



"The peace agreement is 90 percent ready. Ten percent remains. And that is far more than just numbers."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky

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Dhaka races to heat up as big guns enter the fray

Chiefs of major parties return to ballot battles in capital after decades

MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR

Dhaka braces for a high-voltage election as top leaders of three major parties -- the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and the National Citizen Party -- submitted their nominations on Tuesday.

The chiefs of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Nagarik Oikya, the Biplobi Workers Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Labour Party, Bangladesh Nationalist Front, and the Nationalist Democratic Movement chief, who left his party several days before nomination submission to join the BNP, have also entered the fray.

Alongside them, senior and influential figures from other parties, an enforced disappearance victim, a former national footballer, and a leading campaigner against enforced disappearances are set to contest.

Adding further intensity, heavyweight

independents are preparing to run in multiple constituencies.

A total of 238 aspirants have submitted nominations for the 20 constituencies in the capital, widely regarded as the epicentre of the country's political activities.

Electoral Commission data shows that 19 BNP aspirants, including the party's acting chairman Tarique Rahman (Dhaka-17), have submitted their nomination papers. The party has also extended support to Saiful Huq, general secretary of the Biplobi Workers Party of Bangladesh, for Dhaka-12.

Seventeen Jamaat-e-Islami aspirants, including its Ameer Shafiqur Rahman (Dhaka-15), have submitted nominations. Seven aspirants from NCP, including its Convener Nahid Islam (Dhaka-11), have also entered races in the capital.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Ameer

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As the February 12 election nears, affidavits submitted by candidates open a window into their assets, liabilities, and personal histories. The Daily Star is running stories based solely on these filings.



Tarique earns Tk 6.76 lakh a yr from shares, bonds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman's annual income is Tk 6.76 lakh, all of which comes from shares, bonds and bank deposit schemes, according to his affidavit submitted to the Election Commission.

His wife, Dr Zubaida Rahman, earns Tk 35.6 lakh annually as shown in the latest tax statement, although the affidavit did not mention the source of income.

According to the affidavit, Tarique has Tk 1.23 crore in bank. Of this, Tk 31.6 lakh is held as cash

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Shafiqur earns Tk 3.6 lakh a yr from farming

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman declared an annual income of Tk 3.6 lakh, all from agriculture.

According to his last tax statement, the net worth of his wealth is Tk 1.5 crore, and he holds Tk 60.8 lakh in cash, and has current savings worth Tk 4.9 lakh.

Shafiqur, who holds an MBBS degree, has shares worth Tk 27.2 lakh, and 10 bhoris of gold whose value was shown at Tk 1 lakh. The price of gold today ranges from Tk 1,52,857 to Tk 2,24,182 per bhorti depending on the carat.

Nahid, a 27-year-old graduate from Dhaka University, also paid Tk 1.13 lakh in taxes last year -- nearly Tk 80,000 more than the Jamaat chief Dr Shafiqur Rahman.

According to the affidavit, Nahid earns Tk 16 lakh annually from consultancy, which is more than twice as much as Tarique and over four times more than Shafiqur.

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Jamaat, BNP should work together for next 5 yrs: Shafiqur

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said his party and the BNP should work together over the next five years for the sake of national stability.

"We have said that for the sake of our much-loved country, we worked together in the past and, InshaAllah, we will work together in the future as well. Mr Tarique Rahman and the BNP leadership have expressed the same aspiration," he told reporters after a meeting with the BNP acting chairman at the BNP Chairperson's Gulshan office.

Shafiqur said the two parties also discussed the possibility of working together to restore a stable and favourable environment for the nation over the next five years.

He added that the two parties will sit together after the election slated for February 12.

"Immediately after the election and before the formation of the government, we will sit together with an open mind to discuss national interests, think for the nation, and take decisions accordingly," the Jamaat chief said.

Supply crunch

FROM PAGE 1

During winter, global LPG prices usually rise and imports decline.

This time, the premium cost has nearly doubled, while the Saudi contract price (CP), which serves as the benchmark for setting local prices, has also increased, he said.

The premium includes freight, insurance, vendor margins, handling charges and other logistical costs involved in bringing LPG from suppliers to the importing country.

The premium cost stood between \$90 and \$120 per tonne in October, which rose to \$180 in November, said Amirul, also the managing director of Delta LP Gas.

However, BERC still considers the premium at \$110 in its pricing, Amirul said, adding that imports have dropped by as much as 60 percent in recent weeks.

January's LPG pricing will be announced on Sunday or the following day after a meeting with stakeholders, according to a BERC official.

The price may increase slightly as the Saudi CP rose last month, he said.

January may see a further LPG supply crisis as most companies import LPG under annual contracts and new deals are due to be signed this month, according to Amirul.

BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed said the commission is investigating the price hike and has sent a letter to LOAB asking it to look into the matter and take action.

"They initially told us they are facing supply chain problems. They opened letters of credit but could not book shipments, which resulted in the supply shortage."

He could not specify when the situation would return to normal.

The country requires around 14-15 lakh tonnes of LPG. As much as 98 percent of LPG is imported and marketed by more than 25 private importers.

Tarique earns

FROM PAGE 1

or current savings, while the rest are fixed deposits or savings deposits, largely saved in his daughter Zaima Rahman's name.

His wife Zubaida has Tk 1 crore in bank, of which Tk 66.5 lakh is held as current savings.

The BNP leader mentioned in the affidavit that he will spend Tk 30 lakh in electioneering in Bogura-6 constituency, and the money will come from bank deposits and agriculture.

He is also running from Dhaka-17, but the affidavit for that constituency was not immediately available.

Tarique, 57, has shares worth Tk 68.5 lakh, furniture worth less than Tk 2 lakh and gold worth Tk 2,950.

He owns over 2 acres of land in Bogura, whose worth at the time of purchase was Tk 345 lakh. He also inherited 2.9 decimals of land in Gazipur and Cox's Bazaar from his brother Arafat Rahman Koko, who died in 2015.

Zubaida, on the other hand, has shared ownership of 111.25 decimals of land and an 800 square feet duplex house.

The estimated current value of the land properties has not been mentioned.

Tarique, who has a higher secondary degree, is classified by the National Board of Revenue as a "large taxpayer" and paid a little over Tk 1 lakh in taxes last year, while his wife paid Tk 5.6 lakh.

Between 2004 and 2019, he faced 77 cases filed across 38 districts, 50 of which were for defamation or speech-related offences.

About half the cases were disposed of before 2024, while the rest 42 after August 5, 2024.



Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman calls on BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman to express his condolences over Khaleda Zia's death at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

Dhaka races to heat up as big guns

FROM PAGE 1

Mamunul Haque and Nagarik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna submitted nominations for Dhaka-13 and Dhaka-18 respectively.

Labour Party President Mustafizur Rahman, Amjantar Dal General Secretary Tarek Rahman, and NDM Secretary General Mominul Amin submitted nominations for Dhaka-12.

"The upcoming election in Dhaka is shaping up to be high-voltage. With top leaders from all major political parties contesting here, heightened intensity is only natural," said polls expert Abdul Alim.

He said this calls for special attention from the Election Commission, as constituencies with heavyweight candidates demand enhanced monitoring and security.

"During campaigning, ensuring safety will be crucial, as miscreants may attempt to create disturbances. Given the Election Commission's prior experience with various risks, extra caution during this period is essential."

Alim noted that races in Dhaka carries particular importance as the capital is focal point of national attention. "People from across Bangladesh live in Dhaka, and the outcome resonates far beyond the city, reflecting the sentiments of a diverse population."

PAST ELECTIONS

EC data shows that, except for the 1991 national polls held following the fall of dictator HM Ershad, chiefs of major political parties have rarely contested from Dhaka constituencies.

That year, BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia contested five seats, including Dhaka-5 and Dhaka-9, and won all of them.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina contested three seats, including Dhaka-7 and Dhaka-10, but lost to BNP candidates in both constituencies.

During the 1996, 2001, 2008, 2014, 2018, and 2024 polls, no chiefs of major parties such as the BNP or the AL contested from Dhaka.

In 2008, Ershad won Dhaka-17, while Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon won Dhaka-8. Both were allies of the AL. Menon contested using the AL's electoral symbol, while Ershad used his own party symbol.

Since 1991, it has been observed that the party sweeping Dhaka seats usually goes on to form the government.

In the 1991 polls, the BNP won all 13 Dhaka seats. In the June 1996 election, the AL won eight of 13 seats. In 2001, the BNP again won all 13 seats. In 2008, the AL won 18 of 20 seats, while Ershad and Menon won the remaining two.

In the 2014 polls -- boycotted by many parties including the BNP -- the

AL won 14 of 20 seats, with 10 elected unopposed. Jatiya Party won three, Menon won one unopposed, and AL rebel Haji Mohammad Selim won one. BNP chief Abdul Kalam Azad won Dhaka-17.

In the 2018 polls -- controversial for ballot box stuffing -- the AL won 17 of 20 seats. Alliance partner Jatiya Party won two, and Menon won one. Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman contested Dhaka-15 using the BNP's symbol, as Jamaat was banned at the time, but lost amid allegations of "widespread ballot stuffing on the night before voting."

In the 2024 polls, in which the AL fielded its leaders as independents to make the election appear competitive, AL candidates won 16 of 20 seats in the capital, while the "independents" won the remaining four.

WHO'S RUNNING FROM WHERE

Khandaker Abu Ashfaq (BNP), Mohammad Nazrul Islam (Jamaat), Farhad Hossain (Khelafat Majlis), Nurul Islam (Islami Andolan Bangladesh), Nasir Uddin Molla (Jatiya Party), and Sheikh Md Ali (Labour Party) have submitted their nominations for Dhaka-1.

Antara Selima Huda, daughter of a former BNP leader and founder of Trinamool Congress, also filed her nomination for the same seat as an independent.

Amanullah Aman (BNP), Abdul Haq (Jamaat), and Zahirul Islam (Islami Andolan Bangladesh) submitted nominations for Dhaka-2.

Gayeshwar Chandra Roy (BNP), Shahinur Islam (Jamaat), Bacchu Bhuiyan (Gono Samhati Andolan), and 13 others submitted nominations for Dhaka-3.

For Dhaka-4, eight aspirants, including Tanveer Ahmed (BNP), Syed Joynal Abedin (Jamaat), Mosaddik Lalib (IAB), and Mohammad Mizanur Rahman (independent), filed nominations for Dhaka-4.

Sixteen aspirants, including Nabi Ullah (BNP), Kamal Hossain (Jamaat), SM Shahria (NCP), Atiqur Rahman Nannu Munshi (Khelafat Andolan), and Syed Mohammad Ibrahim (Gono Odhikar Parishad), submitted nominations for Dhaka-5.

Ishraq Hossain (Jamaat), Amir Uddin Ahmed (Jatiya Party), and four others submitted nominations for Dhaka-6.

Fifteen aspirants, including Hamidur Rahman (BNP), Enayet Ullah (Jamaat), and Mohammad Saifuddin Ahmed Milon (Jatiya Party), submitted nominations for Dhaka-7.

Mirza Abbas (BNP), Nasiruddin Patwari (NCP), Kefayet Ullah (IAB), Meghna Alam (Gono Odhikar Parishad), and eight others submitted nominations for Dhaka-8.

For Dhaka-9, 10 aspirants, including Afzal Hossain (Jamaat), Dewan Mohammad Salahuddin (BNP), Chowdhury Hasan Sarwary (LDP), Dilshana Parul (NCP), and seven others submitted nominations for Dhaka-9.

Tamiz Uddin (BNP), Abdur Rouf (Jamaat), Nabil Tasnid (NCP), Ashraf Ali (Khelafat Majlis), and several others submitted nominations for Dhaka-10.

At around 8:00pm last night, Khaleda Zia's younger daughter-in-law Syeda Sharmila Rahman, accompanied by her daughters and other family members, came to Zia Udayan to pay their respects.

Meanwhile, security arrangements at Feroza, the two-storyed duplex house on road number 79 of Gulshan where Khaleda lived after she was evicted from her house on Shaheed Mainul Road in Cantonment, remains unchanged, said Shairul Kabir Khan, member of BNP Media Cell.

Guard posts are still in place, and security personnel continue their duties.

"Many memories of the BNP chairperson are tied to this house. People who have worked here for decades feel that connection very strongly," Shairul said.

Khaleda's absence was overwhelming, said a member of the BNP chairperson's security force.

Fourteen aspirants, including Habibur Rashid (BNP), Kabir Ahmad (Jamaat), Shah Iltekar Ahsan (IAB), Kazi Abul Khair (Jatiya Party), Mohammad Javed Mia (NCP), and Tasnia Jara, who recently resigned from NCP, submitted nominations for Dhaka-9.

Rabiul Alam (BNP), Abdul Awal (IAB), Jashim Uddin Sarkar (Jamaat), and 10 others filed nominations for Dhaka-10.

Apart from NCP Convenor Nahid Islam, MA Kaiyum (BNP), Abdul Kader (Gono Forum), Sheikh Md Fazle Baru Masud (IAB), and eight others filed nominations for Dhaka-11.

Dhaka-12 is set to be a key battleground as top leaders from the Biplobi Workers Party, Labour Party, Amjantar Dal, and NDM submitted nominations. Jamaat's Saiful Alam, Taslima Akhter (Gono Samhati Andolan), Mahamudul Hasan (IAB), and others also entered the race for this seat.

Besides Mamunul Haque, Bobby Hajaj, Murad Hossain (IAB), Mizanur Rahman (Gono Odhikar Parishad), and seven others submitted nominations for Dhaka-13.

Enforced disappearance victim Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem (Jamaat), Mayer Daak Coordinator Sanjida Islam Tuli (BNP), Abu Yusuf (IAB), and others submitted nominations for Dhaka-14.

