



The businessmen are right to say they cannot do business in these conditions.  
Iran's Khamenei on protests, warns rioters

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A firefighter walks past a destroyed anti-aircraft unit at La Carlota military air base, after US President Donald Trump said the US has struck Venezuela and captured its President Nicolas Maduro, in Caracas, Venezuela, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## US will 'run' Venezuela

Says Trump after military attack topples Maduro, eyes selling 'large amounts of Venezuelan oil'; ousted leader, wife to face 'US justice'

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump yesterday said that the United States will "run" Venezuela and tap its huge oil reserves after snatching leftist leader Nicolas Maduro out of the country during a bombing raid on Caracas.

Trump's announcement came hours after a lightning attack in which special forces grabbed Maduro and his wife, while airstrikes pounded multiple sites, stunning the capital city.

Trump did not go into detail what he meant but told a press conference in Florida: "We're going to be running it with a group."

"We're designating people," he said, mentioning that cabinet officials standing with him would be in charge.

In another surprise, Trump indicated that US troops could be deployed in Venezuela.

The US is "not afraid of boots on the ground," he said.

Although the operation is being framed as a law-enforcement action, Trump made clear that regime change and Venezuela's oil riches are the major goals.

"We're going to have our very large United States oil companies, the biggest anywhere in the world, go in, spend billions of dollars, fix the badly broken infrastructure," he said.

"We'll be selling large amounts of oil," he said.

Earlier, Trump in a Truth Social post said, "The United States of America has successfully carried out a large scale strike against Venezuela and its leader, President Nicolas Maduro, who has been, along with his wife, captured and flown out of the country."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

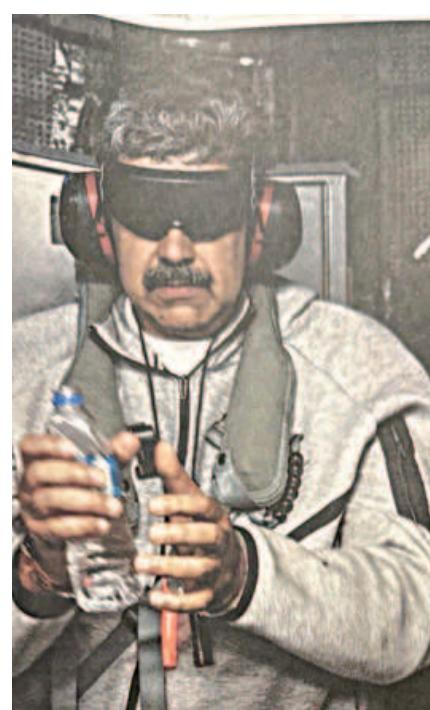


PHOTO: AFP

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro aboard the USS Iwo Jima after being captured in a US military operation.



RMG workers walk towards their factories on a foggy winter morning yesterday. Due to early shifts and limited public transport, many workers have to walk to their workplaces before sunrise. The photo was taken in the Ulil area of Savar.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Seat-sharing talks testing Jamaat-IAB ties

MAMUNUR RASHID

Uncertainty has emerged over whether the electoral seat sharing arrangement between Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Andolan Bangladesh will ultimately hold, despite both parties having worked for nearly three and a half months to consolidate Islamist votes under a single platform.

Leaders and activists within the alliance say Jamaat may keep between 180 and 185 seats for itself, allocating the remaining seats among alliance partners. Islami Andolan is expected to receive the second-highest number of



seats after Jamaat, followed by the National Citizen Party (NCP).

However, the Chormonai Pir-led Islami Andolan is demanding a larger share. Its leaders are dissatisfied with Jamaat's proposal to allocate fewer seats and are particularly aggrieved by the decision to give as many as 30 seats to the newly formed NCP, which they believe has been given undue importance. The stance of

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, led by Mamunul Haque, mirrors that of Islami Andolan.

From the outset, eight parties, including Jamaat and Islami Andolan, were part of the seat-sharing talks. On December 28, a day before the deadline for submitting nomination papers, the NCP and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by retired Colonel Oli Ahmed, joined the alliance. Later that night, reports emerged that Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party) had also joined, bringing the total number of alliance partners to 11.

Senior leaders of Islami Andolan

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## Rebels a cause of headache for BNP

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

BNP's fight in the national election is shaping up on two fronts: against rival parties outside and against rebel contenders within, threatening to split its vote base.

The party is grappling with internal unrest as dozens of members push ahead with independent electoral ambitions, openly defying the official line despite warnings and actions.

Already, more than 190 rebel candidates have submitted nomination papers across 115 constituencies, from traditional BNP strongholds to the capital.

BNP has issued strong warnings to leaders contesting the polls as rebels, saying strict disciplinary action will follow. Nine leaders have already been expelled for submitting nomination papers in seats shared with alliance partners.

BNP leaders said not all are rebels; the party has prepared alternative aspirants for over 15 seats in case its main nominees are disqualified due to issues such as defaulted loans, cases or other complications.

Backups have also been arranged, considering illness or old age among some contenders. If a primary candidate is ruled out, the alternative will be declared as the final nominee.

BNP has issued strong warnings to leaders contesting as rebels, saying strict disciplinary action will follow. Nine leaders have already been expelled for submitting nomination papers in seats shared with alliance partners.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



## Politics bowls Fizz out of IPL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Indian cricket board's decision to have Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman released from the IPL yesterday constitutes a glaring example of politics interfering in sports, observed cricket aficionados.

The 30-year-old, the only Bangladeshi representative in the glamorous Indian Premier League this year, was released by his franchise Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) on the instructions of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). This marked the first time a cricketer had been let go by an IPL side for political reasons.

A Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) director, who attended an emergency board meeting last night, told The Daily Star that the board will be sending an email to the ICC and the IPL governing body regarding the issue.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2



মেরেক ব্রেকিং ২০২৫  
~১৩,০০০ কোটি  
টাকার নেট ডিপোজিট প্রবৃদ্ধি

এ.ডি রেশিও ৮৩%

মাত্র এক বছরেই পাল্টে গেলো চির!

সূচক	ডিসেম্বর ২০২৪	ডিসেম্বর ২০২৫
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নতুন আকার্ডেন্ট	৮.১১ লাখ	৬.৭৮ লাখ

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২৩৪ টি শাখা • ১৮৭ টি উপশাখা • ৬২০ টি এজেন্ট • ৭১৫ টি এটিএম

ইউসিবি'র উপর আপনাদের ভরসা আর  
অবিরাম সমর্থনের জন্য আমরা  
আত্মিকভাবে কৃতজ্ঞ।



## BNP leader shot dead in Jashore town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A BNP leader was shot dead by unidentified miscreants in Shankarpur of Jashore town yesterday evening.

The deceased, Alamgir Hossain, 55, was the joint general secretary of Jashore Municipality Ward 7 BNP.

The incident occurred when Alamgir was in front of the councillor's office in the area around 7:30pm. A group of people suddenly opened fire, police said, quoting locals, adding that one of the bullets pierced the left side of his head and he collapsed on the spot, bleeding profusely.

Hearing the gunshots, locals rescued him and rushed him to Jashore General Hospital, where Dr Bichitra Mallik declared him dead.

The doctor added that Alamgir had died before reaching the hospital due to excessive bleeding from the head injury.

Following the incident, panic and tension spread across the area.

Anindya Islam Amit, acting organisational secretary of the BNP's Khulna divisional unit, said BNP leaders and activists were systematically killed even during the Awami League government's tenure, and now it is occurring in the same manner.

## US allies, foes alarmed by action

AFP, Paris

The US military operation that led to the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro yesterday sparked alarm across the international community, with allies and foes of Washington and Caracas expressing disquiet.

US President Donald Trump said Nicolas Maduro and his wife would be taken to New York to face federal charges after military strikes and an operation which he described as looking like a "television show".

The Venezuelan government decried what it termed an "extremely serious military aggression" by Washington and declared a state of emergency.

Countries such as Russia and Iran, which had longstanding ties with Maduro's government, were quick to condemn the operation but their alarm was also shared by Washington's allies including France and the EU.

Russia's foreign ministry said the "act of armed aggression against Venezuela is deeply concerning and condemnable".

It demanded the US leadership "reconsider its position and release the legally elected president of the sovereign



PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Farmers in Rajshahi's Barind region busy threshing and drying paddy in their courtyards yesterday. Once dried, the paddy will be stored in granaries or husked at mills for consumption. The photo was taken in Chaitanyapur area of Godagari upazila.

country and his wife".

China strongly condemned the use of force by the US against a sovereign country and the use of force against the president of a country.

"China firmly opposes such hegemonic behaviour by the US, which seriously violates international law, violates Venezuela's sovereignty, and threatens peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean. We urge the US to abide by international law and the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and stop violating the sovereignty and security of other countries," its foreign ministry said.

Iran, which Trump bombed last year, said it "strongly condemns the US military attack on Venezuela and a flagrant violation of the country's national sovereignty and territorial integrity".

Mexico, which Trump has also threatened with military force over drug trafficking, strongly condemned the US military action in Venezuela, saying it "seriously jeopardises regional stability".

Colombian President Gustavo Petro, whose country neighbours Venezuela, called the US action an "assault on the sovereignty" of Latin America which would lead to a humanitarian crisis.

**"Beijing firmly opposes such hegemonic behaviour by the US, which seriously violates international law, violates Venezuela's sovereignty, and threatens peace and security in Latin America and the Caribbean."**

-- Chinese foreign ministry

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva slammed the US attacks as a "serious affront" to Venezuela's sovereignty, adding that it crossed "an unacceptable line".

Cuba, a strong ally of Venezuela, denounced "state terrorism against the brave Venezuelan people".

US allies Britain, France and Germany also condemned the attack, saying such action "violates the principle of not resorting to force that underpins international law".

European Commission President

Ursula Von der Leyen said the bloc is very closely following the situation in Venezuela. "Any solution must respect international law and the UN Charter."

However EU said Maduro lacked legitimacy.

Spain offered to mediate in the crisis to find a way to a peaceful solution, while calling for "de-escalation and restraint".

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said all countries should "uphold international law" and added that "the UK was not involved in any way in this operation" as he urged patience in order to "establish the facts".

In a rare expression of support for the US operation by a major European country, far-right Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni -- a Trump ally -- argued the US military action in Venezuela was "legitimate" and "defensive".

Among major Latin American nations, Argentina's President Javier Milei lauded Venezuela's new "freedom". Ecuador, Panama also welcomed the US move.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres was "deeply alarmed" by the US strikes, with his spokesman quoting him as saying it could "constitute a dangerous precedent".

## US will 'run' Venezuela

FROM PAGE 1

Ahead of the overnight strikes, the US had accused Maduro of running a "narco-state" and rigging the 2024 election.

The Venezuelan leader, a 63-year-old former bus driver handpicked by the dying Hugo Chavez to succeed him in 2013, has denied those claims and said Washington was intent on taking control of his nation's oil reserves, the largest in the world.

US sources said Maduro was captured by special operations forces and whisked by helicopters to the Iwo Jima, an amphibious assault ship in the Caribbean, ahead of his transfer to New York.

The 79-year-old Republican posted a picture of Maduro in custody on a US naval ship wearing a blindfold, handcuffs and what looked like noise-cancelling ear muffs. He and his wife were being taken to New York to face narcotics and terrorism charges.

US-backed opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, who won the Nobel Peace Prize last year, posted on social media: "the hour of freedom has arrived."

She called for the opposition's candidate in the 2024 election, Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, to "immediately" assume the presidency.

But Trump scotched any expectation that Machado should emerge as Venezuela's new leader. She doesn't have "support or respect" there, he said.

He indicated he could instead work with Maduro's deputy, Delcy Rodriguez, saying "she's essentially willing to do what we think is necessary to make Venezuela great again."

Trump also made clear that the US presence is unlikely to be short.

"We're there now, but we're going to stay until such time as the proper transition can take place."

Venezuelans had been bracing for attacks as US forces, including the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, spent months massing off the coast.

Caracas residents woke to explosions and the whir of military helicopters around 2:00am (0600 GMT). Airstrikes hit a major military

base and an airbase, among other sites, for nearly an hour, AFP journalists said.

The bombing turned out to be only part of the more ambitious plan to topple Maduro and bring him to US soil to face narco-trafficking charges.

Trump said the assault began with a partial blackout caused by US "expertise".

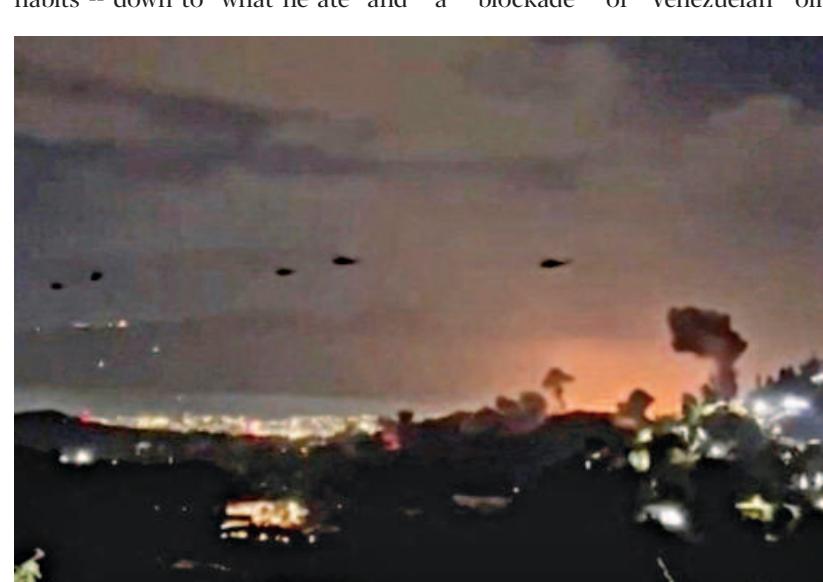
The top US military officer, General Dan Caine, said 150 aircraft took part in the operation, supporting troops helocoptering in to seize Machado with the help of months of intelligence into the leader's daily habits -- down to "what he ate" and

criminal charges in the US and that no further action was anticipated inside Venezuela.

Maduro was indicted in US federal court in 2020 on narco-terrorism and other charges for running what prosecutors called a scheme to send tonnes of cocaine to the US through an alleged "Cartel de Los Soles". He has always denied that.

"They will soon face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts," Attorney General Pam Bondi said on X about Maduro and his wife.

In the run-up, Trump had sought a "blockade" of Venezuelan oil,



In this screen grab, helicopters fly past plumes of smoke rising from explosions in Caracas yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

what pets he kept.

Maduro, 63, and his wife "gave up" without a struggle and there was "no loss of US life," he said.

The US and numerous European governments already did not recognize Maduro's legitimacy, saying he stole elections both in 2018 and 2024.

Maduro was captured by a team that included elite US special forces, including the US Army's Delta Force, a US official told Reuters. Republican US Senator Mike Lee said Secretary of State Marco Rubio had told him Maduro would stand trial on

expanded sanctions against the Maduro government and staged more than two dozen strikes on vessels the US alleges were involved in trafficking drugs, killing more than 110 people.

It was unclear under what legal authority the latest US strikes were carried out.

Trump's move risks a backlash from the US Congress, which has the constitutional right to declare war, and from his own political base, which favours an "America first" policy and largely opposes military intervention abroad.

