

8 remanded over attack on Prothom Alo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed eight people on two-day remand each in a case filed over the vandalism and arson attack on the Prothom Alo office in the capital's Karwan Bazar.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Hasan Shahadat passed the order after police produced the accused before the court with a seven-day remand prayer, said a court sub-inspector.

The eight are Naim Islam, 25; Saidur Rahman, 25; Abul Kashem, 33; Pranto Sikdar, 21; Raju Ahmed, 33; Sagar Islam, 37; Mohammad Jahangir, 28; and Mohammad Hasan, 22.

After the attack on the night of December 18, the case was filed by the newspaper on December 22 with Tejgaon Police Station against 400–500 unidentified people under the Penal Code, the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Special Powers Act, and the Cyber Security Ordinance.

Property looted from the office during the attack is valued at Tk 2.5 crore, while the total damage from vandalism and arson is estimated at Tk 32 crore, according to the case statement.



Government supporters march in Caracas on Wednesday, demanding the release of Venezuela's ousted President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, following their capture in a US operation. More on page 5, 12.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Another suspect arrested over Dipu killing

Police say he played 'leading role'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The Detective Branch of Police has arrested another suspect in the killing of garment worker Dipu Chandra Das at Bhaluka upazila in Mymensingh.

Mohammad Yasin Arafat, 25, of Bhaluka was arrested on Wednesday afternoon from Sarulia, an area under Demra Police Station in Dhaka, said Abdullah Al Mamun, Mymensingh additional superintendent of police (administration).

Yasin had been serving as an imam at Sheikhbari Mosque in Kashar and teaching at Madina Tahfizul Quran Madrasa, he said.

"Yasin played a leading role in the murder alongside others. After the killing, he went into hiding and remained on the run for 12 days at different madrasas in Sarulia. He also joined a madrasa named Sulfa as a teacher," Mamun said, citing preliminary investigation findings.

Police said Yasin's role in the murder was confirmed through earlier investigation, eyewitness accounts, descriptions of the tense situation at the factory gate on the day of the incident, and statements of other arrested suspects.

He was arrested with assistance from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police. Drives are continuing to arrest other fugitives linked to the case.

Dipu, 27, a garment worker, was beaten to death and set on fire by a mob in Bhaluka on December 18 last year on allegations of "hurting religious sentiments".

Law and order lapses stoke public fears

FROM PAGE 1

Contacted by The Daily Star on Wednesday, Dr Tawhidul Haque, associate professor at the Institute of Social Welfare and Research of Dhaka University, said, "The ongoing operation is not sufficiently addressing the crime situation. With the election fast approaching, the failure to apprehend escaped criminals and recover looted weapons are causing anxiety among the people.

"Despite many arrests under Operation Devil Hunt, the rise in targeted killings and political violence is deeply troubling. If this trend continues, it is likely to undermine voter participation, as citizens may be reluctant to risk their lives."

He added, "For a genuinely participatory and fear-free election, law enforcement agencies and the Election Commission must take more stringent actions to ensure a stable and democratic environment."

However, AHM Sahadat Hossain, assistant inspector general of police, said, "While there are challenges in the current law and order situation, Bangladesh Police is working tirelessly to bring it under control.

"Despite limitations and fast evolving circumstances, we are ramping up patrols, conducting operations against criminals, maintaining intelligence surveillance, and taking prompt legal action. The police are performing their duties with professionalism and dedication to protect public life and property and to maintain normalcy."

SPATE OF KILLINGS

At least four murders have taken place in Dhaka city alone so far this year.

In the latest incident on January 8 (Wednesday), unidentified assailants shot dead former Swechhchasebak Dal leader Azizur Rahman Musabbir and injured another man near the Super Star Hotel in Karwan Bazar.

On the first day of the year, Naem Kibria, a lawyer, was beaten to death after a private car collided with his motorcycle in the Bashundhara Residential Area.

On the same day, Shipon, a 24-year-old surgical assistant for circumcision procedures, was hacked to death in the Hazaribagh Zhauchar area. Police brought him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition, where doctors declared him dead.

On January 6, scrap dealer Shahabuddin was hacked to death in Kadamtali.

Outside the capital, village doctor Khokon Chandra, who was critically injured in a knife and arson attack in Shariatpur's Damudya upazila on December 30, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on January 3.