Nine aspirants, including Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman, Shafiqul Islam Khan (BNP), Sajedul Huq Rubel (CPB), and Shafiqul Islam (Gono Forum), filed nominations for Dhaka-15.

Former national football team captain Aminul Huq (BNP), Abdul Baten (Jamaat), Mamun Hossain (Gono Odhikar Parishad), and 10 others submitted nominations for Dhaka-16.

Tarique Rahman submitted nominations for Bogura-6 and Dhaka-17, marking the first time he is contesting for public office.

Bangladesh Nationalist Front (BNF) President SM Abul Kalam Azad, SM Khaliduzzaman (Jamaat), Mohammad Ullah (IAB), and others also submitted nominations for Dhaka-17.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna (Nagarik Oikya), SM Jahangir Hossain (BNP), Muhammad Ashraful Huq (Jamaat), Ariful Islam (NCP), Anwar Hossain (IAB), and 13 others submitted nominations for Dhaka-18.

Alamuddin Rahman (BNP), Abdul Mannan (Jamaat), and Aminul Huq (BNP), submitted nominations for Bogura-7 and Dhaka-19.

He said Tarique has already taken strong steps, including expelling rebel candidates, which is a positive sign.

Another analyst, Mohammad Mojibul Rahman, professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research, also sees the outpouring of love and compassion for the late prime minister as a plus point for the BNP.

He said the signs are clearly positive that many within the party are supporting the transition of leadership from Khaleda to Tarique.

However, he also pointed to potential challenges that Tarique may face.

"He has to deal with the rebel candidates and identify people within the administration who follow certain political ideologies and will be involved in running the election," he said.

BNP leaders said that even before Khaleda's death, the party was utilising her clean image and political legacy as part of its election strategy.

Now, after her death, the BNP plans to move forward by following Khaleda's

BNP aims to transform

FROM PAGE 1

BNP Standing Committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku said, "After the death of Ziaur Rahman, Khaleda Zia led the BNP forward. Now, after the death of Khaleda Zia, the BNP will move ahead under the leadership of Tarique Rahman."

He said the public participation at Khaleda's namaz-e-janaza carried political significance.

"It proves the love and trust people had for her. That trust has now shifted towards her party, and we are determined to hold on to it."

Political analysts said turning this sympathy and trust into votes would require a clear plan under Tarique's leadership.

They also said how effectively the party manages this transition under Tarique's leadership will shape not only the election outcome but also the BNP's future direction.

Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, former professor of government and politics at Jahangirnagar University, acknowledged that the huge crowd at Khaleda's funeral was a positive sign for the BNP ahead of the polls.

"The BNP would be naive if it fails to utilise Khaleda Zia's charisma. The trust and sympathy it got after her death is definitely going to help the party."

He said Tarique now has to take charge.

"He has to move forward with devising a clear election strategy, keeping Khaleda Zia at the centre of the campaign," he said.

He said Tarique has already taken strong steps, including expelling rebel candidates, which is a positive sign.

Another analyst, Mohammad Mojibul Rahman, professor at Dhaka University's Institute of Education and Research, also sees the outpouring of love and compassion for the late prime minister as a plus point for the BNP.

He said the signs are clearly positive that many within the party are supporting the transition of leadership from Khaleda to Tarique.

However, he also pointed to potential challenges that Tarique may face.

"He has to deal with the rebel candidates and identify people within the administration who follow certain political ideologies and will be involved in running the election," he said.

BNP leaders said that even before Khaleda's death, the party was utilising her clean image and political legacy as part of its election strategy.

Now, after her death, the BNP plans to move forward by following Khaleda's

Prof Sayedur reappointed as special assistant to CA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Prof Sayedur Rahman has been reappointed as special assistant to the chief adviser for the health ministry, just a day after his resignation was accepted.

The Cabinet Division issued a gazette in this regard yesterday, and Sayedur confirmed his reappointment to The Daily Star.

On Tuesday, the cabinet had issued a separate gazette confirming his resignation after it was accepted by the president.

Sources at the health ministry said Sayedur was first appointed as special assistant in November last year on deputation while serving as vice chancellor of Bangladesh Medical University.

268 incidents of rights violations in CHT in 2025 Says PCJSS annual report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The rights situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts deteriorated last year as the government failed to implement the 1997 CHT Peace Accord, according to the Annual Human Rights Report 2025 released yesterday by the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti.

The report said under the interim government no meaningful progress was made in implementing the accord. Nearly two-thirds of the accord, including its core provisions, remain unimplemented even after 28 years, resulting in increased militarisation, communal violence, land grabbing and widespread abuses against the indigenous Jumma people.

PCJSS urged the government to fully and immediately implement the 1997 CHT Peace Accord, end extrajudicial killings and arbitrary arrests, resolve land disputes and ensure justice for victims of communal and sexual violence.

PCJSS recorded 268 incidents of human rights violations in the CHT during 2025, affecting 606 Jumma people. It said security forces, police, Bangladeshi settlers, extremist groups, land grabbers and Rohingya armed groups were identified as perpetrators.

The report documented eight extrajudicial killings, 117 arbitrary arrests, 193 search operations in villages and 26 incidents of violence against women and children.

At least 43 homes and two Buddhist temples were searched and vandalised, it said. The report also alleged that more than 300 acres of land were illegally occupied in 2025.

Among the most serious incidents was the killing of three Marma youths in September in Guimara of Khagrachhari, who were shot while protesting the rape of a Marma schoolgirl, the report said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The human rights situation in the country remained "disappointing and alarming" in 2025 due to the inaction of law enforcement agencies, the government's ineffective response, and the irresponsibility of major political parties, according to the Human Rights Support Society's (HRSS) annual report.

The report, released yesterday, said despite hopes for improvement following the July uprising and the formation of an interim government led by Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, human rights violations not only continued but also escalated last year.

While some reforms were introduced, HRSS described them as insignificant compared to the scale of violations recorded.

Based on reports from 15 national newspapers, the report documented 914 incidents of political violence last year, leaving at least 133 people dead and 7,511 injured.

Clashes stemmed from struggles over political dominance, revenge, disputes over committee formation, election-related conflicts, extortion, and property attacks.

Intra-party clashes within the BNP accounted for 486 incidents, resulting in 82 deaths and 4,716 injuries. Clashes between BNP and other parties, including the Awami

League, Jamaat, and NCP, caused hundreds more casualties.

Extremists and criminal groups carried out at least 169 attacks on political leaders and activists, killing 108 and injuring 189. Over 250 people were shot, and thousands of homes, offices, businesses, and vehicles were vandalised, looted, or set on fire.

AT A GLANCE

- 914 incidents of political violence leave 133 dead
- 292 incidents of mob violence kill 168 people
- 318 attacks on journalists
- 2,047 women and girls face violence
- 1,371 child abuse cases recorded, including 288 deaths
- 40 killed in police actions; 92 detainees die in custody

Rising political tensions ahead of the upcoming election triggered numerous clashes, attacks, vandalism, and arson targeting potential candidates and aggrieved party supporters. Protests, road blockades, strikes, and attacks on homes and offices intensified concerns.

Between October and December, 54 election-related incidents left

three people dead and 494 injured.

Notably, on December 18, Sharif Osman Hadi, a July frontliner and potential candidate for Dhaka-8, died from injuries sustained when he was shot in broad daylight on December 12.

Earlier, BNP activist Sarwar Hossain was killed during a campaign rally in Chattogram on November 5, while three others, including BNP candidate Ershad Ullah, were injured. In Mymensingh-3, student wing activist Tanzeen Ahmed was killed in intra-party clashes.

The report recorded 292 incidents of mob violence and public lynching, leaving 168 dead and more than 248 injured. Many victims were humiliated, beaten, or burned over suspicion, rumours, or allegations of theft or sacrifice across the country.

Journalists faced 318 attacks affecting at least 539 individuals. Three journalists were killed, 273 were injured, 57 extorted, 83 threatened, and 17 arrested, while 107 journalists faced legal cases across 34 incidents.

Following Hadi's death, mobs attacked the offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star in Dhaka, vandalising, looting, and setting the buildings on fire. New Age Editor Nurul Kabir was also harassed during the incident.

Several journalists, including

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Fuel prices cut by Tk 2 per litre for January

New rates for diesel, petrol, octane and kerosene take effect from January 1



STAR REPORT

The government has announced a Tk 2 per litre reduction in the prices of diesel, octane, petrol and kerosene for January 2026.

According to the revised rates, diesel will now sell at Tk 102 per litre, down from Tk 104, octane at Tk 122 from Tk 124, petrol at Tk 118 from Tk 120, and kerosene at Tk 114 from Tk 116. A government gazette issued by the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources said the new prices will come into effect from January 1.



Braving dense fog and a biting winter chill, daily wage workers crowd onto a human haulier called nosim as they head towards Khulna city in search of work. Travelling from surrounding villages, they take up various day-labour jobs to earn between Tk 500 and Tk 700 a day. The photo was taken at the Khulna City Bypass Road intersection yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

BNP moves to finalise candidates for Khaleda's seats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said alternative candidates nominated by the party for the three constituencies allocated to chairperson Khaleda Zia would become the official BNP candidates if their nominations pass scrutiny.

He also said there is no legal scope to suspend or defer the election following her death.

"Since our party has nominated alternative candidates for the seats allocated to her, they will become the BNP candidates if their nominations pass scrutiny," he told reporters at the party chairperson's Gulshan office.

Khaleda was nominated by BNP for three constituencies - Dinajpur-3, Feni-1 and Bogura-7 - in the upcoming 13th parliamentary election.

The party also fielded alternative candidates due to her critical health condition.

For Feni-1, Dhaka city south unit convener Rafiqul Alam Majnu; for Bogura-7, local BNP leader Morshed Alom; and for Dinajpur-3, BNP leader Sayed Jahangir Alom submitted nomination papers.

Explaining the legal position, Salahuddin said if the BNP chief had died after scrutiny of nominations or allocation of election symbols, legal complications could have arisen and the question of postponement might have come up.

"But that is not the situation now. She passed away before the scrutiny process. Legally, she no longer exists as a legal entity, so her nomination paper will not be valid during scrutiny," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

3 killed in Dhaka road crashes Four die as truck overturns in Rajshahi



A sand-laden truck overturned in Rajshahi's Putia amid dense fog yesterday morning, killing at least four people.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people, including a police officer, were killed in two road accidents on Malibagh-Mouchak and Khilgaon flyovers in Dhaka on Wednesday night and early yesterday.

Two people died in a head-on collision between a CNG-run auto-rickshaw and a motorcycle on the Malibagh-Mouchak flyover around 4:45am yesterday, police said.

The deceased are auto-rickshaw driver Noyon Talukdar, 60, and motorcyclist Yasin Arafat Ashik, 21, a college student.

Ramna Police Station Sub-Inspector Sushanta Kumar said the collision occurred near the Fortune Market crossing on the flyover, leaving both vehicles severely damaged.

Police rescued the two victims in a critical condition and took them to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared them dead. The bodies were sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

In another incident, a police official was killed after a covered van hit his motorcycle on Khilgaon flyover around 11:45pm on Wednesday.

Rubel Haque, 32, a nayek of the Bangladesh Police who was posted at Rajarbagh Police Lines, died on the spot, said Khilgaon Police Station OC Md Shafiqul Islam.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8



সাম্মিলানো ইসলামী ব্যাংক
SAMILANO ISLAM BANK PLC
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শরীয়াভিত্তিক বাণিজ্যিক ব্যাংক

সাম্মিলানো ইসলামী ব্যাংক প্রিলিমি

আমানতের
সুবক্ষা

লেনদেনের
নিষ্ঠায়তা

বিনিয়োগের
বিনামূল্য

Confiscate 3.872 acres of land of Shah Alam's wife

Court issues order over graft allegations

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday confiscated 3.872 acres of land in Dhaka's Bhatarai and Gulshan areas owned by Afroza Begum, wife of Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan Shah Alam, in connection with corruption allegations.

Judge (in-charge) Md Alamgir of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka passed the order after Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Md Jahangir Alam, also the head of a 10-member inquiry team, submitted an application in this regard, said bench assistant Reaz Hossain.

Of 3.872 acres of land, 3.377 acres are located in Bhatarai, while the remaining 0.495 acre is in Gulshan where a multiple building is situated, said the ACC application.

According to the application, during the course of the inquiry, information has

been obtained indicating that the person concerned [Ahmed Akbar Sobhan Shah Alam] in the allegations has acquired illegal assets in his own name as well as in the names of his family members in various places in Dhaka and across the country, and also abroad after laundering a huge amount of money.

According to reliable sources, it has been learned that Afroza who is linked to the allegations, is attempting to transfer immovable properties owned by her. For the filing of a case and submission of the charge sheet after completion of the inquiry and to ensure a fair trial, it is necessary to seize her immovable properties.

In October last year, the court issued a travel ban on Ahmed Akbar Sobhan Shah Alam, Afroza Begum, and their six family members in connection with corruption allegations.

Mild cold wave sweeps parts of country: BMD

UNB, Dhaka

A mild cold wave is sweeping over parts of the country and it may abate in some places, Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) said yesterday.

According to the Met office bulletin, "A mild cold wave is sweeping over the districts of Madaripur, Gopalganj, Rajshahi, Pabna, Sirajganj, Dinajpur, Panchagarh, Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Cumilla, Khulna, Satkhira, Jashore, Chuadanga, Kushtia, Barishal and Bhola and it may abate from some places."

Weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country.

Moderate to thick fog may occur at many places over the country from midnight to morning and it may continue at places till noon.

Air navigation, inland river transport and road communication may be disrupted temporarily due to thick fog.

Night temperature may rise slightly and day temperature may rise by 1-2°C over the country. Ridge of Sub-continental high extends up to West Bengal and adjoining area. Seasonal low lies over South Bay, extending its trough to northeast Bay.

