

## Fire breaks out at rooftop warehouse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out at a warehouse located on the roof of an eight-storey commercial building, Khaddar Bazar Shopping Complex, in the capital's Gulistan yesterday evening.

The fire was reported around 5:28pm, and the first firefighting unit reached the scene at 5:33pm, fire officials said.

Anwarul Islam, an official of the Fire Service and Civil Defence media wing, said nine firefighting units brought the blaze under control around 6:58pm.

No casualties were reported immediately, and the cause of the fire could not be confirmed yet.

## Brick kiln worker killed in workplace accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A worker was killed after being trapped in a machine at a brick kiln in Fatikchhari upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

The incident occurred around 12:30pm at MA Bricks in Painsong.

The deceased -- Raihan Uddin, 18, from Muktagachha in Mymensingh -- had been working at the brick kiln as a machine operator.

Abdul Kaiyum, team leader of the Fatikchhari Fire Service, said Raihan's leg got stuck in a machine while he was feeding soil into it. At one point, the machine pulled him inside, causing fatal injuries.

He died on the spot, the fire service official said.

Fire service personnel later recovered the body from the machine and handed it over to police for further procedures.

A police team, led by Sub-Inspector Mahmudul Hasan of Fatikchhari Police Station, later sent the body to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

DIFE's Chattogram Deputy Inspector General Mahub Hasan told The Daily Star that legal action would be taken as per rules.



PHOTO: STAR

Firefighters in action to douse a fire broke out at a warehouse on the roof of an eight-storey building in Gulistan, Dhaka last evening.

## THANCHI IN BANDARBAN

# Green crops replace tobacco along Sangu

MONG SING HAI MARMA, Bandarban

Farmers along the banks of the Sangu river in Bandarban's Thanchi upazila are gradually moving away from tobacco cultivation, turning instead to green, environment-friendly crops in a shift that is improving livelihoods while easing pressure on forests and fragile hill ecosystems.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw rows of lush



green fields stretching across hill slopes and along riverbanks. Where tobacco had dominated

the landscape for decades as the main cash crop, Chinese peanuts, beans, mustard, watermelons and seasonal vegetables are now being cultivated, marking a transformation driven by economic necessity and growing environmental awareness.

While profitable, tobacco cultivation in the hills takes a heavy environmental toll.

Large quantities of firewood are required to cure tobacco leaves, leading to widespread tree felling from nearby natural forests. This has degraded hillsides, reduced wildlife habitats and contributed to environmental pollution. Tobacco farming has also been harmful to soil quality in the region.

Angsing Nu Marma of

Chiniang Para, who shifted from tobacco to peanut cultivation, said soil conditions in the area have improved since farmers began abandoning tobacco.

Many indigenous farmers shared similar experiences, saying tobacco cultivation involved high costs, constant labour, uncertain markets and long-term environmental damage. As a result, they have returned to traditional and environment-friendly farming practices.

Farmers also said birds have returned and wildlife movement has increased in areas that were once silent, signalling signs of ecological recovery.

The shift is also proving financially viable. According to farmers, peanut cultivation requires comparatively lower investment and less maintenance, generating Tk 1.5-2 lakh in profit after harvest.

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## Fresh clashes erupt in DR Congo's Uvira

AFP, Bukavu

Fresh clashes erupted yesterday near Uvira in the Democratic Republic of Congo's east between the M23 group and pro-government militia, local and security sources said.

The Rwanda-backed M23 militia had seized the strategic city near the border with Burundi earlier this month, shortly after the Congolese and Rwandan governments signed a peace deal in Washington that US President Donald Trump hailed as a "great miracle".

After the US accused Rwanda of violating the peace agreement it signed with its neighbour in early December, M23 said it would withdraw from Uvira. But plainclothes M23 members have stayed behind in the city, according to local and security forces.

Yesterday, "around 6:00 am, two M23 patrol boats were hit in the Kalundu port before catching fire," Martin Mahikiri Mashimango, a local civil society leader, told AFP.

A Congolese security source told AFP on condition of anonymity that "two enemy patrol boats were hit by our drones in Kalundu," a port on Lake Tanganyika.

Clashes between M23 and pro-government forces erupted earlier in the week near Uvira when the Rwanda-backed militant and a pro-Kinshasa militia called Wazalendo traded gunfire "that could be heard across Uvira," Mashimango had told AFP at the time.