## Rebels a cause of headache

FROM PAGE 1

Party sources said many leaders submitted nomination papers outside the official list. If they do not withdraw by the January 20 deadline, they may face expulsion from party positions and even loss of primary membership.

The party has also warned that tough action will be taken if any leader contests as an independent in constituencies left for alliance partners.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the party had assured its allies that organisational actions would be taken in such cases. "If the expelled leaders withdraw their nomination papers on their own, the party may also reconsider and withdraw the expulsion order."

Noting that January 20 is the last date for withdrawing nominations, BNP Joint Secretary General Syed Enamul Saleh Prince warned, "If anyone still stays in the race by going against party decisions, there will be no chance of forgiveness. We may decide to expel them for life."

On December 30, BNP expelled nine leaders for defying party decisions and submitting nomination papers.

They are: Barrister Rumeen Farhana, co-international affairs secretary of the party's national executive committee; national executive committee members

Muhammad Gias Uddin, Mohammad Shah Alam, Hasan Mamun and Abdul Khalek; former assistant general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal Tarun Dey; former convenor of Dhaka North City BNP unit Saiful Alam Nirab; Sylhet district BNP unit vice-president Mamunur Rashid; and Bancharampur upazila BNP unit president Mehdi Hasan Palash.

### REBEL CONTENDERS

In Brahmanbaria-2, Rumeen Farhana submitted nomination papers although BNP had left the seat for Jamiatul Ulama-e-Islam Joint Secretary General Junayed Al Habib. "I have fought for the rights of the people for the last 17 years. I will continue my campaign and call on voters to respond through their ballots," she told The Daily Star.

In Dhaka-12, Saiful Alam submitted nomination papers despite BNP leaving the seat for Revolutionary Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque. "I have prioritised my constituency and party activists. I am determined to contest," he said.

In Sylhet-5, Mamunur Rashid filed nominations for the seat left vacant by the party for Jamiatul Ulama-e-Islam President Ubaidullah Faruque.

He noted that although he was given BNP tickets in 2008 and 2018, the seat was later shifted to alliance partners, angering local activists.

"In this case, I have decided to take part in the election by giving more importance to the people of my constituency. I have no comment on whatever decision the party has taken. Right now, I am focusing on the election."

In Narayanganj-4, Muhammad Gias Uddin collected nomination papers for this seat that's also given to Jamiatul Ulama-e-Islam.

In Bholai-1, BNP gave up the seat for Bangladesh Jatiya Party Chairman Andaleeb Rahman Partha, yet BNP leader Golam Nabi Alamgir filed nominations.

In Brahmanbaria-6, five BNP leaders submitted nomination papers as independents, although the seat was left for Zonayed Saki of Ganashanghati Andoloni.

In Patuakhali-3, BNP central executive committee member Hasan Mamun submitted nomination papers as an independent, defying the party's decision to leave the seat for Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque.

Multiple rebels have also filed nominations in other constituencies: four each in Natore-1, Jhalakathi-1, Kishoreganj-1, and Brahmanbaria-6; three each in Rajshahi-5 and Panchagarh-2; and two each in Bagerhat-1, Bagerhat-2, Chattogram-14, and Kushtia-4.

## ROs cancel about 220 nominations

FROM PAGE 12

to discrepancies in the voter signatures they submitted.

"I submitted my nomination papers as an independent candidate, but they have not been accepted yet. We will appeal and the process has already started," Tasnim said.

The nomination papers submitted by most of the independent candidates were declared invalid due to the same reason, according to EC officials.

Independent candidates are required to collect and submit signatures from at least 1 percent of voters in their respective constituencies to qualify for nomination.

In the capital, Nagarik Oikko President Mahmudur Rahman Manna's nomination for Dhaka-12 was declared valid although his nomination from Bogura-2 was announced invalid the previous day.

Yesterday, the nomination of Bangladesh Labour Party Chairman Mustafizur Rahman Iran from Jhalakathi-1 constituency was cancelled but his nomination for Dhaka-12 was announced valid.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Ameer Mamunur Haque (Dhaka-13) was also announced valid.

According to returning offices, a total of 81 aspirants from 20 seats in Dhaka were cancelled. A total of 238 aspirants submitted nominations for the seats.

Nomination of Retired Armed Forces Officers' Association (RAWA) President Abdul Haque, Jamaat's candidate for Dhaka-2, was declared invalid.

In Jamalpur, the nomination of 12 candidates, including Jatiya Party's candidate AKM Fazlul Haque for Jamalpur-1 constituency, was cancelled.

In Cumilla, the nomination of

31 candidates, including Jatiya Party's candidate Nurul Islam Milon for Cumilla-1 constituency, was cancelled.

In Chandpur, the nomination of 15, including BNP-nominated candidate Mozammel Hossain for Chandpur-4 constituency, was cancelled.

In Narayanganj, the nomination of 16 candidates, including former state minister Rezaul Karim for Narayanganj-3 constituency, was cancelled.

In Gopalganj, the nomination of 12 candidates, including Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mohajote General Secretary Gobinda Chandra Pramanik, was cancelled.

Nominations of four in Lalmonirhat, three in Kurgirai, three in Pirojpur, 15 in Noakhali, 10 in Kishoreganj, 21 in Pabna, 10 in Laxmipur, seven in Brahmanbaria, 19 in Gazipur and four in Jhenidah were cancelled.



PRIME UNIVERSITY  
Anwar Kamal  
Pasha trustee  
board chair

CITY DESK

Anwar Kamal Pasha was re-elected as the chairman of the board of trustees of Prime University Trust for the next two years (2026, 2027) through election at the annual general meeting held on December 28, 2025, said a press release.

Anwar Kamal Pasha is an educationist, philanthropist, and industrialist.

Four killed in road accidents in 2 districts

STAR REPORT

At least four people were killed in separate road accidents in Natore and Barishal districts yesterday.

In Natore, two people were killed as a vehicle, locally known as trolley, hit a battery-run auto-rickshaw on Gurudaspur-Natore road in Najirpur area under Gurudaspur upazila yesterday noon, reports our Pabna correspondent.

The deceased, both local residents and passengers of the auto-rickshaw, were identified as Md Ashraf Hossain, 70, and Md Haydar Ali, 28.

The accident occurred around 12:00pm, leaving both Ashraf and Haydar dead on the spot, said Md Shafikuzzaman, officer-in-charge of Gurudaspur Police Station.

Police are trying to detain the absconding trolley driver, he added.

In Barishal, two persons were killed as a truck coming from the opposite direction hit their motorcycle and ran them over on Barishal-Jhalakathi regional highway in front of Ukilbari in the city's Rupatali area around midnight yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Md Jewel, 28, a resident of Rupatali, and Md Russell, 25, from Ruiyarpur area, both helpers at an ACI Animal Health store, our Barishal correspondent reports.

Russell died on the spot. Locals rushed critically injured Jewel to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, where on-duty doctors declared him dead.

The truck was found on the scene but its driver and his assistant managed to flee. The bodies were sent to a hospital morgue for autopsy," said OC Al Mamun UI Islam of Kotwali Model Police Station.



A farmer works in a tobacco field in the Rangpur region, where tobacco cultivation has expanded this season. Many farmers have shifted away from potato farming after suffering losses last year and are encouraged by higher profits from tobacco. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## Tobacco cultivation on the rise in Rangpur

S DILIP ROY, *LaMonirhat*

Tobacco cultivation has continued to expand across the Rangpur region, while potato farming has seen a declining trend in the ongoing season.

Tobacco cultivation is largely concentrated in Lalmonirhat district, alongside Rangpur, Nilphamari and Gaibandha.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), tobacco has been cultivated on nearly 20,000 hectares of land in the region this year, up from 18,700 hectares last year.

In contrast, potato cultivation declined significantly to 105,719 hectares this year from 119,719 hectares last year.

The Anti-Tobacco Media Alliance (ATMA), however, claimed that the actual area under tobacco cultivation is double the figure shown by the DAE.

Farmers said many had suffered heavy losses in potato cultivation last season, while those engaged in tobacco farming made unexpected profits. As a result, a large number of farmers shifted from potato to tobacco cultivation this year.

Some farmers also said tobacco companies have been systematically encouraging them to grow tobacco by providing free seeds and fertilisers, field-

level advice and interest-free loans.

Mahbubur Rahman, 65, a farmer from Nayapara village under Rangpur Sadar Upazila, said he decided not to cultivate potatoes this year after sustaining losses in the previous season and instead opted to grow tobacco on his entire eight bigha of land.

Another farmer from the same village, Nuruzzaman Haque, 60, said, "Almost all cultivable land in Mominpur union is being used for growing tobacco."

"Tobacco production ranges between 360 and 400 kilogrammes per bigha and is sold for Tk 190 to 210 per kg. The cost of cultivation ranges from Tk 20,000 to 25,000 per bigha," he said.

"Tobacco requires the most fertile land and is a labour-intensive crop. As such, all family members have to work in the field. However, it is a profitable crop considering the returns," he added.

Nitesh Chandra Barman, 60, a farmer from Sarpukur village under Aditmari Upazila in Lalmonirhat, said, "There are offices of at least seven tobacco companies in this upazila, making it easier for us to sell the crop."

A representative of a foreign tobacco company, who wished to remain anonymous, admitted, "Our job is to encourage farmers to cultivate tobacco. We focus on farmers' problems in every way so that they remain loyal to us."

Khorshed Alam, a member of ATMA, said, "Unless the unrestricted movement of tobacco company representatives at the field level is stopped, its cultivation in this region will remain beyond control."

Aditmari Upazila Agriculture Officer Omar Faruk said, "Despite our anti-tobacco campaigns, farmers are showing greater interest in tobacco cultivation."

Dr Safinur Rahman, senior scientific officer of the Rangpur Divisional Soil Resource Development Institute, said, "Tobacco cultivation degrades soil fertility. It also requires excessive amounts of chemical fertilisers, which are extremely harmful to the soil."

Sirajul Islam, additional director of the DAE in Rangpur division, said, "Since tobacco cultivation is not legally prohibited, we cannot take strict action against it. To control tobacco cultivation, the government must enact a law. We have sent a letter to the Ministry of Agriculture in this regard."

Lalmonirhat Deputy Commissioner HM Rakib Haider said, "We are working to determine how tobacco cultivation can be kept under control."

## Prabal, Mujibur gear up for 'Mission Seven Summit' Expedition begins with Aconcagua in Argentina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mountaineers Prabal Barman and AKM Mujibur Rahman are gearing up for scaling the highest peaks on all seven continents under "Mission Seven Summit".

Their expedition will begin with Aconcagua, the tallest peak in South America, located in Argentina, after January 7.

Mission Seven Summit involves climbing Mount Everest (Asia), Aconcagua (South America), Puncak Jaya (Oceania), Mount Elbrus (Europe), Mount Vinson (Antarctica), Mount Kilimanjaro (Africa) and Denali (North America).

Addressing a press conference at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro yesterday, Prabal, who began mountaineering in 2021, said, "This journey is not just about personal achievement. It is meant to inspire the youth of Bangladesh..."

Prabal, a Covid-19 survivor, earlier climbed Mount Kilimanjaro following formal training at the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering in India.

Mujibur, a professional scuba diver and mountaineer trained at the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering, earlier climbed Mount Elbrus, Mount Kilimanjaro and Aconcagua as part of the Mission Seven Summit. "Mountaineering is like a marathon," Mujibur said. "It demands patience, acclimatisation and the right guidance, not just physical strength."

## Man killed in wild elephant attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bandarban*

A man was killed in an attack by a wild elephant in Naikhyangchhari upazila of Bandarban yesterday morning.

The victim, Abdus Salam, 35, a tube-well mechanic from ward-6 of Baishari union, was the sole earning member of his family, locals said.

According to residents, a wild elephant was crossing the road in front of Salam's house. Out of curiosity, he moved closer from behind to take photographs. Barking by nearby dogs reportedly agitated the elephant, which suddenly charged at him and trampled him with its trunk and feet, killing him on the spot.

With assistance from the Forest Department, the elephant was later driven away.

Ward member Ubaching Marma said efforts were made to prevent further harm but one life had already been lost.

Inspector Md Anwarul Islam at Baishari Police Investigation Centre said police recovered the body and sent it to Bandarban Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Forest Department official Nur Hossain said the area lies within a wild elephant corridor, where such incidents occur frequently.



### TENDER INVITATION

The Inter Services Selection Board (ISSB) of Bangladesh is inviting sealed tenders from eligible tenderers. Details about these tenders, including submission guidelines and specific requirements, can be found in the enclosures of the Tender Notice published on the ISSB website.

Visit: [www.issb-bd.org](http://www.issb-bd.org) for more details. Interested parties must submit their tender documents up to 18 January 2026 by 1200 hours duly filled up with all requirements.

Abu Mohammad Hasanul Habib  
Brigadier General  
President, Inter Services Selection Board

আইএসএসিবির বিবিধ কার্য

## DITF to boost exports

FROM PAGE 3  
desired growth. Against this backdrop, the Dhaka International Trade Fair stands as an important instrument for advancing these goals," he said in a message.

Commerce Adviser Sk

**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

Bashir Uddin formally inaugurated the month-long event at the China-Bangladesh Friendship Exhibition Center (CBFEC) in Purbachal, Rupganj yesterday.

Yunus said he believes that by promoting local products, encouraging diversification and attracting foreign investment, the fair will play an important role in driving overall national development.

He hoped that all

participating countries and institutions would work together in a spirit of mutual cooperation and partnership.

Originally scheduled to open on January 1, the inauguration of the trade fair was deferred to January 3 following the government's declaration of three days of national mourning over the death of former prime minister and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia.

"If you bring the OC of Tazumuddin police station in Bholia and make him the OC of Gulshan, he won't be able to cope."

"To avoid complications, officers-in-charge were selected through a lottery from among Dhaka-based officers, excluding a few," he said, adding that challenges

## Ensuring law, order

FROM PAGE 3  
Metropolitan Police operates differently from district police units and that officers from rural stations often struggle to cope with the complexities of policing in the capital.

"If you bring the OC of Tazumuddin police station in Bholia and make him the OC of Gulshan, he won't be able to cope."

"To avoid complications, officers-in-charge were selected through a lottery from among Dhaka-based officers, excluding a few," he said, adding that challenges

still remain when officers are transferred between police stations with differing demands.

Despite these difficulties, he said police personnel are continuing their duties.

Responding to a question on candidate security, the commissioner said protection is being provided to those who seek it, subject to verification and resource availability.

"We assess how serious the threat to a person's life is through the Special Branch. After verification, when SB confirms that someone has

a security risk, we provide SB personnel or gunmen."

He said several individuals have already been given gunmen and that protection for election commissioners has been increased. "If any candidate informs us of a threat, we are ready to verify and provide security."

However, he acknowledged that police resources are limited.

"If all manpower is deployed for personal security, who will guard the polling centres?" he said, adding that police are trying to balance resources.

## Is the Jamaat alliance tearing NCP apart?

FROM PAGE 3  
The crisis deepened on December 27 after Senior Joint Member Secretary Tasnim Jara confirmed her resignation to the convener and announced she would contest the election as an independent candidate.

On December 28, several senior leaders followed suit, including Joint Convener Tajnuva Jabeen and Fen-3 nomination aspirant Mohammad Abul Kashem.