Plot for Sale

A 6.22 katha residential plot is available for sale in Gulshan-02, very close to Gulshan Society Lake Park. Only interested and genuine buyers are requested to. Contact: 01957-080049

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15 years of experience Math teacher wants to teach O/A Level (Cambridge and Edexcel). Mock text, Q/P solve, Guarantee A. B.Sc (Hons), M.Sc (Math), DU. Dipak Barman 01777846252, 01712 018889

Disappointing and alarming

FROM PAGE 3

former Jatiya Press Club president Shawkat Mahmud and Anis Alamgir, were detained under security and anti-terror laws.

Meanwhile, a female journalist was raped in Dhaka in March.

Last year, at least 2,047 women and girls were victims of violence, including 828 victims of sexual assault, and 474 (57 percent) of them were under 18. Gang rapes affected 179 women and girls, with 28 killed and 10 dying by suicide.

Another 414 suffered sexual harassment, including 236 children. Dowry-related violence claimed 35 lives, injured 32, and drove 4 to suicide.

Domestic violence caused 383 deaths, 133 injuries, and 194 suicides. Acid attacks killed two and injured two.

Child abuse cases totalled 1,371, including 288 deaths and 1,083 suffering physical or psychological abuse.

In 2025, at least 244 cases were filed against the ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, the Awami League, and other party leaders, naming 11,935

accused and listing 42,523 as unidentified.

Over 50,000 people were arrested in various cases or joint operations, mostly from AL and its affiliated organisations. At least 47 members of the banned outfit Hizb ut-Tahrir were also arrested.

Under the Cybersecurity Act 2023 and Cyber Protection Ordinance 2025, 24 people were arrested and 54 charged in 27 cases.

Law enforcers disrupted 47 assemblies, imposed Section 144, and arrested 36 people.

Forty people were killed in police custody, torture, shootings, gunfights, or clashes with law enforcement -- six in clashes or alleged gunfights, 12 through torture, 12 in custody, and 10 shot dead. At least 30 prisoners and 62 detainees died in custody due to torture, suicide, or torture.

Unsafe conditions and a lack of protective equipment led to at least 168 workplace deaths. Employers killed four domestic workers.

HRSS Executive Director Izazul Islam urged coordinated efforts to strengthen the rule of law, democratic practices, and human rights protection.

He warned that failure to address mob violence, deaths in custody, election violence, and restrictions on free expression could further worsen the situation.

At the India-Bangladesh border, 30 were shot dead, two beaten to death, 39 injured, and 63 detained by the BSF, with seven Bangladeshis killed by Indian civilians.

At least 3,493 people were pushed back into Bangladesh, and the Indian Coast Guard seized 143 fishermen in the Bay.

At the Myanmar border,

In another incident, a 19-year-old Chakma youth died after being beaten in Rangamati. No criminal cases or prosecutions followed these deaths, it added.

It also said that in Bandarban, the entire Bawm community faced collective restrictions, requiring permission for travel, farming and even buying daily necessities.

In September, coordinated attacks on Jumma neighbourhoods in Khagrachhari and Guimara left three people dead, injured more than 20 others and burned dozens of homes and shops, causing losses estimated at Tk 250 million, it added.

Police later filed cases against indigenous victims instead of the attackers, naming hundreds of unnamed Jumma people

two were shot and injured by the Arakan Army. A landmine planted by the Arakan Army injured 12 Bangladeshis and killed one. Also, 176 fishermen were abducted.

The report documented at least 28 attacks on religious minorities, resulting in one death, 16 injuries, damage to six temples, 37 idols, 38 homes, and five land seizures.

Over 56 attacks on shrines across the country left more than 50 injured, including one death among shrine visitors and Baul followers.

HRSS also recorded 359 incidents of worker abuse, causing 96 deaths and 1,021 injuries due to labour unrest, worker-police clashes, and assaults.

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two

GAZA STRIP Israel vows to enforce ban on 37 NGOs

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel said yesterday 37 international NGOs operating in Gaza had not complied with a deadline to meet "security and transparency standards," in particular disclosing information on their Palestinian staff, and that it "will enforce" a ban on their activities.

The groups will now be required to cease their operations by March 1, which the UN has warned will exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory.

"Organisations that have failed to meet required security and transparency standards will have their licenses suspended," the Ministry of Diaspora Affairs said yesterday.

Several NGOs said the requirements contravene international law or endanger their independence.



Crew members of the "Ocean Viking" rescue ship assist a migrant onto a RHIB (rigid inflatable boat) during an evacuation from the oil tanker "Maridive 703" in the search-and-rescue zone of international waters between Malta and Tunisia, Wednesday.

PHOTO: AFP

128 journalists killed worldwide in 2025: IFJ

AFP, Brussels

A total of 128 journalists were killed around the world in 2025, more than half of them in the Middle East, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said yesterday.

The grim toll, up from 2024, "is not just a statistic, it's a global red alert for our colleagues," IFJ General Secretary Anthony Bellanger told AFP. The press group voiced particular alarm over the situation in the Palestinian territories, where it recorded 56 media professionals killed in 2025 as Israel's offensive continued in Gaza.

"We've never seen anything like this: so many deaths in such a short time, in such a small area," Bellanger said. Journalists were also killed in Yemen, Ukraine, Sudan, Peru, India and elsewhere.

Bellanger condemned what he called "impunity" for those behind the attacks. "Without justice, it allows the killers of journalists to thrive," he warned.

Meanwhile, the IFJ said that across the globe 533 journalists were currently in prison -- a figure that has more than doubled over the past half-decade.

China once again topped the list as the worst jailer of reporters with 143 behind bars, including in Hong Kong, where authorities have been criticised by Western nations for imposing national security laws quashing dissent.

Deal to end Ukraine war '10 percent' away

Says Zelensky; 20 killed in Ukrainian drone attack: Moscow

AGENCIES

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Wednesday his country was "10 percent" away from a deal to end the war with Russia, but cautioned that the most important issues were unresolved and warned against rewarding Moscow.

US-led efforts to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II have gained pace in recent weeks, but both sides remain at odds over the key issue of territory in a post-war settlement.

In his New Year's Eve address, Zelensky said his country wanted an end to the war but not at "any cost", and that any agreement needed strong security guarantees to deter Russia from invading again, reports AFP.

"The peace agreement is 90 percent ready. Ten percent remains. And that is far more than just numbers," Zelensky said in the address,

posted on his Telegram account.

"Those are the 10 percent that will determine the fate of peace, the fate of Ukraine and Europe," he added.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian drone attack on a Russian-held part of Ukraine's southern Kherson region has killed at least 20 people, a Moscow-installed governor and Russian authorities said yesterday.

"Three UAVs struck a cafe and hotel on the Black Sea coast in Khorly. According to preliminary reports, more than 50 people were injured, and 24 people were killed," Vladimir Saldo said on Telegram.

A Russian drone attack damaged power infrastructure in several Ukrainian regions overnight, Ukraine's energy ministry said yesterday.

Saudi-backed forces to deploy in seized territories Say Yemen separatists

AFP, Al Mukalla

Separatists from Yemen's Southern Transitional Council said yesterday that Saudi-aligned government forces would enter territories seized by the UAE-backed group, in a step that appeared unlikely to satisfy Riyadh after it repeatedly demanded their full withdrawal.

A surprise offensive by the STC, in which the separatists took control of resource-rich Hadramawt and Mahra provinces last month, has brought the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, officially allies in Yemen, to a point of unprecedented escalation.

On Tuesday, the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen struck what it said was a shipment of Emirati weapons destined for the separatists, a claim Abu Dhabi has denied, and called for STC forces to withdraw.

In its statement yesterday, the STC said it would continue to operate in the regions but had agreed to the deployment of the Riyadh-backed National Shield government force in the areas.

"Today, we launched an operation to integrate the southern National Shield forces so that they can assume the responsibilities and missions that fall to our armed forces," they announced.

The statement said a National Shield brigade would be deployed in "areas of the Hadramawt and Mahra governorates, as agreed".

ECONOMIC WOES One killed in Iran protests

REUTERS, Dubai

One man was killed in Iran on Wednesday night, state television said, the first death reported after days of demonstrations over high inflation that mark the most significant unrest since nationwide protests three years ago.



State media said yesterday the person killed was a member of the paramilitary Basij militia-- naming him as 21-year-old Amirhossam Khodayari Fard.

The incident in Kuhdasht in Iran's western Lorestan province marks an escalation in the unrest that has spread across the country since shopkeepers began protests on Sunday.

University of Dhaka
e-GP Tender Notice

e-GP Tender is invited in the National e-GP System (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of medicine mentioned below under University of Dhaka.

SL No	Tender ID	Package No	Name of Work	e-Tender Last Selling date & Time	e-Tender Closing date & Time
1.	I203834	DU/MC/Procurement/2025-2026/OTM/G-2	Procurement of Medicine	18-Jan-2026 17.00	19-Jan-2026 12.30

[Signature]

Chief Medical Officer
Shahid Buddijibe Dr Mohammad Mortaza Medical Center
University of Dhaka

GD-9

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Jamalpur Public Works Division
Jamalpur
Phone: 02-997772417
E-mail: ee_jmlpr@pwd.gov.bd

2nd Corrigendum Notice

Date: 01-01-2026

Memo No. 25.36.3900.164.07.001.26/1092
e-Tender is invited in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, Jamalpur PWD Division, Jamalpur for the procurement of:

Tender Description			
Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of work	Tender documents last selling date & time
1	1195341	"Establishment of Jamalpur Medical College & Hospital and Nursing College, Jamalpur. Sub-Head: Construction of Hospital Building (6-Storied Building with 10-Storied Foundation) with a Basement Floor including Civil, Sanitary and Electrical Work. FY-2025-26"	11-Jan-2026 17:00:00

Corrigendum:		
Area of Corrigendum	Old value	New value
Notice	2. Minimum Specific Experience as a Contractor shall be Successful Completion of at least 1 (one) number of 5 (Five) Storied RCC Building with a Single Basement (B1+5) that covers Civil, Sanitary and Electrification Works of value Tk 140.00 (One Hundred and Forty) Crore.	2. Minimum Specific Experience as a Contractor shall be Successful Completion of at least 1 (one) number of 5 (Five) Storied RCC Building with a Single Basement (B1+5) that covers Civil, Sanitary and Electrification Works of value Tk 140.00 (One Hundred and Forty) Crore within the Last 10 (Ten) Years counting backward from the date of publication of the IFT.
ITT Clause-13.1(b)	Minimum Specific Experience as a Prime Contractor shall be Successful Completion of at least 1 (one) number of 5 (Five) Storied RCC Building with a Single Basement (B1+5) that covers Civil, Sanitary and Electrification Works of value Tk 140.00 (One Hundred and Forty) Crore in a Single Contract in any Government/Semi-Government/Autonomous Organization of Bangladesh within the Last 5 (Five) Years counting backward from the date of publication of the IFT.	Minimum Specific Experience as a Prime Contractor shall be Successful Completion of at least 1 (one) number of 5 (Five) Storied RCC Building with a Single Basement (B1+5) that covers Civil, Sanitary and Electrification Works of value Tk 140.00 (One Hundred and Forty) Crore in a Single Contract in any Government/Semi-Government/Autonomous Organization of Bangladesh within the Last 10 (Ten) Years counting backward from the date of publication of the IFT.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. This Corrigendum is part and parcel of the tender. All other conditions will remain unchanged.

[Signature]
Md. Rokonuzzaman
Executive Engineer
Jamalpur PWD Division
Jamalpur

GD-02

Office of the Project Director
Economically Lost Lifecycle Rubber Tree Felling, Reforestation and Rubber Processing Modernization Project
Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation
73, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000
www.bfidc.gov.bd

Date: 01-01-2026

e-GP Tender Notice (OTM)

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 bellow:

SL	Description	Tender ID	Last Selling Date & Time	Last Date & Time of Tender Security Submission	Closing & Opening Time & Date
01	Hiring of 01 (one) double cabin pickup for project office, project site monitoring and supervision work.	1205749	11-01-2026 14:00	12-01-2026 13:00	12-01-2026 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)) 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 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).

[Signature]
01-01-26
(Md. Masudur Rahman Bhuiyan)
Project Director (Joint Secretary)
Economically Lost Lifecycle Rubber Tree Felling, Reforestation and Rubber Processing Modernization Project
Phone: 02-223382979
E-mail: bfidc.project@gmail.com

GD-05

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Munshiganj Road Division
Dashkani, Panchasar (Mukterpur), Munshiganj.
Phone # 02-998847019
E-mail: ee munrhd@gmail.com

Date: 01/01/2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in The National e-Gp system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by the Executive Engineer, RHD, Munshiganj Road Division, Munshiganj for the procurement of

SL No	Tender ID & Package No	e-Tender Description	Last Selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time	Opening Date & Time
1	1205590 02-Dev-e-GP/Mundiv/2025-2026	Construction of 151.90m (1x25.90m+1x99.00m+1x25.90m) Span Steel BUG Truss / I-Girder Bridge (Kunderbazar Bridge) at 6th Km (Ch.5+570m) and Construction Of 25.90m (1x25.00m) Span Steel Composite I-Girder Bridge (Baroipara Bridge) at 6th Km (Ch.5+804m) on Munshiganj (Hatinara) - Kunderbazar - Sreenagar (Sonabari) Road (Z-8004) under Munshiganj Road Division, Munshiganj (WP-34)	01-02-2026 17:00	02-02-2026 12:00	02-02-2026 12:00

1. The above tender is 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, please register on e-Gp system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).
2. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National E-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Banks Branch.
3. Further information and guidelines are available in the National E-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

[Signature]
01-01-26
(Masud Mahmud Simon)
ID No-602165
Executive Engineer, RHD
Munshiganj Road Division.

GD-06

star BUSINESS



Merging banks start repaying depositors

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The five troubled banks under the process of being merged into the country's largest state run Islamic lender began repaying depositors yesterday, with no visible rush at their branches.