## Severe cold disrupts lives

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Met Office. Farmers and agricultural labourers are among the worst affected in the region.

Nazir Ali, 65, a farmer from Milonpur village in Rangpur's Mithapukur upazila, said, "On Thursday afternoon, I started working in my potato field with three labourers, but we could not continue even for an hour."

The thick fog has also severely affected river, rail and road communications.

Sahidul Islam, a boatman at Jatrabari river ghat in Kurigram, said, "Even at noon, we have

to operate very carefully due to dense fog. Boat navigation becomes too risky after 4:00pm."

The worst sufferers are day labourers, the landless poor and people living in shoo areas.

Maneshwari Bala, 67, from Uttar Saptan village in Lalmonirhat, said she has nothing but a thin shawl. "I cannot go outside because of the cold. If it continues like this, I will fall seriously ill," she said.

Local representatives expressed concern over a shortage of blankets.

Bablu Mia, chairman of Begumganj Union

Parishad in Kurigram's Ulipur upazila, said, "In previous years, many private individuals and organisations came forward, but this year that support is largely absent. More government allocation is urgently needed."

According to sources at the Rangpur Divisional Commissioner's Office, so far 86,000 blankets have been allocated for cold-stricken people across five districts -- Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Nilphamari and Gaibandha. Preparations for additional allocations are underway.

## Gaza hospital halts

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hospital's ability to deliver basic services".

He urged local and international organisations to intervene swiftly to ensure a steady supply of fuel.

Despite a fragile truce observed since October 10, the Gaza Strip remains engulfed in a severe humanitarian crisis.

While the ceasefire agreement stipulated the entry of 600 aid trucks per day into Gaza, only 100 to 300 carrying humanitarian assistance can currently enter, according to the United Nations and non-governmental organisations.

The remaining convoys largely transport commercial goods that remain inaccessible to most of Gaza's 2.2 million people.

International medical charity Doctors Without

Borders (MSF) now manages roughly one-third of Gaza's 2,300 hospital beds, while all five stabilisation centres for children suffering from severe malnutrition are supported by international NGOs.

On a daily basis, the vast majority of Gaza's residents rely on aid from UN agencies and international NGOs for survival. Gaza's health sector has been among the hardest hit by the war.

During the fighting, the Israeli military repeatedly struck hospitals and medical centres across Gaza, accusing Hamas of operating command centres there, an allegation the group denied.

In Israel's ensuing military campaign in Gaza, at least 70,942 people -- also mostly civilians -- have been killed, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.

## US launches strikes

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"decisions to be taken by the leadership of the two countries".

The strike comes after Trump in late October began warning that Christianity faces an "existential threat" in Nigeria and threatened to militarily intervene in the West African country over what he says is its failure to stop violence targeting Christian communities.

Reuters reported on Monday the US had been conducting intelligence-gathering flights over large parts of Nigeria since late November.

Nigeria's foreign ministry said the strike was carried out as part of ongoing security cooperation with the United States, involving intelligence sharing and strategic coordination to target militant groups.

"This has led to precision hits on terrorist targets in Nigeria by air strikes in the North West," the ministry

## BPL 12 begins in style

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chipped in with 41 and 33, respectively.

BCB also arranged a cultural programme between the two opening-day matches. Actress Tanjin Tisha's dance performance was followed by a musical show by Fuad Almuqtadir and his team, before the evening concluded with a light show and fireworks.

In the second match of the day, Chattogram Royals avoided further embarrassment by fielding the mandatory two foreign players -- Pakistan's Mirza Tahir Baig and Afghanistan wicketkeeper-batsman Masood Gurbaz -- against

Noakhali Express. According to BPL bylaws, teams must include a minimum of two and a maximum of four overseas players in the playing eleven.

The board took over the franchise a day before the tournament when owners Triangle Services Limited withdrew, citing financial difficulties. Compounding the poor build-up, the captains' photoshoot was cancelled as the trophy failed to arrive in Bangladesh.

However, once the action moved to the field, quality cricket finally brought much-needed relief as the BPL began on an encouraging note.

## Malaysia ex-PM

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state fund Najib co-founded in 2009 during the first of his nine years in power in the Southeast Asian country.

More than \$1 billion allegedly made its way into accounts linked to 72-year-old Najib, who was first imprisoned in 2022 in another IMDB case and has long insisted he has been made the scapegoat for Malaysia's biggest-ever financial scandal.