Azad Khan Bhasani, chief coordinator of the party's farmers' wing and grandson of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, also resigned, calling the alliance a betrayal of the party's founding values. Two other key figures -- Joint Member Secretaries Mushfiqul Salehin and Arif Sohel -- also stepped down.

The crisis has particularly affected female leadership.

Senior Joint Convener Samanta Sharmin said she would not contest the Bholia-1 seat, calling the alliance with Jamaat "morally unacceptable".

Joint Convener Nasrat Tabassum withdrew from

both the election and party activities.

Monira Sharmin pulled out of the Naogaon-5 race, Southern Organiser Monjila Jhuma withdrew from Khagrachhari, and Northern Organiser Dyuti Aranny Chowdhury said she would not campaign, writing that the decision had "shattered the dreams of countless leaders and activists."

Humayra Noor, who withdrew from Naokhali-5, said she accepted the party's decision but was stepping back due to the overall situation, adding that her political journey with the NCP would continue.

Meanwhile, amid the turmoil, on December 29, former adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain formally joined the NCP, announcing

that he would not contest the election but would serve as the party's spokesperson and head of its election management committee.

NCP, however, dismissed all the concerns regarding the party's situation.

NCP Joint Convener Javed Rashed said the resignations were based on personal decisions and would not affect either the party or the alliance.

"This alliance was formed through a democratic process based on the majority view within the party," he said.

Meanwhile, speaking on condition of anonymity, a senior NCP leader said more resignations were likely. "There are at least 10 more names on the list. The number will go up."

## Star journalist gets CRAB best reporting

FROM PAGE 3  
were also present.

In crime investigative reporting (print) Mahmudul Hasan of

Prothom Alo received the award. The crime investigative reporting (television) category was

jointly won by Mohammad

Shahriar Arif of Channel 24 and Naeem Al Ziko of News 24.

Mohammad Jamil Khan received the award

for his two-part series, "Childhood Lost in Rolling Biri" and "Toiling Their Lives Away in Smoke and Shadows."

Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation (HEAT) Project  
Office of the Sub-Project Manager (SPM)  
UGC HEAT-ATF PIN 11013  
Department of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology  
University of Rajshahi  
স্থানক নং: জিইবি-রাবি./হিট-এটিএফ/পিএইচ-১১০১৩/২৯  
e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited on the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following goods under HEAT Project for Microbiology Laboratory, Department of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology University of Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of Works	Online Tender Notice Publication Date and Time	Online Tender Closing Date and Time
1200401	RU/11013/G-1	ICT Equipment's for Microbiology Laboratory	04-01-2026 02:00 PM	15-01-2026 02:00 PM
1200841	RU/11013/G-2L1	Procurement of Machineries and Installation for Microbiology Laboratory. Lot 1	04-01-2026 02:00 PM	22-01-2026 02:00 PM
1205812	RU/11013/G-2L2	Procurement of Machineries and Installation for Microbiology Laboratory. Lot 2	04-01-2026	

## US HISTORY IN LATAM

### 1954 GUATEMALA

On June 27, 1954, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz Guzman, president of Guatemala, was driven from power by mercenaries trained and financed by Washington, after a land reform that threatened the interests of the powerful US company United Fruit Corporation. In 2003, the US officially acknowledged the CIA's role in this coup, in the name of fighting communism.

### 1961 CUBA

From April 15 to 19, 1961, 1,400 anti-Castro militants trained and financed by the CIA attempted to land at the Bay of Pigs, 250 kilometres from Havana, but failed to overthrow Fidel Castro's communist regime. The fighting left killed more than a hundred on each side.

### 1965 DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In 1965, citing a "communist threat", the United States sent Marines and paratroopers to Santo Domingo to crush an uprising in support of Juan Bosch, a leftist president ousted by generals in 1963.

### 1970S SUPPORT FOR DICTATORSHIPS

Washington backed several military dictatorships, seen as a bulwark against left-wing armed movements in a world divided by Cold War rivalries. It actively assisted Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet during the September 11, 1973 coup against leftist president Salvador Allende. In the 1970s and 1980s, six dictatorships (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Brazil) joined forces to eliminate left-wing opponents under "Operation Condor," with tacit US support.

### 1980S WARS IN CENTRAL AMERICA

In 1979, the Sandinista rebellion overthrew dictator Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua. US president Ronald Reagan, concerned about Managua's alignment with Cuba and the USSR, secretly authorised the CIA to provide \$20 million in aid to the Contras (the Nicaraguan counterrevolutionaries), partly funded by the illegal sale of arms to Iran. The Nicaraguan civil war, which ended in April 1990, claimed 50,000 lives. Reagan also sent military advisers to El Salvador to crush the rebellion of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in a civil war (1980-1992) that resulted in 72,000 deaths.

### 1983 GRENADA

On October 25, 1983, US Marines and Rangers intervened on the island of Grenada after PM Maurice Bishop was assassinated by a far-left junta. Reagan launched Operation "Urgent Fury" with the stated goal of protecting a thousand US citizens. The operation, widely deplored by the UN General Assembly, ended on November 3, with more than a hundred dead.

### 1989 PANAMA

In 1989, after a contested election, president George W Bush ordered a military intervention in Panama, resulting in the surrender of general Manuel Noriega, a former collaborator of US intelligence, who was wanted by US justice. Some 27,000 GIs took part in Operation "Just Cause", which officially left 500 dead.

SOURCE: AFP



(From left, clockwise) Members of the National Guard stand guard at Fuerte Tiuna, Venezuela's largest military complex, in Caracas yesterday; Venezuelans in Miami in the US celebrate news of the strikes and capture of Maduro; and Fire at Fuerte Tiuna is seen from a distance after a series of explosions in Caracas.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS



## Bombing for peace!

Under 'peacemaker' Trump, US has become 'world bully' from 'world cop'



AFP, Washington



Donald Trump returned to office vowing to be the peace president. Nearly a year later, he is embracing war on multiple fronts.

Trump on Saturday ordered large-scale military strikes in Venezuela and announced that leftist leader Nicolas Maduro had been captured and flown out of the country.

The raid to kick off the new year comes after the US military on Christmas Day hit Nigeria, in what Trump said was an operation targeting jihadists who had attacked Christians.

And hours before the attack in Venezuela, Trump warned of another US intervention in a third region, saying US forces were "locked and loaded" if Iran's clerical state kills protesters who have taken to the streets.

The enthusiasm for war would seem at odds for a president who has loudly declared that he deserves the Nobel Peace Prize for supposedly ending eight wars, a claim that is highly disputable.

In his second inaugural address on January 20 last year, Trump said: "My proudest legacy will be that of a peacemaker and unifier."

But soon after, Trump rebranded the Defense Department as the "Department of War."

Both Trump and his aides insist that military muscle is the path to real peace.

"We're making peace through strength. That's what we're doing," Trump told a rally last month in Pennsylvania.

Making his love of force even more striking, Trump has not only described himself as a peacemaker but has spoken for years against US interventionism.

Declaring "America First," he cast himself as a different kind of Republican than the party's last president George W Bush, whose administration he castigated as warmongers over the Iraq invasion of 2003.

In a speech in Riyadh in May, Trump said that "so-called nation-builders" wrecked far more nations than they built" and failed to understand countries where they intervened.

In one key difference with Bush, Trump has made no pretense of long term commitment.

He last year ordered the bombing of Iranian nuclear sites in support of an Israeli attack as well as strikes in Syria in retaliation for the killings of US forces.

But like Bush, Trump cares little about UN or other international conventions on war.

The Trump administration argues that Maduro faced a warrant for drug charges in the United States, but Maduro's government is a UN member, even if most Western countries consider him illegitimate following elections riddled with irregularities.

Senator Ruben Gallego, a Democrat and Iraq war veteran, called Venezuela the "second unjustified war in my lifetime," although he agreed Maduro was a dictator.

"It's embarrassing that we went from the world cop to the world bully in less than one year. There is no reason for us to be at war with Venezuela," he said on X.

Reverse NGOs ban in Gaza  
UN chief tells Israel

AFP, United Nations

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has called for Israel to end a ban on humanitarian agencies that provided aid in Gaza, saying he was "deeply concerned" at the development.

Guterres "calls for this measure to be reversed, stressing that international non-governmental organizations are indispensable to life-saving humanitarian work and that the suspension risks undermining the fragile progress made during the ceasefire," his spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement.

"This recent action will further exacerbate the humanitarian crisis facing Palestinians," he added.

Israel on Thursday suspended 37 foreign organisations from accessing the Gaza Strip after they had refused to share lists of their Palestinian employees with government officials.

NGOs included in the ban have been ordered to cease their operations by March 1.

Several NGOs have said the requirements contravene international humanitarian law.

Israel says the new regulation aims to prevent bodies it accuses of supporting terrorism from operating in the Palestinian territories.

Iran protesters' demands fair  
Says Khamenei after Trump warning

AFP, Tehran

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday acknowledged the economic demands of protesters in Iran, where demonstrations have spread to more than two dozen cities, even as he warned there would be no quarter for "rioters".

The protests began on Sunday as an expression of discontent over high prices and economic stagnation, but have since expanded to include political demands.



"The president and high-ranking officials are working to resolve" the economic difficulties in the sanctions-battered country, Khamenei said in a speech.

"The shopkeepers have protested against this situation and that is completely fair," he added.

But Khamenei nonetheless warned that while "authorities must have dialogue with protesters, it is useless to have dialogue with rioters. Those must be put in their place."

US president Donald Trump on Friday said the US was "locked and loaded and ready to go" if Iran crackdown on protesters but did not specify what action it might take.

At least ten people have been killed in the protests so far, including members of the security services, according to sources.

The protests have mostly been concentrated in mid-sized cities in Iran's west and southwest, where clashes and vandalism have been reported.

In recent days, the protests have taken on a more overtly political bent. In Karaj, on the outskirts of the capital, "a few people burned the Iranian flag, shouting 'Death to the dictator!' and 'This isn't the last battle, Pahlavi is coming back!'" Fars reported, adding that others in the crowd objected to the slogans.

## FIRST PHASE OF MYANMAR POLLS Military-backed party takes lead

REUTERS

Myanmar's military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party is leading after the first phase of a contentious general election, early results cited by state media showed, in the first vote since a 2021 coup.

Having sparked a nationwide rebellion after crushing pro-democracy protests in the wake of its coup, the ruling junta has said the three-phase vote would bring political stability to the impoverished Southeast Asian nation.

Partial results from Myanmar's first election since 2020, released by the Union Election Commission (UEC) for 56 constituencies, showed the junta-backed party winning by a wide margin as expected, despite thin turnout.

The results published on Friday show the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), led by retired generals, winning 38 of 40 seats in the Pyithu Hluttaw, or lower house, whose outcomes have been tallied.

The Shan Nationalities Democratic Party, also known as the White Tiger Party and the Mon Unity Party (MUP) got one seat each.

Among a diminished field of competitors handpicked by the military, the USDP also won 14 seats of the 15 regional or State Hluttaw seats tallied in the first-past-the-post system, while the Akha National Development Party took one.

For the upper house, or Amyotha Hluttaw, only one seat has been declared, which was won by the Wa National Party.

Two more rounds of voting set for January 11 and January 25 will cover 265 of Myanmar's 330 townships, in some of which the junta does not have complete control.



Hindu devotees take a holy dip in the Shali River on the occasion of the Swasthani Brata Katha festival on the outskirts of Kathmandu yesterday.

India security forces kill 14 Maoist rebels

AFP, Raipur

Indian security forces killed 14 Maoist rebels yesterday in two clashes, police said, as New Delhi steps up efforts to quash the long running insurgency in the country's central regions.

More than 10,000 people have died in the decades-long rebellion waged by Naxalite rebels, who say they are fighting for the rights of marginalised indigenous people in resource-rich central India.

The government has been cracking down on the remnants of the group, named after the village in the Himalayan foothills where the Maoist-inspired insurgency began nearly six decades ago.

The rebels were shot dead in the central state of Chhattisgarh in the early hours of yesterday.

Authorities have repeatedly vowed to completely finish the insurgency by the end of March.

PHOTO: AFP

## Is this a path to more invasive surveillance?

NEIR launch has raised safety and livelihood concerns

The launch of the National Equipment Identity Register (NEIR) has created more panic and confusion than the security the government promises it will deliver. The government has stated that the main objectives of making mobile handset registration mandatory are to prevent tax evasion, stop the entry of illegal and counterfeit mobile phones into the country, and support crime control. Experts, however, believe that, as seen in the past, the system creates greater scope for a government to expand surveillance of citizens since both SIM cards and handsets will be registered against individuals.

In 2016, the Awami League government made biometric registration, including fingerprints, mandatory for mobile SIM cards, citing crime prevention as a justification. But instead, fingerprints of citizens were misused to register SIM cards, leading to numerous incidents of mobile phone fraud and crime. After the NEIR system went live on January 1, 2026, many people received a rude shock when they discovered that 30 to 40 mobile phones had been registered in their name using their National Identity Card (NID). This exposes individuals to the risk of being implicated in criminal activity if phones have been registered under their NID without their knowledge. One can only imagine the legal complications and harassment such individuals may face to extricate themselves from this kind of situation.

The government's assurances, moreover, are not very convincing. According to officials from the telecom and IT ministry, this is a temporary technical glitch involving the inclusion of historical data of handsets linked to active SIMs or devices. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) and mobile operators are reportedly working together to resolve the problem. But given the country's poor track record in protecting private data and preventing major breaches, public concern is hardly misplaced.

Experts have pointed out that the NEIR should not have been launched without proper testing. The BTRC, moreover, has failed to clearly explain the nature of these glitches to the public, further fuelling anxiety. That mobile phone traders—whose livelihoods are at stake—resorted to protests that ended in vandalism at the BTRC headquarters reflects the government's lack of foresight and strategic planning before implementing such a drastic measure. The government has since announced that total duties on handsets will be reduced from 61.8 percent to 43.4 percent, but this has failed to satisfy traders.

So why was it so necessary to launch the NEIR at this moment? At a time when it was evident that the move, however well intentioned, would adversely affect small traders, introducing a system that effectively renders their businesses illegal or uncertain overnight seems quite imprudent. From the consumer's perspective, many may no longer be able to afford to buy smartphones due to rising prices, while all mobile phone users will understandably worry whether the new system could become a gateway to more intrusive surveillance.

## A long-overdue urban roadmap

National Urban Development Policy-2025 should guide planned urbanisation

After more than two decades of delays, the approval of the National Urban Development Policy-2025 is a welcome step. As rapid urbanisation continues to reshape Bangladesh's economy and society, the absence of a comprehensive national framework has long hampered efforts to manage cities in a planned, equitable, and sustainable way. The policy's approval, therefore, offers hope for better-managed, more liveable cities in the years ahead.

Although only about 32 percent of our population lives in urban areas, they generate over 60 percent of the national output. However, this growth has largely been unplanned, placing severe pressure on housing, transport, water supply, waste management, and the environment. Congestion, pollution, loss of open spaces, and rising climate risks have been continuously eroding urban liveability. In this context, the policy's stated aim of building climate-resilient, inclusive, and liveable cities is appreciable.