Most branches of the five lenders reported normal banking activity, hinting at growing depositor confidence in the newly formed Sammilito Islami Bank PLC.

The five banks are the Export Import Bank of Bangladesh (EXIM Bank), First Security Islami Bank, Global Islami Bank, Social Islami Bank and Union Bank.

Signboards bearing the name Sammilito Islami Bank have been installed at the branches and head offices of the merging lenders, while their original signboards have also been kept in place.

Under instructions from the Bangladesh Bank (BB), customers are currently allowed to withdraw up to Tk 200,000 from their savings and current accounts.

Visits to several branches in Dhaka's Motijheel area yesterday found no unusual crowds, with customers seen carrying out regular banking transactions.

At the corporate branch of Social Islami Bank in Motijheel, only five to six customers were seen conducting transactions.

Muhammed Asaduzzaman Miah, manager of the branch, told The Daily Star that clients are permitted to withdraw funds as per their demand, but many are choosing not to do so.

"I think customers are trusting the bank, as it is being merged into a state-run institution," he said.

He added that the branch holds deposits of around Tk 300 crore, the majority of which belong to individual customers.

Govt lowers interest rates on savings certificates

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has reduced interest rates on all major national savings certificates (NSCs) for the next six months, aligning them with prevailing market interest rates.

Under the revised structure, the highest return on savings instruments will now be 10.59 percent, while the lowest will be 8.74 percent, according to an announcement by the Internal Resources Division on December 30.

The new rates came into effect yesterday. However, the revised rates will apply only to new investments made after January 1, 2026. Investors who purchased savings certificates earlier will continue to receive returns at the rates applicable at the time of issuance.

This is the second reduction in interest rates within six months. Under the current policy, NSC interest rates are reviewed every six months.

Under the new structure, investors with smaller investments – up to Tk 7.5 lakh – will receive comparatively higher returns than those investing above that threshold.

Previously, the most popular instrument, the Family Savings Certificate, offered investors a return of 11.93 percent on investments of up to Tk 7.5 lakh upon maturity after five years. This rate has now been reduced to 10.54 percent.

For the same amount of investment, the Pensioner Savings Certificate offers an interest rate of 10.59 percent, down from 11.98 percent. Five-year Bangladesh Savings Certificate offers 10.44 percent, down from 11.83 percent.

The five-year Bangladesh Savings Certificate now offers 10.44 percent, down from 11.83 percent for up to Tk 7.5 lakh.

For all three above-mentioned savings instruments, investments exceeding Tk 7.5 lakh will provide a return of 10.41 percent, down from 11.80 percent.

Returns on the quarterly interest-based savings certificates have also been cut. Investors with up to Tk 7.5 lakh will now receive 10.48 percent, while those above the limit will earn 10.43 percent.

Interest rates on Wage Earner Development Bonds have also been reduced across all investment slabs, with returns now ranging from 11.20 percent for lower tiers to 8.40 percent for the highest investment bracket.

Remittances hit record \$32b in 2025, shoring up reserves

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladeshis abroad sent home a record \$32.8 billion in 2025, according to central bank data, as economists say more expatriates are now using formal banking channels, with informal routes siphoning off less since the August political changeover.

The historic high inflows offered a much-needed tonic to the country's fragile external balance.

The amount is 22 percent higher than the \$26.88 billion recorded in the previous year, according to Bangladesh Bank (BB) data released yesterday.

In December alone, remittances reached \$3.22 billion, the highest monthly inflow in nine months, up 22 percent from the same month last year.

Foreign currency streaming in helped lift gross reserves to \$33.8 billion on December 30, up from \$25 billion a year earlier.

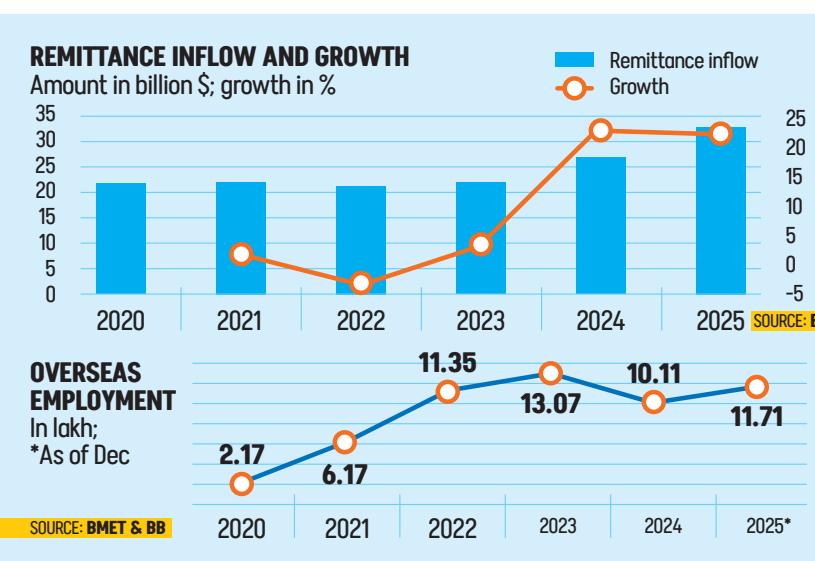
After the fall of the previous government, remittance inflows started to rise every month. Previously, demand for hundi was growing amid large sums of money reportedly being siphoned abroad

"Remittances have been a key driver for the recent increase in reserves, indicating improved performance of the external sector," said Mohammed Nurul Amin, former chairman of the Association of Bankers Bangladesh (ABB).

"Forex reserve figures are now closely watched, as a rise strengthens confidence and attracts foreign interest," he said.

He hoped that the trend could ease pressure on the external sector in the months ahead.

During the July-December period last year, expatriates sent home \$16.26 billion, an 18.1 percent increase on the same period in 2024, according to the BB data.



Industry insiders said government incentives, banks' efforts to attract foreign funds, and the decline of the hundi system – an illegal yet popular cross border transfer mechanism – helped push inflows higher after the political changeover in August 2024.

After the fall of the previous government, remittance inflows started to rise every month. Previously, demand for hundi was growing amid large sums of money reportedly being siphoned abroad. That stopped under the interim government.

Mohammed Nurul Amin, former independent director and chairman of Global Islami Bank, said incentives have played a major role in boosting the inflow. "As a result, people are sending more money through formal channels," he added.

Remittance senders currently get a 2.5 percent government incentive.

He also pointed to a psychological change after the fall of the previous government. "People believe that corruption is no longer as prevalent as before," he said, adding that overseas employment has risen, with more skilled workers leaving home for jobs abroad.

Between January and December 28 last year, as many as 1,116,725 men and women went overseas. In 2023, 1,303,453 workers went abroad, while

1,011,969 left the country for overseas jobs in 2024, according to official data.

According to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training, Saudi Arabia welcomed 744,619 Bangladeshi workers, Qatar 106,805, and Singapore 69,491 during the first 11 months and 28 days of the year.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, said more expatriates are using official channels because less money is now being siphoned abroad, reducing demand for hundi transfers.

"Higher reserves boost confidence in the exchange rate, thereby limiting depreciation," said the economist. "Although investment may rise after the election, the strong reserve position should prevent pressure on the exchange rate."

In December, Islami Bank Bangladesh received the highest inflow at \$671 million, followed by Bangladesh Krishi Bank with \$353 million, Janata Bank \$281 million, and BRAC Bank \$261 million, showed BB data.

With rising remittances easing demand for US dollars, the central bank purchased over \$3 billion in the current fiscal year, a reflection of ongoing efforts to shore up foreign exchange reserves.

Govt sharply cuts taxes on handset imports, manufacturing

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government has sharply cut taxes on mobile phone imports and local manufacturing, responding to a long standing demand from traders and aiming to curb the use of unofficial and smuggled handsets while stabilising prices.

The overall import duty on mobile phones has been reduced to 43.43 percent from 61.8 percent, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam announced yesterday at a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy following an Advisory Council meeting.

Besides, customs duty on imported handsets has been slashed to 10 percent from 25 percent, while that on locally manufactured phones has been lowered to 5 percent from 10 percent.

Alam said the tax incidence on locally manufactured phones would also decline significantly.

The government expects the measures to boost local manufacturing, attract investment, lower prices, and curb the inflow of used and refurbished phones, he added.

The move coincided with the launch of the National Equipment Identity Register (NEIR) yesterday, a system designed to identify and block unauthorised mobile phones.

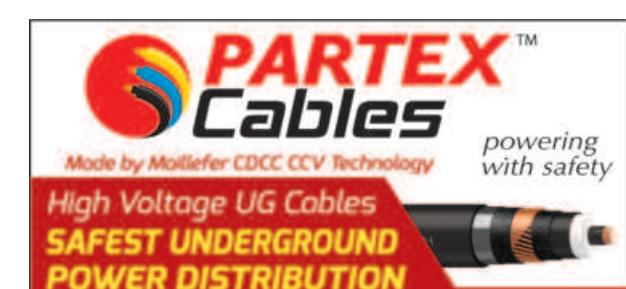
According to data from the Mobile Phone Industry Owners' Association and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), grey-market smartphones now account for 40 percent to 50 percent of the market.

Estimates show that 93 percent of premium phones of one brand in use in Bangladesh last year entered through the grey market, while the figure for mid-range models stood at around 69 percent, The Daily Star reported last month.

BTRC OFFICE VANDALISED AMID NEIR LAUNCH

Amid the NEIR launch, a group vandalised the BTRC office in Agargaon, Dhaka, around 4:25pm yesterday, breaking the glass wall at the front of the building.

DMTP's Tejgaon Division Deputy Commissioner Ibne Mizan said a few people were detained from the scene for questioning and that they initially appeared to be mobile phone traders. Besides, the Bangladesh Army arrested 28 people on the spot.



A BTRC official said mobile phone traders had gathered outside the office around 3pm to protest the NEIR launch, and some leaders were invited inside for discussions. Shortly afterwards, however, several individuals were seen throwing bricks and vandalising the premises.

Shamim Mollah, senior vice-president of the Mobile Business Community, denied any involvement of mobile phone traders in the vandalism, suggesting that a group of curious individuals or customers might have been responsible.

Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser with executive authority over telecom and ICT, said customs duties on legally imported phones had been reduced significantly.

"Despite this, those who attacked and vandalised the BTRC office are in no way above the law," he said, adding that all those involved would be brought to justice.

He also said strict operations would begin at land ports and airports to curb illegal handset imports and stressed that NEIR is vital for digital security.

BTRC Chairman Major General Md Emdad ul Bari said some traders wanted to illegally import refurbished or used phones.

Any decision on the matter rests with the commerce ministry and is beyond the regulator's jurisdiction, he also noted.

Chilly spell raises disease risk for winter crops

SUKANTA HALDER

As a cold wave continues to grip the country, agricultural experts are warning that certain crops could face serious risks from the unusual weather, while others may benefit and thrive under these conditions.

According to a press release issued yesterday by the Bangladesh Agro-Meteorological Information Service under the Department of Agricultural Extension, the cold weather is expected to affect multiple crops.

Potatoes are particularly vulnerable to late blight, while rice seedlings in seedbeds may be affected by scorch disease. Onions and garlic face tipburn, and onions can also develop purple blotch. Pulses are at risk of leaf spot, rust, and *Stemphylium* diseases. Mustard crops may develop white mould and leaf spot before flowering.

Limu Akter, senior scientific officer of the vegetable division at the Horticultural Research Center of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute, said the current cold and damp weather is highly unfavourable for some winter vegetables, as it encourages the spread of serious diseases such as late blight and powdery mildew.

"Crops like potatoes, tomatoes, capsicum, and eggplant are particularly vulnerable, while cucurbit crops face an increased risk from powdery mildew. Prolonged adverse weather can stunt plant growth and greatly increase disease risks," she added.

Mahbuba Begum, principal scientific officer of the Tuber Crop Research Center in Gazipur, said, "The prevailing weather conditions are ideal for the initiation and rapid spread of late blight in potatoes."

"High humidity and cool conditions significantly increase the risk of infection, making potatoes the most vulnerable crop at this time. Other crops, such as sweet potatoes and mustard, are not facing major threats under the current conditions."

Begum advised, "To effectively control late blight, farmers should follow recommended management practices, including the regular application of fungicides at seven-day intervals."

"Timely preventive action is essential, as the



Farmers shield Boro seedlings with polythene as the cold wave threatens crops like potatoes, tomatoes, and onions, risking disease and stunted growth while some crops may thrive. The photo was taken in Manda upazila of Naogaon on December 31.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

severe enough to cause measurable losses.

"The situation would have been far more damaging if the rice had already been transplanted into open fields. At present, only Boro rice in seedbeds is being managed."

COLD WAVE CONTINUES

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), a cold wave is currently sweeping over 17 districts, with moderate to dense fog possible in some areas.

Earlier on December 26, the Met Office reported that a mild cold wave had hit Jashore, Chuadanga, Gopalganj, Rajshahi, Pabna, Sirajganj, and Nilphamari.

Shahnaz Sultan, a meteorologist at BMD, said, "The unusually cold conditions in the country began on December 25. There was a brief period of sunlight on December 27, but persistent fog and overcast skies on December 28 and 29 prevented daytime warming."

"During this period, maximum daytime temperatures dropped significantly, while nighttime temperatures remained largely unchanged. The lack of sunlight made the days feel much colder, intensifying the impact of the cold spell."

MCCI, BCI condole Kheda Zia's death

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Two major trade bodies have expressed deep condolences over the passing of Kheda Zia, a three-time prime minister of Bangladesh.

In a press release yesterday, the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI), said, "Her demise marks the end of a significant chapter in Bangladesh's political history, leaving behind a legacy of leadership, resilience, and profound national impact."

Kheda passed away on December 30 while undergoing treatment at Evercare Hospital. She was 80. She was laid to rest beside her husband, former Bangladesh president Ziaur Rahman, the following day at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital.

