugee camps in June 2025.

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

The tragedy lies not only in the act of early marriage itself, but in the conditions that make it appear reasonable. These conditions do not emerge spontaneously. They are created through flawed policy decisions, deteriorating funding crisis, and a humanitarian response that has mostly been sluggish at best.

What recurrent news reports on the crisis of Rohingya women suggest is the broader environment in which these marriages take place. Girls who remain

unmarried are increasingly exposed to sexual exploitation, including coerced or paid sex work driven by hunger and desperation. Women take on informal, unsafe work—both inside and outside the camps—where abuse is common and recourse almost non-existent. Girls disappear from classrooms not only into marriages, but into domestic labour, factories, or shadow economies shaped by exploitation and fear.

Trafficking networks operate most effectively in such environments. Promises of work, safety, or marriage become tools of deception, drawing women and girls into situations of forced labour, domestic servitude, or sexual manipulation. These outcomes are often discussed as separate crises, each demanding its own response. In reality, they are interconnected expressions of the same systemic deprivation. When economic opportunities are denied and movement is restricted, exploitation does not arrive as an anomaly; it becomes an alternative.

Internationally, there is no shortage of rhetoric about protecting women and girls, combating trafficking, and ending child marriage. These commitments feature prominently in policy statements and development agendas. Yet in practice, they appear remarkably shallow, vulnerable to shifting geopolitical priorities and donor agendas. Protection that depends on funding cycles is, by nature, temporary. And temporariness is precisely what Rohingya women can no longer afford.

These women are often portrayed as passive recipients of aid and abuse, but this portrayal does them a disservice. When education, skills training, or livelihood opportunities have been available, women have engaged with determination and purpose. They have demonstrated resilience through daily acts of endurance and adaptation. The problem has never been proper utilisation of available agency. It has been the steady erosion of the same.

What's more troubling is that prolonged crises often erode urgency. Practices that would once have provoked outrage, such as early marriage, forced labour, sexual exploitation, begin to appear as regrettable but expected realities of camp life. This normalisation is the outcome of concern without concrete action. For Rohingya women and girls, these gaps shape their futures and life trajectories in ways that are irreversible.

What is unfolding today at the Rohingya camps is not simply the result of displacement, uncertainty, or poverty taken separately. It is the outcome of a sustained failure to provide protection that is lasting, rights-based, and sensitive to gendered realities. Temporary solutions for the Rohingya community have long outlived their usefulness. It is more than evident that piecemeal actions cannot resolve a long-standing, large-scale crisis.

More reports on the Rohingya will continue to follow, for sure. More stories will be told, documenting preventable tragedies. The question, as always, is whether they will continue to compile a laundry list of consequences while leaving root causes largely unacknowledged, or whether collectively they will force a reckoning with the uncomfortable truth that this crisis persists not because solutions are unknown, but because responsibility has become too easy to defer.

For Rohingya women, the cost of that deferral is already being paid—quietly, repeatedly, and largely out of sight.

The peace promise of ceasefire is but a mirage for Palestinians



Jamal Kani
is the author of *Children of Catastrophe: Journey from a Palestinian Refugee Camp to America, and other books*. He writes frequently on Palestinian/Arab world issues for various national and international publications.

JAMAL KANI

The bombs may have eased, but Palestinian children are still dying. This time, not by Israeli airstrikes, but from cold and collapsing damaged structures. Israel has violated the ceasefire agreement by obstructing the entry of vital services for children, and essential shelters to protect civilians whose homes were destroyed by two years of genocide. A war crime by other means: slower, less visible, but more excruciating death delivered through deprivation and exposure.

In recent weeks, heavy rains have inundated Gaza's tent camps, flooding makeshift shelters and causing damaged buildings to collapse on families inside. Adequate shelter is unavailable because Israel has blocked its entry at the Rafah crossing. At least 16 Palestinians, including infants, have died as a direct result of these storms. Amnesty International rightly described this as an "utterly preventable tragedy." It was not bad weather that killed these children, but Israel's violation of the ceasefire terms.

After more than two months of ceasefire noncompliance, Israel has killed and injured more than 400 Palestinians, and continues to severely restrict aid and critical supplies needed to repair the water and sewer infrastructure system. This persists despite an International Court of Justice advisory opinion affirming Israel's obligations as an occupying

power, and a UN General Assembly resolution demanding compliance. The reality on the ground tells a different story: the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) alone has shelter supplies for up to 1.3 million people waiting outside Gaza, barred from entry.

After repeated displacement, the destruction or damage of at least 92 percent of Gaza's structures, and the designation of most of the territory as no-go zones, most Palestinians are now living in dilapidated tents or taking shelter under dangling concrete slabs. Israel first weaponised food to break Palestinian resistance; now its strategy has turned nature into a new weapon of war.

Amnesty investigators documented buildings collapsing in Jabalia, al-Rimal, Sheikh Radwan, and al-Shati refugee camp, crushing entire families. Mohammed Nassar lost two children, Lina and Ghazi, when their damaged five-storey building crumpled under the storm. They had fled Israeli airstrikes twice. After two years of genocide, they returned to their destroyed home, believing its sagging concrete roof would be safer than a tent flooded by rain. Instead, it collapsed, crushing them beneath it. He mourned that his children had survived the bombardment only to be killed by a storm.

UNRWA had warned over a month

earlier of a harsh winter, "More shelter supplies are urgently needed for the people of Gaza. UNRWA has them outside, waiting for the green light." Those warnings fell on deaf ears, and heartless consciences.

This is what the US President Donald Trump's mediated ceasefire looks like when the blockade remains intact. Amnesty International's conclusion was unequivocal: Israel is continuing to deliberately inflict conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of Palestinians in Gaza. Israel's objectives remained unchanged, if bombs and destruction do not make Gaza unliveable, nature

Amid an unfolding tragedy, and babies freezing to death, Trump speaks of bringing 'peace' to the Middle East 'for the first time in 3,000 years.' Absurd on its face, the statement is nonetheless revealing. For Trump, and for a wider political culture that has come to accept such logic, 'peace' prevails so long as the victims are not Israeli Jews.

would be allowed to complete the job.

Amid an unfolding tragedy, and babies freezing to death, Trump speaks of bringing "peace" to the Middle East "for the first time in 3,000 years." Absurd on its face, the statement is nonetheless revealing. For Trump, and for a wider political culture that has come to accept such logic, "peace" prevails so long as the victims are not Israeli Jews.

Infants freezing to death in Gaza does not upset that false "peace" narrative. It is only Israeli Jewish lives that appear to count as a measure of instability. Death is rendered invisible when it is asymmetrically borne, and peace is redefined as the absence of discomfort, for Israelis only.

The same Zionist savagery is at work in the occupied West Bank. As Gaza drowns, bulldozers tear through Palestinian refugee camps, and Jewish mobs set fire to homes and olive groves across the West Bank. In Nur Shams camp, near Tulkarem, the Israeli military has issued new orders to demolish 25 more Palestinian homes. Palestinian leaders and UNRWA warn that hundreds face imminent forced displacement, 77 years after their first expulsion from their original homes in historic Palestine.

The demolition of Palestinian homes coincides with the approval of new Jewish-only colonies. Where are these refugees expected to go? Their land was stolen in 1948, and they have neither the financial means nor the ability to resettle elsewhere in Palestine. Meanwhile, the Israeli government continues to expropriate what little land remains for Jewish-only use, while systematically denying building permits to non-Jews.

In Gaza, displacement is enforced by siege, in the West Bank, by demolition and land theft, both carried out by the same malevolent power. In each case, only Palestinians pay the price under the so-called "peace."

International humanitarian law is clear. Israel as an occupying power must ensure access to food, shelter, medical care, and essential infrastructure. "Peace" made on the graves of frozen infants will stand as an indictment, not of the weather, but of humanity. This is not peace; this is a genocide by other means.



'The fire in Karwan Bazar was not just an attack on two newspaper buildings; it was also an attack on press freedom.'

FILE PHOTO: MD ABBAS

Attacks on media houses, unruly politics, and the new democratic risk



Dr S M Rezwan-Ul-Alam is associate professor of media, communication, and journalism at North South University.

S M REZWAN-UL-ALAM

The smoke that rose from Karwan Bazar during the early hours of December 19 did not begin with fire. It started with grief, or so it seemed, apparently over the tragic killing of young leader Sharif Osman Hadi that shook the entire nation. In reality, that grief was exploited by vested quarters to do what many believe they wanted to do for long. Thus, the attacks on the offices of *Prothom Alo* and *The Daily Star*, along with the unruly behaviour directed at New Age editor Nurul Kabir, were not spontaneous outbursts borne out of mourning. They were the result of a political atmosphere in which anger is weaponised and violence is quietly rationalised as moral action. Hadi's killing became the emotional trigger, but the target was the press. That shift tells us something deeply unsettling about how dissent, grief, and power are being managed today.

When the state cannot clearly and forcefully defend journalists, it sends a message that some forms of violence are tolerable, even if they are officially condemned. Democracy does not collapse all at once. It erodes slowly, through moments when the state hesitates and non-state actors step forward to fill the space.

The most troubling feature of these attacks is that they were carried out by groups that do not formally control the state, yet claim moral authority over it. These actors claim to defend national interest, religious values, or popular sentiment. In reality, they operate outside the law while masquerading as patriots or

it towards media houses. They were accused of distortion, bias, or silence. Whether these accusations are fair or not became irrelevant. What mattered was that the press had become a symbol, and symbols are easily burned.

This redirection did not happen organically. A significant role was played by online figures operating from outside the country. These digital actors speak loudly but risk nothing. From safe distances in Europe or North America, they frame events in moral absolutes and encourage confrontation.

Major media houses in Bangladesh have often failed to communicate effectively with the public, particularly with younger generations. They often speak in formal language, remain distant during crises, and assume that credibility speaks for itself. In a polarised environment, that assumption can be fatal.

They do not face tear gas, arrest, or retaliation. Those consequences fall on young men on the streets, many of whom believe they are acting heroically. In this sense, the violence against media houses was due as much to local anger as to outsourced radicalisation.

At the heart of this lies a dangerous misunderstanding of how media power actually works. Many attackers seem to believe that newspapers possess an almost magical ability to shape public opinion and fate, as if a single headline can sway the thoughts of millions overnight. This belief comes from an outdated view of communication, one that treats audiences as passive and the media as all-powerful. Modern research shows the opposite. Media influence is limited, filtered through personal beliefs, social networks, and digital algorithms. People choose what they consume. They argue, reject, remix, and ignore.

In today's Bangladesh, newspapers are no longer the dominant source of information. Social media platforms shape opinion far more aggressively and far less responsibly. Rumours spread faster than facts, and outrage travels further than evidence. If the genuine concern were manipulation, attention would be directed towards unregulated digital ecosystems. Burning newspaper offices does nothing to solve that problem. It only creates fear and silence.

Yet, defending the press does not mean denying its

weaknesses. Major media houses in Bangladesh have often failed to communicate effectively with the public, particularly with younger generations. They often speak in formal language, remain distant during crises, and assume that credibility speaks for itself. In a polarised environment, that assumption can be fatal. When accusations of being "anti-state" circulated, media institutions responded slowly and defensively. They did not explain their editorial processes. They did not humanise their tone. They did not actively engage in online narratives that were turning hostile.

This gap made it easier for non-state actors to define the media before the media could define itself. Silence was interpreted as arrogance or guilt. In an age where perception moves faster than truth, that silence became dangerous.

To understand why this moment matters, it is helpful to consider a simple model of media attacks by non-state actors. The process usually unfolds in five stages. First, a triggering event occurs, often involving death, injustice, or humiliation. Hadi's killing fits this stage. Second, emotional narratives spread rapidly, amplified by social media and external influencers. Third, the media is framed as an enemy, accused of betrayal or distortion. Fourth, symbolic violence is carried out against media institutions to demonstrate power and unity. Ultimately, fear sets in, leading to self-censorship and a weakening of accountability.

This model shows why such attacks are not isolated incidents. They are structural threats to democracy. Bangladesh is now witnessing the emergence of non-state actors hell-bent on threatening media freedom.

The state's response at this stage is crucial. Condemnation without enforcement is not enough. The interim government must make it unmistakably clear that violence against the press is a red line. That means arrests, prosecutions, and public accountability, regardless of who the perpetrators claim to represent.

At the same time, media institutions must change. They cannot afford to remain insulated silos. They must engage directly with citizens, especially young people. They must explain why journalism matters, how stories are verified, and where mistakes are acknowledged and corrected. Trust cannot be assumed. It must be rebuilt, patiently and publicly.

Hadi's death should have led to national reflection and institutional reform. Instead, it was weaponised to justify attacks on the very institutions that could have helped uncover the truth and demand justice. That inversion is the real tragedy. When grief is turned into violence and journalism becomes the enemy, democracy stands on fragile ground.

The fire in Karwan Bazar was not just an attack on two newspaper buildings; it was also an attack on press freedom. It was a signal that showed how quickly anger can be redirected, how easily non-state actors can shape political action, and how vulnerable democratic institutions become when both the state and the media fail to act decisively. If this moment is not taken seriously, the next crisis will be worse. And the subsequent fire may not stop at media houses.