During a verdict that took five hours to deliver, High Court judge Collin Lawrence Sequerah said Najib's contention that he was repeatedly deceived by others at IMDB was implausible and to believe that would "stretch the imagination into the realms of pure fantasy".

On a day of reckoning for arguably Malaysia's most divisive politician Najib was found guilty of all four counts of abuse of power and all 21 money laundering charges, after a marathon legal battle that included multiple appeals and a partial royal pardon.

# One more held over attacks on Star, Prothom Alo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested another individual in connection with the attack, looting, and arson at the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.

With this, the total number of arrests in the cases rose to 32.

The arrestee, identified as Athahar Ali alias Swapan, 33, was apprehended from Panchagarh on Thursday night, said Tejgaon Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Kya Shi Nyu Marma last night.

The arrest was made with the assistance and information provided by Police Headquarters, said the OC.

He said Athahar had uploaded sensitive videos and photographs of the attacks on the offices of the two national dailies on Facebook in an attempt to incite the public and encouraged others to share them widely. The OC added that Athahar was produced before a court.

## DIPU MURDER

# 18 held so far, four confess before court

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police have so far arrested 18 people in connection with the killing of Dipu Chandra Das in Bhaluka, Mymensingh, following allegations of "hurting religious sentiments" on the night of December 18.

Among them, four have given confessional statements before the court.

Additional Superintendent of Police (Administration) of Mymensingh, Abdullah Al Mamun, confirmed the information to The Daily Star.

Police arrested six more people early Thursday in connection with the case. The arrestees are Taqbir, 22; Ruhul Amin, 42; Noor Alam, 33; Shamim Mia, 28; Selim Mia, 22; and Masum Khalasi, 22.

They were produced before a Mymensingh court on Thursday afternoon with a prayer for five days' remand. The court fixed Sunday for hearing the remand prayer and sent them to jail, said Md Abdullah Al Mamun, additional superintendent of police in Mymensingh.

"The arrested individuals allegedly incited factory workers with slogans, spread the incident outside the factory, and pressured Dipu to resign," the additional superintendent of police said.

Earlier, 12 people were arrested in separate operations conducted by police and RAB on last Saturday and Sunday. The court granted three days' remand for each of them.

Speaking to The Daily Star, ASP Mamun said after the remand period, six of the 12 accused were produced before the court yesterday, and four gave confessional statements under Section 164.

"They admitted their involvement and provided important information. As the incident is very sensitive, we are closely reviewing the statements," he said.

## Any party against

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guardians of the student community, the Jamaat ameer said, "For the last 54 years, pens were snatched from students' hands. Innocent students were misled, and weapons were put in their hands. Educational institutions were turned into mini cantonments."

He said the situation has improved a bit, but urged caution. "Until this shadow is eliminated, Chhatra Shibir must continue its struggle."

Addressing the conference, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar said, "Failing to confront Shibir with logic and ideology, the opposing forces have resorted to lies and propaganda. They have labelled Shibir as anti-independence and 'rogkara', but failed to prove it. In student union elections at four public universities, the people rejected them."

Nurul Islam Saddam was elected president of Shibir for the 2026 session through a vote of members. Sibgatullah was appointed as the new secretary general of the student organisation.

## Tarique may register

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Islam Sarkar, said the EC is fully prepared and sees no complication regarding Tarique's future eligibility to contest elections once he becomes a voter.

He added that security considerations for both Tarique and the EC building will determine whether the registration is conducted at his Gulshan residence or at the EC office, a decision yet to be finalised.

The EC prepared the photo-based voter list in 2008, but Tarique Rahman and his wife, Zubaida Rahman, were not enrolled

In the opening session, Omar Bin Hadi, elder brother of slain Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi, also spoke. He said, "Not as Osman Hadi's brother, but as a fellow fighter, I want to say that it is you who must decide how Bangladesh will be built in the days ahead. If anyone retreats from here or collaborates with a neighbouring state or the deep state to help re-establish fascism in this country, you will be held accountable before Allah."

He added, "May this Bangladesh be freed from hegemony in exchange for Osman Hadi's blood, and may justice be established in this country."

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at the time, as they had been living in London after leaving Bangladesh on September 11 that year.

Zubaida Rahman returned to Dhaka with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on May 6 this year, registered as a voter, and returned to London on June 5.

Tarique Rahman returned to the country on Thursday with his wife and daughter after 6,314 days abroad.

He was not included in subsequent voter lists prepared for the 2014, 2018 and 2024 national elections.