In a separate statement, the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) said the nation will remember Kheda's role in expanding education, particularly women's education, and in creating a social safety net.

BCI President Anwar-Ul-Alam Chowdhury (Parvez) said during her tenure, the foundation of industrialisation laid through the introduction of a free-market economy and encouragement of the private sector helped strengthen Bangladesh's economy. "With her death, the country and the nation have lost a dedicated patriotic leader."

A year of living dangerously

Govt must restore order in the run-up to the February election

It is disheartening that what began as a year of political transition has ended in a grim tableau of lawlessness. Two rights organisations have described the situation as "unstable and deeply concerning," a verdict borne out most starkly by a surge in lynchings and mob violence. Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) recorded at least 197 deaths in mob attacks in 2025, up from 128 the previous year. Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF) puts the number of deaths from lynchings at 166. The victims of mob violence cut across society—men and women, members of religious minorities, and even freedom fighters—and the trend seemed to intensify as the year wore on.

On December 18, for instance, a mob in Mymensingh beat a garment worker, Dipu Chandra Das, before burning him to death over unproven allegations of blasphemy. Around the same time in Dhaka, mobs looted and torched the offices of *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo*. It feels distant now that, following the bloody uprising in 2024, people expected the interim government to restore order. Instead, targeted repression by the previous regime has been replaced by the chaotic tyranny of the street. Mobs have vandalised statues, harassed women, and attacked cultural institutions. Hindu homes and temples have also been targeted. The streets have grown unruly, while law enforcement was absent in many cases.

Election-related violence has added another dimension. After the election schedule was announced, MSF documented 26 incidents linked to nominations and campaigning, leaving three people dead and 249 injured. In one chilling episode, Sharif Osman Hadi, a leader of Inqilab Moncho and a potential candidate in the Dhaka-8 constituency, was shot dead in a daylight attack. Alongside this breakdown, another disturbing pattern persists. ASK documented 38 extrajudicial killings in 2025, all reportedly occurring during so-called "crossfire" or "gunfights" while suspects were in custody. At least 116 inmates died in prison, with most deaths officially attributed to illness, although cases of suicide, torture, and unexplained fatalities were also reported. Perhaps most chilling is the discovery of 641 unidentified bodies, many found bound with tape and dumped by roadsides or in rivers.

Press freedom—often the first casualty of disorder in Bangladesh—has also been suffocating. Beyond the arson attacks on media offices, three journalists were killed during the year, and nearly 400 others were harassed or abused. MSF cited the continued abuse of laws to intimidate and silence reporters.

As we have said before, the interim administration cannot simply wait out the clock. It must work proactively to ensure that peace in the run-up to the February election is not marred by chaos. If it can hold the line, the post-election period may, we hope, serve as a circuit breaker to prevent violence from becoming a permanent feature of our national life; a government elected with a genuine mandate could muster the authority needed to rein in mobs and dismantle the culture of impunity. That is perhaps the narrow path out of this morass.

Healthcare sector in disarray

Service breakdowns show why reforms are vital

We are concerned about the persistent chaos in our healthcare sector. The year 2025 was particularly troubling, as per a report by this daily, with prolonged service disruptions, medicine shortages, and policy paralysis. Thousands of people were deprived of essential care as a decades-long operational arrangement was abruptly scrapped without an effective alternative in place. At a time when the country is grappling with rising disease burdens and growing healthcare needs, these disruptions have exposed serious weaknesses in planning, coordination, and governance.

Trouble began with the sudden halt of USAID funding that affected critical programmes including tuberculosis control initiatives. The situation worsened when the interim government scrapped the proposed fifth Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP), ending a framework that had guided health, nutrition, and family planning services since 1998. While the government argued that integrating sectoral programmes into regular ones would improve coordination, the transition was poorly managed. Months passed before alternative projects were approved, leaving gaps that directly harmed service delivery.

Reportedly, hundreds of upazila-level hospitals faced disruptions in the supply of medicines for chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. Around 14,500 community clinics—serving nearly half a million people daily—experienced prolonged shortages of essential drugs after procurement stalled for almost a year. Even when funding was later allocated, bureaucratic complications again halted procurement. Moreover, dengue outbreaks overwhelmed hospitals, influenza infection rates reached a record high, and the total fertility rate rose for the first time in five decades, signalling setbacks in preventive and family planning services.

While the promotion of over 6,000 doctors was a welcome step, placing most of them in supernumerary posts without adequate infrastructure or deployment planning has limited its benefit. This again reflects the absence of efficient leadership and long-term planning, a major weakness of our health sector. Meanwhile, the recommendations of the Health Sector Reform Commission—ranging from making primary healthcare a constitutional obligation to establishing independent and decentralised health authorities—were widely recognised as pragmatic and necessary to make healthcare efficient, accountable, and accessible to all, but little visible effort has been made to translate these proposals into concrete action.

Overall, abrupt policy decisions, weak administrative capacity, and neglect of reform have left the sector in a fragile state, depriving many of much-needed care. We hope the next elected government will take it upon itself to rid the sector of these long-standing challenges, but that doesn't mean that those in charge now should abdicate their responsibility for stabilising services and laying the groundwork for meaningful reform. Together, they must ensure better budget utilisation, continuity of essential programmes, and the implementation of long-discussed reforms. Otherwise, the vision of a people-oriented healthcare system will remain a distant dream.

EDITORIAL

The magic of Khaleda Zia

Her last speeches call for a politics of 'no vengeance'



THE THIRD VIEW

Mahfuz Anam
is editor and publisher of *The Daily Star*.

MAHFUZ ANAM

People's presence said it all. The millions who poured in last Wednesday at her namaz-e-janaza did so out of a love for her that cannot be measured by the usual standards applied to political leaders. They came spontaneously, driven by an inner urge to show their respect to a person who they felt represented them. The bonding was more subconscious than political, and definitely not partisan, for most of the people who attended the janaza were members of the public in general. It was quite unbelievable how magically she had touched the hearts of so many ordinary people.

Since the road in front of our office was closed to traffic, I had the privilege of being part of the stream of people heading towards Manik Mia Avenue. As I walked along, I felt a sense of sorrow that sprang from a far deeper feeling than one usually witnesses on such occasions. People maintained a dignified silence as they walked on, showing with every step a deep sense of loss they did not quite know how would be filled. Obviously, there can be no reliable estimate of how many people attended the janaza, but the eye estimates by my colleagues and me converged on millions, as we also put in our headline the next day. Despite the sheer scale of the gathering and the pressures it must have created, the overall discipline was striking. They

In our view, the most meaningful way to pay tribute to the memory of Khaleda Zia is to take her last messages seriously and embark on the path of rebuilding Bangladesh with love, compassion and understanding. The first and foremost step is to unite behind democratic values and norms, the most crucial of which is holding a free, fair and inclusive election. Any attempt to postpone or disrupt it should be exposed for what it really is: an attempt to harm Bangladesh.

came, they mourned, and they left, all with a dignity and composure that represented the most important values Khaleda Zia symbolised. There was a calmness in her persona, which she seemed to have conveyed effectively to her supporters.



People came spontaneously to attend Khaleda Zia's janaza, driven by an inner urge to show their respect to a person who they felt represented them.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

sight—which is what being out of power means—is usually being out of mind. But in Khaleda Zia's case, the oppression meted out to her only increased her popularity, and public respect grew by leaps and bounds. That sentiment remained hidden until people could finally express it at her janaza.

On August 7, 2024, within two days of Hasina's fall, Khaleda Zia addressed her first public meeting since her arrest in 2018 via Zoom. Her main message—apart from thanking the students for the movement and her party workers for their support—was that we must build a "knowledge-based, democratic Bangladesh" "free from exploitation," with "merit and competence" by "strengthening the hands of our youth." However, the most important message was her call for a politics of "no destruction, no revenge, no retaliation, but one of love, peace, and a knowledge-based society." In her second address, on February 27, 2025, again on Zoom from London, where she had gone for advanced medical treatment, she recalled her husband Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman's statement that "the party is bigger than the individual, and the country is bigger than the party." She also reiterated her earlier message of shunning the politics of revenge and retaliation and replacing it with mutual love and camaraderie to

caretaker/interim governments in 1991, 1996, 2001, and 2006, the institutions of elections—and voters' freedom to choose their representatives freely—were progressively weakened. Their logic, as we once noted in an article, appeared to be that "an election is only free and fair if I win it..." With every election, mutual hostility became more and more visceral, and politics reduced itself to "revenge and retaliation."

Since this piece is not an evaluation of her total political legacy, we will write about her successes and failures separately. Today, our purpose is to focus on the significance of her last messages before she embarked on her eternal journey.

What makes her recent statements particularly valuable is that such messages are rare and, as stated earlier, urgently required at this moment. We need to build Bangladesh anew, and we need to start immediately, the urgency of which will be proved by holding a free and fair election. A similar message has also come from Tarique Rahman. He has every reason to be bitter and hateful towards Sheikh Hasina and her government. The exile, the many cases, and the personal humiliation he suffered—including a court order that prevented the media from publishing any statement made by him—could easily have made him vengeful. Yet, so far, in his numerous virtual speeches

messages seriously and embark on the path of rebuilding Bangladesh with love, compassion, and understanding. The first and foremost step is to unite behind democratic values and norms, the most crucial of which is holding a free, fair, and inclusive election. Any attempt to postpone or disrupt it should be exposed for what it really is: an attempt to harm Bangladesh.

The interim government should have gone for an election much earlier. To make up for that error of judgement, it should now tolerate no attempt to disrupt our journey towards the election, which, thankfully, it seems to be doing. The quicker we can transition to a government elected by the people, the faster our development process can restart. The law and order situation is presently at its worst, which has created a sense of uncertainty and fear among the public. This is the first and most fundamental function of any government. Stability in governance requires the early restoration of an elected government. The practice of mobs creating terror by hurting individuals and institutions must be stopped. Whatever public grievances exist should wait until the coming of an elected government.

It could be that the election will have many flaws. In Third World countries, they usually do. The non-inclusion of Awami League in it will obviously generate debate. However, it should be remembered that the AL expressed no regret whatsoever over the deaths of 1,400 ordinary people (UN findings), including many students and children, within the final weeks of its rule. This has further alienated it from the people.

We have had an almost year-long process to agree on reforms. There were numerous discussions on the July National Charter and its final approval. We now have a decision to go for a referendum. Unfortunately, this will complicate election-day proceedings. Most concerning is the fact that the referendum on the July charter remains largely undecipherable for ordinary voters because of the language used.

What concerns us even more is the lack of clarity in party manifestos. We have heard some generalities about post-election plans, but specifics remain elusive. Bangladesh's economy rests on three pillars: agriculture, expatriate labour earnings, and the RMG sector. Our farmers mostly do not receive their due, with profits pocketed by middlemen. A section of our expatriate workforce remains trapped in the grip of inhuman exploitation. We talk a great deal about RMG, yet real solutions to its fundamental problems remain ignored. These three sectors must receive due importance in political parties' plans.

We have heard almost nothing from political parties about addressing the challenges related to the climate crisis, despite Bangladesh being on the frontline. It remains a mystery why the Professor Yunus-led government did not place sufficient focus on this existential issue. Another vital area requiring emphasis is employment generation, especially for our youth. Here again, the relative inaction of the present government is inexplicable. There should have been a special effort on these issues to prepare recommendations for immediate implementation by the elected government.

Let us be clear: without adequate preparation to face the climate crisis, and without ensuring sustained economic growth, Bangladesh's future will remain extremely vulnerable.



ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKROBORTY

When considered against the background that she had been out of power since 2006, in jail and under house arrest for seven of her later years, and consistently and cruelly vilified by the Hasina regime for most of the 15 years of Awami League rule, the honour displayed to her memory at the janaza is nothing short of a miracle. It seems the more Hasina vilified her, the more people's love for Khaleda Zia grew. In our political culture, being out of

build a new Bangladesh.

The reason we refer to the above two speeches is Khaleda Zia's insistence that we should all—including her own party—shun the politics of revenge and retaliation. It is perhaps the most important message the country needs at this moment: to move away from a mob culture that seems to be engulfing us across various sectors. It is a testimony to her wisdom, tolerance, maturity, and democratic values. When

made from London, and in the speech he delivered at the mammoth welcome gathering upon his return on December 25, his messages have focused more on the future than the past. This indicates political maturity, signalling an essential shift away from the kind of politics that has harmed us in so many ways.