The policy classifies cities into four categories—megacities (population of one crore and above), metropolitan cities (population of 5,00,000 to one crore), medium or district towns (50,000 to 5,00,000), and upazila or small towns (20,000 to 50,000). By classifying urban centres into these categories and assigning distinct economic functions to each of them, the policy recognises that balanced urban development requires differentiated strategies. Discouraging industrial establishments in megacities while encouraging investment elsewhere is particularly important for easing population pressure on Dhaka and reducing long-standing regional disparities. The emphasis on decentralisation is equally encouraging. Envisioning metropolitan cities as regional hubs, district towns as service centres, which will provide administrative and professional services and facilitate the exchange of farm products, offers a more balanced model of growth. If implemented effectively, this could create jobs beyond major cities and slow the continuous migration that continues to overwhelm core urban areas.

However, as experts have noted, the policy is indicative rather than legally enforceable. Without supporting laws, regulations, and strong institutions, its impact will be limited. While forming a National Urban Development Council under the policy is a good idea, it must be empowered with real authority, resources, and coordination capacity.

We, therefore, urge the government to move swiftly from policy to practice. This means enacting enabling legislation, strengthening local governments, and integrating the policy into city plans, transport strategies, and climate actions. The policy provides a long-awaited roadmap. Whether it leads to more liveable and resilient cities will now depend on political will and effective implementation.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### Trains collide in Pakistan

On this day in 1990, two trains collided in Sangi, Pakistan, killing between 200 and 300 people and injuring an estimated 700 others. This was the worst rail accident to date in Pakistan.

# EDITORIAL

## Education reform: Too little, too late under the interim regime



Dr Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at BRAC University, chair of Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), and adviser to the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMP). Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

MANZOOR AHMED

The tenure of the interim government (IG) since August 2024 has not been particularly comforting for the country's education community. It is a sad irony that a student-led uprising sparked by discontent about discriminatory educational outcomes brought about a regime change, but led to no significant education reform initiative. At least 11 high-level reform commissions were established in the political, economic, and social spheres, but there was no commission on education.

As it turned out, the long-accumulated Augean stable of problems and grievances in education split onto the streets. Students, teachers and parents joined marches and hunger strikes, with numerous complaints and demands. We witnessed the unsightly spectacle of police using water cannons and batons to suppress protesting teachers and students. The government took various decisions on an ad hoc basis, in fire-fighting mode, under pressure, without due and adequate consideration of broader consequences and implications. Such steps were partial solutions or no solution at all, and would potentially create even more serious problems down the line.

Responding to pressure from the education community, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MoPME) formed a "consultation committee" in November 2024 for recommendations on student learning, teachers' performance and inequality in education. The nine-member committee, with this writer as the convener, was given a three-month deadline. The committee, consulting major stakeholder groups and visiting schools in 11 districts, presented its report, which the chief adviser received in person on February 10, 2025.

The report consisted of over a hundred recommendations for actions in eight categories. Key points included shifting focus to mastery of foundational skills of reading with comprehension and basic arithmetic at the primary stage; adjusting pedagogy and student assessment to this focus; and each school and its teachers, led by the headteacher, ensuring that all children learn. Short, medium and long-term measures were

indicated to carry out the reforms. Specific proposals regarding teachers' and headteachers' incentives, status and career path were made to be implemented in phases, recognising that teachers are the pivot of change. Moving towards a decentralised and responsive governance of schools by piloting an upazila-based planning and management mechanism was suggested as a major strategy.



FILE VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

Disappointingly, the reform recommendations have not yet received a serious and systematic consideration by the government. In fact, there appears to be no mechanism for deliberating on and initiating a comprehensive reform effort. Some of the reforms proposed for primary education—teachers' and headteachers' status and career path, or decentralised upazila-level planning and management trial—require policy decisions by the government, not just by MoPME. Apparently, at the high political and administrative level, there has been no champion for the transformative change in primary education. MoPME leadership also did not or could not make a strong enough plea in favour of the reforms to persuade the cabinet of advisers, the highest decision-making body that could direct various agencies to take the necessary steps to implement the reforms.

Meanwhile, in October 2025, the Ministry of Education (MoE) appointed a consultative committee on secondary education. The ten-

member committee, again headed by this writer, was allowed a three-month timeframe. MoE also set up another interdisciplinary committee led by Dr Abed Chowdhury, a reputed gene scientist with a deep interest in education, to produce a "vision document" for qualitative change in education. These actions convey the intention of the MoE adviser to engage in a serious dialogue about education reform.

A legitimate question, however, is whether this is not too late and too little, as the tenure of the IG will end soon, and the committees' work cannot be considered a comprehensive education sector reform initiative. The response of the education authorities, as conveyed to the committees, is that while various exigencies have prevented a broader education reform

effort, preparing the ground for reform at least in school education—the foundation of the education system—would contribute to the work that has to be undertaken by the post-election government.

Severe and long-standing problems beset other sub-sectors of education. Education in some 2,500 colleges under the National University is a disaster zone in respect of the quality of instruction and the employability of graduates. With three-quarters of higher education students enrolled in these colleges, they supply the bulk of mid- and high-level skilled workers for government and businesses, including most schoolteachers. The widespread increase in the number of universities, both public and private, with scant attention to ensuring standards, has created an untenable situation. Quality assurance, market relevance, proportions of enrolment, gender disparity, and policy coordination are persistent problems in vocational and technical education. Similar concerns

prevail in professional education.

Does the history of political leadership and decision-making in education over more than five decades of independent Bangladesh give us ground for optimism about the next government's stance on education? The political statements of the likely contenders for power are broad promises that do not specifically indicate what changes, if any, can be anticipated. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in its 31-point outline of state reform, promises "need-based education at the lower and mid-levels and knowledge-based education at the tertiary level." However, what is meant here is not clear, because all stages of education should be both need-based and knowledge-based. BNP also pledges five percent of the GDP as government allocation for education. Jamaat-e-Islami, yet to publish its manifesto, speaks about a religion-based redesigning of education and six percent of the GDP for public education. However, neither can keep these allocation promises unless the GDP ratio of public revenue is at least doubled from the present level of under eight percent. More important is to figure out how the public resources can be better used by re-prioritising objectives and strategies and ensuring much stronger accountability for results in the education sector. Change and reform in the complex and multifaceted education sector call for a holistic approach to defining problems and designing change without ignoring the distinctive features of the sub-sectors.

An early task of the post-election government may be to develop an education sector plan, taking from the work on the two stages of school education. Sub-sector analysis of general higher education, technical and professional higher education, mid-level vocational and technical education and training, madrasa education and lifelong learning will be essential parts of the total sector planning—bringing them within a common framework of inclusive, equitable and quality-driven human development.

The experience with the primary education reform recommendations and the ongoing work of the other committees suggests that deciding how the plan would be implemented is as important as identifying and planning the objectives, strategies, and targets. Firm political commitment to reform and high-level champions in political and administrative decision-making forums are necessary to ensure that reform steps are taken and results materialise.

## Will the next government deliver truth and healing for victims?

Dr Muhammad Asadullah is an associate professor at the Department of Justice Studies, University of Regina, Canada.

Tajriyaan Akram Hussain is an advocate at the District and Sessions Judge Court in Dhaka, and a member of the National Elections Inquiry Commission.

Nousheen Sharmila Ritu is executive director of UK-based think tank Bangladesh 2.0 Initiative.

MUHAMMAD ASADULLAH, TAJRIYAAN AKRAM HUSSAIN, and NOUSHEEN SHARMILA RITU

As Bangladesh moves towards the much awaited election in February, the central question confronting the country is no longer whether grave abuses occurred during Awami League's rule of 15 years, but whether the next government will address the needs of victims of those abuses or repeat the mistakes seen in other transitional societies, where political compromise and selective justice weakened accountability, leaving victims without meaningful redress.

The past year or so saw important conversations in this regard. Victim consultations in Dhaka, involving survivors of the last regime, were held across political party lines and in the presence of various stakeholders. These engagements sought to build consensus around the need for a truth, justice, and healing process grounded in lived experiences. Political parties were encouraged to reflect on victims' healing, justice, and accountability needs in their election manifestos,

recognising that transitional justice is not a peripheral concern but a core democratic obligation. Representatives from BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, NCP, AB Party, and other parties also expressed willingness to incorporate these issues into their manifestos.

Building on these discussions, on December 12, the International Institute of Law and Development (IILD) and Bangladesh 2.0 Initiative organised a consultation with victims, their families, and relatives from the Rangpur division. It was structured around compassionate listening to their overall sense of uncertainty.

What victims shared in Rangpur closely echoes narratives that

healing.

Many victims also spoke of exhaustion. They described being asked repeatedly to recount their experiences in gatherings and programmes, which they found to be uncomfortable and re-traumatising. While recognising the importance of sharing their stories, they expressed frustrations that the government and wider society listen without caring, and document suffering without acting upon it. This feeling only adds to their overall sense of uncertainty.

What victims shared in Rangpur closely echoes narratives that

**The consequences of unhealed trauma since the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 are still being borne today. Political expediency and compromises made in the name of stability did not bring lasting unity. Instead, they embedded cycles of violence, politicised institutions, and normalised abuse by state actors.**

and justice aspirations. The participants shared their experiences and insights regarding enforced disappearances, custodial torture, extrajudicial killings, false cases, medical neglect, economic dispossession, and long-term psychological trauma. Families spoke of the fear that displaced them from their homes, of loved ones killed in so-called crossfire, of permanent disability, and of a justice system that repeatedly failed to respond. This process of sharing can contribute not only to documenting truth but also to

have emerged from earlier victim-led consultations held elsewhere. Suffering is acknowledged rhetorically, yet accountability is consistently deferred in the name of stability, order, or political transition. These recurring testimonies, across regions and victim groups, underscore why a truth and healing commission is urgently needed, and why it must be designed with integrity and a decolonial framework. As victims have repeatedly made clear, healing cannot occur if they are asked to forgive while

and justice aspirations. The participants shared their experiences and insights regarding enforced disappearances, custodial torture, extrajudicial killings, false cases, medical neglect, economic dispossession, and long-term psychological trauma. Families spoke of the fear that displaced them from their homes, of loved ones killed in so-called crossfire, of permanent disability, and of a justice system that repeatedly failed to respond. This process of sharing can contribute not only to documenting truth but also to

perpetrators remain unidentified, unpunished, or shielded by political power. Reconciliation, however desirable as a national aspiration, cannot be forced upon victims without credible justice processes and enforceable accountability mechanisms. When reconciliation is prioritised over justice, it ceases to heal and entrenches silence.

The consequences of unhealed trauma since the birth of Bangladesh in 1971 are still being borne today. Political expediency and compromises made in the name of stability did not bring lasting unity. Instead, they embedded cycles of violence, politicised institutions, and normalised abuse by state actors.

With the next election approaching fast, the risk is that restorative transitional justice may once again be reduced to an unmet commitment. History is not only observing whether a new government takes office, but whether it chooses to break with the past. A credible Truth and Healing Commission—grounded in victim participation, linked to prosecutions where evidence exists, and accompanied by proper institutional reform and reparations—would signal a decisive departure from the "forget and forgive" approach.

The victims do not demand vengeance. They demand recognition, truth, accountability, and assurance for non-recurrence. If the next government fails to address those needs, it will only be repeating the cycle of injustice, perpetuating the suffering of those who have already endured so much.

# 'The interim has failed to curb inflation and unemployment': A rebuttal



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ABDULLAH A. DEWAN

I write this in response to an article recently published by *The Daily Star*, titled *The interim has failed to curb inflation and unemployment*. The article, written by Dr Birupaksha Paul, evaluates the interim government's economic performance primarily through the conventional inflation-unemployment trade-off, concluding that policy failure explains the persistence of both. In my view, while the argument is internally coherent in a textbook sense, it rests on analytical assumptions that no longer hold and omits critical institutional realities. These omissions are serious enough to mislead public understanding and, therefore, warrant rebuttal.

One may recall that the interim government assumed responsibility amid a nationwide breakdown of law and order, where weakened enforcement and administrative paralysis disrupted commerce, supply chains, and investor confidence, constraining economic stabilisation at the outset.

The central problem with the article is not its use of economic theory, but its choice of theory and its abstraction from context. It treats Bangladesh's economy as though it were operating under normal macroeconomic conditions, where

the inflation-unemployment trade-off commonly associated with the Phillips curve. This framework, once influential in mid-20th-century industrial economies, has long lost empirical relevance in modern economic systems. Over the past four decades, the Phillips curve has flattened or broken down across both advanced and developing economies. Low unemployment has frequently coexisted with stable inflation, while inflationary episodes have occurred without tight labour markets. This is not a temporary anomaly but a structural shift in how inflation and employment are generated in contemporary economies.

Modern inflation is no longer driven primarily by domestic demand pressures interacting with labour scarcity. It is increasingly shaped by supply-side shocks, exchange-rate pass-through, energy and commodity price volatility, market concentration, administered pricing, speculative behaviour, and institutional failures. In Bangladesh's case, syndicate control over essential commodities and distribution networks has played a decisive role in price formation. When inflation is driven by market power rather than excess demand, monetary tightening becomes

because rates move slightly; they hire when they trust banks, contracts, competition policy, credible enforcement against cartels and syndicates, and the broader institutional environment.

Attributing employment outcomes primarily to the interest-rate policy. A further weakness lies in the article's treatment of monetary policy transmission as intact. The Phillips curve logic presumes a functioning banking system capable of translating policy signals into credit allocation. But Bangladesh's banking sector, at the time the interim government took over, was severely compromised. Large volumes of liquidity circulated outside productive channels. Loan discipline had been eroded, supervision weakened, and public confidence damaged. Under such conditions, neither tightening nor easing operates cleanly. Monetary policy becomes a blunt instrument, producing weak, delayed, or perverse effects. Evaluating outcomes as if transmission were normal is analytically unsound.

The article also fails to distinguish between policy optimisation and crisis stabilisation. Interim governments do not inherit clean slates; they inherit trajectories. Their primary task is to arrest deterioration, prevent

systemic collapse, and restore minimal functionality. Expecting simultaneous reductions in inflation and unemployment within a short horizon—using non-crisis macroeconomic benchmarks—imposes an unrealistic standard. Even advanced economies with intact institutions experience long and uneven lags between policy action and labour-market outcomes. In Bangladesh's case, those lags are longer

of institutional realism, it risks becoming elegant but misleading. The issue here is not whether inflation and unemployment has declined fast enough, but whether the analytical lens used to judge performance is appropriate to the reality being assessed. Applying a mid-20th-century trade-off model to a 21st-century economy marked by financial fragility, market capture, and governance breakdown is a category error.



FILE VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

because institutional damage had to be addressed before policy levers could regain effectiveness.

Another notable omission is the absence of temporal analysis. The article implicitly treats outcomes as contemporaneous products of interim decisions, rather than as lagged consequences of earlier distortions. Inflationary momentum, excess liquidity, and investment paralysis do not dissipate instantly when governance changes. They unwind slowly, often asymmetrically. By ignoring these dynamics, the article compresses time and assigns responsibility without acknowledging deeply rooted institutional inertia.

Of course, none of this implies that the interim government should be immune from criticism. In fact, criticism is both necessary and appropriate where warranted. But accountability requires proportionality and analytical precision. Criticism grounded in outdated frameworks and incomplete context does not enhance public understanding. When economics is stripped

It evaluates the patient with the wrong diagnostic tool.

A more credible assessment would begin with what the interim government inherited: a weakened banking system, distorted markets, eroded regulatory credibility, and broken transmission mechanisms. It would then ask whether deterioration was halted, whether minimal discipline was restored, and whether conditions for future policy effectiveness began to re-emerge. Only after those foundations are rebuilt does it make sense to judge performance against conventional macroeconomic benchmarks.