A smarter solar strategy essential for Bangladesh's clean energy transition

Nafis Mubarrat is programme associate at South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM). He can be reached at nafis.sanem@gmail.com.

Sheikh Tausif Ahmed is research associate at SANEM. He can be reached at sheikhtausif89@gmail.com.

NAFIS MUBARRAT and SHEIKH TAUSIF AHMED

In recent years, Bangladesh has made notable progress in renewable energy production. The Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA) estimates that five percent of the country's total generation capacity now comes from renewables. Solar energy is the primary contributor, accounting for 82 percent of renewable generation. Rooftop solar is steadily expanding, with 4,267 net-metered systems installed nationwide to date. Large-scale solar parks are also playing an increasingly important role.

Despite these advances, Bangladesh's solar potential remains largely untapped. Experts estimate this potential at 50,174 MW—sufficient to meet around 80 percent of the country's projected energy demand of 60,000 MW by 2041. The urgency to harness this potential has been heightened by the recent energy crisis. Responding to these challenges, the interim government announced ambitious targets in its Renewable Energy Policy of June 2025, aiming to generate 20 percent of energy from renewables by 2030 and 30 percent by 2040.

While rooftop solar continues to grow, Bangladesh must explore more effective alternatives to increase the share of renewables in its overall energy mix. Advances in solar, storage, and smart-grid technologies offer opportunities to leapfrog traditional power systems. One promising innovation is perovskite solar cells, a new class of photovoltaic (PV) material capable of converting up to 50 percent more sunlight into electricity than conventional silicon panels. This makes them particularly suitable for low-light conditions, including Bangladesh's monsoon seasons. Lightweight and adaptable, these cells can be printed or spray-coated, enabling applications such as "solar paint" on roofs or walls. Unlike traditional silicon PV, perovskites can be processed at near room temperature, significantly reducing manufacturing energy use and costs. Such high-efficiency, low-cost PV technologies could allow Bangladesh to expand capacity within

limited rooftop and urban spaces while lowering adoption costs for households, industries, and SMEs.

Alongside perovskites, emerging technologies such as thin-film and organic photovoltaics (OPV) offer distinct advantages. They are lightweight, flexible, and inexpensive to manufacture. Thin-film cells can be produced on rolls or plastic substrates, making them suitable for curved roofs, portable devices, and building integrated solar windows. In Bangladesh, thin-film modules could be installed on lightweight rooftops and building exteriors where heavier panels are impractical, while OPV films could supply power to village shops and small electronic devices.

Solar power generation typically requires more land than conventional power plants. As Bangladesh faces acute land constraints, floating photovoltaic (FPV) systems provide a way forward by enabling solar deployment on reservoirs, lakes, and ponds. Water acts as a natural coolant, improving panel efficiency and durability, while also reducing evaporation and algae growth. Bangladesh has already installed an FPV plant in Bagerhat, and this modular, scalable technology could rapidly add capacity without displacing farmers or occupying scarce land.

Agrivoltaics offers another solution by integrating solar panels and agriculture on the same land. Elevated PV arrays create dual-use fields where crops grow under partial shade while panels generate electricity. Studies show that this approach can increase overall land productivity, reduce water requirements, and raise combined crop and energy yields by 35 to 73 percent. In Bangladesh, trials with BRRI-33 rice indicate that intermittent shading does not reduce yields and may even improve plant growth, soil conditions, and water retention. A 100 MW semi-agrvoltaics project is already planned in Jamalpur, where green chillies, turmeric, and ginger will be cultivated beneath solar panels.

Beyond photovoltaic systems, solar thermal technologies also offer potential for renewable power generation. Thermoelectric generators, for example, can convert solar heat directly into electricity. Other solar thermal options, such as concentrating solar power (CSP), use mirrors or lenses to heat fluids that drive turbines. Unlike PV systems, CSP can store energy as heat—often using molten salt—and deliver electricity on demand. This feature is particularly valuable as it

allows energy supply during periods of low sunlight. Feasibility studies, especially in the Dinajpur region, have identified significant potential for CSP deployment.

In addition to CSP, several storage technologies are being developed to support photovoltaic power. Flow batteries store energy in liquid electrolytes held in external tanks, separating power capacity from storage volume. They offer long lifespans, often exceeding tens of thousands of cycles, and allow full depth of discharge. Although their energy density is lower than that of lithium-ion batteries, flow batteries are well-suited to large-scale, multi-hour grid storage and can smooth daily or weekly fluctuations in renewable generation with minimal degradation. Bangladesh currently has no grid-scale flow battery installations, but declining costs could make them viable for island grids or long-duration solar storage.

Among long duration storage solutions, pumped storage hydroelectric (PSH) is the most established. It uses surplus electricity to pump water to an elevated reservoir, releasing it later to generate power during peak demand. PSH offers large capacity at a relatively low cost per kilowatt-hour and can operate reliably for decades. Although Bangladesh has no PSH plants at present, the 2016 Power System Master Plan has set a target for the first project by 2030. Locations such as Kaptai, where an existing hydroelectric dam operates, or reservoirs in the hilly northeast could provide gigawatt-hour scale storage.

Modernising the power grid is essential to integrating renewable energy effectively. Smart grids use digital sensors, automated controls, and real-time data to optimise electricity flows and manage intermittent supply. In Bangladesh, US-funded studies have launched pilot projects in Dhaka and at the national transmission level to improve grid efficiency and flexibility. The 2025 net-metering reforms mark another important step. Under the revised policy, households and businesses can use rooftop solar for self-consumption and export excess electricity to the grid. Net exporters receive energy credits, which can be used to purchase electricity later. These measures encourage decentralised generation. When combined with smart grid investments, these measures will help Bangladesh manage its expanding renewable capacity more efficiently.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh					
Local Government Engineering Department					
Office of the Upazila Engineer					
Upazila Sadar, District: Munshiganj					
www.lged.gov.bd					
Memo No. 46.02.5956.000.14.061.25.732					
Date: 24.12.2025					
e-Tender Notice No. 06/2025-26 (LTM)					
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for following Package of Sadar, Munshiganj					
Sl No.	Tender ID	Package	Name of work	Last selling date & time	Closing date & time
01	1168000	e-Tender/MUN/SAD/ADP/2025-26/W-01	Improvement of Doshkani-Bhuyain Ban-Champatola Road at Ch.0-200m under Panchasar Union, Munshiganj Sadar, Munshiganj	12 Jan. 2026 17.00	13 Jan. 2026 12.00
02	1163821	e-Tender/MUN/SAD/ADP/2025-26/W-02	Construction of Khonokar Bari main road to Rampal graveyard via Nurul Sheikh residence under Ramal Union, Munshiganj Sadar, Munshiganj	12 Jan. 2026 17.00	13 Jan. 2026 12.00
03	1163845	e-Tender/MUN/SAD/ADP/2025-26/W-03	Improvement of Syedpur Tempustand to Chitulia Bazar River east side Ghat at Ch.00-420m under Adhara union, Munshiganj Sadar, Munshiganj	12 Jan. 2026 17.00	13 Jan. 2026 12.00
04	1202929	e-Tender/MUN/SADA/UDF/2025-26/W-03	a) Rehabilitation of Matbarbari Mor to Ajit Doctor House Road by Uni Block at Ch.00m-145m under Panchsar UP, Upazila: Munshiganj Sadar, District: Munshiganj b) Rehabilitation from Notungao Kahir Sir House to Mehedi Hasan Sharif House Road by Uni Block at Ch.00m-135m under Panchsar UP, Upazila: Munshiganj Sadar, District: Munshiganj. c) Rehabilitation of Bonikopara Bytunnoor Jame Mosque Road at Ch.00m-285m under Panchsar Upazila: Munshiganj Sadar, District: Munshiganj	12 Jan. 2026 17.00	13 Jan. 2026 12.00

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). The authority preserves all right to accept or reject all or any Tenders without showing any reason.

Upazila Engineer
LGED, Munshiganj-S
Munshiganj

Office of the Project Director					
Economically Lost Lifecycle Rubber Tree Felling, Restoration and Rubber Processing Modernization Project					
Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation					
73, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000					
www.bfidc.gov.bd					
Date: 24-12-2025					
e-GP Tender Notice (OTM)					
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of below:					
SL	Description	Tender ID	Last selling date & time	Last date & time of tender security submission	Closing & opening date & time
01	Procurement for hiring service personnel through outsourcing policy.	1202860	06-01-2026 16:00	07-01-2026 12:00	07-01-2026 14:00

Ref-22.03.0000.022.122.01.003.25-96

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of below:					
SL	Description	Tender ID	Last selling date & time	Last date & time of tender security submission	Closing & opening date & time
01	Procurement for hiring service personnel through outsourcing policy.	1202860	06-01-2026 16:00	07-01-2026 12:00	07-01-2026 14:00

This is an online e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal ([https://www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches. Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Masudur Rahman Bhuiyan
Project Director (Joint Secretary)
Economically Lost Lifecycle Rubber Tree Felling, Restoration and Rubber Processing Modernization Project
Phone: 02-223382979
E-mail: bfidc.project@gmail.com

star BUSINESS



Bangladesh is facing moderate stagflation Says former WB lead economist

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh is facing a moderate form of stagflation, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, as economic growth remains weak, inflation stays high, and job creation has been limited in recent years.

In developing economies, he said, stagflation does not necessarily mean negative growth. Instead, it occurs when growth remains below its potential or target while inflation continues to rise.

Hussain made the remarks at an event jointly organised by Voice for Reform and the Bangladesh Research Analysis and Information Network in Dhaka yesterday.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, inflation has surged sharply, while economic growth has shown a persistent decline. Although gross domestic product growth remains positive at around 3.5 to 4 percent, inflation in the high single digits points to clear stagflationary pressure, he said.

Sustained economic growth, he added, depends fundamentally on political and macroeconomic stability. Without a stable political environment, progress cannot take root.

According to the economist, three elements are essential for macroeconomic stability. Those are controlling inflation, maintaining balance of payments stability, and restoring the health of the financial sector.

Under the current institutional framework, Bangladesh's potential growth is capped at roughly 6.5 percent. Achieving growth closer to 8 percent would require deep structural reforms, Hussain said.

He also noted that the financial sector remains fragile, particularly because of high levels of non-performing loans. However, it appears to have reached its lowest point and is beginning to stabilise.

Reaching a trillion-dollar economy by 2035 will require inclusive growth driven by labour market reforms that ensure economic gains reach the wider population rather than relying on trickle-down mechanisms, he added.

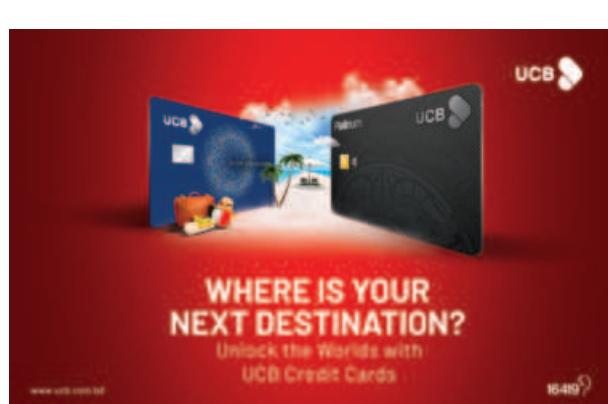
Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said Bangladesh risks falling into a low-level economic equilibrium if constraints on productivity, investment, and human capital are not addressed urgently.

Aspirations for a trillion-dollar economy require more than ambitious targets. They require sustained improvements in investment, inflation management, and inequality reduction, she said.

Inflation has remained elevated for nearly three years, fuelled by successive shocks from the pandemic, global conflicts, and domestic instability, she added.

Fahmida highlighted a great skills mismatch in the labour market. Unemployment is highest among the educated, while employers report shortages of skilled workers.

The private sector, which accounts for 80 percent of the economy, has not expanded sufficiently, placing increased pressure on government employment, she said.



Banks open on Saturday for election payments

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) has instructed banks to keep their branches open on Saturday to facilitate election-related financial transactions ahead of the 13th national parliamentary election.

The central bank issued a circular yesterday, saying the decision was taken to ensure the smooth deposit of nomination fees and the purchase of voter lists by candidates.

According to the circular, candidates will be able to make payments through bank drafts, pay orders or treasury challans at any branch of scheduled banks across the country.

The move followed a request from the Election Commission, which sought uninterrupted banking services during the nomination process.

In a letter sent to the BB yesterday, the commission said December 29 is the last date for submitting nomination papers. However, banks would otherwise remain closed for three consecutive days – December 25 for Christmas, followed by weekly holidays on December 26 and 27.

Under electoral rules, candidates must submit security deposits and fees for purchasing voter list CDs through bank drafts, pay orders or treasury challans along with their nomination papers.