In our view, the most meaningful way to pay tribute to the memory of Khaleda Zia is to take her last

When NCP's rhetoric of a new politics meets reality



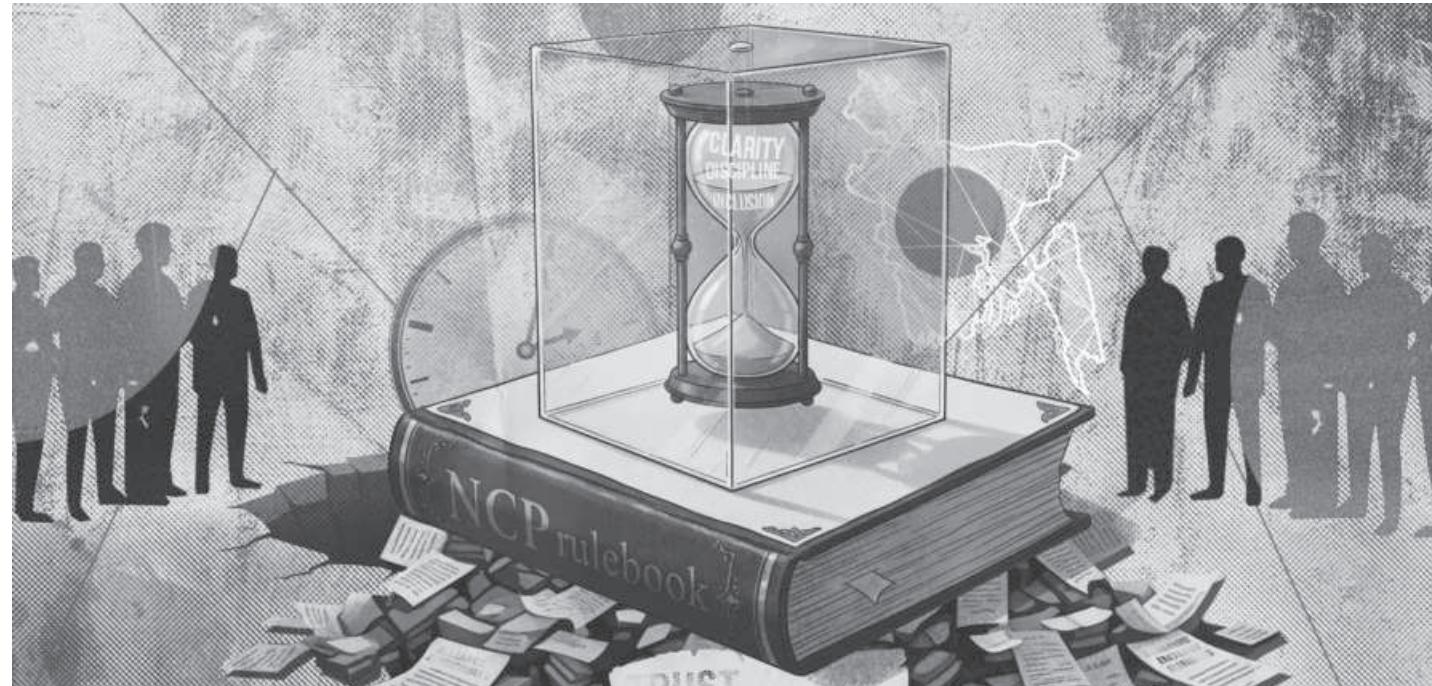
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KAZI A S M NURUL HUDA

The promise of a "noya bondobosto" or new settlement carries an enormous political appeal. After years of democratic erosion, institutional decay, and public disillusionment in the country, citizens have understandably been eager for a political force that breaks with the entrenched habits of established parties. The National Citizen Party (NCP) had positioned itself as that force. But a new political "settlement" or system or culture cannot be built through lofty speeches or slogans. It requires clarity, credibility, and disciplined political practice on the ground. Judged by these standards, there is reasonable scepticism, especially after its seat-sharing arrangement with Jamaat-e-Islami, about whether NCP can deliver its promise as it increasingly surrenders to the pull of familiar political conveniences.

The central issue with the NCP's move isn't that they have ideological differences with their partners, but the action's potential to create public distrust. In an article published in this daily on October 17, 2024, I argued that the student-public uprising succeeded where established political parties such as the BNP failed, despite their shared goal of regime change, because the public had lost trust in traditional politicians. That distrust was the cumulative outcome of years of opacity, opportunism, and instrumental politics. Notably, the same pathologies appear to have emerged within the NCP itself, a party that had promised to transcend them.

Any party serious about a new political settlement must first articulate a clear vision to the people. Apart from a few vague concepts and symbolic initiatives, such as the "Desh Gorte July Padajatra", the NCP has failed to offer sustained pro-people programmes that explain what it stands for, or how it intends



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

to govern differently. Even after formally constituting itself as a political party, its leadership has remained disproportionately engaged on university campuses and with foreign delegates, rather than systematically building grassroots connections. My conversations with voters outside elite or educated circles in urban areas reveal, most citizens cannot identify NCP leaders beyond a handful of prominent figures, let alone explain the party's ideological commitments. A party that remains largely socially unrecognisable cannot plausibly claim to represent the public.

political self definition.

When a party cannot clearly state who it is and what it stands for, citizens are not obliged to supply trust in advance. On the contrary, opacity invites suspicion. If a political actor appears uncertain about its own identity, or unwilling to clarify it, it dents confidence. Political trust arises from sustained clarity about ends, means, and limits. Ambiguity may offer short-term tactical advantages, but it is normatively corrosive. Clarity is a political virtue, and without it, the rhetoric of a new settlement collapses.

Concerns about political judgment on

different occasions further compound this credibility gap. Even the decision to rename their July *podobastra* in Gopalganj as a "March to Gopalganj," a move that later contributed to violence, raised questions about the party's political maturity and capacity to assess risk in volatile contexts. A party aspiring to reshape the political order must demonstrate restraint, situational awareness, and responsibility. On this count, the NCP has fallen short.

reasonably infer that similar habits will govern public decision-making.

The problem becomes even more acute when questions of inclusion are considered. A party that claims to inaugurate a new political settlement must demonstrate a principled commitment to women and marginalised groups. Yet, the NCP has articulated no clear roadmap for women's participation or leadership. This absence is especially troubling given its electoral coalitions with parties that openly oppose women's visibility in public life and often display misogynistic attitudes. Former insiders suggest that the NCP is now compelled to campaign for allied parties in constituencies where it does not field its own candidates. Such arrangements compromise both moral credibility and political autonomy.

Taken together, these failures form a pattern, and it is this pattern that decisively undermines the NCP's claim to a new political settlement. The conditions required for a genuine settlement—ideological clarity, organisational discipline, internal democracy, political judgment, and principled inclusion—are not missing by chance. They appear to be absent by design or neglect. A party that cannot properly define or govern itself, and cannot transparently justify its actions and alliances, cannot plausibly be entrusted with reshaping the political order. Political settlements are built by actors who know who they are, what they stand for, and whom they refuse to accommodate. The NCP has shown neither the coherence nor the courage required for such a task. What remains is not an unfinished project but a cautionary example of how the language of renewal can be hollowed out from within.

Bangladesh does not merely need new actors in politics. It needs new standards of political conduct. Trust cannot be demanded in advance, nor can democratic renewal be declared into existence. It must be earned through clarity, discipline, judgment, and visible commitment to principles that survive pressure, temptation, and alliance politics. Where these are absent, appeals to novelty only deepen public cynicism rather than overcome it.

Is the Trump administration committing war crimes in Venezuela?



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

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ABDULLAH SHIBLI

application of military force."

Also, the second strike against the two survivors, called "double tap," has been unanimously condemned by the media and politicians. Some Democrats and legal experts have argued that a strike to kill shipwrecked survivors could constitute a war crime.

The rules of war, formally known as International Humanitarian Law (IHL), protect persons who are not, or are no longer, directly or actively participating in hostilities, and impose limits on the means and methods of warfare. As mentioned earlier, the two shipwrecked fishermen were not engaged in any combat, and they should have been rescued by the US naval ships in the vicinity.

The Geneva Conventions say shipwrecked persons must be "respected and protected." The Department of Defense Law of War Manual states that helpless, shipwrecked survivors are not lawful targets, while The Hague regulations forbid orders declaring that no quarter will be given.

In short, "double tap" or shooting to kill survivors are war crime. Former Defense Secretary Leon Panetta called the second strike a war crime in an interview with CBS News on December 8.

When pressed by ABC News in the Oval Office with specific questions about accountability and the attack, Trump said, "This is war," although Congress has not authorised war, and the initial strike is still being scrutinised.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time that the US military during Trump's rule has killed innocent civilians at sea and has tried to cover up these murders. The New York Times recently reported that in 2019, during the first Trump administration, the US Navy killed three North Korean fishermen when they were found witnessing a secret American SEAL team off the coast of North Korea.

Jonathan Blitzer offered a scathing critique of current US policy: 'Because the President had labelled several drug cartels "terrorist organisations" in a series of executive orders, the government simply asserted that suspected traffickers were "unlawful combatants" who could be summarily killed.' (The New Yorker, December 7, 2025).

The US government must be held accountable for innocent deaths, and the G7 countries and the UN bodies must voice their concerns without delay. While the State Department

justifies the escalation of tension and random attacks against a peaceful Latin American country in the name of preventing drug trafficking, experts point out that the US administration

is setting a bad example. Russia, China, and Israel now have a roadmap to attack their neighbours and cover up their territorial ambitions with one pretext or the other.

Since September last year, the Trump administration has taken a hard line against Venezuela's Maduro government. Without any provocation, US fighter jets have been regularly firing missiles at fishing boats suspected of transporting drugs in the Caribbean Sea and in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing around 100 people in several dozens of strikes, according to the BBC. In none of these cases has the administration provided any evidence of alleged drug trafficking by Venezuelans.

One particular incident that has aroused international attention happened on September 2, when the US military targeted a boat in the Caribbean. The first strike killed nine individuals on the ship, and a second follow-on attack killed two survivors. Videos show the two survivors clinging to a capsized lifeboat and waving their arms to the airmen flying overhead. The only rational interpretation of the action of these unarmed sailors was that they were calling for help or trying to wave off another strike.

The shock and outrage generated by this news, first reported by *The New York Times*, has reverberated throughout the globe. One needs to ask if the US military committed war crimes by killing innocent and helpless fishermen. The US Congress and the international community need to investigate and answer why powerful nations can get away with such violations of human rights law.

A brief history of the conflict between the US and Venezuela is in order. The US has been pushing back against imported drugs and foreign drug cartels for many years. Since Trump took office in January, he has targeted Venezuela and its leader, Nicolás Maduro. While the administration has cited its war against drugs as the excuse for this obvious transgression, Trump has not been shy to voice his grudge against the leftist regime in Caracas.

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তারিখঃ ৩০/১২/২০২৫

পুনঃ দরপত্র নোটিশ

বর্জ্য ব্যবস্থাপনা কার্যক্রমের গতিশীলতা ও মানোন্যনের লক্ষ্যে প্রাথমিক বর্জ্য সংগ্রহ সেবা প্রতিষ্ঠি লক্ষ্যে নতুন নিবন্ধন কার্যক্রম গ্রাহণ করা হয়েছে। ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন এর আওতাধীন এলাকায় নির্যাপত্তি ১০ মিনিট (ওয়ার্ট নং- ০৭, ০৯, ১০, ২৮, ৪৮, ৬৯, ৭০, ৭২ ও ৭৫) প্রাথমিক বর্জ্য সংগ্রহ সেবা প্রয়োজন আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে নিয়ন্ত্রিত কর্তৃত অনুসরণসূর্যীক আবেদনপত্র ত্বরণ ও জমা প্রদানের জন্য অনুমোদিত করা হলো।
ক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজন আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠান অনুসৃত কর্তৃত অনুমোদিত প্রতিষ্ঠান আবেদনপত্র ত্বরণ ও জমা প্রদান করাতে হবে।
১. আবেদনপত্র ত্বরণ ও জমা প্রদান কার্যক্রম অনুসৃত কর্তৃত করাতে হবে। ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের সময়সূচী অনুসৃত করাতে হবে।
২. আবেদনপত্র ত্বরণ ও জমা প্রদান করাতে হবে।
৩. ওয়েবসাইটে https://dscc.gov.bd হতে নির্দেশনা অনুসৃত করাতে হবে। একের প্রয়োজন আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠান প্রতিষ্ঠান ও আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের অনুসৃত প্রযোজন আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠান করাতে হবে।
৪. নিবন্ধনের জন্য আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের উকৰ প্রয়োজন আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠান করাতে হবে। একের প্রয়োজন আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠান করাতে হবে।
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৬. আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের উকৰ প্রয়োজন আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠান করাতে হবে।
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Dozens killed in fire at Swiss ski resort bar

FROM PAGE 12
firework inside the bar which set fire to the ceiling. He was in Crans-Montana, where he said a number of Italians had gathered seeking information about missing relatives or friends. He declined to say if there were any Italian victims.

Yesterday morning, hours after the explosion, footage from the street outside showed the

area cordoned off, with forensic tents behind white screens set up in front of the bar in Crans-Montana, a fashionable ski centre with an array of boutiques, luxury hotels and restaurants.

"I know someone who might have been among the victims and I can't reach her. I'm very worried," said local resident Karine Spreng. "I'm going to try to

contact other people who know this woman to see if she is still alive."

The daytime scene, with small groups of people, some in tears or carrying flowers, was a stark contrast to the panic and confusion that officials said faced first responders who arrived when the alarm was raised.

"The first responders - the firefighters and police officers - arrived at a scene

of chaos, at a dramatic scene," Stephane Ganzer, head of security for Valais canton, told reporters.

He said some of the victims were from other countries, hundreds of personnel were working on the case and a helpline had been opened for relatives. Officials said the grim task of identifying badly burned bodies would take a considerable time.

Flaws in bearing pads, design

FROM PAGE 12
a five-member committee led by Abdur Rouf on the same day, and later added four more members to investigate what the committee described as a very "rare and complex technical incident."

The committee observed that the hardness, compression set and neoprene content of the displaced bearing pads did not conform to established standards. Further testing in overseas laboratories is required to confirm this finding, it said.

Buet Mechanical Engineering Department Professor ABM Toufique Hasan, a committee member, said they tested two bearing pads -- one that fell in October last year and another in September the previous year -- at the Buet laboratory and found deviations in at least two parameters.

Abdur Rouf said 12 types of bearing pads are used in the metro rail, and the two tested pads were among them. As the company that

supplied the pads challenged the findings, the committee said they need to be tested by a third party.

The committee noted that the bearing pads were installed at a slight slope (0.8 percent), which may have contributed to their displacement.

It said circular alignments exist at both ends of the Farmgate metro rail station and that no transition curve was used between the straight and circular sections of the viaduct alignment, indicating a possible design flaw. Separate modelling and analysis were not carried out for the curved alignment, it added.

During vibration measurements conducted while trains were running, the committee observed significantly higher vibrations at the piers with displaced bearing pads compared to other piers.

The committee believes that possible design flaws in the curved alignment are generating unintended lateral forces and associated

vibrations, which are linked to the displacement of the bearing pads.