This is why a rebuttal is necessary. My disagreement here is not ideological but analytical. Inflation and unemployment today are multi-causal, institutionally mediated, and globally augmented phenomena. Treating them as mechanically linked through an obsolete curve risks mistaking inherited structural decay for present-day policy failure. A serious public debate deserves better diagnostic tools and better contextualisation.

## Why is our logistics policy failing to deliver on its promise?



Md Al Alif Hossain  
is research associate at North South University.

Md AL ALIF HOSSAIN

In 2024, Bangladesh announced its first National Logistics Policy, a crucial reform for an economy where logistics costs devour 15.20 percent of GDP—nearly double the global average. The policy envisions a future characterised by increased efficiency and competitiveness, which are vital as the nation approaches its graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status. However, our field research uncovers a significant gap: the policy's objectives have scarcely been realised in practice. At a time when Bangladesh must accelerate its progress towards global integration, the widening gap between policy and implementation is emerging as a significant national vulnerability.

To better understand the logistics industry's operations and challenges, one of our research teams from North South University (NSU) visited multiple logistics companies and interviewed their CEOs. However, we discovered that the same systemic issues persisted across firms: unpredictable clearance times, fragmented regulatory processes, chronic port delays, and an implementation gap that prevents logistics policy from translating into real-world efficiency.

We visited The Eagles Company, a disciplined, internationally aligned firm that policymakers frequently highlight as proof of private-sector readiness. Eagles uses ISO-compliant methods, digital warehouse management systems, electronic documentation, and collaborates with

keep up with us." The problem is bigger than any one company. When outside processes are unpredictable, internal efficiency doesn't mean much.

These delays are not just a coincidence. The World Bank's Container Port Performance Index (CPPI) Report (2023) ranked Chattogram port 334th out of 348 ports in the world. The trip from Dhaka to Chattogram still takes almost 20 hours

brokerage and warehousing. The success of their business hinges on reliable clearance windows and the efficient transit of trucks through port terminals and along highways. However, the landscape in which they function is characterised by unpredictability.

Mahabob Mokammel Romel, group managing director of INTASL, said, "We've grown despite the system, not because of it. If the logistics environment became predictable, companies like ours could scale much faster." While mid-sized operators want to grow, they lack the necessary infrastructure to facilitate expansion.

The Review of Maritime Transport highlights that Bangladesh's reliance on feeder services and its restricted deep-sea capabilities result in lead times ranging from 40 to 45 days to reach significant Western markets. The current delays are undermining competitiveness at a time when global buyers are increasingly seeking faster and more reliable supply chains.

The National Logistics Policy presents a series of robust commitments, including the establishment of a National Single Window (NSW) for clearance, harmonisation of licensing processes, development of multimodal freight corridors, modernisation of cold-chain logistics, and the implementation of comprehensive digital documentation from start to finish. Companies have repeatedly indicated that the pace of implementation continues to be sluggish or goes unnoticed. Numerous individuals have characterised the policy as one that "exists but isn't felt."

Fragmentation across over 20 government entities continues to result in duplicate approvals and inconsistent processes. As a result, even sophisticated businesses are caught in manual clearance operations with uncertain timelines. According to Eagles' CEO, "Every agency talks about logistics modernisation, but when you need a simple approval, you realise how fragmented the process still is."



FILE PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN  
The current logistics delays are undermining competitiveness at a time when global buyers are increasingly seeking faster and more reliable supply chains.

worldwide networks such as UFS, Spedman Global Logistics, and IUP Cargo. Their internal operations are coherent, well-controlled, and technologically advanced. However, the ecology in which they operate is not.

Discussing recurring port congestion and inconsistent clearance times, CEO Rais Uddin Ahmed said, "If delays happen outside of our control, our whole plan can fall apart. We're working hard in a system that can't

on average, even though it's only 220 kilometres. More than 80 percent of goods are moved by road, which is the slowest and most expensive mode. Even if a company is disciplined, these structural flaws cause demurrage costs, cargo delays, and problems with planning for businesses.

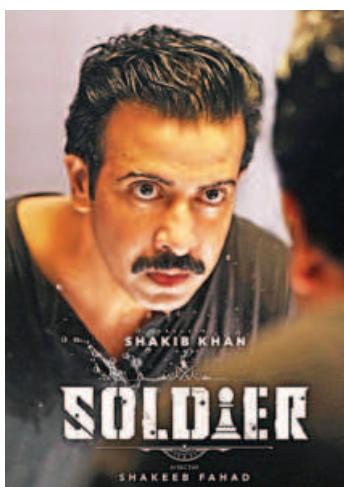
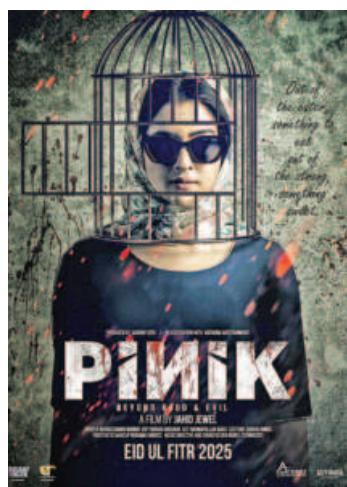
A similar pattern emerged when we visited INTASL Logistics Ltd, a mid-sized operator working across freight forwarding, customs

Bangladesh's regional competitors have demonstrated the remarkable outcomes that can result from effective execution. The customs process in Vietnam has undergone significant digitisation, leading to a remarkable reduction in clearance times. India has initiated private involvement in freight rail corridors, leading to significant improvements in efficiency. Türkiye and Malaysia enhanced their ports by implementing automation and streamlined clearance systems. Bangladesh faces the threat of losing its competitive edge, not because of insufficient private sector capabilities, but rather because of sluggish coordination within the public sector.

Throughout our discussions, not a single company mentioned subsidies or incentives. They demand predictability—understanding of the duration of clearance processes, the timing of container releases, and the expected length of trips. Their demands are reasonable, yet they continue to be out of reach. "We don't require incentives to expand. We need a system where we can plan with confidence," summarised INTASL's group managing director.

As Bangladesh approaches its graduation from LDC status, the looming unpredictability could emerge as the nation's most significant challenge. With the fading of tariff benefits, countries are now vying for supremacy in efficiency, speed, and reliability—three crucial domains where logistics influences outcomes.

Companies such as Eagles, INTASL, and others will be able to scale rapidly and compete effectively if Bangladesh can integrate its logistics governance, digitise the entire clearance process, and increase multimodal freight access beyond highways. If these improvements remain stagnant, even the most well-managed businesses will continue to struggle with inefficiencies that they did not cause and are unable to control. Now is the time for Bangladesh to take action.



## 2026 films to look forward to

**A new year has begun. In the past year, a total of 46 Dhallywood films were released, with only a handful achieving commercial success. Audience turnout was largely concentrated around Eid releases, while a few other films earned appreciation from viewers and critics alike.**

### ZAHID AKBAR

Several Dhallywood films are now lined up for release in 2026. Some have already gone into production, a few are nearing completion, while others have wrapped up preparations and are awaiting shooting. Here is a look at twelve Dhallywood films expected to hit theatres in the new year.

#### Soldier

Top Dhallywood star Shakib Khan will be seen in *Soldier*, directed by Shakeeb Fahad. The film also stars Tariq Anam Khan, Tauqir Ahmed, Tanjin Tisha and Jannatul Ferdous Oishee, among others. Built around themes of patriotism, action and human emotion, the film is currently in the final stages of shooting.

#### Prince

Another Shakib Khan starrer, *Prince*, is yet to begin shooting. Tasnia Farin has been finalised as the female lead, while Indian actress Jyotirmoyee Kundu will also appear in the film. Directed by Abu Hayat Mahmud and produced by Shirin Sultan under the banner of Creative Land Films, the action-driven film is expected to be released on Eid-ul-Fitr.

#### Domm

Directed by Redoan Rony, *Domm* is slated for release on Eid-ul-Azha. The film stars Afran Nisho, Puja Chery and Chanchal Chowdhury. Parts



of the film have already been shot in Kazakhstan, with the remaining portions currently being filmed in Bangladesh. It is being produced by SVF Alpha-i Entertainment.

#### Bonolota Express

Tanim Noor's *Bonolota Express* is scheduled for an Eid-ul-Fitr release. The cast includes Chanchal Chowdhury, Mosharraf Karim, Sabila Nur, Sariful Razz and Azmeri Haque Badhan, among others.

#### Malik

Arifin Shuvoo headlines *Malik*, directed by Saif Chandan, with Bidya Sinha Mim starring opposite him. The pair previously worked together in *Taarkata* and *Shapludu*. The film

is being made with an Eid-ul-Fitr release in mind.

#### Rakkhosh

Siam Ahmed stars in *Rakkhosh*, directed by Mehedi Hasan Hridoy, opposite Indian actress Susmita Chatterjee. The film's first-look poster has already been released, and shooting is currently underway. Produced by Shehrin Akter Sumi, the film is expected to be released on one of this year's Eids.

#### Roid

Mejbaur Rahman Sumon's *Roid* released its trailer on December 16 last year. The film will have its international premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) in February, before being released in local theatres. The cast includes Nazifa Tushi, Mostafizur Noor Imran, Gazi Rakayet and Ashabul Yamin Riyad.

#### Bonolata Sen

Directed by Masud Hasan Ujjal, *Bonolata Sen* is slated for release on Eid-ul-Fitr. Masuma Rahman Nabila plays the titular role, while Khairul Basar portrays poet Jibanananda Das. The government-grant film also stars Shohel Mondol, Naziba Basher, Priyoneet Urbee, Ruponty Akid and Sharif Siraj, among others.

#### Pinik

*Pinik* marks the third collaboration between Shobnom Bubly and Ador

Adz. Directed by Zahid Jewel, the film also features Ali Raj, Fazlur Rahman Babu, Jayita Mahalanobish, Azad Abul Kalam, Momena Chowdhury, Masum Bashar, Samu Chowdhury, Sharif Siraj, AK Azad Setu, Nazneen Shabnam and Nafis Ahmed Bindu. It is being produced by Euro Bangla Entertainment, with Shimul Khan as co-producer.

#### Tribunal

Directed by Raihan Khan, *Tribunal* is inspired by a widely discussed incident from 2011, when a woman was killed after being set on fire with kerosene in Chattogram. The cast includes Mousumi Hamid, Tania Brishty, Ador Azad, Nusraat Faria, Tariq Anam Khan, Saira Akhter Jahan, Rakib Hossain Emon, Shahed Ali, Ashok Bepari, Saberi Alam and Upoma, among others.

#### Rong Bazar

Rashid Palash's *Rong Bazar* stars Peya Janatul, Mousumi Hamid and Tanzika Amin. The film is expected to be released on Eid-ul-Fitr.

#### Biday

*Biday*, starring Bapparaj and Prarthana Fardin Dighi, is directed by Mehedi Hasan Hridoy. The film has completed shooting and is set for release later this year.

With a mix of commercial ventures, festival-bound projects and socially driven narratives, 2026 is shaping up to be a busy year for Dhallywood.

## Fahmida Nabi's new songs bring back the '90s

At a time when many established artistes are largely focused on live concerts, veteran singer Fahmida Nabi continues to release new music. The singer has recently recorded three new songs that draw inspiration from the melodic sensibilities of the 1990s.

The new tracks are titled *Dukher Dalil*, *Tai Kori* and *Ashlo Na Brishti*. All three songs are written by Golam Moshred and composed by Shams Sumon. Shooting for the music videos of the songs is currently underway.

The songs are being produced under the banner of Gaan Janala, and will be released gradually in the near future.

In addition to these upcoming tracks, another new song sung by Fahmida Nabi, *Brishti Tumi Jhorchhile Sedin*, was recently released on Sripa Multimedia's YouTube channel.

## Apurba's 'political' claims are from fake accounts

The spread of misleading information using celebrities' photos or videos is nothing new. In August last year, actor Ziaul Faruq Apurba became a victim of such misinformation. The same incident has occurred again. Apurba has claimed that controversial political statements are being circulated using his image, stating that these statements are baseless and entirely false.

Over the past few days, several Facebook accounts and pages claiming to be news portals have been sharing controversial political remarks using Apurba's name and photograph. The matter did not escape the actor's attention.

On Friday afternoon, Apurba shared screenshots of the fake photo cards on his own Facebook page. Apurba has categorically stated that these remarks do not reflect his views. Urging people to refrain from publishing such false news and misleading statements, he wrote in the caption of his post, "Please refrain from spreading such fake news and statements. Otherwise, legal action will be taken."

## NEWS

### Habiganj

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as to why he made his controversial comments.

It also instructed him to refrain from organisational activities, stating that his comments were inconsistent with the values of the Students Against Discrimination (SAD) and had tarnished the organisation's image.

A video that went viral on social media Friday afternoon shows Mahdi saying, "We burnt down Baniachong Police Station; we set SI Santosh on fire."

During the 2024 mass uprising, Baniachong Police Station was torched, and Sub-Inspector Santosh Chowdhury was killed by a mob on August 5, the day Sheikh Hasina's authoritarian government collapsed.

In the video, Mahdi is also heard threatening OC Abul Kalam: "If you have become an agitator, what happened? We are so many boys here, and we formed the government through the July movement. You are our administration now. You've arrested our people."

The confrontation followed the arrest of Enamul Hasan Nayan, vice president of the Shayestaganj Sadar Union Chhatra League, who was detained Thursday night for alleged involvement with the banned organisation.

On Friday afternoon, SAD members gathered outside Shayestaganj Police Station demanding his release. District leaders, including Mahdi, entered the OC's office, escalating tensions.

Additional Superintendent of Police Shahidul Islam intervened around 3:00pm, and Nayan was released from custody around 3:30pm.

Despite repeated attempts, Mahdi did not respond to calls or texts from The Daily Star. Later, speaking to a local journalist, he defended his actions, claiming Nayan's arrest was politically motivated. He admitted his remarks about burning the police station were inappropriate, calling them a "slip of the tongue".

Mahdi confirmed he had received the show-cause notice and was preparing his response.

Meanwhile, OC Abul Kalam said, "We arrested Nayan as a suspect with alleged ties to the Chhatra League. The country saw what happened after the arrest, and the video was circulated widely. We are not involved in any wrongdoing."

The Habiganj Superintendent of Police could not be reached for comment despite repeated calls.

### 161 languish in jail

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not seen much progress over nearly 17 years.

In July 2010, police submitted the charge sheet in the explosives case to a Dhaka court against 808 people, mostly BDR members. Later, another 26 were included in the charge sheet.

Defence lawyers said that though trial proceedings in both cases started in August 2011, the explosives case was put on hold so that the murder case could proceed uninterrupted. The proceedings of the explosives case resumed after a Dhaka court pronounced verdict in the murder case in November 2013.

Between January 19 and November 20 this year, 316 ex-BDR members, accused in the explosives case, were released from jail after securing bail from Dhaka Metropolitan Special Tribunal-2.

Of them, 259 had earlier been acquitted by the HC in the murder case, and 57 already served jail terms ranging from one to 10 years, according to court staffers.

Aminul Islam, one of the defence lawyers, said the explosives case was used as a strategy to keep behind bars the accused who were acquitted or already served their jail terms. There was no specific evidence that they possessed explosives.