Govt approves Tk 7.88 lakh crore revised budget

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has approved a revised budget of Tk 7.88 lakh crore for the current fiscal year 2025-26.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Advisory Council, chaired by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, at the Chief Adviser's Office in Dhaka yesterday.

The revised budget trims Tk 2,000 crore from the original outlay of Tk 7.90 lakh crore. The annual development programme (ADP) has been cut by Tk 30,000 crore to Tk 2 lakh crore.

"This revised budget will be effective from February 1 next year," said Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser, while briefing reporters at the Foreign Service Academy.

Alam said revenue collection has picked up in the current fiscal year. Revenue collection growth during the July-October period stands at 26.4 percent, up from 24.1 percent in the same period last year.

In this context, the revised budget sets the revenue collection target at Tk 5.88 lakh crore for FY26, a 5 percent increase, or Tk 24,000 crore, over the original budget target of Tk 5.64 lakh crore.

IPDC ডিপোজিট | ১৬৫১৯

Non-NBR tax targets have been raised to Tk 20,000 crore from Tk 19,000 crore, while non-tax revenue has been increased to Tk 65,000 crore from Tk 46,000 crore.

The NBR has raised its target to Tk 5.03 lakh crore from Tk 4.99 lakh crore. The revised budget also reduces the deficit to 3.3 percent of GDP, according to the press secretary.

He said the chief adviser has instructed that the budget should enhance national self-reliance. "The chief adviser said that many projects are being implemented with foreign loans. We have to gradually move away from them."

He added that the chief adviser emphasised funding projects from domestic resources.

Chief Adviser Yunus also highlighted the importance of quality education, rural development, women's empowerment, youth initiatives, and the health sector in the budget. Alam said inflation is expected to fall to 7 percent and GDP growth could reach 5 percent in the current fiscal year.

An unhappy year as stock investors bear the cost of market reforms

AHSAN HABIB

The capital market opened 2025 with a tentative sense of hope.

The mass uprising in August last year had left the country in a mood for change, and investors expected that long promised reforms would bring accountability, stronger financial institutions, and a fairer, more transparent market.

Some of those reforms finally arrived. New rules for mutual funds and margin loans were introduced, cash dividend processes were streamlined, and authorities reduced annual BO account fees.

Several figures, once considered untouchable, faced punishment for market violations.

Yet, as with any major surgery, the early days appeared to be painful and uncomfortable. Forced sales, portfolio losses, and falling share prices left investors nursing the wounds.

The market, in effect, entered a post-operative room, waiting to see whether recovery would take hold.

THE REWIND

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), began January above 5,200 points. Then it fell sharply within months, recovered to 5,636 in September, and slipped again below 5,000 after announcements of bank mergers and liquidation of non-bank financial institutions.

These movements reflected more than routine volatility. They revealed a market and its participants struggling to adjust to a new reality.

For investors, reform delivered mixed signals. Many agreed that long-standing weaknesses had to be addressed, but uncertainty over the pace of change and who would bear the cost created hesitation.

This hesitation was most visible in the financial sector. Five banks entered into the merger process, while eight listed non-banks among nine institutions moved towards liquidation.

Based on face value, the loss for shareholders of these banks and NBFI amounted to around Tk 5,500 crore.

Apart from the financial losses,

MOVEMENT OF DSEX SO FAR THIS YEAR

(In points)



SOURCE: DSE

trust itself was hurt by the merger and liquidation move.

Investors had been relying on audit reports and credit ratings of the banks and non-banks. Those did not detect any misdeeds over the years.

"People invested seeing that auditors certified them as healthy and credit rating agencies gave them good ratings," said Richard D' Rozario, a director of DSE. "But overnight, their financial condition fell apart."

The problems were not confined to the financial sector. Over the past decade, many companies have been listed with high expectations.

But by 2025, a large number of them became low-performing or were widely seen as poor-quality stocks. This gradual decline continued to weigh on sentiment.

The situation was compounded by the absence of new listings.

Not a single initial public offering came to the market during 2025. Investors holding weak stocks had few alternatives, leaving portfolios stuck and fresh interest low.

Regulatory activity was high throughout the year. Mutual fund regulations were gazetted, introducing changes that asset managers welcomed. However, they are advocating for some more changes that could have long term effects.

Margin loan rules were revised, dividend distribution was streamlined, and annual BO account fees were reduced from Tk 450 to Tk 150.

Punitive actions were also taken against individuals and firms accused of market manipulation, including former BSEC chairman Shibli Rubayat Ul Islam and former private sector adviser to the previous prime minister Salmaan F Rahman.

For investors, this marked a break from periods when enforcement had been questioned.

However, those reforms carried immediate costs. "The immediate impact of reform is always painful while it benefits in the long run, and we are crossing the painful episode," said Saiful Islam, president of the DSE Brokers Association of Bangladesh (DBA).

For instance, changes to margin loans triggered forced sales and added pressure on prices.

In the mutual fund sector, the regulator stopped approving new closed-end funds, a move Islam described as necessary. Expectations for open-ended funds were not fully met.

Another disappointment was the failure to bring state-owned enterprises to the market.

"We have missed a big opportunity to bring well-performing state-run companies despite clear direction

from the chief adviser," Islam said.

Demand for new IPOs was strong, but no company was listed in 2025.

For a market short of quality stocks, the absence of these listings reinforced concerns that reform was not matched with measures to deepen the market.

"A cumulative failure was that we all failed to bring confidence back," commented Islam. "The market did not grow, and the ecosystem became unsustainable."

Trading activity reflected this lack of confidence.

Average daily turnover at DSE fell to Tk 510 crore in 2025 from Tk 566 crore the previous year.

The legacy of the floor price regime also weighed on liquidity. "The floor price left suffering for the whole market," said D' Rozario.

He said institutional investors were forced into low performing but liquid stocks simply to continue operations.

"After August last year, the market began moving again, particularly in fundamentally strong stocks, but many investors remained locked in weak shares, limiting recovery," he added.

By year-end, the bourse responded less to earnings and more to uncertainty. That uncertainty included the pace of reform, treatment of shareholders during restructuring and timing of quality listings.

Housing slowdown temporary, recovery ahead

Rajuk chairman says as REHAB fair begins



Employees of a real estate firm wait to welcome visitors at a stall of the four-day housing fair that began yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The ongoing downturn in the country's housing sector is not permanent, and the industry will recover once market confidence returns, said Md Reazul Islam, chairman of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakka (Rajuk), amid concerns over falling sales, rising costs, and regulatory hurdles.

"The housing sector has gone through many cycles of ups and downs. Although the market is facing a slowdown now, it is not permanent. Better days will surely return," he said yesterday while inaugurating a four-day housing fair organised by the Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB) at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka.

Islam also said real estate developers play a vital role in urban development, job creation, and overall economic activity.

The sector, which has strong backward linkages with industries such as cement, steel, ceramics, electrical goods, and fittings, is currently under pressure due to high interest rates, lower private investment, rising construction costs and stricter enforcement of planning rules.

The Rajuk chairman stressed the importance of following planning rules, particularly under the newly gazetted

Detailed Area Plan (DAP), and urged a gradual shift towards environmentally friendly, or green buildings.

He also warned against unplanned construction that limits access for emergency services, saying such practices benefit only a few people while harming the city as a whole.

"Any development where fire service vehicles or ambulances cannot enter has no real economic or social value," he said, adding that unplanned construction increases urban risks and raises public costs.

Regarding the DAP, Islam acknowledged that its implementation has faced resistance and challenges but thanked developers for eventually accepting it.

He said the gazette is not final and will be updated by a technical committee to identify errors and suggest necessary corrections.

At the event, Ferdousi Begum, chairman of the National Housing Authority, urged developers to honour their commitments to help restore buyer confidence, especially among expatriates and middle-income families who invest remittance income in housing.

"Housing is deeply linked to employment, remittance utilisation, and government revenue," she said.

REHAB President Md Wahiduzzaman chaired the opening ceremony.

VAT waiver on metro rail extended

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has extended the value-added tax (VAT) exemption on metro rail services until June 30, 2026, aiming to keep fares affordable and encourage wider use of the mass transit system.

The existing VAT waiver was set to expire on December 31, 2025.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) said yesterday that the extension was approved through a gazette notification issued on Tuesday, following a recommendation from the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges.

Govt cuts duty on date imports

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has reduced customs duty on date imports by 10 percent ahead of the fasting month of Ramadan to keep prices stable.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) issued a notification yesterday stating that customs duty on date imports has been reduced from 25 percent to 15 percent.

The reduced rate will remain in force until March 31, 2026.

In addition, advance income tax on the import of dates and other fruits has been lowered from 10 percent to 5 percent.

Rice inflation was high in Nov despite price fall: govt report

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Despite a modest fall in prices, rice inflation remained elevated in November, continuing to exert significant pressure on overall food inflation.

Rice was the single largest contributor to food inflation, accounting for 40.28 percent in November, down from 47.01 percent in October, according to the Economic Update and Outlook, a monthly publication of the General Economic Division (GED) under the Planning Commission, released yesterday.

The contribution from all major rice varieties declined during the month. Medium rice's contribution fell to 17.68 percent in November from 19.54 percent in October, fine rice declined to 6.57 percent from 7.20 percent, while coarse rice dropped to 12.65 percent from 16.81 percent.

Overall rice inflation also showed a clearer downward trend, easing to 12.26 percent in November from 13.77 percent in October.

Dry fish remained another major driver of food inflation, contributing slightly more than 39.33 percent in November.

As a result, general inflation edged up to 8.29 percent in November 2025 from 8.17 percent in October, with food inflation rising to 7.36 percent from 7.08 percent.

Non-food inflation, meanwhile, remained broadly stable at around 9 percent.

GED data also showed that the gap between price and wage inflation widened slightly in November. Price inflation stood at 8.29 percent, compared with wage inflation of 8.04 percent.

The revenue target for fiscal year 2025-26 (FY26) was set at Tk 4,99,000 crore, with a target of Tk 36,326 crore for November 2025. Actual revenue collection during the month stood at Tk 29,658 crore, falling short of the target by Tk 6,668 crore.

Meanwhile, the Annual Development Programme (ADP) utilisation in November 2025 showed some improvement compared to earlier months. However, expenditure remained lower than expected for this critical period, raising concerns about implementation momentum.

Bank deposits reached Tk 19,24,635.70 crore in October, registering a year-on-



year growth of 9.62 percent. This followed stronger growth in August, when deposits rose by 10.02 percent, and before easing marginally to 9.98 percent in September.

The sustained growth from August through October indicates continued depositor confidence and healthy savings mobilisation. November data has not yet been released.

Credit expansion showed moderate trends across segments in October. Public sector credit growth slowed to 21.43 percent from 24.45 percent in September, while private sector credit growth edged down slightly to 6.23 percent from 6.29 percent.

Overall domestic credit stood at Tk 23,35,885.40 crore, with growth decelerating to 9.62 percent from 10.20 percent a month earlier.

Foreign commercial banks recorded the highest interest rate spread at 8.88 percent in October, indicating wider margins between lending and deposit rates. In contrast, specialised and development banks posted the lowest spread at 3.37 percent, reflecting their mandate-driven operations and concessional lending.

State-owned and private commercial banks reported similar spreads of 5.69 percent and 5.59 percent, respectively, suggesting convergence in pricing behaviour.



Janata Bank PLC.

Head Office

IT Procurement, Security, Compliance and Maintenance Department

110, Motijheel, C/A, Dhaka-1000

Tel: +02223356514, Fax: 88-02-9564644, Telex: 675840 JBD BJ

Website: www.jb.com.bd

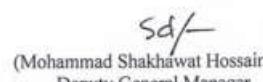
Invitation for e-Tender

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal ([https://www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) for the procurement of following goods:

SL No.	Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Tender Description	Tender Publish Date & Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
01	1201190	JB/IT-Proc-57/OTM/Online-UPS/2025	Tender for Procurement of Online UPS (Supply, Installation & Commissioning) for Janata Bank PLC.	24.12.2025 02.30PM	08.01.2026 02.00 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP System portal ([https://www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP portal and e-GP Help Desk (Email: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


(Mohammad Shahkawat Hossain)
Deputy General Manager

Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer (RHD)
Road Division, Bhola.
Phone-02-4799-66160
E-mail: eebho@rhd.gov.bd

Memo No. 35.01.0918.404.34.001.20-2395

Date: - 24/12/2025

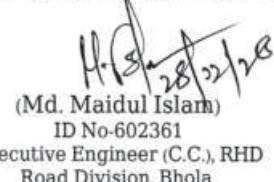
Invitation for e-Tender (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP system portal for the following works:

Tender ID	1200172
Name of Tender	Repair Works of RHD Staff Quarter under Road Division Bhola, during the year 2025-2026. Package No-17/e-GP/Bho/RB/2025-2026
Tender Last Selling Date and Time	04-Jan-2026 17:00
Tender Closing & Opening Date and Time	05-Jan-2026 12:00

Tender ID	1200174
Name of Tender	Supplying of Geo-bags at Bhola RHD Stackyard for the Maintenance of different Roads of Road Division Bhola during the year 2025-2026. Package No-18/e-GP/Bho/Routine/2025-26
Tender Last Selling Date and Time	04-Jan-2026 17:00
Tender Closing & Opening Date and Time	05-Jan-2026 12:15

This is an online tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-tender, please register on e-GP system (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details please contact e-GP help desk helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd


(Md. Maidul Islam)
ID No-602361
Executive Engineer (C.C.), RHD
Road Division, Bhola.