Buet Civil Engineering Department Professor Khan Mahmud, another committee member, said it cannot be concluded that all bearing pads are substandard based on tests of only two out of around 4,000 pads. He said metro rail operations could continue with regular monitoring of the pads.

The committee recommended a thorough review of the viaduct's structural and track design through detailed analysis by an independent third party consultant to definitively determine the cause of the bearing pad displacement.

It also called for a third-party safety audit of the overall metro rail project, and the installation of an effective structural health monitoring system for close supervision. Strong efforts must be undertaken to enhance the capacity of the metro rail authority and ensure technology transfer

from foreign consultants to local experts.

The road adviser said the board of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd would take steps against responsible persons after reviewing the report. He said discussions will be held with Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica), the project's financier, regarding the flaws.

Biman chooses Boeing for 14 aircraft deal

FROM PAGE 12
inducted into the fleet, opportunities will be created to expand operations in both state and commercial sectors, according to sources at the meeting.

After completing required approvals and financial procedures, the final contract will be signed with Boeing, followed by phased delivery of the aircraft, the sources added.

Police recovered a large cache of chemicals, bomb-making materials, and explosives from the site and later filed a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act against seven named and several unidentified suspects.

Though a week has passed, law enforcers have yet to arrest the prime accused -- Sheikh Al Amin, 32, a director of the madrasa.

Police have so far arrested seven people, including Shahin alias Abu Bakar alias Musa alias Diba Sultani, 32.

The case statement said

Lawyer beaten

FROM PAGE 12
A motorcycle collided with Naeem's car in the Bashundhara area. Moments later, the men on the bike dragged him out of the vehicle and beat him up, leaving him injured, said Ariful Islam, sub-inspector of Bhatarai Police Station, quoting the victim's family.

Upon receiving the information, family members rescued him and took him to Kurmitola General Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Police later sent the body to the Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

The SI said Naeem had injuries to his neck, hands, and back. "We are checking CCTV footage and looking into the incident."

Naeem's cousin, Rakibul Islam Shamim, said he received a call from Naeem's phone around the time of the attack, but heard only shouting.

Repeated attempts to reach him afterwards failed. About an hour later, a security guard from Bashundhara received the phone and informed him that Naeem had been beaten up and abandoned.

Shamim said Naeem had gone into hiding after a case was filed against him in Pabna following the July uprising last year.

His mother, Irin Kibria, is a former panel chairman of Pabna Zila Parishad.

Shamim alleged that a mob attacked Naeem but could not identify the assailants.

Police said an investigation is underway.

Shafiqur earns Tk 3.6 lakh a yr from farming

FROM PAGE 1
He has 241.77 decimals of land worth Tk 20.25 lakh and a duplex house worth Tk 27 lakh.

Shafiqur, 67, paid Tk 30,000 in taxes last year.

The Jamaat chief, who is running from Dhaka-15, will spend Tk 35 lakh in electioneering. Of this, Tk 10 lakh will come from his savings, and the rest from the party fund.

He still faces one case under the Anti-Terrorism Act and another for "unlawful assembly" -- both filed in 2013 and both stayed by the High Court.

In total, he had at least 34 cases filed against him between 2008 and 2022. Only two of these cases were disposed of before August 5, 2024. He has since been acquitted in 7 cases and exonerated in 16, while eight cases were withdrawn.

At least 15 of his cases were related to "unlawful assembly," breaching "public safety" and rioting. Six other cases were filed under Explosive Substances Act, one under Arms Act and one related to alleged corruption.

Saarc must be revived: Yunus

FROM PAGE 12
Yunus conveyed the same message to all: Saarc must be revived.

The chief adviser said the fact that leaders from across the region came together to pay tribute to Khaleda Zia and showed respect to her memory clearly demonstrated that the spirit of Saarc still exists.

"We must preserve the spirit of Saarc," Yunus said.

Shafiqul also said the visiting foreign dignitaries were impressed by the scale and dignity of the funeral.

The press secretary said the foreign dignitaries also expressed their condolences to BNP

acting chairman Tarique Rahman.

Meanwhile, Foreign Affairs Adviser Md Touhid Hossain yesterday described the presence of South Asian leaders at Khaleda Zia's funeral as a "positive gesture".

He also clarified that no bilateral issues were discussed during the brief interactions, calling the exchanges "courtesy meetings".

SRI LANKA FM MEETS TARIQUE

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath paid a courtesy call on Tarique Rahman on Wednesday night.

The meeting took place

around 8:30pm at the BNP chairperson's office in Dhaka's Gulshan.

Sri Lanka's High Commissioner Dharmapala Weerakkody accompanied the foreign minister during the meeting, BNP Media Cell member Shariful Kabir Khan told The Daily Star.

Sharing a photo of his visit on X at 10:36pm on Wednesday, Herath said, "During the meeting, I conveyed the deepest condolences of the government and the people of Sri Lanka to the bereaved family and to the people of Bangladesh on the passing of the former prime minister".

INDIAN DEFENCE

SIGNS CONDOLENCE BOOK
Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh yesterday visited the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi and expressed his condolence on the demise of Khaleda Zia, reports The Hindu.

In a post on X at 10:36pm on Wednesday, Herath said, "Went to the High Commission of Bangladesh in New Delhi. Signed the Condolence Book expressing our profound sorrow at the passing of former Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia. Our thoughts are with her family and the people of Bangladesh."

Fresh blast at site

FROM PAGE 12

The explosion occurred at the madrasa in Hasnabad Housing around 10:25am on December 26, severely damaging the building and nearby structures.

Police recovered a large cache of chemicals, bomb-making materials, and explosives from the site and later filed a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act against the seven named and several unidentified suspects.

Police recovered a large cache of chemicals, bomb-making materials, and explosives from the site and later filed a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act against the seven named and several unidentified suspects.

Though a week has passed, law enforcers have yet to arrest the prime accused -- Sheikh Al Amin, 32, a director of the madrasa.

Police have so far arrested seven people, including Shahin alias Abu Bakar alias Musa alias Diba Sultani, 32.

The case statement said

the suspects are supporters of the banned militant outfit Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh.

Shahidur Rahman, an inspector of the Anti-Terrorism Unit investigating the case, told The Daily Star that they had learned the seven arrestees have links to Neo Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

The case statement said accused Al Amin and Shahin have been arrested multiple times for their involvement in militant and terrorist activities.

Al Amin was previously arrested in 2017 and 2020. Seven cases are registered against him in Dhaka and surrounding areas, police said.

Police said the explosion occurred around noon when the madrasa's owner, Parvin Begum, entered the premises with Raju and

began cleaning the site.

Parvin's daughter, Sohana Akter Munia, told this correspondent they had taken permission from the local police station to remove broken bricks from the pathway to allow access to a neighbouring house.

She said unexploded explosives or chemicals, possibly scattered during the initial blast and hidden under debris, might have caused the explosion.

OC Saiful said a large quantity of chemical substances had been recovered from the madrasa, and public access to the building had been barred in the interest of public safety until further notice.

"The site is still a crime scene and forensic experts are still working there," he added.

Pry students get books on first day of yr

FROM PAGE 12
said the government printed 30 crore textbooks this year with significantly improved paper quality.

However, the situation with secondary textbooks is different.

Prof Riad Choudhury, member (textbook) of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, told The Daily Star that while 88 percent of the 21.43 crore secondary books had been printed, only 75.15 percent had been dispatched by yesterday.

NTCB officials admitted that deliveries for classes 7 and 8 were lagging behind significantly, whereas distribution of books for pre-primary to class 5 was 100 percent completed.

Prof Riad said, "We expect to deliver all the textbooks by January 15."

Data from Narsingdi lay bare a stark inequality. While general secondary schools there received about 64 percent of their required books, English version schools received absolutely none for classes 7 to 8.

In Rajshahi, while the demand for books at the primary level was fully met, secondary schools reported significant shortfalls.

District Education Officer Zayedur Rahman said only 48.81 percent of the secondary requirement reached the district, with

zero books arriving for class 8.

"It feels very bad to begin the year without books. We will fall behind in our studies," said Sijjalat Muntaha Sadia, an eighth-grader at Government Promothnath Girls' High School in Rajshahi.

Barishal has a similar problem.

"None of the class 8 books have been delivered yet," said Nitul Mondol, research officer at the district education office.

Faruk Ahmed, head teacher of Narayanganj Government Girls' High School, said, "No textbooks for classes 7 and 8 have been delivered so far."

In the capital, a teacher at Azimpur Government Girls' High School echoed the concerns, stating that supplies for classes 6 and 9 were inadequate, with absolutely none for classes 7 to 8.

In Rajshahi, while the demand for books at the primary level was fully met, secondary schools reported significant shortfalls.

District Education Officer Zayedur Rahman said only 48.81 percent of the secondary requirement reached the district, with

not reached students. Zila Poura Kalyan High School authorities reported that they received no humanities books.

In Tangail, schools received 33.33 lakh copies against a secondary-level demand of 46.14 lakh.

Shamim Al Mamun Jewel, general secretary of the Bangladesh Teachers' Association, said that while the festival was cancelled, ensuring students received books on the first day was a success. He added that complete sets for classes 7 and 8 could not be delivered, but the association hopes to distribute them by the end of January.

This year the textbooks were handed over without the traditional book festival, which was cancelled due to state mourning following the death of BNP chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia.

[Correspondents from Narayanganj, Rajshahi, Barishal, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Rangamati, Tangail, and Noakhali contributed to this report.]

Shafiqur earns Tk 3.6 lakh a yr from farming

FROM PAGE 1
He has 241.77 decimals of land worth Tk 20.25 lakh and a duplex house worth Tk 27 lakh.

Shafiqur, 67, paid Tk 30,000 in taxes last year.

The Jamaat chief, who is running from Dhaka-15, will spend Tk 35 lakh in electioneering. Of this, Tk 10 lakh will come from his savings, and the rest from the party fund.

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Shamim gets going after Litton's show of 'trust'

SPORTS REPORTER

Shamim Hossain struck a career-best 81 off 43 balls not out while playing a lone hand for Dhaka Capitals against Sylhet Titans in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) in Sylhet yesterday, nearly pulling off a win. Dhaka eventually fell short by six runs, but Shamim's innings underlined his value in the lower middle order and explained why captain Litton Das had backed him and even confronted selectors over his exclusion from the Ireland series in November-December last year.

Bangladesh's middle-order batters such as Shamim, Tawhid Hridoy, Jaker Ali, and Nurul Hasan Sohan are capable of playing the finisher's role, but they have struggled for form of late.

Shamim did not get to bat in the final T20I against Ireland despite being included in the squad. His previous six T20I innings saw three ducks and two scores of one. With the T20 World Cup approaching, BPL performances could prove decisive in determining the final squad, and Shamim's career-best effort must give the team management something to ponder.

His last-over assault highlighted his T20 credentials, with bat speed and a flair for the unconventional proving decisive against Mohammad Amir, a renowned death-over bowler. Chasing 27 off the final over, Shamim flicked the first ball over middle and off to fine leg for four. After two wides, he reverse-scoped a delivery well outside off-stump over third man for six. Amir then missed his yorker by a small margin, and Shamim went down to smash it through mid-on. An edge off the penultimate ball flew away for another boundary before Amir finally nailed the yorker, leaving Shamim unable to add to his tally.

The acceleration in Shamim's innings was telling. With wickets falling around him, he was 37 off 27 balls at one stage. He then plundered 54 runs off his next 17 deliveries.

"Obviously, when you lose a game, there is always regret, but I had faith that as long as I stay there, I will keep believing in myself," Shamim said in the post-match presser.

On overcoming a difficult period, he credited T20I captain Litton for showing faith in him.

"Regarding the national team, I have to thank Litton for placing his trust in me because I have played match-winning knocks before. A player can have two or three bad games, but if someone backs you and supports you, you can make a comeback easily," he said, adding that his focus was on performing well in the BPL to prepare for next month's T20 World Cup.

While he admitted that Amir's final delivery was "extraordinary", Shamim will hope to build on yesterday's knock to strengthen his case as the kind of middle-order batter Bangladesh have been searching for.

Cummins returns as Australia name provisional T20 WC squad

ICC

Australia have announced a provisional 15-player squad for ICC T20 World Cup 2026 in Sri Lanka and India.

Mitchell Marsh was named captain while Pat Cummins, Cameron Green and Cooper Connolly, who all missed Australia's T20 series against India, returned to the squad.

Provisional Australia squad: Mitchell Marsh (c), Xavier Bartlett, Cooper Connolly, Pat Cummins, Tim David, Cameron Green, Nathan Ellis, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Matthew Kuhnemann, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Short, Marcus Stoinis, Adam Zampa

When passion outshone the numbers

ANISUR RAHMAN

The scoreline of the BRAC Bank Oporaje Alo Women's Hockey Tournament final suggested a one-sided affair, but the competition itself revealed a much richer story about the state and spirit of women's hockey in Bangladesh.

FAvourites BKSP thrashed Zone-2 -- a team formed by girls from Dhaka and Mymensingh -- 8-0 at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium on Thursday. Yet the tournament was less about the margin of victory and more about the perseverance of girls from across the country who displayed their love for the sport despite limited opportunities.

Much like the men's game, women's hockey in Bangladesh largely depends on BKSP players. However, the participation of more than 350 players from 18 districts was widely viewed as a possible foundation for the future of the women's game, with teams such as Sylhet showing notable enthusiasm.

The story of the Sylhet girls captured the essence of the tournament. They were first introduced to hockey using the curved handles of umbrellas, holding the shafts to learn how to control the ball. Only later did the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) provide them with 18 proper hockey sticks.

From training with umbrella handles to seeing two of their players -- Prima Begum and Nuri Akter -- reach the final phase was a testament to their adaptability and eagerness to learn. The tournament began with zonal rounds, where 18 districts were divided into four zones. Each zone sent one team, formed by the best players, to the final phase in Dhaka. BKSP, who train year-round on artificial turf under FIH-certified coaches, entered the final phase directly as the fifth team.