"The murder case is the main case. Yet, the trial court did not grant bail to those accused in the explosives case, citing the gravity of the offence..." he added.

Another defence lawyer, Tasmia Nuhuya Ahmed said the trial proceedings in the explosives case are going slowly.

"At least 989 out of 1,287 prosecution witnesses have yet to testify before the tribunal. It is uncertain when the proceedings will conclude," she added.

When contacted, Special Public Prosecutor Md Borhan Uddin said, "I hope those who are still in jail will get bail from the court soon."

Responding to a query, he said the recording of statements of prosecution witnesses will be completed soon. "The trial proceedings could be wrapped up within a short time."

Disposing of an appeal by the prosecution, the HC in November 2017 reduced the number of individuals sentenced to death to 139, awarded life imprisonment to 185, and sentenced 228 others to various prison terms ranging from one to 13 years. It also acquitted 283 people and exempted 15 others from the case.

The explosives case, however, has

### Cops examining

FROM PAGE 12  
could not be reached.

Hadi was shot in the Paltan area on December 12 while campaigning for the upcoming national election. He died on December 18 while undergoing treatment in Singapore.

On December 14, Jaber filed an attempted murder case with Paltan Model Police Station against Faisal and several unnamed individuals, which later turned into a murder case.

According to DB sources, following the shooting of Hadi, law enforcement authorities conducted drives in various areas and arrested 11 individuals, including Faisal's parents, wife and a female friend. The arms used in the attack were also recovered. Among the arrestees, six have given confessional statements under section 164 of the CrPC, while the court recorded statements of four witnesses.

### IS-linked fighters kill 14 in DR Congo attack

AFP, Beni

A militia linked to the Islamic State group staged a simultaneous attack on three villages in the Democratic Republic of Congo, killing at least 14 people, the military and local sources said Friday.

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) carried out the attacks overnight within a seven-kilometre radius (4.3 miles) in the northwest of North Kivu province.

The three villages were attacked simultaneously in an "ADF incursion," said local leader Macaire Sivikunula.

Villagers panicked as gunfire rang out between 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm, he said, adding that 15 people were killed and 13 houses burned.

Residents who spoke with AFP confirmed the deadly attack.

The Congolese army said two of its soldiers were killed.

"There was an incursion by ADF terrorists in the Bepera sector... the death toll is 14, including 12 civilians and two soldiers," Lieutenant Marc Elongo, the army spokesperson in the region, told AFP.

Residents who spoke with AFP confirmed the deadly attack.

### Trader dies days after being hacked, set on fire

FROM PAGE 12

Locals rescued him and took him to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital. Later that night, he was transferred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and subsequently admitted to the burn institute.

His relative Pranto Das said Khokon suffered burns on about 30 percent of his body and had been under treatment at the institute since Thursday night. "His condition worsened early today [Saturday]. He died in the ICU around 7:30am."

After the autopsy was completed in the afternoon, family members took the body back to their village and performed the final rites last night.

Before his death, Khokon named two attackers: Sohag Khan, 27, and Rabbi Mollah, 21. Police later

identified a third suspect, Palash Sardar, 25.

A case was filed late Thursday night with Damudya Police Station by Khokon's father, Paresh Chandra Das, naming the three men as accused.

The incident sparked outrage among traders and residents of Tilo village, who demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the accused.

Family members vented frustration over police failing to arrest any suspects in the two days since the incident, despite Khokon identifying the attackers before his death.

Police suspect the attack was motivated by the large sum of cash Khokon was carrying from his business.

Damudya Police Station Officer-in-Charge Robiul Haque said they are trying to arrest the accused.

### Salahuddin's asset grew by 6.5 times to Tk 18cr since 2008

FROM PAGE 12

Salahuddin is contesting this time.

In 2008, Salahuddin earned less than Tk 1 lakh in bank and Tk 22 lakh in cash, while Hasina had less than Tk 5,000 in bank and held Tk 40.6 lakh in cash.

According to their affidavits, Salahuddin's liquid money rose to Tk 1.75 crore and that of his wife dipped slightly to Tk 32.3 lakh.

Salahuddin now gets an allowance from his position as a director of a company, Pekua Livestock and Fisheries Farm, amounting to Tk 26.4 lakh per year.

Salahuddin has three firearms as well – one pistol, one rifle and one shotgun – valued at Tk 1.3 lakh.

There is also a large amount of internal lending – Salahuddin lent Tk 3.33 crore to his wife, Tk 60 lakh to his son Sayeed Ibrahim Ahmed, and borrowed Tk 2.6 crore from his brother Giasuddin Ahmed.

The couple's son, Sayeed Ibrahim, borrowed Tk 16.77 crore from a company named Southern Sea Coast Asset Management Ltd. This company had taken out a Tk 30 crore loan from First Security Islami Bank PLC, which was paid by Salahuddin in full.

# The north shivers in cold

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Although the temperature rose slightly yesterday compared to the past three days, dense fog and cold winds blowing continuously from the north disrupted daily life across northern districts, including Panchagarh and Thakurgaon.

The Tetulia Weather Observatory recorded a minimum temperature of 10.2 degrees Celsius at 9:00am yesterday.

Elsewhere in the region, the minimum temperature was 10.5 degrees Celsius in Dinajpur, 10.8 degrees in Saidpur, 11 degrees in Rangpur, and 10 degrees in Kurigram's Rajarhat on Saturday morning.

On Friday, Tetulia recorded a minimum temperature of 9.4 degrees Celsius, while it was 9 degrees on Thursday, said Jitendranath Ray, acting officer of the Tetulia Weather Observatory.

Despite a mild cold wave, the maximum temperature was recorded at 23.7 degrees Celsius on Friday and 23.8 degrees on Thursday.

Although the sun appeared in the second half of the day, the cold persisted as sunlight remained weak.

The biting cold and dense fog have been hampering daily activities, with people dependent on daily earnings facing the worst hardships.

During a visit to Thakurgaon town, several day labourers were seen waiting for work at the Chourasta intersection around 11:30am. Due to the inclement weather, none were hired.

Khitish Chandra Barman, 52, said he had been waiting there since 9:00am,



as on other days. "But no one has come to hire labourers because of the bad weather. If I don't get work, it will be difficult to take rice home," he said.

Another day labourer, Jalal Uddin, 55, expressed frustration after failing to find work. "How can life go on like this? As soon as the weather turns a little unfavourable, people do not want to hire labourers. They think work cannot be done properly in such conditions," he said, adding that without any savings, meeting daily expenses becomes difficult.

Rafiqul, a rickshaw-puller in the town, said he went out around 10:00am despite the dense fog and severe cold but earned only Tk 60 until 1:30pm as fewer people came out of their homes. "I don't know how much more I can earn in the rest of the day," he said.

Abdul Malek, 45, of Madanhat village in Boda upazila of Panchagarh, said they started sowing maize seeds after noon due to the harsh weather. "It is so cold that working in the fields has become very difficult," he said.

Meanwhile, the number of patients suffering from cold-related illnesses, particularly children and the elderly, has increased in hospitals due to the severe cold.

The country's lowest temperature of 9 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday in Badalgachhi of Naogaon, Ishwardi of Pabna, and Rajshahi.



After collecting date palm sap by hanging earthen pots from the trees, a farmer carries the pots to the village market in Babuganj upazila of Barishal yesterday. He sells each pot for around Tk 300.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Seat-sharing talks testing Jamaat-IAB ties

FROM PAGE 1

and Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis say their opinions were not given due weight when NCP, LDP and AB Party were brought into the alliance. They argue that the current discontent stems primarily from Jamaat's "unilateral decision-making".

Despite the tensions, Islami Andolan's Senior Nayeb-e-Ameer, Syed Muhammad Foyul Karim, believes the crisis surrounding seat sharing among the 11 parties is "resolvable".

Speaking to The Daily Star, he said, "To form an alliance, sincerity is essential. There must be mutual respect and goodwill. There has to be a mindset of moving forward together. If one thinks, 'I am very big and you are very small', then how can we walk together?"

Hinting at Jamaat, Foyul Karim added, "There should be parity among the parties. Whatever decisions are taken should be through consultation. If that happens, no one raises questions or feels confused."

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Jalaluddin Ahmed echoed a similar view, telling The Daily Star, "I do not think this is a crisis. Since there will be seat-sharing, every party should receive its fair share according to its standing. If that happens, there will be no crisis or complications."

From Jamaat's side, Ahsanul Mahbub Zubair, assistant secretary general and central publicity

department chief, said, "There is no such crisis here. Different parties joined us at different times, which is why the process is taking a bit longer."

### PROMISED SEATS

Party sources say the latest round of discussions among the 11 alliance partners took place on December 28. On that day, Jamaat Amer Shafiqur Rahman announced at a press conference at the National Press Club that NCP and LDP had joined the bloc of parties involved in the simultaneous movement. News of AB Party's inclusion followed later.

According to sources, under the latest proposal, Jamaat intends to allocate 40 seats to Islami Andolan, 30 to NCP, 11 to Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, three to Khelafat Majlis, three to AB Party, two to LDP, three to Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa), and two to Bangladesh Development Party (BDP).

However, as the seat sharing arrangement was not finalised, Jamaat fielded candidates in 276 constituencies on December 29, the final day for submitting nomination papers. Islami Andolan fielded candidates in 268 seats. NCP submitted nominations for 44 candidates, AB Party for 53, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis for 94, and Khelafat Majlis for 68.

According to Election Commission data and sources from Jamaat and Islami Andolan, Jamaat candidates -- contesting under the scale symbol -- submitted nomination papers even in constituencies it had promised to leave for Islami Andolan. Likewise, Islami Andolan candidates -- contesting under the hand fan symbol -- submitted nominations in seats Jamaat was supposed to retain.

Most of the 24 seats where Jamaat did not field candidates were reportedly left for NCP. Jamaat has also withdrawn its candidates from Dhaka-13 for Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Amer Mamunul Haque and from Kishoreganj-6 for the party's Joint Secretary General Ataullah Amin. On the other hand, despite not fielding candidates in 24 seats for other alliance partners, Islami Andolan candidates remain in constituencies promised to the party. The Chormona Pir's brother and the party's Senior Nayeb-e-Ameer, Syed Muhammad Foyul Karim, submitted nomination papers in Barishal-5 and Barishal-6, where Jamaat candidates are also contesting.

Two other Islami Andolan candidates, Syed Ishaq Muhammad Abul Khair from Barishal-4 and Mosaddeq Billah Al Madani from Dhaka-13, also submitted nominations. Jamaat had agreed to vacate two of these three seats, yet fielded candidates in all of them. Islami Andolan Secretary General Yunus Ahmed is

contesting from Khulna-4.

### DEAL PROGRESS

Party sources say Islami Andolan initially demanded 150 seats, later reducing its claim to 120. It is still seeking more than 70 seats and is unwilling to settle for just 40.

Syed Muhammad Foyul Karim said, "It's not that a compromise on seats is impossible. If both sides have the right intentions, if both genuinely want to bring Islam to power, and if no party in the alliance harbours ambitions of ruling alone, then this is not a problem at all."

Asked when the seat-sharing deal might be finalised, Jamaat's Ahsanul Mahbub Zubair told The Daily Star yesterday, "Tomorrow [Sunday] is the last day for scrutiny of nomination papers. We hope to finalise and announce the agreement within this week."

Expressing similar optimism, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Jalaluddin Ahmed said, "Since we are an alliance and public expectations from this alliance are very high; we are prepared to make concessions, if necessary, to keep the alliance intact."

Foyul Karim added, "The key point is that we have not broken the alliance so far. No one has been expelled, and no one has left. We will try to work together inclusively. But if anyone thinks they alone will go to power, then it will not be possible to move forward."

## Foyul Karim

FROM PAGE 12

He earned Tk 4 lakh from waaz-mahfils, Tk 7 lakh from teaching and 3.22 lakh from rent last year.

In his tax return, his gross wealth was estimated at Tk 1.64 crore.

Foyul, who is running from Barishal-5 constituency, owns a .22 bore rifle. His wife received 187 bhoris of gold in gifts. During the last tax cycle, Foyul received a gift of Tk 60 lakh from his wife, according to his affidavit.

## Mamunul

FROM PAGE 12

and a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act registered in 2021. The former is under trial, while the latter under investigation.

The third case, filed with the Darus Salam police station in Dhaka in 2013, has been stayed by the High Court.

He has faced a total of 41 legal cases, including four for manslaughter and seven for attempt to murder, filed between 2012 and 2021. Thirty-seven of these cases were disposed of in 2025 and one in 2024. He was acquitted in five of these cases, while the rest were withdrawn by the state.

The highest number of cases -- 19 -- were filed in 2021, the year Hefazat-e-Islam waged a movement against the arrival of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Dhaka, resulting in clashes with law enforcers.

## Riyadh urges dialogue between Yemen factions

AFP, Mukalla

Saudi Arabia on Saturday called for dialogue between factions in southern Yemen amid clashes in resource-rich Hadramawt province, where the UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) seized vast swathes of territory in recent weeks.

In a statement posted to social media, the Saudi foreign ministry called for "a comprehensive conference in Riyadh to bring together all southern factions to discuss just solutions to the southern cause".

## Politics bowls Fizz out of IPL

FROM PAGE 1

"We will seek an explanation from them about the current situation," said the BCB director who spoke on the condition of anonymity. "In particular, we will convey the public discontent that has arisen over the issue and how the BCB feels humiliated by the way things have unfolded. They had given clearance to one of our players to play, and now he is unable to do so. The BCB is deeply hurt over this matter," the board director added.

Questions were raised also regarding shifting Bangladesh's matches in next month's T20 World Cup, set to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

"We will first seek clearance from the ICC. This security risk will be conveyed to the ICC with due seriousness," the director further said.

Bangladesh are set to play three of their four group stage matches at Eden Gardens -- KKR's home venue, which had already received threats of disruption from protesters if Mustafizur featured in the IPL -- and the other group game in Mumbai.

Meanwhile, in a social media post, Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Nazrul said he has "instructed the BCB to ask the ICC to shift Bangladesh's World Cup matches to Sri Lanka." He also asked the "information and broadcast adviser not to broadcast the IPL in Bangladesh".

Mustafizur's removal from the IPL had caused outrage among the cricket-crazed netizens in Bangladesh. Despite the IPL having a large following in Bangladesh, fans took to social media in support of the country's ace pacer, some even calling for a boycott of the T20 league by the Bangladesh media.

In the last few days, pressure had been mounting on KKR and its majority owner Shah Rukh Khan from ruling BJP politicians and religious leaders to release Mustafizur, citing what they claimed a lack of safety of the minorities in Bangladesh.

According to Indian media reports, religious leader Devkinandan Thakur slammed Shah Rukh for Mustafizur's inclusion, and ruling party politician Sangeet Som had labelled the

be mixed with politics", while former Bangladesh skipper Akram Khan echoed the sentiment, calling it an "injustice" towards Mustafizur and raising concerns over what it could mean for Bangladesh's World Cup games in India.

Mustafizur, who last played for Delhi Capitals and has been a regular feature in the multi-billion-dollar franchise league, could not be reached for comment.

## Ukraine hosts talks with Nato, 15 allies in Kyiv

### Moscow says Kyiv trying to 'torpedo' peace efforts

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine is hosting security advisers for crunch talks yesterday as Kyiv insists negotiations are zeroing in on a deal, while Russia claims a deadly New Year strike torpedoed the efforts.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said around 15 countries would attend the talks, along with representatives from the European Union and Nato, with a US delegation joining via video link.