BTMA seeks 3-year extension of export incentive

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) has urged the government to extend the cash incentive on export receipts for three more years, until December 2028, to support the struggling textile industry.

In a letter to the finance secretary signed by BTMA President Showkat Aziz Russell yesterday, the association stated that the export-oriented textile sector and other manufacturing industries have faced substantial losses from exchange rate fluctuations while importing raw materials.

Contributing factors include the Ukraine-Russia and Israel-Palestine wars, the global economic crisis, sharp depreciation of the taka, a 250 percent rise in gas prices, a 70 percent increase in workers' salaries, recent political unrest, worker dissatisfaction,

and inadequate gas and electricity supply that prevents mills from operating at full capacity, the BTMA said.

The long-standing issues have also left large amounts of yarn unsold in spinning mills, causing continuous losses. Many mills have been forced to reduce production, which could further affect the export-oriented textile industry, the letter said.

In this situation, the BTMA stressed that extending the cash subsidy programme under Bangladesh Bank's FE Circular No. 28, currently valid until December 31, 2025, is crucial for the survival of the industry.

The primary textile sector under BTMA has an investment of about \$23 billion, the largest single investment in the private sector. The textile and apparel sector accounts for roughly 85 percent of Bangladesh's export earnings, with the

textile sector contributing 70 percent of that figure and around 30 percent of the country's foreign exchange. BTMA's member mills are therefore considered import-complementing industries.

In a separate letter to the central bank governor on December 23, BTMA requested an extension of the credit limit for importing industrial raw materials until December 31, 2026.

Previously, Bangladesh Bank had extended the credit period under FE Circular No. 08 and continued it under FE Circular No. 27, both of which expire on December 31, 2025.

BTMA stressed that importing basic raw materials like cotton and receiving export proceeds often take 270-300 days, far exceeding the current 180-day limit, making it urgent to extend FE Circular No. 08 for another year.

Midland Bank signs deal with Marco Polo Dhaka Hotel

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Midland Bank PLC has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Marco Polo Dhaka Hotel to provide special privileges to its cardholders.

The MoU signing ceremony was held on December 15 at Midland Bank's head office in Gulshan 2, Dhaka, according to a press release.

Md Nazmul Huda Sarkar, chief technology officer of Midland Bank, and Md Asraf Uddin, operations manager of Marco Polo Dhaka Hotel, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

Under the agreement, Midland Bank cardholders using debit, credit and prepaid cards will enjoy a 50 percent discount on the hotel's published room rates.

They will also receive a 15 percent discount at the Polo Amber restaurant and Marco Street cafe, a 30 percent discount on bookings at the Sapphire banquet hall, and a 15 percent discount on services at Polo Spa.



Md Nazmul Huda Sarkar, chief technology officer of Midland Bank, and Md Asraf Uddin, operations manager of Marco Polo Dhaka Hotel, pose with the signed memorandum of understanding at Midland Bank's head office in Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: MIDLAND BANK PLC

Md Rashadul Anwar, head of PRD at Midland Bank, and Marufa Nur Maria, assistant manager of sales and marketing at Marco Polo Dhaka Hotel, were also present at the event, along with other officials from both organisations.



PHOTO: JAMUNA BANK PLC

Noor Mohammed, deputy managing director and chief business officer of Jamuna Bank PLC, and Tajuddin Mahmood, deputy managing director of Best Western Plus Bay Hills Hotel, sign the agreement.

Jamuna Bank cardholders to get benefits at Best Western Plus

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Jamuna Bank PLC signed a corporate agreement with Best Western Plus Bay Hills Hotel in Cox's Bazar on December 9, according to a press release.

The agreement was signed by Noor Mohammed, deputy managing director and chief business officer of Jamuna Bank PLC, and Tajuddin Mahmood, deputy managing director of Best Western Plus Bay Hills, at

Jamuna Bank Tower in Gulshan, Dhaka.

Under the agreement, Best Western Plus Bay Hills will offer exclusive benefits to Jamuna Bank's cardholders and employees, including a 40 percent discount on room rent, a 10 percent discount on food and a 15 percent discount on banquet hall services.

AKM Atiqur Rahman, deputy managing director and chief information officer of Jamuna Bank, and other senior officials from both organisations were present.

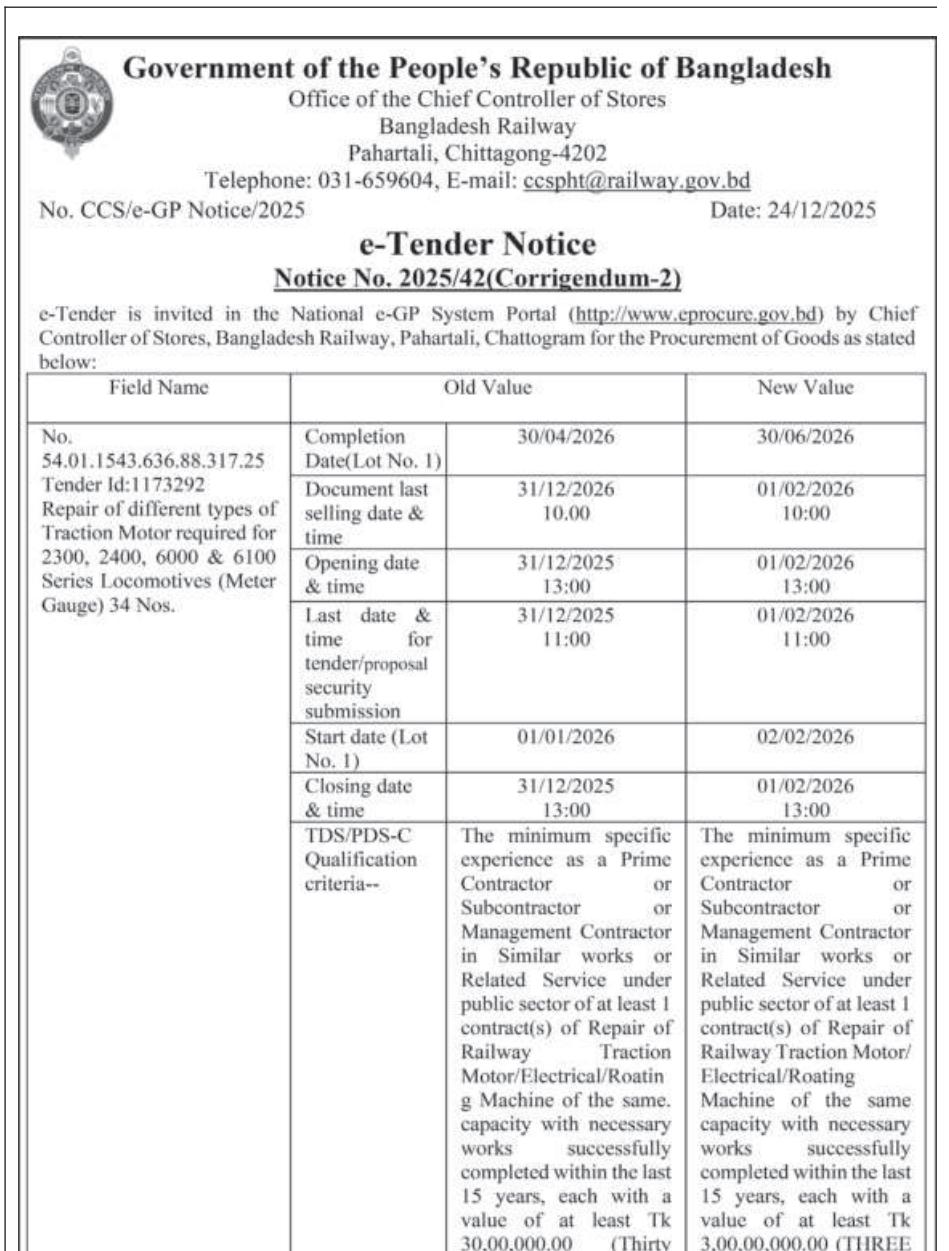


PHOTO: IFIC BANK PLC

Officials of IFIC Bank PLC and participants pose for photographs at the "Cashless Bangladesh Initiative" event in Jashore on December 23. PHOTO: IFIC BANK PLC

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Under the initiative of Bangladesh Bank, IFIC Bank PLC, as the lead bank, organised a series of day-long programmes in Jashore on December 23 to promote the expansion of the Cashless Bangladesh Initiative.

The event was held at the Jashore Software Technology Park, with Arif Hossain Khan, executive director of Bangladesh Bank, attending as the chief guest, according to a press release.

The seminar was presided over by Rafeza Akther Kanta, director of the Payment Systems Department of Bangladesh Bank.

Among the special guests were Md Rukunuzzaman, executive director of the Khulna office of Bangladesh Bank, Md Tawheed Hasan, assistant commissioner and executive magistrate, Jashore, and Syed Mansur Mustafa, managing director of IFIC Bank PLC.

The programme began with a public awareness rally, followed by a special seminar on the Cashless Bangladesh Initiative at the auditorium of the Jashore Software Technology Park.

During the seminar, speakers discussed the objectives, action plans and benefits of digital transactions under the initiative, alongside a question-and-answer session with participants.

Later in the day, participating banks arranged practical demonstrations of QR code-based payment systems at their respective booths. Through the day-long campaign, emphasis was placed on raising public awareness of digital transactions.

Senior officials of IFIC Bank, representatives of other banks and guests from various professional backgrounds were also present at the event.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents for the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online branches of any registered bank branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

এস (২৫) (১৩২)

Md. Shariful Islam
Assistant Controller of Stores/P2
On the behalf of CCS/PHT

Anti-Liberation War forces have taken advantage of the failure of democracy

In conversation with Rehman Sobhan, one of Bangladesh's most distinguished economists and a celebrated public intellectual.

Prothom Alo (PA): The nation reached the Liberation War of 1971 through a long trail of political upheavals and historical turns. You were an active participant in that continuum of struggle. The vision at the time was to build a just, equitable and exploitation-free society in response to West Pakistan's discriminatory and extractive rule. Fifty-four years on, how far do you think today's reality has drifted from that original vision?

Rehman Sobhan (RS): Bangladesh has registered progress and change in many areas since 1971. Pre-1971 disparities in every socio-economic indicator prevailed in favour of West over East Pakistan. Today we are ahead of Pakistan in virtually every development indicator from GDP to human development. Unfortunately, we are far away from constructing an exploitation-free society so that economic inequality and social disparity have widened.

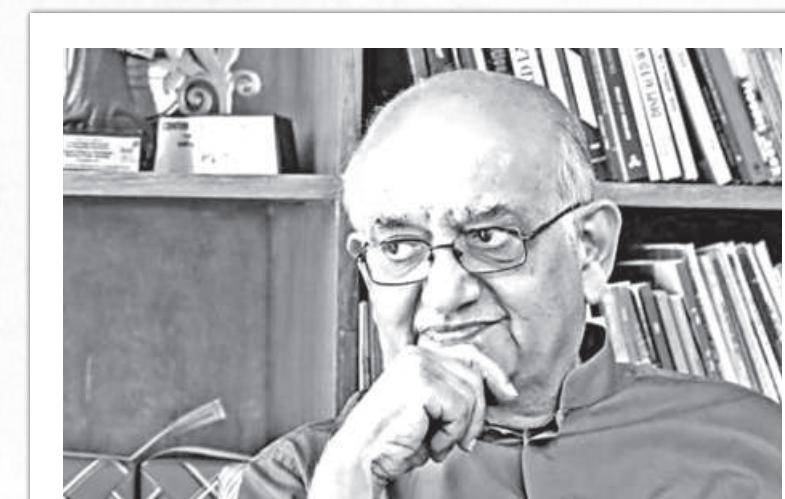
PA: In the two decades following independence, the country witnessed a series of political assassinations, military coups and long stretches of military rule. Yet one of the central aspirations of the Liberation War was to break free from Pakistani militarism and build a democratic society. Although democracy was revived after the 1990 mass uprising, it has stumbled repeatedly, while authoritarian and illiberal tendencies have strengthened. In your view, where does the fundamental flaw lie in our political culture, mind-set and practice?

RS: Sadly, we have over 54 years

of quotas for descendants of freedom fighters half a century after the Liberation War was quite wrong to the point of absurdity. Sheikh Hasina sensibly did away with quotas and later moved to appeal the High Court decision before the Appellate Division. Autocratic, oppressive, unjust and corrupt governance was the ultimate source of the uprising. Sheikh Hasina's unnecessary and inappropriate remarks about razakars fuelled the uprising, bringing the widespread frustrations and anger of the citizens to the surface.