Two days later, three murders were reported in three districts: Rana Pratap Bairagi, a trader in Jashore's Monirampur, was shot in the head; Mohammad Jane Alam Sikder, a Youth Party leader in Chattogram's Raozan, was shot dead; and businessman Moni Chakrabarty was hacked to death in Narsingdi's Palash upazila.

On January 6, police recovered the body of Mohammad Shahed Islam, a student who had been missing for a day, in Chattogram.

PHQ data shows 3,785 murder cases were filed across the country last year, including cases related to killings during the uprising. In 2023,

Contacted, Saifur Rahman Chowdhury Suján, general secretary of the Karwan Bazar Brihattar Paikari Kacha Bazar Arot Byabasayi Malik Samity, said, "The operation [Devil Hunt] needs to be strengthened, especially with the upcoming election. Disturbances are already visible. With looted weapons yet to be recovered, public concern is natural."

National Citizen Party spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain described the election-time law and order as "very disappointing".

After a meeting with the Election Commission on Tuesday, he said, "Since the announcement of the polls schedule, a known criminal recently

from arrested suspects and crime scenes, including after a gunfight between rival criminal groups in Chandgaon. In another case, bullet casings marked "police" were found at the scene of a businessman's murder.

Similar instances have been reported in Dhaka and other districts, where suspects confessed to using firearms stolen from police stations during the unrest.

An official of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, requesting anonymity, said a portion of the looted firearms were sold to criminal gangs in Dhaka.

Residents of Mohammadpur alleged that firearms looted from Mohammadpur and Adabor police stations are now in criminal hands.

ESCAPED INMATES STILL AT LARGE

Around 2,241 inmates, including 88 death-row convicts, fled prisons during and after the uprising. Of them, around 710 remain at large.

Inspector General of Prisons Brig Gen Syed Muhammad Motahar Hussain said efforts to capture the fugitives and recover looted weapons have stalled due to limitations.

"Multiple operations were conducted at known addresses, but without success. We suspect some may have fled the country. We also don't have documentation for about 178 escapees, particularly from Narsingdi jail, as records were destroyed.

"The relevant ministry and law enforcement agencies are aware of the issue. We have raised it in law and order meetings, and efforts are ongoing."

OPERATION DEVIL HUNT SO FAR

Following the launch of the second phase on December 13, law enforcement agencies arrested 15,009 people and seized 218 firearms by January 6.

In August last year, the government announced rewards for information leading to recoveries, but no major breakthroughs have been reported.

During the first phase, from February 8 to March 2 last year, 12,220 people were arrested, while 188 locally made weapons and 50 firearms were recovered.

After a January 5 advisory council meeting, Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said all forces were directed to work in coordination and intensify grassroots activities before and during the election.

"Instructions were given to take all necessary measures to ensure stability during political programmes and campaigning," he said, urging cooperation to ensure a conducive election environment.

Karwan Bazar.

Musabbir did not live in the Tejguri Bazar area. His wife said he visited the area occasionally.

According to the case statement, Musabbir was with friends on the second floor of Hotel Superstar before leaving for home with Masud on Wednesday night. When they reached in front of Ahsanullah Institute in Tejguri Bazar around 8:20pm, four to five armed assailants blocked their way and opened fire indiscriminately.

Musabbir was shot in the right elbow and the right side of his abdomen and he collapsed on the spot. When Masud tried to help him, the attackers shot him in the left side of his abdomen.

His autopsy was done at the Dhaka Medical College morgue yesterday.

In front of the morgue, his wife Suraiya told The Daily Star, "I cannot say for certain who was behind the killing. Since CCTV footage is available, I hope law enforcers will check it and take swift action against the attackers."

"Incidents like this have happened before, are happening now, and may happen again. Without a proper investigation, many more families like mine will suffer," she said.



3,023 murders were reported, while 3,126 were recorded in 2022.

According to Ain o Salish Kendra, 102 people were killed in political violence last year. The figure was 100 in 2024, 45 in 2023, and 70 in 2022. The Human Rights Support Society reported 133 deaths from political violence last year, compared to 145 in 2024 and 96 in 2023.

Last year, at least 197 people were killed in mob violence, up from 128 in 2024, ASK data shows.

During the interim government's tenure, which began on August 8, 2024, at least 293 people were killed in mob violence, the rights body's data shows.

A recent ASK report shows that at least eight people from minority communities were killed in different districts from December 2, 2025 till January 6 this year. The incidents include the murder of Amrito Mandal in Rajbari on December 24, Brajendra Bishwash in Mymensingh on December 29, and businessman Prantosh Sarker in Narsingdi on December 2.

released on bail killed one of our comrades [Sharif Osman Hadi].... This has further intensified public concern about the election."