Although the final scoreline was unflattering,

the runners-up were not completely outmatched. Despite the absence of proper facilities and regular competition, they showed encouraging signs by moving the ball well, producing a few neat passes, carrying the ball at pace and even penetrating BKSP's attacking third. Ultimately, the lack of skill, fitness and experience proved decisive.

Their effort was reflected in the individual awards. Best player of the final Fardiya Akter Ratri, best goalkeeper Mohua and rising star Apurbo Akter all came from outside BKSP. Meanwhile, BKSP's Arpita Pal and Airin Akter Riya emerged as the tournament's top scorer and best player, respectively.

"It is really challenging for girls from outside BKSP because we play on grass and it is tough to adjust to artificial turf," said Ratri, younger sister of national forward Rakibul Hasan Rocky, adding that the final phase would have been more competitive had BKSP players been distributed among the teams.

"I sat idle most of the year and only came into action during the tournament," said Apurbo. "If we are given training throughout the year, we can improve more. I want to represent the national team."

Airin also acknowledged that non-BKSP players lag behind in experience as BKSP players regularly play international tournaments.

So far, 25 players have been selected from the event for advanced training starting in mid-January, while the federation is considering launching a national camp in March ahead of the Asian Games qualifiers. With BRAC Bank CEO and MD Tareq Refat Ullah Khan promising continued support for women's hockey and BHF eager to take initiatives, the tournament that began with umbrella handles may yet prove to be the first step toward a stronger future.



BKSP players celebrate after winning the BRAC Bank Oporaje Alo Women's Hockey Tournament final, beating Zone-2 -- comprising girls from Dhaka and Mymensingh -- 8-0 at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium on Thursday.

What to WATCH

TSPORTS

BPL

Dhaka vs

Chattogram

Live from 2:00 pm

Sylhet vs Rangpur

Live from 7:00 pm

Qualifier 2

STAR SPORTS 2

Big Bash League

Brisbane Heat vs

Melbourne Stars

Live from 2:15 pm

ILT20

Live from

9:30 pm

Live from 8:30 pm

STAR SPORTS 1

SAT20

Paarl Royals vs

MI Cape Town

Live from

9:30 pm

'International cricket demands a different temperament'

Middle-order batter **Sobhana Mostary** finally proved her worth at the international level in last year's ICC Women's World Cup. The 23-year-old recently finished the Women's Bangladesh Cricket League (WBCL) T20 as the highest run-getter, scoring 259 runs in five innings at a strike rate of 126.34, and led North Zone to the title. As the women's team begin their final phase of preparation, starting Saturday in Mirpur, for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Qualifiers in Nepal from January 18, Mostary spoke to **The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan** about her recent evolution and plans for the qualifiers. Excerpts follow:

DS: You had a remarkable BCL as a batter and a captain. How would you describe it?

Sobhana Mostary (SM): I have captained in domestic competitions like the Premier League, NCL and BCL for the last four years, but winning a title always remained a dream. Even after losing our first match this season, I didn't lose belief. Everyone gave their best, and the support from senior players like Supta [Sharmi Akter] Apu and Samimu [Shamima Sultana] Apu helped me a lot as a captain.

DS: You are heading into another ICC event after playing only domestic cricket, no international matches, in the buildup. What sort of a difference does it make?

SM: The difference is significant. In domestic cricket, we play against the same opponents regularly, so there is less pressure. Experience matters the most at the international level. If we could have played against India as preparation for the qualifiers, it would have provided a lot of room for improvement because international cricket demands a different temperament; it can never be compared to domestic cricket.

DS: How do you reflect on your transformation as a player since the last World Cup?

SM: I struggled for three or four years and couldn't perform the way people expected, which led to a lot of criticism. The 2024 T20 World Cup was a turning point for me. Finishing among the top 10 batters gave me belief. My preparation was different -- I trained harder, stayed mentally focused and tried to understand the game's momentum, which helped me perform better.

DS: With four teams qualifying, will the upcoming qualifier be less challenging?

SM: I wouldn't say it would be easy, but we are confident. We have played against most of these teams and done well. Since the top four will qualify, I believe Bangladesh are in a good position. But we still need to perform.

DS: Should the BCB prioritise arranging international matches beyond the FTP?

SM: The board is trying to arrange more international matches before the T20 World Cup. Discussions about the Women's BPL are also ongoing. Senior players and the captain regularly convey the need for more matches, and the board generally responds positively.

DS: Despite salary and allowance increases, domestic earnings remain an issue in women's cricket. What's your take?

SM: The salary increase is a positive step, but domestic match fees are still low, especially for players outside the national pool. Many train all year for only one or two tournaments. Increasing domestic fees would sustain their careers.

An 'unexplainable' emotional return for Sabina

SPORTS REPORTER

Former Bangladesh captain Sabina Khatoon feels it is like breathing fresh air to be wearing the red and green jersey again following a long silence.

After more than a year away from the national spotlight, the familiar jersey will return to her shoulders, bringing with it emotion, pride, and renewed purpose.

For Sabina, this moment is not just a comeback -- it is a reminder of what it truly means to represent Bangladesh.

She is set to lead the Bangladesh women's team in the upcoming SAFF Women's Futsal Championship, to be held in Thailand from January 13-25.

After being overlooked for the women's football team for nearly a year following her disagreement with head coach Peter Butler in January last year, Sabina was named as captain for the preliminary futsal squad announced in December last year.

"The feeling of representing the nation is really unexplainable," Sabina said when



she faced the media in a press conference yesterday for the first time after the fallout with Butler.

For her, the red and green symbolise honour, sacrifice, and responsibility, and returning to them after such a long gap has made the moment even more special.

Iranian head coach Saeid Khodarahmi announced the men's and women's squads after a month-long training camp, and the

teams are leaving for Thailand well ahead of the tournament to adapt to the conditions and futsal facilities.

Sabina welcomes the preparation, knowing the team is still growing into the game.

Transitioning from regular football to futsal has been an exciting challenge for her. Sabina carries valuable experience, having been the first Bangladeshi female footballer to play international futsal tournaments abroad.

She feels that experience has given her confidence and a natural comfort on the futsal court. More importantly, she sees this as an opportunity to contribute to the country in a new way.

"Now the girls know about futsal -- how to play it and understand the laws," she said, expressing optimism. Though the surface and style are different, the team has adapted well and shown promise.

As captain, Sabina is focused not only on results but also on inspiring the next generation.

ততুল বছরে সুস্থানের তিশ্বরতা
অ্যাপোলো এর সাথে

গাইনি ও সার্জারি

সেবা মাস

১ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬ - ৩১ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬

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* সর্ট প্রযোজন
ছাপু সময়

গাইনি সেবা সমূহ

নরমাল ডেলিভারি

NVD-Normal Vaginal Delivery

সিজার (প্রথম ও দ্বিতীয়)

LUCS (1st & 2nd)

সিজার (তৃতীয় ও জাতিল)

LUCS (3rd / Complex)

জরায় অপসারণ

TAH (Total Abdominal Hysterectomy)

ল্যাপারোক্ষেপিক জরায় অপসারণ

Laparoscopic Hysterectomy

ল্যাপারোক্ষেপিক ডিশিয়াল অপসারণ

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Pry students get books on first day of yr Quarter of secondary textbooks yet to reach schools

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Primary schoolchildren across the country received full sets of new textbooks yesterday, but about a quarter of secondary-level textbooks did not reach the schools, leaving millions of students without complete sets on the first day of the academic year.

Shortages were most acute for students of classes 7 and 8, Dakhil students from classes 6 to 9, and class 9 humanities students, according to reports of our district correspondents.

Primary and Mass Education Adviser Prof Bidhan Ranjan Roy Podder described the primary-level distribution as a "major success" for the government.

Speaking at the inauguration at Abul Bashar Government Primary School in Agargaon yesterday, he

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Biman chooses Boeing for 14 aircraft deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has decided in principle to purchase 14 aircraft from Boeing -- to expand its fleet and modernise the national flag carrier.

The decision was taken at Biman's annual general meeting held on Tuesday, Boshra Islam, general manager (public relations) of Biman, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Aviation and Tourism Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin, who is also chairman of Biman's board of directors, chaired the meeting.

Biman's decision ruled out Boeing's rival Airbus's proposal to sell aircraft to the national airline. During the meeting, the board of directors principally approved the purchase of 14 Boeing aircraft, subject to price negotiations and other terms in line with recommendations of Biman's techno-finance committee, Boshra Islam said.

Biman will buy eight Boeing 787-10 Dreamliners, two Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners and four Boeing 737-8 MAX aircraft.

The interim government had earlier pledged to purchase 25 aircraft from Boeing as part of efforts to reduce the trade deficit with the United States. Following further evaluation and scrutiny, Biman finalised the decision.

Board members said the move was taken considering the need to enhance the country's aviation capacity, strengthen international connectivity, and meet future passenger and cargo demand. Once the aircraft are

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



Dozens killed in fire at Swiss ski resort bar

100 injured; officials say victims include several nationalities

REUTERS, LENS

Dozens of people were killed and around 100 injured, most of them seriously, after fire tore through a crowded bar during a New Year's Eve party in the upscale Swiss ski resort of Crans-Montana, officials said yesterday.

Fire broke out at 1:30 am (0030 GMT) in a bar called "Le Constellation" in the resort in southwestern Switzerland. The cause of the blaze, which was initially reported as an explosion, remains unclear but authorities said it appeared to be an accident rather than an attack.

Swiss police said "tens" of people were presumed dead with around 100 injured, and the Italian foreign ministry said information from Swiss police indicated about 40 deaths. Swiss officials declined to give a specific figure.

Video footage showed lines of ambulances queuing and helicopters landing to take victims of the blast to nearby hospitals and specialist burns units in other Swiss cities.

Two young French women who said they were in the bar told France's BFM TV that they saw the fire start in the basement section of the club after a bottle containing "birthday candles" was held up too close to the wooden ceiling.

"The fire spread across the ceiling super quickly," one of the two women, who identified themselves as Emma and Albane, told BFM TV. The pair said they were able to climb a narrow staircase to the ground floor as panic broke and escape the building. Minutes later, the fire had reached the ground floor too, they said.

BFM showed video of a waitress carrying a champagne bottle with a lit 'fountain candle' through the bar, in line with the account, but the video did not show the fire taking hold.

Video footage verified by Reuters showed fire spreading from the building, with people outside the club, some of them running and screaming.

Italy's ambassador to Switzerland, Gian Lorenzo Cornado, told Sky TG24 local authorities had told him the blaze was started by someone letting off a firework inside the bar which set fire to the ceiling. He was in Crans-Montana, where he said a number of Italians had gathered seeking information about missing relatives or friends. He declined to say if there were any Italian victims.

Yesterday morning, hours after the explosion, footage from the street outside showed the area cordoned off, with forensic tents behind white screens set up in front of the bar in

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



The glass wall at the front of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission office in Agargaon is shattered during a protest against the launch of the National Equipment Identification Register (NEIR). Several mobile phone traders are alleged to have been involved in the incident. Story on page 6.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Saarc must be revived: Yunus Regional leaders meet CA after Khaleda's funeral

STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus has reiterated the need to revive the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, saying the Saarc spirit is "alive and well" following the presence of several regional leaders at the funeral of former prime minister and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Yunus made the remarks as several regional leaders met him after attending Khaleda's funeral procession on Wednesday, reports BSS.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam disclosed the matter at a briefing at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday afternoon.

Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Foreign Minister of Bhutan DN Dhungyel, External Affairs Minister of India Dr S Jaishankar, Foreign Minister of Nepal Bala Nanda Sharma, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Employment and Tourism of Sri Lanka Vijitha Herath, and Minister of Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development of the Republic of Maldives Dr Ali Haider Ahmed were present at Khaleda's funeral.

Of them, Ayaz Sadiq and Nanda Sharma met the chief adviser on Wednesday, Shafiqul said. Ali Haider and Vijitha Herath met Yunus yesterday, he added.

During these interactions, the press secretary said

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

METRO MISHAP Flaws in bearing pads, design to blame

Says probe committee, urges regular monitoring, safety measures



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A high-powered probe committee has found defects in the metro rail's bearing pads and design flaws at the point where a pad fell in Dhaka's Farmgate in October last year, killing one person and injuring two others.

The committee, led by Bridges Division Secretary Mohammad Abdur Rouf, made several recommendations, including urgent technical measures at the curved alignment sections to ensure that the bearing pads cannot shift.

It also said metro rail operations could continue with regular monitoring of the bearing pads. Metro rail authorities have already started taking measures at the curved alignment sections to prevent the pads from shifting.

The committee chief handed over the probe report to Road Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan yesterday. The adviser later revealed some findings of the investigation to journalists at his secretariat office.

A pedestrian was killed and two others injured on October 26 last year when a bearing pad from a metro rail pillar fell and struck them in the capital's Farmgate area.

The incident occurred just 13 months after another bearing pad fell from the metro line near the same location, raising concerns about the safety of this highly technical mode of transport.

The Road Transport and Bridges Ministry formed

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

We Deeply Mourn



Mr. Mazharul Haque
(1956-2026)

We express our heartfelt condolence on the passing of our visionary leader and sponsor director of Phoenix Insurance PLC **Mr. Mazharul Haque** ("Inna lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un"). He breathed his last on 1st January 2026 early morning in Malaysia. The Board of Directors, the Management, and the Employees of Phoenix Family express their deep shock and profound sorrow at the sad demise of Mr. Haque. We pray to the Almighty Allah for the eternal peace of the departed soul and convey our deepest sympathy to his bereaved family members to get strength for bearing the irreparable loss.

We respectfully acknowledge his remarkable contribution to Phoenix Insurance PLC.

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