Leaders from the so-called coalition of the willing are expected to convene in France next week after yesterday's talks.

The latest peace push comes after Zelensky announced in his New Year's Eve address that the US-brokered plan was "90 percent" ready, but cautioned that important territorial issues remain.

Russia occupies around a fifth of Ukraine and has hit its smaller neighbour with an almost daily barrage of missiles and drones that have killed thousands of civilians and displaced millions.

Kyiv has repeatedly said Russia is not interested in peace and is deliberately trying to sabotage diplomatic efforts in order to seize more Ukrainian territory.

## Most mobile phone shops stay shut for 3rd day

FROM PAGE 3

manufactured by local industries stayed open, confirmed a local handset manufacturer.

The manufacturer claimed that only shop owners dealing in grey-market handsets in a few large shopping malls in Dhaka and Chattogram had kept their stores closed, while most handset shops across the country remained open. Officials of the Mobile Phone Industry Owners' Association of Bangladesh (MIOB), which represents local manufacturers and assemblers, also opened several stores at Jamuna Future Park yesterday.

Since the NEIR system launch, numerous users have complained of an unusually large number of handsets registered against their NIDs.

Many users expressed concerns that someone else may have used their NID numbers, either intentionally or unknowingly, to register devices or SIMs, raising fears of identity theft, SIM fraud, and unauthorised handset activation.

Some also feared that crimes or illegal activities committed using these devices could be traced back to them, potentially causing harassment or legal complications despite having no involvement.

BTRC Chairman Maj Gen (retd) Md Emdad ul Bari said historical data uploaded into the system made it appear that a large number of handsets were registered under a single NID. For example, if a SIM was inserted into a handset for a few minutes for emergency use or testing, that handset's IMEI -- a unique 15-digit identifier assigned to a mobile device -- would be tagged with the NID as SIMs are purchased using an NID.

He also said BTRC regularly recycles mobile numbers that remain inactive for a certain period, after which operators resell them to

new customers. As a result, IMEIs of devices previously used with those numbers may appear linked to the new SIM owner's NID.

Besides, Internet of Things (IoT) devices also carry IMEI numbers, which can further inflate the number of devices shown under a single NID.

"We will sanitise the data phase by phase, but it will take time. Customers do not need to panic," Bari added.

He, however, said he did not



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

have the exact data on how many customers were facing an unusually large number of IMEIs linked to their NIDs, but the number could be in the hundreds.

Meanwhile, in a Facebook post, Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser for telecom and ICT, said after the launch of NEIR, millions of cloned and counterfeit mobile phones were found operating with fake or patterned identifiers on Bangladesh's networks, exposing the scale of longstanding irregularities.

He said these devices would not be shut down immediately to avoid public disruption and would instead be tagged as "grey."

Many citizens have unknowingly been using low-quality counterfeit phones that never underwent radiation or other safety tests, posing serious public health and security concerns, he added.

## Gestational diabetes linked to lower cognitive scores in mothers and higher developmental risks for children

A major new review of global research suggests that gestational diabetes during pregnancy may affect brain health in both mothers and their children. The findings were presented at the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) Annual Meeting in Vienna.

Researchers analysed results from 48 observational studies covering more than 9 million pregnancies across 20 countries, making this the most comprehensive review of its kind. Gestational diabetes, which affects around 14% of pregnancies worldwide, is becoming increasingly common, particularly among older mothers, those living with obesity, people with a family history of diabetes, and non-white women.

The analysis found that mothers who experienced gestational diabetes scored slightly lower on tests of cognitive function during pregnancy compared with those who did not. More notably, children exposed to gestational diabetes in the womb showed lower average IQ scores, reduced verbal abilities, and a higher risk of developmental delays.

The study also found that these children were 36% more likely to develop ADHD and had a 56% higher risk of autism spectrum disorder. However, no clear differences were seen in overall brain structure or general intelligence scores.

Although the exact causes are not fully understood, researchers believe factors such as internal biological stress, reduced oxygen supply, and altered insulin levels during pregnancy may influence early brain development.

The authors stressed that early screening and careful management of gestational diabetes are crucial and said further long-term studies are needed to better understand the lasting effects on children as they grow.

Source: *The Lancet*



## When winters change, our health does too!

DR MUHAMMAD MAHTAB  
HOSSAIN MAZED

Winter in Bangladesh is no longer as predictable as it used to be. In the past, winter meant a light morning fog, some sunshine in the afternoon, and intense cold at night. However, in recent years, it has been observed that in many areas, sunlight is absent even after 12 noon. The main reason behind this change is climate change. Climate experts have stated that dust particles, gas emissions, and irregular increases in humidity are the primary causes of dense fog. It can cause long-term respiratory problems in children and the elderly. Additionally, fog and haze reduce visibility and increase the risk of accidents.

### Risks from fog and reduced daylight

Vitamin D from sunlight is essential for bone health, immune function, and mental well-being. Reduced daylight can cause vitamin D deficiency, putting children, pregnant women, and the elderly at risk. Dense fog and low sunlight increase the chances of colds, coughs, and pneumonia among children. Among the elderly, asthma, blood pressure fluctuations, and joint pain are more likely to occur. The healthcare system in both urban and rural areas is affected, with rural regions being particularly vulnerable due to limited access to medical services.

Without sunlight during the day, the body's natural warmth decreases. This poses a significant challenge for labourers such as farmers, construction workers, fishermen, and daily wage earners. Dense fog and low temperatures slow down work, affecting daily income and the economy.

Students are also affected. On their way to school, children face risks due to fog and low light. Without proper winter clothing, they are more susceptible to respiratory infections, colds, coughs, and pneumonia. Industrial and business activities are also impacted. Reduced daylight and cold temperatures lower work efficiency, which can affect business income as well as the national economy.

Winter health risks are no longer just an individual concern; they pose a significant challenge for families and society as a whole.

### Mental health and the effects of fog

Dense fog and low light negatively affect mental health:

- Fatigue and lethargy
- Low mood and reduced concentration
- Decreased participation in social activities
- Prolonged exposure to low light and fog can increase depression, anxiety, and stress.

### Health awareness and preventive measures

- Wear warm clothing: sufficient

clothes, socks, and gloves during the day and night.

- Warm beverages and balanced nutrition: soups, milk, tea, and fruits
- Adequate sleep and rest: boost immunity
- Maintain a clean and warm environment: keep living spaces warm and dust-free. Monitor children and the elderly: seek medical attention promptly for illness or respiratory problems.
- Limit prolonged outdoor exposure on foggy or cold days.
- Light exercise and walking: helps maintain proper blood circulation

### Social and government responsibility

- Addressing winter health risks requires social and governmental initiatives:
- Distribution of winter clothing and health awareness programmes
- Protection of children and the elderly
- Expansion of patient welfare centres and healthcare facilities
- Collaboration between government and non-government organisations can further enhance impact.

The author is a columnist, public health analyst and founder & chairman of Jatiya Rogi Kalyan Society.

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## Precision, compassion and progress: How modern oncology is redefining cancer care

### STAR HEALTH REPORT

Cancer care is undergoing a quiet but profound transformation, driven by technology, better understanding of disease biology, and a growing emphasis on quality of life. During their recent visit to Dhaka, two senior oncologists from Singapore's National Cancer Centre (NCCS)—Clin Asst Prof Li Youquan, Radiation Oncologist, and Clin Asst Prof Johan Chan, Medical Oncologist, shared insights that challenge many long held fears and misconceptions surrounding cancer treatment.

Both specialists pointed to a steady rise in genitourinary cancers, particularly prostate cancer, across Asia. Professor Li explained that this trend is largely driven by ageing populations and increasing life expectancy. Prostate cancer, often slow-growing and symptom-free in its early stages, is frequently detected incidentally through prostate specific antigen (PSA) testing or digital rectal examination. However, screening remains controversial. "It is not just about detecting cancer,"



he noted, "but deciding what to do with borderline results and avoiding unnecessary anxiety or treatment."

Radiation therapy, often feared for its side effects, has evolved dramatically.

According to Professor Li, modern radiation oncology now relies on advanced imaging, artificial intelligence, and precision planning to target tumours while sparing healthy tissue. Techniques that once took days can now be completed in minutes, with adaptive, real-time planning allowing treatment to be

adjusted daily. While cutting-edge options such as proton therapy remain expensive, he expressed optimism that innovation and automation will gradually reduce costs and improve accessibility.

Professor Chan addressed another persistent concern—the stigma surrounding chemotherapy. "What people imagine from television or past experiences is very different from today's reality," he said. Improved anti-nausea drugs, outpatient-based regimens, and newer targeted therapies mean many

patients can receive treatment and return home the same day. In prostate and bladder cancers, oral hormonal agents and immunotherapy have further reduced reliance on traditional chemotherapy.

He also emphasised the importance of awareness and self-examination, particularly for testicular cancer, which often affects men in their 20s to 40s and is highly curable when detected early. Lifestyle risks, including smoking and emerging habits like vaping, remain a concern. "If you do not know what you are inhaling, it is safest not to inhale it at all," he cautioned.

Both oncologists stressed that when cure is no longer possible, early integration of palliative care is essential. Focusing on symptom control, dignity and patient preferences, they agreed, can significantly improve quality of life.

Their message was clear: cancer care today is not only about longer survival, but about smarter, kinder, and more individualised treatment—an evolution from fear to informed hope.

## CPAP therapy offers hope for people with diabetes and sleep apnoea

### STAR HEALTH DESK

People with type 2 diabetes (T2D) who also have obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) face serious health risks, including higher chances of heart problems, stroke, and premature death. A new study presented at the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) suggests that treating sleep apnoea with CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) could significantly improve survival in these individuals.

Obstructive sleep apnoea occurs when the airway repeatedly collapses during sleep, causing the person to briefly wake up to breathe. This leads to disrupted sleep and lower oxygen levels, which can affect the heart, brain, and metabolism. Many people with T2D may also suffer from undiagnosed OSA, meaning they may not realise the additional health risks the condition brings.

When left untreated, sleep apnoea can worsen diabetes and increase the likelihood of complications. CPAP machines work by delivering pressurised air through a mask, helping keep the airway open during sleep and ensuring the body gets proper rest and oxygen.



The study reveals that using CPAP can reduce the risk of severe health problems and death in people with both T2D and OSA. While prior research has often focused on short-term effects, this new study sheds light on the long-term benefits of treating sleep apnoea as a part of diabetes care. This means that by addressing sleep apnoea, people with T2D can see improvements in both their overall health and life expectancy.

Experts emphasise that sleep health is intrinsically linked to overall health, especially for people with chronic conditions like diabetes. Treating OSA is not just about improving sleep quality; it may also protect heart health, improve metabolism, and help reduce the risks of cardiovascular disease and other diabetes-related

complications. By improving sleep quality through treatments like CPAP, people with T2D can experience better control over their condition and potentially lower the risk of developing severe complications.

The findings also highlight the importance of early diagnosis and screening for sleep apnoea in individuals with diabetes. Many people with T2D may not be aware they also suffer from OSA, making it essential for doctors and patients to recognise and address this connection. Simple, effective treatments like CPAP, when paired with good diabetes management and lifestyle changes, can make a meaningful difference in quality of life and long-term survival.

In conclusion, this research underscores the value of holistic diabetes treatment. Addressing sleep apnoea not only improves sleep but also enhances heart health, metabolism, and overall well-being. With better screening, early detection, and treatment options like CPAP, people living with both T2D and OSA can look forward to improved health outcomes and an overall better quality of life.

## When AIs collaborate, accuracy in medicine improves

The growing use of Artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare has raised questions about how trustworthy these systems really are. According to a new study published in the journal PLOS Medicine, researchers have found that AI systems work more accurately when they "think together" rather than alone.

The study tested a group, or "council", of five AI models based on GPT-4 on 325 publicly available questions from the three stages of the US Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE). These exams cover everything from basic medical science to clinical decision-making. When working together, the AI council answered questions correctly 97% of the time for Step 1, 93% for Step 2, and 94% for Step 3, outperforming a single AI model.

Normally, AI systems can give different answers to the same question, and some responses may be wrong or made up. Instead of seeing this variability as a weakness, the researchers designed a system where the AIs discuss their answers, compare reasoning, and reconsider their choices when they disagree. A facilitator program guides this discussion and asks the group to try again until they reach a shared answer.

When the AIs initially disagreed, the discussion process led to the correct answer 83% of the time, and even fixed more than half of the mistakes that a simple majority vote would have missed.

The researchers believe this shows that collaboration helps AI self-correct, making it more reliable. While this approach has not yet been tested in real hospitals, it could one day lead to safer and more trustworthy AI tools for healthcare, education, and other fields where accuracy really matters.

## Millions left behind: Global push to make health care affordable by 2030



Since 2000, most countries have made progress in expanding health service coverage and reducing the financial burden of health care, according to the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Global Monitoring Report 2025 from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Bank. Health service coverage rose steadily, while fewer people experienced financial hardship from out-of-pocket (OOP) costs.

However, the poorest populations continue to face the greatest challenges. Globally, 4.6 billion people still lack access to essential services, and 2.1 billion experience financial hardship, including 1.6 billion pushed further into poverty. High medicine costs remain a major driver, especially for those living in poverty, who spend a median of 60% of their OOP expenses on medicines.

Progress has slowed since 2015, with only a third of countries improving in both coverage and financial protection. Gains have been strongest in infectious disease programmes, while improvements in reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health have been modest. Inequalities persist, with women, rural populations, and people with less education disproportionately affected.

### Actions leading to 2030

Achieving UHC by 2030 is central to realising the human right to health. With five years remaining on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda, urgent action is needed. The report calls for six key measures:

- Ensure essential health care is free at the point of care for vulnerable populations.
- Expand public investment in health systems.
- Address high out-of-pocket spending on medicines.
- Accelerate access to essential noncommunicable disease (NCD) services.
- Strengthen primary health care to promote equity and efficiency.
- Adopt multisectoral approaches, recognising that health determinants extend beyond the health sector.

These steps are essential to close gaps, reduce inequalities, and ensure that everyone can access the care they need without financial hardship by 2030.

Source: World Health Organisation

## Your eyes blink in time with the music!

Music influences the human body in ways that go far beyond enjoyment and conscious movement. Our eyes naturally blink in time with a steady musical beat, revealing a hidden connection between hearing and involuntary movement.

Researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences studied over 100 participants while they listened to Western classical music with an even tempo. Without being instructed to move, participants' spontaneous eye blinks synchronised with the rhythm, and their brain activity aligned with the beat as well. This process is linked to auditory-motor synchronisation, the brain mechanism that allows people to move in time with sound.

To rule out familiarity with the music, the researchers played the songs backwards and also used simple rhythmic tones. In both cases, blinking still matched the beat, showing that the effect was driven by rhythm rather than melody or memory.

The synchronisation disappeared when participants were asked to focus on an unrelated visual task, such as watching for a red dot on a screen. This suggests that attention to the music is required, even if people are not consciously aware of the response.

This insight could one day help improve music-based therapies and provide simple ways to study attention and brain health. By revealing how deeply music affects the brain, the findings may support new approaches to healthcare, therapy, and everyday wellbeing.