He also criticised the lack of visible security measures, adding that the NCP has urged the EC to increase law enforcement presence at the grassroots level.

LOOTED WEAPONS BEING USED

The Awami League regime was overthrown in a student-led uprising on August 5 last year, after which 5,753 firearms and 651,609 rounds of ammunition were looted from police stations and outposts, according to PHQ.

At least 1,333 looted firearms, including 113 Chinese rifles, 31 SMGs, three LMGs and 206 Chinese pistols, remain unrecovered. More than 243,000 rounds of ammunition are also missing.

Police have recovered looted firearms from multiple crime scenes in at least six incidents over the past year.

In Chattogram, police seized pistols and bullets marked "police"

Cops focusing on turf war in Karwan Bazar

FROM PAGE 1

Investigators are exploring possible links to a local turf war, control over Karwan Bazar, and political rivalry as motives behind the killing.

His wife, Suraiya Begum, told the police that her husband had been getting repeated threats to his life, Tejgaon Division Deputy Commissioner Ibne Mizan told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, she did not specify who issued the threats or why, police said. The police official said Musabbir had never reported the threats to law enforcers.

Musabbir, former general secretary of Swechchhasebak Dal's Dhaka north unit, was shot just after 8:00pm on Wednesday in an alley near Hotel Superstar on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.

He was accompanied by Abu Sufian Bepari Masud, general secretary of Tejgaon Van Workers' Union, who sustained bullet injuries in the attack.

Masud was undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Musabbir's wife yesterday filed a murder case with Tejgaon Police Station, accusing four-five unidentified assailants.

He was a BNP-backed candidate for the councillor post in ward-26 of Tejgaon

in the city corporation polls in 2020.

A police official familiar with the investigation said they suspect that a top criminal was behind the murder, allegedly over extortion and councillor elections.

Family members and party activists claimed that Musabbir spent much of his time in jail during the Awami League regime and was repeatedly arrested in political cases.

Seeking anonymity, a senior Detective Branch official told The Daily Star that police are looking into several issues, including internal conflicts and attempts to establish dominance in Karwan Bazar. "We have already questioned several individuals as part of the investigation."

According to Karwan Bazar traders, a large stretch of the footpath in the area has long been illegally occupied by vendors, from whom AL leaders and local gangs collected extortion money. The footpath is divided into several segments.

Following the uprising, investigators claimed that the area is now controlled by various gangs with ties to political parties. Musabbir was attempting to take control of the area, the traders alleged.

On December 29 last year, a human chain of traders against extortion came under attack. Police arrested 11 people in

this connection.

Besides, police are also probing another dispute involving the control of a garage in the Farmgate area.

"These issues are being checked to see whether they align with the threats mentioned by his wife," said a police official involved in the probe, adding that political motive behind the killing is also being looked into.

However, Musabbir's younger brother Mahbubur Rahaman Azmaine dismissed the allegations of extortion against his brother and told this newspaper that his brother was involved in water supply business and providing internet services.

Meanwhile, police have checked CCTV footage from the area and identified two suspects. "One of their faces is partially visible. If we can identify him, it will significantly advance the investigation," said police official Ibne Mizan.

Police said CCTV footage shows two assailants fleeing the scene on foot, and more footage is being collected and analysed. Tejgaon police, along with DB and Rab, are jointly working to identify and arrest the suspects.

Hailing from Shariatpur, Musabbir was the eldest among three siblings. His family lives on Garden Road of West

BNP planning clampdown

FROM PAGE 1

Tarique Rahman should intervene and instruct the grassroots leaders to work for the party nominees.

Not only are grassroots leaders not working for their party nominees, but partners are also unhappy and angry, as local BNP leaders are not being cooperative.

In Munshiganj-3 constituency, where Quamruzzaman Ratan, social welfare affairs secretary of BNP's central committee, has been nominated, district BNP Member Secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed is also contesting the polls, causing a division among the supporters of the two leaders.

Ratan said, "My pain comes from seeing my party divided. Our leader, Tarique Rahman, wants a united BNP. Those who spread confusion and those who run as independents while still carrying the party's identity ... I don't think both can go hand in hand. I hope the party will take action on this matter."