PA: We now see attempts by some to frame the 2024 uprising as being in opposition to the Liberation War itself. Why is this happening? Is this a temporary or isolated effort, or do you think forces opposed to the historical and political aspirations of 1971 have steadily grown stronger and are now, in the post-2024 moment, deliberately trying to undermine the legacy of the Liberation War?

RS: As I have indicated above, the July uprising was inspired by democratic failure and unjust rule. Elements opposed to the Liberation War who have remained embedded in our politics took advantage of the uprising, infiltrated it, and may even have played an important role in its direction. This happens in mass upsurges against autocratic regimes where suppressed forces which have remained well organised and disciplined, even when they were repressed, can readily come into prominence when the opportunity presents itself. In the period of the interim government, they have



projected such views after 5th August. Others appear to have elevated their strong antipathy to Sheikh Hasina and her party into an antipathy to Bangabandhu and the Liberation War. Both positions have become counterproductive to the political aspirations of the student movement. The role we all looked for from the students and any political party they formed was to delink themselves from the historical and partisan debates which divided the AL and BNP. The students should have projected themselves as a forward-looking force of the 21st century and emerged as a modern-minded third political force which was badly needed to enable Bangladesh to move away from our tribalised politics. Their origins from non-elitist social backgrounds could have provided them with credibility

Their respective roles should have been more fully recognised both after liberation in 1972 and subsequently by Sheikh Hasina. To assign an exclusive position to the AL in the liberation struggle was both politically and morally wrong and has proved costly for her party as well as to the memory of the Liberation War.

PA: The Awami League's prolonged use of Liberation War rhetoric has, in many ways, deepened social fractures and political divisions. How can these rifts be healed? And specifically, how can we re-engage the younger generation with the Liberation War—its history, its ideals, and the broader practice of historical inquiry?

RS: We need to initiate a process of historical reconciliation through an extended programme of reasoned dialogue both at the political level and among the younger generation. This dialogue should bring all the available historical evidence into the public domain so we can arrive at a more consensual version of history based on facts rather than partisan posturing backed by rhetoric, abuse and even physical threats. The degree of misinformation and its weaponisation for political gain has clouded the understanding of an entire generation about this formative phase in our history.

PA: The 2024 uprising has introduced a host of new questions about Bangladesh's society, politics, and historical trajectory. People had hoped for profound transformation, and the moment did open up such possibilities. Words like "reform," "inclusion," "pluralism," and "a new settlement" echoed everywhere. Fifteen months into the uprising and the interim government, to what extent do you think popular expectations have been met?

RS: Prof. Yunus and the interim government (IG) have rightly recognised that a central message of the July uprising remains that we should not go back to business as usual. The reform initiatives by various Commissions and task forces, summarised in the July Sanad, serve as a positive move to present a set of reforms which would provide Bangladesh with better governance and a more just future. Our long history with the promise of reform provided by every regime from the time of our liberation indicates that the true challenge is to implement whatever reforms or policies a government has presented to the people. In my view, implementation failure more than wrong policies has been the principal source of both democratic dysfunction and malgovernance.

The lack of emphasis by the IG on improving governance through better implementation, whether of law and order or economic management, has been disappointing and a source of frustration to the people. The IG has brought about improvement in some areas, but this has not matched public expectations. In my view, the IG should have given priority to diagnosing implementation failure and should, within their short tenure, have demonstrated how policies and projects already on the statute books can be better implemented.

The future of the reforms under the July Sanad, in reality, can only be implemented by an elected government which stays in office for four to five years, which provides enough time to evaluate the outcome of a reform. It is a political and juridical mistake to believe that an elected government can be bound by a Sanad mandated through a referendum. The future of such reforms will depend on the political commitment of the elected government, the strength of the elected opposition to pressure them in parliament to carry out and

implement reforms, and the activism of civil society to serve as watchdogs over the passage and implementation not just of reforms but the election manifesto of the elected government.

The two issues which were very much in the minds of the July uprising, pluralism and inclusion, have unfortunately not received the attention they demand. The IG government has demonstrated its own limitations in protecting women, minorities and political elements which are currently out of favour. None of the commissions, including the economic task forces, have provided any clear agenda for an inclusive development strategy, nor has the IG, through the Sanad, satisfactorily addressed the issue of pluralism. The neglect of the recommendations of the Women's Commission remains a case in point.

PA: The interim government's inaction and inability to curb mob violence have emboldened the far right. Women, ethnic and religious minorities, Bauls, and followers of mazars have faced attacks, and their spaces have shrunk. Major political parties have also failed to play an assertive role in protecting their rights. Liberal groups remain cornered and silent. What impact do you think this will have on our society going forward?

RS: The failure of the IG to discourage and take firm action against mob violence remains conspicuous. Their failure is both a declaration of intent as well as a reflection of their weak governance capacity. Political parties have made rhetorical observations but have done little to act against such violence. Verbal abuse and instigation of violence emanating from social media remain unattended. The IG should have set standards on how to deal with such a process. It is not clear if elected political parties will be any more willing to take action to contain such forces since some of this violence emanates from political elements who now hope to get elected to the 13th Sanghsad. The failure of the IG to deal with violence has now opened up a new and more dangerous phase on the eve of elections through the resort to gun violence against particular political contestants.

PA: For more than three decades, Bangladeshi politics has revolved around a rigid two-party structure. You have argued that this bipolar divide has produced a kind of tribalism in national politics. How realistic is the emergence of a third political force in Bangladesh?

RS: As I pointed out earlier, we had entertained much hope that the students may emerge as a third force. Their statements, actions and efforts at forming a political party do not provide much encouragement that they will emerge as such a force. The Jamaat-e-Islami has clearly emerged as a strong political force. During and after the elections they will serve as the bipolar force in contestation with the BNP in politics and parliament, given the absence of the Awami League.

The big question which no one is willing to publicly discuss is the future role of the Awami League which provided one of the two pillars of our bipolar politics. They remain a party with a 77-year history and a sizeable electoral following. Whatever their wrongdoing, this force will not wither away in our tribalised polity. This is an issue which will have to be addressed by the elected government. Failure to do so will open up an uncertain future for the workings of our 'reformed' political order.

PA: In your writings and lectures, you have repeatedly emphasised the idea of an "unfinished Liberation War." In your view, in what sense does our Liberation War remain incomplete? And how do we, as a nation, carry forward the unfinished journeys of that struggle?

RS: The Liberation War promised democracy, secularism, socialism and nationalism. The first three principles have never been fully realised. Nor does the near future provide much prospect for their realisation. These three foundational principles of our nationhood have indeed been excluded from the July Sanad. The idea of nationalism remains contested even after 54 years. I fear that my own political journey, at the age of 90, may remain unfinished.

The interview was originally published in Bangla by Prothom Alo on December 16, 2025. It was conducted by AKM Zakaria and Manoj Dey.



not been able to build a workable and sustainable democracy. Our struggle with the Pakistani ruling elite was over the denial of democracy which remained the root cause of the economic deprivation of the Bengalis. We have, for a period from 1991 to 2008, had four relatively free and fair elections under a caretaker government in which power has been transferred to an opposition party. But even in this period of 'democratic' rule the institutions of democracy, such as parliament and the judiciary, have not functioned as they were intended to, so that a version of 'illiberal' democracy prevailed. From the introduction of the 15th Amendment doing away with the CTG, we have witnessed the ascendancy of autocratic government which culminated in an absolute monarchy. The source of the problem lies in the appropriation of power in an all-powerful leader, whether as President or elected Prime Minister, and the tribalisation of our democratic politics which has led to a winner-take-all culture.

PA: The failure to fulfil the ideals of 1971, the persistence of inequality, and the democratic backsliding we have seen—did these make the 2024 mass uprising inevitable? Or do you view the events of 2024 through a different explanatory lens?

RS: The uprising of July 2024 was initially inspired by the restoration of quotas for government jobs through a High Court ruling. The persistence

emerged as a more visible force with strong electoral prospects. They are inclined to use this opportunity to reinterpret their historical collaborationist role with the Pakistan Army in 1971. Being led by politically astute leaders, at this stage of the political process, their position on the Liberation War is likely to be projected with some caution. It, however, remains a part of their political strategy to whitewash their role in 1971.

PA: In an article for *Prothom Alo* this April, you wrote about Jamaat-e-Islami that, "Although they display restraint in public rhetoric, one of their main objectives is to rewrite history so that, even if they are not seen as heroes of 1971, they at least appear as victims, portraying Bangladesh under Bangabandhu's leadership as having fought the wrong enemy in the wrong war." We are now seeing that this effort is not limited to Jamaat alone; some segments of the student leadership that led the uprising, along with other groups, are also attempting to write history and shape narratives in their own way. There are visible attempts from their side to marginalise or overlook the Liberation War. How do you interpret this trend?

RS: The response of some of the student leadership to the Liberation War has surprised many. Such a position indicates that some elements in the movement were nurtured by anti-liberation forces and have

provided an authentic voice to the concerns of the common people.

PA: During Sheikh Hasina's fifteen and a half years of undemocratic rule, the rhetoric of the Liberation War was frequently used as a political instrument to repress and delegitimise the opposition. Moreover, historical discourse was narrowed to an exclusively Awami League-centric interpretation, restricting broader scholarly and civic engagement with 1971. Do you believe this environment contributed to the emergence of negative perceptions about the Liberation War among the younger generation?

RS: Sheikh Hasina's initial response was motivated by the complete whitewashing of Bangabandhu and the AL from the public domain by the regimes in office between 1975 and 1996. However, when she came to power in 1996, and more so in 2008, she overplayed the image of her father and oversold the prominence and role of the AL in the Liberation War.

The objective reality was that the AL was a vanguard force in the struggle for national liberation provided by the democratic mandate received through the 1970 election and the iconic role of Bangabandhu in giving leadership to the struggle for self-rule for the Bengalis. However, other political leaders and parties contributed to this struggle, while our armed forces and the common people of Bangladesh also played a critical role in the Liberation War.

NEWS

Tk 250cr graft in 5 solar plants

FROM PAGE 3
According to the Bangladesh Power Development Board, the average cost of setting up a solar power plant is typically Tk 8 crore per megawatt. Based on this estimate, the average cost of the six solar power plants covered by the study should have been Tk 4,043 crore, but the actual total cost stood at Tk 6,970 crore.

The six projects incurred an average cost of Tk 13.8 crore per megawatt, more than one and a half times the projected cost. In some cases, even where government projects were set up on government-owned land without land acquisition or leasing issues, the per-megawatt cost was shown as Tk 14.08 crore, higher than other solar projects in the country.

"The average electricity tariff of the selected renewable energy projects in this study is \$0.124 per kWh. In comparison, the average tariff in neighbouring

countries is significantly lower - \$0.03 in India, \$0.032 in Pakistan and \$0.045 in China. Thus, the tariff in Bangladesh is nearly four times higher than in these countries," the study said.

Conducted by TIB's Md Newazul Moula and Ashna Islam, the study said collusion in the energy sector appears to be a systemic and multi-stage phenomenon embedded throughout the project lifecycle and involving networks of interlinked stakeholders.

"Collusion is rooted in policymaking and strategy formulation processes. By gaining influence over selected policymakers through various forms of benefits, vested interests shape strategy formulation and target-setting in ways that align with their priorities. This influence extends to the structuring of laws, policies and strategic documents

through selective addition, removal or amendment of favourable clauses, thereby institutionalising bias at the policy level," it said.

At the land acquisition and environmental clearance stage, collusion manifests through coordinated manipulation of land acquisition, compensation, leasing and environmental approval processes, it added.

Speaking at the press conference titled "Generating Power from Renewable Energy in Bangladesh: Governance Challenges and Way Forward", TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said the power sector is one of the most corrupt sectors in the country.

"Corruption, irregularities and wastage are very common here. The study now shows that the renewable energy sector is not an isolated one," he said.

ICT-2 presses charges

FROM PAGE 3
They were dragged onto the footpath and beaten indiscriminately with canes, rifles and shotgun butts.

At one point, a policeman allegedly asked Tayim to run. As he did, another fired two shots from a pistol, one of which struck Tayim in the lower back, causing him to collapse. When Rahat tried to help him, Inspector Md Zakir Hossain allegedly fired several shotgun rounds at close range. Rahat, shot in the leg, fled in fear, leaving Tayim bleeding on the ground.

A video showing these details was played before the tribunal yesterday. Tayim's mother Parvin Akhter, seated in the courtroom, broke down in tears.

The accused are: former Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Habibur Rahman; former DMP joint police commissioner Sudip Kumar Chakraborty; former Wari Division deputy commissioner Iqbal Hossain; former additional deputy commissioner (Demra Zone) Md Masudur Rahman Monir; former ADC (Wari Zone) SM Shamim; former assistant police commissioner Nahid Ferdous; former Jatrabari OC Abul Hossain;

Inspector (investigation) Md Zakir Hossain; Inspector (operation) Md Wahidul Haque Mamun; sub-inspectors Sajjad Uz Zaman and Md Shahadat Ali of the same police station.