Source: *PLOS Biology*



# Fizz left in the cold as KOLKATA CUT CORD

## SPORTS REPORTER

Sylhet wore a subdued look yesterday as Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman was released by Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season, the chill of the ongoing winter cold wave reflecting the mood.

The development overshadowed a scheduled rest day in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20. Most teams relaxed at hotels or explored the city, while bottom-placed Noakhali Express trained at Sylhet Outer Stadium after returning from Dhaka the previous night.

Earlier in the day, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) inaugurated its Sylhet Regional Office at a city hotel, part of its decentralisation and grassroots development efforts, with little indication at the time of the storm that would follow.

The mood changed sharply when it emerged that KKR had released Mustafizur following instructions from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). Indian media reported the franchise had faced pressure from right-wing political and religious groups over concerns regarding minority safety in

## KOLKATA KNIGHT RIDERS SQUAD UPDATE

Kolkata Knight Riders confirms that BCCI/IPL as the regulator of IPL has instructed it to release Mustafizur Rahman from the squad ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season.

The release has been carried out following due process and consultations, upon the instruction of the Board of Control of Cricket in India.

BCCI will allow Kolkata Knight Riders a replacement player in line with IPL regulations, and further details will be communicated in due course.

Bangladesh.

Journalists waited for hours for an official response before BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul confirmed the board had convened an emergency online meeting later in the night to assess the situation and determine its stance. BCB media committee chairman Amzad

Hossain said that player dignity, safety and security remain the board's top priorities.

The development has triggered wider debate, with calls for Bangladesh to request the International Cricket Council (ICC) to move their T20 World Cup matches from India. Bangladesh, in Group C, are scheduled to face West Indies (February 7), Italy (February 9) and England (February 14) at Kolkata's Eden Gardens, and Nepal (February 17) at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

"If anything happens, the damage will be ours alone," said former Bangladesh captain and Noakhali head coach Khaled Mahmud. "I think BCB and the Bangladesh government should formally request the ICC to shift the matches to another country."

Rangpur Riders assistant coach Mohammad Ashraful, whose team features Mustafizur in the BPL, voiced his disappointment. "This was the first time Mustafizur truly got what he deserved at the IPL auction," Ashraful said. "Cricket should remain cricket. I hope the governments and boards of both countries resolve the matter. Personally, I believe teams should tour every country,

and the host nation must ensure security," he added.

Mustafizur has played for several IPL franchises over the last decade, breaking through with Sunrisers Hyderabad in 2016 and bagging the Emerging Player Award -- still the only overseas player to win the accolade in IPL history.

His BPL team Rangpur also showed support on social media, posting: "Opportunities may be taken away, but respect is earned on the field. We stand with 'The Fizz'."

Fizz's 9.2 crore rupee IPL payout remains uncertain, as he did not voluntarily withdraw and was removed under BCCI instructions -- a situation unprecedented in IPL history.

The episode comes amid strained Bangladesh-India cricket ties. The BCCI recently postponed India's men's tour of Bangladesh and did not host the women's team in December. Although the BCB has slated a bilateral series for September 2026, its prospects remain uncertain.

With the coming days expected to be crucial, the developments involving the BCCI and KKR may further test both cricketing and diplomatic relations between Bangladesh and India.



Bangladesh Police and Border guard Bangladesh (inset) players celebrate after winning the women's and men's titles respectively at the National Kabaddi Championship at the Shaheed Captain M Mansur Ali National Handball Stadium yesterday. BGB edged past Bangladesh Army 33-28 in a thrilling men's final, while Police defeated Bangladesh Ansar & VDP 36-31 in the women's decider. Police's Sraboni Mallick and BGB's AI Amin were named the tournament's best players.

PHOTO: BKF

## Lacklustre BFL drifts into uncertainty

## SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings barely held on to the top spot as the Bangladesh Football League (BFL) concluded a low-key and controversy-hit first phase, sliding into uncertainty amid player departures, poor planning and broadcast failures.

The nine-round first phase of the 10-team league ended on Saturday with four matches played across four venues. The most startling result came in Manikganj, where eighth-placed Young Men's Fakirpool staged a remarkable comeback from 3-0 down to hold leaders Kings to a 3-3 draw, scoring all three goals in the final 15 minutes.

The result, following a defeat and a draw in Kings' previous two matches, still allowed the five-time champions to retain top spot with 18 points from nine matches. Fortis FC joined them on 18 points after a 2-0 win over PWD SC, while Abahani climbed to fifth place, five points adrift of the leaders, with a 3-0 victory against Arambagh.

Rahmatganj and Bangladesh Police FC remained third and fourth

respectively with 15 and 14 points after a 1-1 draw.

While the congested top half of the table may suggest fierce competition, the reality has been a noticeable drop in quality and intensity in the rebranded BFL compared to previous seasons.



resume," Amer told The Daily Star.

Following the ninth round, the league has entered an extended break with no confirmed restart date. The BFF said the mid-term transfer window will run from January 4 to 31, during which all league and Federation Cup matches will be suspended. A tentative February 6 restart has been discussed, but national elections scheduled for February 12 are likely to force a further delay.

Financial instability has also taken its toll. Kings saw Cuban Mitchell announce his departure on social media, alleging unpaid wages -- echoing claims made earlier by defender Tariq Kazi. With the league's most affluent club struggling, others are barely surviving.

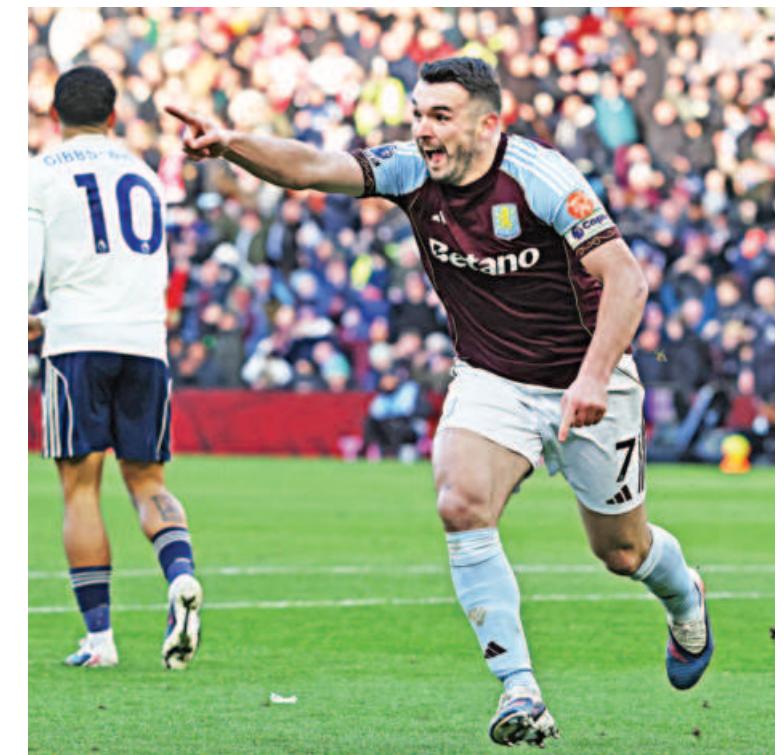
"We were supposed to receive a share of broadcast revenue, but nothing has been paid yet," Amer alleged, questioning the logic of a long mid-term window when most clubs are unwilling to sign new players. Abahani manager and BFF executive member Satyajit Das

Rupu echoed similar concerns.

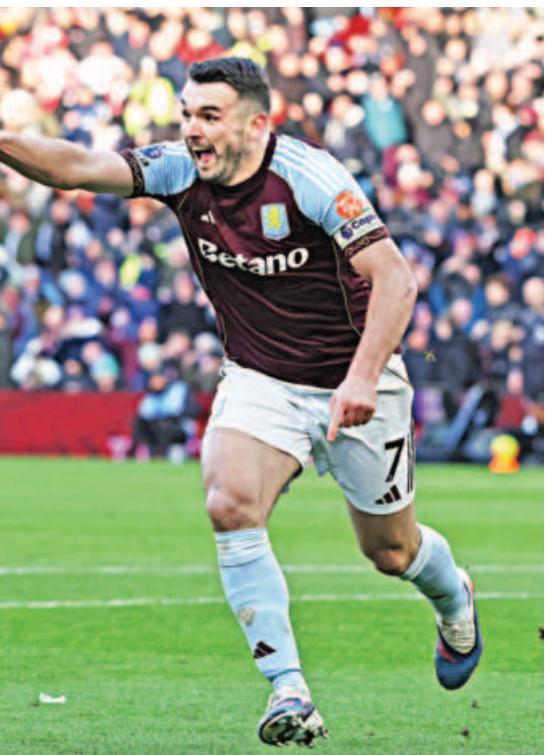
"We are looking forward to the federation's directives to decide on the team's training," Rupu said.

Beyond the lack of quality on the pitch and administrative shortcomings, broadcast and marketing failures have emerged as the most widely criticised aspects of Bangladesh's top tier league this season. Midway through the first phase, the BFF announced a title sponsorship agreement with Malaysian petroleum giant Petronas, only to withdraw the claim within 24 hours. Meanwhile, branding of the league's new sponsor, United Healthcare, has been largely absent across all five venues.

Broadcasting has further frustrated supporters, with one entire round of matches going untelevised and the remaining fixtures shown with outdated production quality. Poor camera work and substandard coverage have made viewing on YouTube and OTT platforms a trying experience for fans.



Aston Villa midfielder John McGinn celebrates after scoring his second goal in a 3-1 Premier League win over Nottingham Forest at Villa Park yesterday. McGinn struck twice in the second half, while Ollie Watkins found the net for the fourth time in three matches, as Villa bounced back from their midweek mauling by Arsenal and provisionally climbed to second in the table. The victory leaves Villa on 42 points, three behind league leaders Arsenal and one clear of Manchester City.



## SHORT CORNER

### Cuba Mitchell leaves Bangladesh, citing unpaid salaries at Kings

Following the footsteps of defender Tariq Kazi, midfielder Cuba Mitchell has left Bashundhara Kings, citing unpaid wages. Cuba, who joined the five-time Bangladesh league champions at the end of July, departed for England after posting a lengthy statement on social media in which he alleged that salary payments were due from the club.

### Shooting federation suspends Koly following her allegations

The Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation has temporarily suspended national team shooter Kamrunnahar Koly for allegedly violating the code of conduct of the national team training camp. The decision was communicated to Koly's employers, the Bangladesh Navy, through a letter sent on January 1. The federation has also informed the Bangladesh Olympic Association about the suspension.

Read full stories on The Daily Star website



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THE ONLY STEEL FACTORY IN BANGLADESH TO RECEIVE THE  
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## Habiganj SAD leader held after viral remarks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Mahdi Hasan, member secretary of Students Against Discrimination's Habiganj unit, was detained last night, a day after his controversial remarks during a confrontation with the officer-in-charge of Shayestaganj Police Station.

Habiganj Additional Superintendent of Police Probas Kumar Singha confirmed the matter to The Daily Star around 9:00pm.

Contacted, Habiganj Sadar Police Station Inspector (Investigation) Shafiqul Islam said, "Police are interrogating Mahdi over the incident."

The SAD central committee yesterday issued a show-cause notice to Mahdi, asking him to provide a written explanation within 24 hours

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



People crossing a bamboo bridge over the Ramchandrapur Canal in Mohammadpur's Chandrima Model Town area, Dhaka yesterday. Thousands rely on this unstable passage daily to commute, facing significant risk.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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.



Salahuddin's asset grew by 6.5 times to Tk 18cr since 2008

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed's assets grew by nearly six and a half times since 2008 to Tk 18.2 crore, while that of his wife Hasina Ahmed by over three and a half times to Tk 12.2 crore.

A comparison of their affidavits and tax returns from 2008 and 2025 also shows an increase in their net worth, according to the BNP leader's affidavit submitted to the Election Commission.

Salahuddin's wife Hasina contested the 9th national parliamentary elections in 2008 from Cox's Bazar-1 constituency, a seat that

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Foyjul Karim, wife have assets worth Tk 7cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islami Andolan Bangladesh Nayeb-e-Ameer Mufti Syed Foyjul Karim owns over 24 acres of agricultural land in Barishal's Charmonai valued at Tk 1 crore, as per his tax return from the last fiscal year.

The couple jointly have movable assets worth Tk 3.74 crore. Separately, Foyjul owns another Tk 3.15 crore worth of properties, according to his affidavit.

His properties include three flats in Rampura and Khilgaon and a store in Rampura Super Market – all inherited. In addition, he owns about 40 decimals of non-agricultural land in Barishal and Khilgaon, Dhaka.

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Mamunul has Tk 83 lakh in liquid assets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Ameer Maulana Md Mamunul Haque earns Tk 13 lakh annually from teaching and business.

Currently, he has liquid assets worth Tk 83 lakh, and has invested Tk 1 lakh in bonds and shares, according to his affidavits submitted to the Election Commission.

Mamunul, also joint secretary general of Hefazat-e-Islam, has no farm land, but owns non-agricultural properties worth nearly Tk 82 lakh. He is running from Dhaka-13 constituency.

He still has three pending cases against him, two of which are under the Explosive Substances Act filed in 2014

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Hasnat is worth Tk 31.7 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party leader Hasnat Abdullah has assets worth Tk 31.7 lakh, and earned Tk 12.5 lakh from his educational business Elysium Academy last year, according to his affidavit.

Hasnat, who is running from Cumilla-4 constituency, holds Tk 13.5 lakh in cash, and a little more than Tk 3 lakh in bank in the name of Elysium Academy.

Elysium Academy is located in Mirpur DOHS. Hasnat, 27, holds a master's degree in English, is newly married, and owns gold worth Tk 26 lakh.

He aims to spend Tk 10.6 lakh from his own income in the upcoming election and plans to crowdfund Tk 30 lakh for his election campaign.

## Cops examining video of Hadi murder suspect

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police are examining a video of Faisal Karim Masud, the prime accused in the murder of Inquilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi, which recently surfaced on social media, said Md Sazzat Ali, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

"We will speak after the examination is complete," he said yesterday while responding to a question at the Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh's Best Reporting Award ceremony at the Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium.

Earlier on December 28, the DMP said Faisal and his associate Alamgir had fled to India through the Haluaghata border. Later, two video clips of Faisal – who has been on the run since the shooting – surfaced on Facebook in which he said that he was not involved in the murder and that he was in Dubai, not India.

Meanwhile, Inquilab Moncho continued holding demonstrations demanding justice for Hadi, also an aspirant independent candidate from Dhaka-8.

But the platform's scheduled "March for Justice" programme did not take place.

Several attempts were made to contact Abdullah Al Jaber, member secretary of Inquilab Moncho, but he



Amid oncoming traffic, a vendor crouches to cross Mirpur Road through a broken section of the divider at the Gabtoli Bus Stand, risking an accident at any moment. The photo was taken recently.



Trader dies days after being hacked, set on fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

A businessman who was hacked and set on fire in Shariatpur's Damudia upazila on Wednesday night died yesterday morning while undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka.

Khokon Chandra Das, 50, was a resident of Tiloj village in Kaneshwar union. He ran a pharmacy shop in the local market and also worked as an agent of mobile financial services (MFS).

The attack took place around 9:30pm on Wednesday as Khokon was returning home after closing his shop. Armed assailants intercepted him, hacked him with sharp weapons, and set him ablaze using flammable substances.



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