The situation is similar in Noakhali-6, where the BNP-nominated candidate and two other BNP leaders are contesting, causing a split among grassroots leaders that is likely to benefit rival party contenders.

Speaking anonymously, a candidate from the seat, said, "BNP leaders and activists are divided into three factions. The party high command does not consider grassroots opinions, which is why many leaders are working against the party."

"The party should discuss the issues with grassroots leaders and resolve the matters as soon as possible."

In Manikganj-1, BNP has nominated district convening committee member SA Jinnah Kabir, while former district BNP joint convener Tojammel Haq is running, who has been expelled from

the party.

Jinnah said, "Over the last 15 years, BNP grassroots leaders and activists have struggled. It is normal for several candidates to contest as independents, but I believe that they will withdraw their nominations and work for the party nominees together."

Some grassroots leaders have remained inactive, while partners have also alleged that they are not receiving support from BNP's grassroots leaders.

In Jhenaidah-4, Rashed Khan, who joined the BNP after resigning as general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad, accused supporters of a BNP rebel candidate of intimidation and issuing threats.

In Cumilla-7, Redwan Ahmed, who joined the BNP after stepping down as LDP general secretary, said he does not expect support from BNP rebels, even if they withdraw from the race.

Political analysts warned that if Tarique fails to address the dissatisfaction among party leaders, the situation could worsen.

Prof Sabbir Ahmed, Dhaka University's political science department, said, "This is bad for the party. If Tarique Rahman seriously discusses with the party leaders and can satisfy them with alternative solutions, then may be the situation will return to normal. If not, the party will fall into a crisis."

"If there was a practice in the party to decide nominations through internal elections, it would have been better."

Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, former professor at Jahangirnagar University's government and politics department, said, "The rebel candidates have their own supporters, and they have already made investments. Even if they don't get party tickets, they are not withdrawing from the election."

Govt to fix prices of all 295 essential drugs

FROM PAGE 1

Contacted, Zakir Hossain, secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, said the association had been made aware of the approval but had not yet received official documents. "We will give our formal reaction after reviewing them," he told this correspondent last night.

According to the World Health Organization, essential medicines are those that meet priority healthcare needs based on public health relevance, evidence of benefit and harm, cost-effectiveness, and affordability.

The existing list of 285 essential medicines was last updated in 2016. Of these, the government directly sets prices for 117 widely used drugs, while the rest are approved based on proposals from manufacturers.

The National Drug Policy 2016, citing WHO guidelines and expert opinions, recommends that the essential drug list be revised every two years.

However, it has only been updated twice since its inception in 1982: once in 2008 and again in 2016.

This time, around 135 new medicines have been added, replacing many from the previous list, sources said.

According to Prof Sayedur, the National Drug Policy 1982 led to the expansion of the country's pharmaceutical sector and helped make medicines available to the public.

However, a change introduced in 1994 limited government price control to only 117 of the then total drugs, instead of all medicines, resulting in price increases for drugs outside the list and causing public suffering, he added.

He noted that nearly two-thirds

of healthcare spending by the public goes towards purchasing medicines. Over the years, the number of drugs has increased and now stands at around 1,400.

Considering all these aspects, the interim government formed a taskforce in July last year, led by the vice-chancellor of Bangladesh Medical University, which consulted all stakeholders.

Based on the taskforce's recommendations, the updated essential drug list and the guideline were formulated.

Prof Sayedur said the government will fix the prices of essential drugs, and companies selling these medicines will have to comply with the set rates.

Companies will be given four years to gradually adjust their prices, he said, adding that a company will not get approval for a new drug if they fail to comply with the rate.

He mentioned that the updated list of 295 essential medicines would be adequate to treat illnesses affecting about 80 percent of the population, meaning price regulation would directly affect this majority.

According to Prof Sayedur, at least one-fourth of a pharmaceutical company's production will have to consist of essential drugs to ensure their availability.

The guideline has also devised a mechanism to set prices for non-essential drugs, ensuring that the price of a medicine does not vary by more than 15 percent from one company to another.

An independent authority will be formed to fix drug prices. Until it is established, the existing authority will continue to set prices.

He also mentioned that drug prices will be adjusted every year in March in line with the inflation rate.

CEC vows level playing field in polls

Opens law-and-order cell, EU to deploy 200 observers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin yesterday said the EC will ensure a level playing field, with no staged elections this time.

The CEC made the remarks in the morning while speaking to reporters after visiting the nomination appeal booths set up at the commission's Agargaon office in the capital.