According to the prosecution, Habibur and Sudip ordered the use of "any force, including shooting" to suppress the movement. These instructions were relayed to officers on the ground by Shamim, Nahid, Abul, Zakir, Mamun and Sajjad.

The charge further states that Liton and Shahriar had attempted to rescue Tayim but were blocked by armed police.

Police later took Tayim to a police station, where he was allegedly tortured again, and then to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he was declared dead. The prosecution alleged that SI Shahadat Ali had prepared a false inquest report on Tayim.

The prosecution also alleged that police had looted money and other items from Liton's shop, and filed a false case blaming innocent people for his killing. Although the formal charge mentioned that another SI named Shukdev had filed a false case, no charge was brought against him.

31 held so far for attacks

FROM PAGE 12
DMP press release, the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit and the DB Cyber (North) division conducted separate drives to detain the suspects.

CTTC arrested Zakir from the Bailey Road area, while Swapna was picked up from the Abdullalpur intersection in Tongi, Gazipur.

In a separate drive, a team from the DB Cyber (North) division arrested Niaz from Bholia's Borhanuddin upazila.

Meanwhile, Rab arrested one Azmir Hossain Akash, 27, from the Tejgaon area on Monday, in connection with the attack on The Daily Star office.

"The arrestee was

DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 25, 2025
POUSH 10, 1432 BS
The Daily Star 9

directly involved in the vandalism and arson carried out at The Daily Star office," said a press release of Rab-3, adding that electronic equipment looted during the attack, including two monitors, one CPU, one hard disk, and cables, was recovered from his possession.

Among the arrestees, a Dhaka court yesterday sent Akash, Zakir, and Niaz to jail.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Sarah Farzana Haque passed two separate orders after police produced them before the court, said a court staffer.

Akash was arrested in a case filed over the attack on The Daily Star office, while Zakir and Niaz were held

in a case lodged over the attack on the Prothom Alo office.

Revise

FROM PAGE 3
EC Secretary Akhtar Ahmed announced that the deadline for expatriates to register via the Postal Vote BD app has been extended to December 31.

He said Bangladesh Bank was asked to keep banks open on the next Saturday for nomination-related activities.

Meanwhile in a letter to the CEC, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JASAD) claimed that the interim government has no mandate to organise a referendum.

5th DEATH ANNIVERSARY!



It's been 5 years we lost our honorable former Director, Veteran Industrialist

Engr. REAZAT ALI BACHCHU

on 25th of December 2020.

We remember him on this day.

We all pray to Almighty Allah for granting him Jannat.

Directors and All Employees of



AUSTRALIAN
INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL



University of Asia Pacific UAP

74/A Green Road, Dhaka-1205
Tel: (PABX) (+880-2) 46010626-9, Website: www.uap.bd

**Invites Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Position of Vice Chancellor
Time Extended to December 31, 2025**

The Board of Trustees (BOT) of the University of Asia Pacific (UAP) cordially invites **Expression of Interest (EOI)** from qualified academicians for the position of **Vice Chancellor of UAP**. Interested candidates are required to meet the criteria set by Private University Act 2010, Clause 31, Sub-Clause 3 which states that the candidate must have 1st Class or equivalent Graduate and Post Graduate Degree or PhD, and minimum of 10 years of teaching experience in a recognized University, along with research or administrative experience for a total of 20 years. Such candidates are requested to send their EoI via email to vcsearch.botoffice@uap-bd.edu by **December 31, 2025**. Upon receipt of the EoI, the BOT office will provide the candidate with instructions for submitting credentials in a standardized format

Those who have already submitted the EoI earlier are not required to submit it again.

বাংলাদেশ পানি উন্নয়ন বোর্ড

নির্বাচিত প্রক্ষেপণীর নথি
পঞ্জাবী পানি উন্নয়ন বিভাগ
বাল্পাটোয়া, পঞ্জাবী-১০০০
ফোন: +৮৮০-০২-৯১৮৩২২ (অফিস)

Office of the Executive Engineer
Panchagarh WD Division
BWDB, Panchagarh-5000
Tel: 088-0258-7718322 (Office)
E-mail: xenbwdb.panchagarh@gmail.com

Memo No. 42.01.7700.190.14.009.22-1429

Date: 23/12/2025

e-Tender Notice-03 (OTM)

An e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following works:

Sl No.	Tender	Package No. & description	Procure ment method	Location of the works	Tender/ proposal document last selling date & time	Tender/ proposal closing & opening date & time
1	1190739	Rehabilitation work of Canal, Dyke, Crossing Slabs, Oulets, Pump & Motor of Nalkura Low Lift Irrigation Project located in Upazila: Sadar, District: Panchagarh under Panchagarh WD Division, BWDB, Panchagarh during the FY 2025-26. (Package No.: PAN/NDR/2025-26/W-02)	OTM	Upazilla: Sadar, District: Panchagarh	08-01-2026 Time: 12.00 hr	08-01-2026 Time: 16.00 hr

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches up to banking hours. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd) (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

পানি-৫১/২০২৫-২০২৬

৬৫৩

Ashutosh Barman
Executive Engineer
Panchagarh WD Division
BWDB, Panchagarh

Request for Proposal (RFP)

International Labour Organization (ILO) Dhaka is inviting proposals from interested and Bonafide firms to develop a Digital Case Management System for the Government of Bangladesh. The Terms of Reference (ToR) and RFP documents can be downloaded from the [United Nations Global Market Place \(UNGMP\)](http://www.unigm.org/Public/Notice/28793) at <https://www.unigm.org/Public/Notice/28793>. The deadline for submission of proposal is Sunday, January 25, 2026, at 04:30 PM (BST time).

“পুনঃদলৱপত্ব বিজ্ঞপ্তি”
পুনঃদলৱপত্ব বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং. ০৬
তারিখ: ১৪/১/২০২৫ খ্রি.
তারিখ: ১৪/১/২০২৫ খ্রি.
Md. Nannu Miah
ID No. 1-01304
Director
Directorate of Purchase
BPDB, Dhaka
Email: dir.purchase@bpdb.gov.bd

31 held so far for attacks

FROM PAGE 12
DMP press release, the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit and the DB Cyber (North) division conducted separate drives to detain the suspects.

CTTC arrested Zakir from the Bailey Road area, while Swapna was picked up from the Abdullalpur intersection in Tongi, Gazipur.

In a separate drive, a team from the DB Cyber (North) division arrested Niaz from Bholia's Borhanuddin upazila.

Meanwhile, Rab arrested one Azmir Hossain Akash, 27, from the Tejgaon area on Monday, in connection with the attack on The Daily Star office.

"The arrestee was

directly involved in the vandalism and arson carried out at The Daily Star office," said a press release of Rab-3, adding that electronic equipment looted during the attack, including two monitors, one CPU, one hard disk, and cables, was recovered from his possession.

Among the arrestees, a Dhaka court yesterday sent Akash, Zakir, and Niaz to jail.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Sarah Farzana Haque passed two separate orders after police produced them before the court, said a court staffer.

Akash was arrested in a case filed over the attack on The Daily Star office, while Zakir and Niaz were held

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender hereby invited by Prime Bank PLC. from reputed companies in the relevant field for providing below item:

Name of Item	Period of Sale (Tender)		Last Date of Submission
	From	To	
Procurement of 50 units Automated Teller Machines (ATM)	28.12.2025	21.01.2026	21.01.2026

Details are given on the Prime Bank website:
<https://www.primebank.com.bd/tenders>

Head of Facility Management Division

Prime Bank

বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড
Bangladesh Power Development Board

Directorate of Purchase
Bidyut Bhavan (13th Floor)
1, Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka-1000
www.bpd.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice

The following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of:

SL No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Reference No.	Description of goods/works	Last selling date and time	Closing date and time	Opening date and time
01	1202826	GR-42 FY 25-26	27.11.0000. 304.26. 304.25	Procurement of Liquid Ferric Chloride for Shikhalba 225MW CCP	06.01.2026 13.00	06.01.2026 14.00	06.01.2026 14.00
02	1202932	GR-43 FY 25-26	27.11.0000. 304.26. 305.25	Procurement of Anionic Poly Electrolyte, Biocide Acid, Biodispersant and Carbohydrazide (Oxygen Scavenger) for Shikhalba 225MW CCP	06.01.2026 13.00	06.01.2026 14.00</	

6.1 earthquake hits southeast Taiwan

No damage reported

REUTERS, Taipei

An earthquake with a magnitude of 6.1 struck Taiwan's southeastern coastal county of Taitung yesterday, the island's weather administration said, although there were no immediate reports of damage.

The quake shook buildings in the capital, Taipei. The quake had a depth of 11.9 km (7.39 miles), the administration said.

There was no immediate report of damage across Taiwan, the National Fire Agency said.

Taiwan chipmaker TSMC said the quake did not reach the required level for evacuation of factories across the island, which lies near the junction of two tectonic plates and is prone to earthquakes.

More than 100 people were killed in a quake in southern Taiwan in 2016, while a 7.3 magnitude quake killed more than 2,000 people in 1999.



South Korean volunteers in Santa Claus outfits toss hats into the air during a launch ceremony in Seoul yesterday, ahead of delivering gifts to about 800 underprivileged children on Christmas Eve. PHOTO: AFP

OCCUPIED WEST BANK Israeli army demolishes home of Palestinian

AFP, Jerusalem

The Israeli army yesterday demolished the home of a Palestinian accused of carrying out a stabbing and shooting attack that killed an Israeli earlier this year, the military said.

On July 10, two attackers killed 22 year old Shalev Zvuluny in a shopping area near Jerusalem, before the Israeli army shot them dead.

Yesterday, Israeli army bulldozers entered the village of Bazzaryah in the occupied West Bank, destroying the family home of one of the attackers after it had been evacuated.

Hazem Yassine, head of the Bazzaryah municipal council,



denounced what he called a "heinous crime".

Meanwhile, the Israeli army said yesterday that it had identified a Hamas financial official it killed two weeks ago in a strike in the Gaza Strip.

Abdel Hay Zaqt, a financial official in Hamas's armed wing, was killed on December 13 in the same strike that also claimed the life of military commander Raed

Saad, whom Israel regards as one of the architects of Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack.

The Israeli army's Arabic-language spokesperson, Avichay Adraee, said yesterday that Zaqt was killed while he was in a vehicle alongside Raed Saad in "a joint operation by the Israeli army and the Shin Bet", Israel's internal security agency.

Zaqt "belonged to the financial department of the armed wing" of Hamas, Adraee wrote on X.

"Over the past year, Zaqt was responsible for collecting and transferring tens of millions of dollars to Hamas's armed wing with the aim of continuing the fight against the State of Israel," he said.

INTERNATIONAL

BNP gives 10 more seats

FROM PAGE 1

those who joined the party would contest the polls with the BNP symbol.

Earlier on Tuesday, the BNP announced sharing four seats with alliance partner Jamiat Ulema e Islam Bangladesh.

Of the 300 parliamentary constituencies, BNP fielded its own candidates in 272 seats, while allocating 14 seats to partners.

BNP now has 14 seats vacant, which will be considered for both allies and its own candidates, sources said.

Fakhrul said discussions with other partners were ongoing and that further decisions would be announced soon.

SEVEN SEATS

BNP will not field candidates in Pirojpur-1, Jhenaidah-4, Dhaka-12, Jashore-5, Bogura-2, Patuakhali-3 and Brahmanbaria-6, where allied parties will contest using their own symbols.

In Bogura-2, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, president of Nagorik Oikya, will contest with his party symbol. In Brahmanbaria-6, Jonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganasamhati Andolon, will also contest with his.

In Pirojpur-1, Mostafa Jamal Haider, chairman of Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar), will contest with his party symbol.

In Patuakhali-3, Nurul Haque Nur, president of Gono Odhikar Parishad, and

in Jhenaidah-4, Rashed Khan, the party's general secretary, will contest using their own symbols.

Saiful Haque, general secretary of the Revolutionary Workers Party, will contest the election in Dhaka-12, for which BNP had earlier nominated Saiful Alam Nirab.

In Jashore-5, Islami Oikya Jote leader Rashid Bin Wakkas will contest with his party symbol. BNP will not field any candidate there.

Responding to a question, Fakhrul said organisational action would be taken against any BNP leader who contests in seats under the seat sharing arrangement.

JOINED BNP

Two leaders of allied parties formally joined BNP yesterday at the Gulshan office, while Bobby Hajai, chairman of the Nationalist Democratic Movement, is also expected to join BNP soon and contest from Dhaka-13 using its symbol.

In Narail-2, Fariduzzaman Farid, chairman of the National People's Party, will contest using the BNP symbol.

As part of the seat sharing agreement, Redwan Ahmed resigned from his post as secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party (Colonel Oli) and joined BNP. He will contest the election from Cumilla-7 with the paddy sheaf.

Law enforcers' inaction proves

FROM PAGE 12

said around 25 journalists were trapped inside and faced life threatening conditions due to fire and smoke.

He also mentioned how Editors' Council President and New Age Editor Nurul Kabir went there risking his life to help, but was also attacked.