When his attention was drawn to allegations that independent candidates are being harassed while collecting signatures from one percent of voters, the CEC said the EC is the appellate authority.

"Decisions taken by returning officers, if nominations are rejected, can be appealed to us. Or if a nomination is accepted and any candidate wants

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Passengers wrapped in warm clothes wait for trains at Kamalapur Railway Station in Dhaka amid bitter cold, as the capital recorded a minimum temperature of 12.5°C yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Govt eases data localisation rules

Jail terms scrapped, financial penalties remain



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has largely removed data localisation requirements for technology companies from the Personal Data Protection Ordinance and scrapped jail terms for violations by tech firms, including global giants such as Meta and Google.

The amendments were approved at a meeting of the advisory council in Dhaka yesterday.

Under the revised ordinance, only data related to government-designated Critical Information Infrastructure (CII), as defined in the Cyber Security Ordinance, will be required to be stored within Bangladesh.

The blanket requirement for technology companies to keep local copies of user data has also been eased.

Under the original ordinance, gazetted in November last year, technology companies were required to store at least one synchronised real-time copy of data inside Bangladesh.

Under the amendment, this requirement will now apply only to restricted personal data, for which at least one synchronised real-time copy of cloud-stored data must be kept within the country.

The amendment also revises the punishment provisions. Previously, violations of the ordinance — including breaches of personal data or infringement of users' rights — could result in both imprisonment and financial penalties.

The revised ordinance removes the provision for

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Ensure effective execution of RTI law

Speakers urge govt, parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an event yesterday urged the government and political parties to ensure effective implementation of the Right to Information (RTI) law, noting that citizens' access to information remains limited despite the law being in force.

They said transparency, accountability and citizen participation are essential to strengthening democracy, and stressed the need for coordinated action among the media, civil society and citizens to make the RTI law more effective.

Policy experts also called on all political parties contesting the February 12 election to include specific commitments to the RTI Act in their election manifestos so that access to information becomes a governance priority.

The remarks were made at an event titled "Strengthening Democracy through Right to Information: Launch of The RTI Citizen Platform and Dialogue on Engaging Political Parties to Advance Right to Information", organised by Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB) at a hotel in the capital.

"The citizens are the true owners of the state. They have the right to access information because it is the source of power. But in many cases, the government does not provide information properly," said Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman.

He urged the government to

activate the Information Commission by appointing its commissioners and to ensure that officials disclose their income and assets.

Highlighting gaps in government compliance, he said, "Officials are supposed to disclose their income and assets, but this has not been done fully. Government departments have often failed to keep their commitments."

He said although private organisations and the media have

said citizens, journalists and civil society must act collectively to demand transparency and accountability.

"Women must have sufficient representation in accessing information, as they are often excluded from decision-making and information rights," she said.

Rezaur Rahman Lenin, researcher and rights activist, said the RTI would not function effectively under the interim government as



Speakers at the discussion yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

helped raise awareness, only about seven percent of people are aware of the RTI law. "We need to expand this further," he said.

Media Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) Executive Director Hasibur Rahman said journalists face multiple challenges, including delays in obtaining information and a lack of institutional support outside the capital.

Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam

the system is designed to restrict citizens' access to information.

"Without proper implementation and citizen-oriented design, RTI cannot fulfil its role in accountability and transparency," he said.

The event was moderated by RIB board member Asif Munier and featured speakers Quazi Zahed Iqbal of Blast, Javed Arafat of the National Citizen Party, RIB Chairperson Shamsul Bari and Deputy Director Ruhi Naz, among others.

Musabbir murder aimed at destabilising interim government

Says Fakhrul; BNP issues 24-hour ultimatum to arrest killers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The killing of Swachchhasebak Dal leader Azizur Rahman Musabbir was carried out to put the interim government in a difficult position, BNP leaders said yesterday, issuing a 24-hour ultimatum to arrest the perpetrators.

They warned that failure to arrest the culprits within the time frame would indicate a lack of sincerity on the part of the interim government.

Protesting the murder and demanding the immediate arrest of those responsible, Swachchhasebak Dal announced countrywide protest marches in districts and metropolitan areas on January 10.

"Such horrifying incidents are being repeatedly carried out to put the interim government in a difficult position. So, there is no alternative to suppressing these miscreants with a firm hand," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir in a press release yesterday evening.