Prof Anu added, "Chhayanaut is part of our history and cultural resistance. It was built with people's money and housed music education, a children's school and a library. Everything was destroyed."

"Udichi[too] is a symbol of cultural resistance that predates even the Pakistan period. Burning its office was an attack on that legacy."

He questioned why intelligence agencies failed to act despite months of online hate speech and open calls for attacks. "These names and threats were visible on social media for a long time. Intelligence agencies knew about them. Why did they remain silent?"

He also said that while the government remains inactive in protecting public interests, it is very active in signing deals that favour foreign and corporate interests.

Udichi[too] is a symbol of cultural resistance that predates even the Pakistan period. Burning its office was an attack on that legacy."

He said the attack on their office was deliberate and questioned the motive behind it. "Udichi stood at the forefront of the 2024 movement. Even then, our office was set on fire. This did not happen suddenly."

Awal said the attackers intend to disrupt the democratic process and create an environment of fear ahead of the upcoming election.

He also announced that Udichi will not take any financial help from the government to rebuild its office.

At the rally, Mofizur Rahman Lalit, a member of the Democratic Cultural Alliance, announced a seven point demand, including ensuring a proper investigation and justice for the brutal killings of Sharif Osman Hadi, Dipu Chandra Das, and Ayesha Akter.

He also demanded the investigation and trial of all mob and terrorist attacks across the country, including those on Udichi, Chhayanaut, Prothom Alo, and The Daily Star.

Other demands included swiftly identifying and punishing those who incited violence, ensuring freedom of expression and the safety of life and property, and providing compensation to families and institutions affected by violence.

The speakers also demanded the removal of Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury over what they alleged was his complete failure to ensure public safety, and called for ensuring the national election is held on the announced date.



**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Office of the Superintendent of Police
Manikganj**

Mamo No: 5858 /E

Date -24-12-2025

Tender Notice No-02/2025-2026 (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of Following Words Detail are given bellow.

SL NO:	Package no	Tender ID No	Tender Last Selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing & Opening (Date & Time)
1	Repair & Maintenance of Police Lines Manikganj Ration Store (Fy-2025-26) Dist: Manikganj	1201274	07-Jan-2026 16:00	08-Jan-2026 16:00
2	Repair & Maintenance of Police Lines Manikganj Inspector Quarter Shapla (Fy-2025-26) Dist: Manikganj	1202046	07-Jan-2026 16:00	08-Jan-2026 16:00
3	Repair & Maintenance of Police Lines Manikganj SI Quarter Bokul (Fy-2025-26) Dist: Manikganj	1202047	07-Jan-2026 16:00	08-Jan-2026 16:00
4	Repair & Maintenance of Police Lines Manikganj Drill shed (Fy-2025-26) Dist: Manikganj	1202048	07-Jan-2026 16:00	08-Jan-2026 16:00
5	Repair & Maintenance of Police Lines Manikganj Pump House (Fy-2025-26) Dist: Manikganj	1202049	07-Jan-2026 16:00	08-Jan-2026 16:00

This is an Online Tender Where only e-tender will be accepted in National e-GP Portal no offline/hard Copise will be accepted to submit e-Tender, registration National e-GP System (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be Deposited online through any registered Bank, Branches Further information & guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal from e-Gp help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

24/12/2025
(Mohammad Sarwar Alam BPM)
BP-7806119729
Superintendent of Police
Manikganj.
02-996610400
E-Mail: spmanikgonj@police.gov.bd



Be part of
a Winning Team

Become our
CHIEF RISK OFFICER (CRO)

Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC (AIBPLC), a leading Shariah-based Islamic financial institution in Bangladesh, has earned a distinguished reputation for its consistent growth, innovation, and commitment to delivering a wide spectrum of banking solutions. AIBPLC invites applications from suitably qualified, experienced and competent professionals for the position of **Chief Risk Officer (CRO)**. The role is critical in strengthening the Bank's risk governance framework and ensuring compliance with regulatory and Shariah requirements.

Job Grade SEVP - DMD

Core Responsibilities

- Develop, implement and oversee a comprehensive risk management framework that covers investment risk, market risk, operational risk and liquidity risk in compliance with both Shariah law and conventional banking guidelines.
- Review and analyze all significant credit proposals, ensuring they align with the bank's risk tolerance by evaluating creditworthiness and structuring appropriate credit facilities, particularly focusing on Islamic banking products.
- Identify, assess, monitor and mitigate investment, market, liquidity, operational, Shariah and compliance risks.
- Ensure effective risk appetite framework, stress testing and risk reporting mechanisms.
- Advise the Board Risk Management Committee (BRMC) and Senior Management on risk-related matters.
- Ensure compliance with Bangladesh Bank regulations, Islamic banking risk management guidelines and internal policies.
- Coordinate with Shariah Supervisory Committee to ensure Shariah-compliant risk practices.
- Oversee Internal Capital Adequacy Assessment Process (ICAAP) and Basel-related risk requirements.
- Promote a strong risk-aware culture across the Bank.
- Liaise with regulators, auditors, and other stakeholders as required.
- Develop and maintain a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and a Recovery Plan in case of a crisis, such as economic downturns of unexpected market shocks, ensuring the bank's resilience.
- Ensure that the bank maintains adequate liquidity to meet financial obligations, especially in volatile market conditions which includes managing liquidity buffers, ensuring Shariah compliant liquidity solutions and assessing the bank's funding position.

Job Requirements

- Postgraduation or Master's degree preferably in Economics, Finance or Business Administration from a recognized UGC approved university is mandatory. CFA, CMA, FRM, CPA, ACCA or MBA in Finance/Accounting/Banking/Management or relevant professional certifications will be an added advantage. No third class is acceptable in any academic result.
- Minimum 15 years of banking experience with a mix of minimum 3 years' experience in senior risk management role, preferably as CRO, Deputy CRO or Head of IRM/CRM.
- Age Limit: Not exceeding 55 years as of the application deadline.

Application Procedure

Interested candidates are requested to send your applications in a sealed envelope addressed to the **Managing Director & CEO, Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, Head Office, Al-Arafah Tower, 63, Purana Paltan, Dhaka** along with detailed Curriculum Vitae (CV), cover letter outlining suitability for the role, copies of academic and professional credentials and a recent passport size photograph.

Application Deadline 11 January 2026

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

The Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any application without assigning any reason.

Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC is
an Equal Opportunity Employer.
www.aibl.com.bd

**Al-Arafah
Islami Bank**

aib
Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC



The Boxing Day action gets underway with the fourth Ashes Test between Australia and England at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground, starting at 5:30am (Bangladesh time) on Friday. Star Sports 1 and 2 will broadcast the match live. Australia have already retained the Ashes, having secured dominant victories in the first three Tests of the series.

BPL 12

OFF-FIELD HURDLES on-field optimism

SPORTS REPORTER

As the newest edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is quickly approaching, the old problems from previous seasons -- payments delays and last-minute scrambling for overseas cricketers -- have returned. The grand opening ceremony in Dhaka had already been scrapped owing to security concerns, and on Wednesday, the pre-season captain's photoshoot with the trophy was also been canned. Even amid all this, the players remain hopeful of a vibrant BPL.

Payment concerns resurface
Payment issues that plagued last season's BPL have resurfaced as several franchises have not cleared 25 percent of players' total payments -- as required under tournament bylaws -- with just two days remaining before the opening fixtures.

A Chattogram Royals' player told The Daily Star on Wednesday, "No payments have been made." Sources from Sylhet Titans indicated that payments were due and a source from Noakhali Express also revealed that payments were yet to be made.

Dhaka Capitals skipper Mohammad Mithun confirmed during a press conference that his team had received 25 percent of their payments, a claim corroborated by several players. Rangpur Riders' media department confirmed that 50 percent of payments to local players have been completed. Rajshahi Warriors' media officials said 25 percent payment has been made, along with nine days' travelling allowance and Dearness Allowance (TADA) for both local and foreign players -- a claim supported by two players.



Chattogram Royals opener Mohammad Naim was all smiles during a practice session at the Sylhet Outer Stadium yesterday. All eyes will be on Naim, the player with the highest price tag among locals, when his side take on Noakhali Express in the second match on the opening day of the 12th Bangladesh Premier League in Sylhet tomorrow.

PHOTO: BCB

Foreign player crisis hits Chattogram
With less than 36 hours to go before BPL 12 gets underway, Chattogram are yet to welcome any of their overseas player and even head coach Justin Kemp has not arrived as of Wednesday.

Chattogram had roped in Pakistani spinner Abrar Ahmed as a direct signing and bought Sri Lanka's Niroshan Dickwella and Angelo

Perera at the auction and post-auction, they confirmed Irish batter Paul Stirling, South Africa's Cameron Delport and Pakistan's Kamran Ghulam and Mirza Tahir Baig.

However, apart from Delport, Kamran and Mirza -- who themselves are yet to reach Dhaka

-- the rest have opted out.

Meanwhile, Noakhali's Sri Lankan recruit Kusal Mendis has been ruled out of the tournament owing to injury. Pakistani recruits Hassan Eisakhil and Haider Ali have arrived and the franchise is hopeful that a few more overseas players will join in Sylhet on Thursday.

No captains' photoshoot

BPL officials confirmed on Wednesday that there will be no captains' photoshoot before the tournament this season.

Officials also said heavy security measures have been put in place in Sylhet, where franchises are holding their final practice sessions ahead of the tournament opener.

Players remain upbeat

Nepali leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane, who last played in the BPL in 2019 and will represent Rajshahi, expressed optimism about his side's chances.

"The kind of potential our team is carrying, the local players have to step up. Here in Rajshahi Warriors, I find it amazing. I know most of the guys since we played against each other in the past as well. The team is shaping up nicely and they are all excited to give their best," he said. Meanwhile, Rangpur Riders' Khushdil Shah wants to replicate his last year's performance for the same team. "I have performed for every team I have played for [in BPL], and it is definitely lucky for me because I made my comeback to the Pakistan team after I performed well here last year. Inshallah, I will try to perform well this year as well and help my team win."

SHORT CORNER

Kohli breaks Tendulkar record on Vijay Hazare return

Virat Kohli marked his return to domestic cricket in emphatic fashion as he shattered a long-standing record on his first outing in the current Vijay Hazare Trophy season, while Rohit Sharma also made headlines with a blistering knock on Wednesday. After 15 years away from the competition, Kohli turned out for Delhi in the Vijay Hazare Trophy, with participation in domestic cricket made mandatory for players aiming to feature in the ODI World Cup. He made the return memorable by becoming the fastest batter to reach 16,000 runs in List A cricket, surpassing the previous record held by Sachin Tendulkar.



Arsenal reach League Cup semis

Kepa Arrizabalaga was Arsenal's League Cup quarter-final hero with the decisive penalty shoot-out save that completed a miserable evening for Crystal Palace defender Maxence Lacroix on Tuesday. Lacroix's own goal put Arsenal ahead with 10 minutes left at the Emirates Stadium before Marc Guehi snatched Palace's stoppage-time equaliser in the 1-1 draw.

Suryavanshi rewrites record books with 84-ball 190

Vaibhav Suryavanshi shattered multiple records on the opening day of the Vijay Hazare Trophy while playing for Bihar in the clash against Arunachal Pradesh in Ranchi on Wednesday. The prodigy smashed 190 runs off 84 deliveries with as many as 16 fours and 15 sixes at a strike rate of 226.19. In the process, Vaibhav broke AB de Villiers' world record, hitting the fastest 150 in List A cricket history.

***Read full stories on The Daily Star website*

A LOOK BACK AT 2025

Plenty played, little settled

EKUSH TAPADER

At first glance, 2025 appeared to be a year of relentless activity for Bangladesh. Packed schedules and headline numbers hinted at momentum, but beneath the surface lay a more unsettling truth.

Statistically, it was a landmark year as the Tigers registered their highest-ever number of T20I wins. Yet the flip side told a grimmer story. They also suffered their second-highest number of defeats in the format, losing 14 matches, surpassed only by the 16 defeats in 2021. With Litton Das and company playing a record 30 fixtures in the shortest format, volume inflated both success and failure.

Four consecutive bilateral series wins -- including two against the Netherlands and Ireland -- offered brief encouragement, but a shock defeat to the UAE quickly punctured the optimism. Beyond the bilateral bubble, the Tigers once again fell into familiar patterns. While they have historically thrived in home series, even against the big guns, expectations continue to unravel as the moment they step into multi-

Cup, but those successes were largely bowler-driven and offered no lasting solution to the batting crisis. With the T20 World Cup looming in February-March and no international fixtures left, the focus now shifts to the Bangladesh Premier League -- a franchise tournament whose overall quality remains debated even within the corridors of Bangladesh Cricket Board.

A come-from-behind series win against Ireland late in the year did little to dispel a growing sense of complacency. The middle order's



struggles persisted, yet the team management appeared unmoved. Matters worsened when the selection process came under scrutiny, culminating in a public fallout between skipper Litton Das and chief selector Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu. The episode laid bare a lack of coordination and clarity. As the year closes, the T20 side remain clouded by more doubt than certainty.

In the 50-over arena, the slide continued unchecked, eroding a format that once defined the Tigers' rise. Languishing 10th in the rankings, Bangladesh showed no signs of revival. More alarmingly, direct qualification for the 2027 World Cup now hinges on a handful of high-stakes series next year.

Bangladesh lost seven of their 11 ODIs in 2025. Mehidy Hasan Miraz's leadership came under scrutiny, and the squad never looked settled. Constant reshuffling of the batting order and a shortage of consistent, match-winning performances reduced the side to a shadow of their former selves.

MARGINAL MEETING EXPECTATIONS

Even in Tests, where opportunities were limited and opposition modest, Bangladesh struggled to assert

white-ball sides, the overall quality of cricket remains underwhelming.

As 2025 draws to a close, the common thread across formats is not a lack of effort or opportunity, but a lack of direction. Bangladesh have played more, won some, lost plenty, and learned little when it mattered most. For casual followers, the numbers may hint at progress but the warning signs are hard to ignore, with the Tigers risking another year chasing momentum rather than shaping it.

POLITICS TRUMPED CRICKET AS PROTEAS ENDED DECADES OF HURT

International cricket in 2025 delivered major moments but was repeatedly overshadowed by politics. South Africa finally erased their 'bridesmaids' tag by winning the World Test Championship, India dominated white-ball cricket by claiming the men's Champions Trophy and the women's World Cup, while Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma retired from Test cricket. England's aggressive Bazball approach also unravelled during a disastrous Ashes tour of Australia.

***Read full story on The Daily Star website*

Be part of a Winning Team

Become our CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER (CPO)



Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC (AIBPLC), a leading Shariah-based Islamic financial institution in Bangladesh, is committed to excellence, innovation and sustainable growth. We believe our people are our greatest asset, and we are looking for a visionary HR leader to shape the future of our workforce. AIBPLC invites applications from suitably qualified, experienced and competent professionals for the position of **Chief People Officer (CPO)**.

Job Context

The Bank is looking for a competent Human Resources Professional who will play a crucial role in shaping the organization's human resources strategy and ensuring compliance with laws, rules and regulations.

Job Grade EVP - SEVP

Job Responsibilities

The CPO will be directly reporting to the Managing Director & CEO of the Bank and will be responsible to perform the following key responsibilities:

- Strategic HR Leadership:** Develop and implement HR policies that align with the bank's business objectives. The CPO will work hand in hand with the executive leadership team to ensure that the bank's workforce is agile, highly skilled, and aligned with both immediate operational priorities and future growth strategies.
- Talent Acquisition, Management & Manpower Budgeting:** Overseeing recruitment, onboarding, and retention strategies to attract top talent and ensure the implementation of Competency Development Program to create succession and build Talent Management Pipeline. Preparing short & long term Manpower forecast and HR Budget to translate the quantifiable headcount requirements and directing recruitment activities for ensuring that the best candidates are selected for each role.
- Employee Relations & Compliance:** Ensuring adherence to labor laws, banking regulations, and ethical HR practices and serving as the primary point of contact for employee relations matters, addressing conflicts, grievances, and disciplinary issues.
- Performance Management & Organizational Development:** Design and execute appraisal systems to enhance employee productivity and develop strategies to foster a strong, service-oriented culture to ensure continuous learning and skill enhancement throughout the organization.
- Training & Development:** Conducting Training Needs Analysis (TNA) to ensure employees remain skilled and support leadership development programs to build a pipeline of future bank leaders.
- Compensation & Benefits:** Develop and manage competitive compensation and benefits programs to attract, retain, and motivate talent by overseeing payroll and other benefits administration to ensure accuracy and timeliness and reviewing in regular intervals.
- HR Operations & Systems:** Manage HR processes, automation, and reporting for efficiency in day to day HR services provided to the employees and stakeholders.
- People Engagement & Culture:** Foster a positive work environment and drive employee engagement programs and enhancing external branding image through Job Fair participation, Internship Programs, provide guest lectures in career programs and sponsor relevant programs.
- HR Analytics & Reporting:** Lead HR analytics and reporting efforts, providing insights that guide decision-making and enhance HR processes. Ensure that data-driven decisions align with organizational goals.
- Operational Excellence & HR Transformation:** Beyond strategic planning, the CPO is also tasked with ensuring that HR operations are efficient and modernized. This might involve leveraging technology to automate routine HR processes, streamlining operations and implementing data-driven decision-making practices.

Job Requirements

- Postgraduation or Master's degree preferably in Economics, Finance or Business Administration from any UGC approved local or reputable foreign universities with no third class or equivalent in any certification. Diploma in HRM, CHRMP, CHRG, PGDHRM or any other professional degree holders or certified HR professionals will get the preference.
- Minimum 15 years of banking experience with a mix of minimum 3 years' experience in senior HR Managerial and Leadership role, preferably as CHRO, CPO, Deputy CHRO or Head of HRD.
- Age Limit: Not exceeding 55 years as of the application deadline.

Application Procedure

Interested candidates are requested to send your applications in a sealed envelope addressed to the **Managing Director & CEO, Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC, Head Office, Al-Arafah Tower, 63, Purana Paltan, Dhaka** along with detailed Curriculum Vitae (CV), cover letter outlining suitability for the role, copies of academic and professional credentials and a recent passport size photograph.

Application Deadline | 11 January 2026

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

The Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any application without assigning any reason.

Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

www.aibl.com.bd

Al-Arafah Islami Bank





BSRM
THE ONLY STEEL FACTORY IN BANGLADESH TO RECEIVE THE
GREEN FACTORY AWARD 2025

HIGHEST SELLING CEMENT **20** for more than **YEARS**



Justice Zubayer Rahman new CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury, a senior judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, has been appointed as the 26th chief justice of Bangladesh.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin made the appointment under Article 95(l) of the constitution, as current Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed will retire on December 27, according to a law ministry gazette.

Justice Zubayer got enrolled as an advocate of the District Court and the High Court Division of Supreme Court on March 3, 1985 and May 17, 1997 respectively.

He obtained his LLB (Hons) and LLM from Dhaka University and LLM in International Law from the UK.

He was elevated as additional judge of the HC Division on August 27, 2003 and appointed judge of the same division on August 27, 2005. On August 13, 2024, he was elevated to the Appellate Division.



Journalist leaders form a human chain at the Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) yesterday, protesting the attacks on the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo and the harassment of New Age Editor Nurul Kabir. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Govt passes stricter tobacco ordinance

Revenue concerns trim several draft measures

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The advisory council yesterday approved an anti-tobacco ordinance, expanding the definition of tobacco products and introducing several new provisions to control their use, particularly emerging ones.

Bans under new ordinance

- Production, import, sale and use of e-cigarettes and vaping devices
- Consumption of tobacco products in public places, alongside smoking
- Sale of tobacco products within 100-metre radius of schools, hospitals, playgrounds, children's parks
- All forms of tobacco advertising, including online and digital platforms

The ordinance, however, omitted several sections of the original draft such as the prohibition on the sale of loose or unpackaged tobacco products, which weakened the law intended to control tobacco use.

Proposals to ban the sale of tobacco products through hawking and without registration, as well as a ban on flavors that make tobacco and nicotine products more appealing, were also excluded from the ordinance following recommendations of a finance adviser-led committee, The Daily Star has learnt from officials involved with the proceedings.

The ordinance incorporated new items such as nicotine pouches as tobacco products and banned

SEE PAGE 3 COL 1

31 held so far for attacks on Star and Prothom Alo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers have so far arrested 31 people for their alleged involvement in the attacks, looting, and arson at the Karwan Bazar offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday said all those involved in the recent attacks on the offices of the two national dailies will be brought to book.

Briefing reporters at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka, he disclosed the arrest of 31 people.

In a vicious assault on press freedom, mobs launched coordinated attacks on the head offices of the two dailies on the night of December 18 and vandalised the offices, looted valuables, set the buildings ablaze, and trapped journalists and staffers of The Daily Star inside for hours.

Following the incident, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday arrested three more individuals in connection with the attacks.

The arrestees are Zakir Hossain Shanto, 29, Swapan Mondal, 30, and Niaz Mahmud Farhan, 21.

According to a

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

'No more internet blackouts'

Govt approves new telecom ordinance putting guardrails on surveillance

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The Advisory Council has finally approved the Bangladesh Telecommunication (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 barring state-led internet shutdowns and introducing limited measures for accountability in surveillance, while establishing a quasi-judicial body comprising members of the government executive body to oversee interception.

A three-member "quasi-judicial council" will be formed to review, approve, amend, or reject interception requests, according to a portion of the approved version of the ordinance seen by The Daily Star.

The council will be chaired by the minister of law, justice and parliamentary affairs, and will include the principal staff officer and the secretary of the home affairs ministry as members.

It will operate independently, free from any administrative, political or institutional influence.

No individual will be eligible to serve as a member of the council if they have been implicated in government reports relating to human rights violations, unlawful surveillance, enforced disappearance or illegal detention; found guilty in departmental inquiries; or previously involved in the misuse or leakage of classified or sensitive information.

The council will mandatorily meet at least once every two weeks to review, approve, modify or reject interception applications and may require justification where necessary.

All council decisions will be documented and auditable, and provisions will exist for appeal against such decisions. Complaints regarding unlawful interception may be filed

with the council.

Any intentional and unauthorised interception, data collection, retention or use will constitute a punishable offence, carrying penalties of up to five years' imprisonment, a fine of up to Tk 1 crore or both. The council, court or administration may recommend budgetary sanctions of up to Tk 99 crore against the concerned agency.

A three-member "quasi-judicial council" will be formed to review, approve, amend, or reject interception requests, according to a portion of the approved version of the ordinance seen by The Daily Star.

An annual national interception report will be prepared detailing the grounds and scope of interception activities. The report will be presented to the parliament and made public. The parliamentary standing committee will annually review operations, budgets and institutional capacity.

All measures adopted under the provision will remain consistent with international best practices in line with the standards of the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations human rights framework, according to the ordinance.

While the approved ordinance introduces some transparency and accountability in interception, it still falls short of the quasi-judicial council proposed in the first draft

SEE PAGE 3 COL 4

National unity key to credible polls

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is showing signs of sliding into a "transition trap", with reform commitments failing to translate into meaningful action, speakers said at a roundtable yesterday.

They stressed that forging national unity ahead of the next national election is now imperative to ensure credible polls and maintain public trust democratic process.

They made the observations at a roundtable titled "Electoral System Reform: Progress Review", organised by Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) at the CIRDAP auditorium in the capital.

Addressing the event, Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow at CPD, said the country now stands at a critical juncture where the success of the upcoming election will determine whether it retains a democratic environment.

Debapriya, a noted economist, also unveiled a digital "Reform Tracker" to monitor the implementation of recommendations made by the Electoral Reform Commission. Of the 31 reform proposals tracked, only two have been implemented so far, he said. These include measures to reduce the gender gap and provisions to enrol citizens in the voter list who turn 18 shortly before the election schedule.

Four other proposals show limited progress, while the majority remain untouched, reflecting a widening gap

SEE PAGE 3 COL 7



Traders sorting through heaps of cauliflower, a beloved winter vegetable, at the Bidhimpur market in Rajshahi's Mohanpur upazila yesterday. With good harvests of this year's seasonal produce, including cabbage, gourd, radish and small tomato, prices at the retail market have fallen to Tk 20-40 per kg from Tk 80-120 just days ago. Vegetables from here are shipped to Dhaka, Chattogram and other districts.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Ataur Rahman Bikrampuri held, sent to jail

STAR REPORT

Ataur Rahman Bikrampuri, known for his highly provocative sermons, online speeches, and Facebook posts, was sent to Kashimpur Central Jail yesterday.

Mehedi Hasan, officer in charge of Tongi East Police Station, told The Daily Star, "Ataur Rahman was handed over to the station after the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police arrested him on the home ministry's instructions."

"After receiving him, we completed the necessary procedures, and then he was sent to Kashimpur Central Jail," the OC added.

Regarding the arrest, Taleb Rahman, deputy commissioner of DMP's media and public relations, said Ataur was detained in Narsingdi on Tuesday night at the request of Gazipur Metropolitan Police (GMP).

A GMP press release said that for the sake of law and order, the home ministry, exercising its authority under section 3(1)

SEE PAGE 3 COL 6



Law enforcers' inaction proves govt's complicity

Anu Muhammad tells rally against recent mob attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The law enforcement's inaction during the attacks on The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Chhayanaut and Udichi proves that the government acted as the attackers' associate, Prof Anu Muhammad said at a rally at the National Museum yesterday.

"The police and army were present during the attacks but did nothing. This clearly shows the government stood on the side of those who carried out the destruction," he told the protesters, including students, teachers, office-goers and cultural organisations.

Prof Anu, a member of the Gono Odhikar Parishad, said the attacks were not sudden or a spontaneous act by an angry crowd. "These were planned and targeted attacks. Important documents, musical instruments, computers and institutional property were destroyed and looted systematically."

Referring to the attack on The Daily Star building, he

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