"After the fall of the Awami autocratic regime through the student-led mass movement, miscreants have once again become active in creating chaos and instability in the country," he said, calling Musabbir's killing an example of conspiracy.

Fakhrul said to establish democracy and protect people's voting rights, all sections of society must remain united, warning that allies of "Awami fascists" pose a threat to the country's existence.

Earlier in the day, Musabbir's namaz-e-janaza was held

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Defence seeks discharge of Ziaul at ICT

Prosecution urges trial to proceed; ex-army chief named witness

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The defence yesterday sought the discharge of Maj Gen (relieved) Ziaul Ahsan from a crimes against-humanity case involving more than 100 alleged enforced disappearances and killings, arguing that none of the three charges is supported by evidence.

Opposing the plea, Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam told International Crimes Tribunal-1 that the prosecution had established a prima facie case and urged the court to frame charges and proceed to trial to ensure justice for the victims' families.

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Shibir sweeps JnUCSU too

'Odommo Jobian Oikya' bags top 3 posts

RAKIB MADBER

The results of the Jagannath University Central Students' Union (JnUCSU) and hall students' union elections were officially announced yesterday, with the Islami Chhatra Shibir and Chhatra Sangstha-backed panel "Odommo Jobian Oikya" winning most posts, including the top three positions.

The results were published through a notification signed by the university's Chief Election Commissioner Prof Mostafa Hasan.

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3 Chinese nationals held for running illegal iPhone plant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives have arrested three Chinese nationals for allegedly running an illegal iPhone assembly plant in the capital's Uttara and Nikunja areas.

The arrestees were identified as Tan Jian, Wu Jun, and Dong Hongwei.

During drives conducted on Wednesday, DB officials seized 363 iPhones of various models, a large cache of spare parts, machinery used for assembling phones, eight bottles of foreign liquor, and Tk 26,000 in cash, said Mohiuddin Mahmud Sohel, deputy commissioner (DB) of Mirpur Division, at a press briefing at the DMP Media Centre yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a detective unit raided a house in Nikunja-1 around 5:30pm, where they made the arrests and discovered a "secret lab".

Sohel said a gang had been operating for a year and a half, evading taxes and deceiving customers by selling assembled phones as original products.

When asked if any Bangladeshi nationals were involved, the DB official said they had found the names of some locals during preliminary investigation. "However, we cannot disclose the names at this moment for the sake of investigation."

Police said legal action against the arrestees is underway.



Bijoy Majumdar and his wife Anjana Majumdar dry betel nuts in a field at Adamkathi village in Pirojpur. After drying raw betel nuts purchased from garden owners between Ashwin and Agrahayan, they sell 100 of these to traders at a wholesale price of Tk 150 in mid-Paush. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

JULY UPRISING ROLES

DU syndicate to bring charges against 4 teachers

Approves renaming Bangabandhu, Bangamata halls

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka University syndicate yesterday approved a move to proceed with the renaming of two university halls named after Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his wife Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib.

Sources present at the syndicate meeting told The Daily Star that approval was given to change the names of Jatir Janak Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall and Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall.

However, a source said the syndicate does not have the authority to rename halls, and the matter has been forwarded to the university senate for final approval.

Earlier, on December 21, Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) Vice President Abu Shadik Kayem, along with other Ducusu leaders and students, laid siege to the vice-chancellor's office, demanding the renaming of the two halls.

The syndicate also approved the formation of a probe committee against four teachers of the university's sociology department. They are Prof Sadeka Halim, Prof Abul Kashem Mohammad Jamal

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Bangladesh, EU finalise PCA text

Deal to serve as legal, political foundation of long-term partnership

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and the European Union have finalised the text of the Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation (PCA), which will serve as the legal and political foundation for a strategic and long-term Bangladesh-EU relationship.

The agreement was finalised at the fifth round of negotiations held in Dhaka on January 7-8.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretary (Bilateral) Dr Nazrul Islam led the Bangladesh delegation, while the EU side was headed by Paola Pampaloni, acting managing director for Asia-Pacific at the European External Action Service.

The EU is Bangladesh's largest trading bloc, with total trade in goods between the two sides amounting to €22.2 billion in 2024.

The agreement is expected to deepen cooperation in a wide range of policy areas, including human rights and governance, trade and investment, environmental sustainability and climate change, food security, energy, transport, and science, technology and innovation.

Earlier on Wednesday, the EU delegation paid

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PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

A trader cleans items at his shop decorated with clayware, including pots and earthen stoves, beside Bilsimla Railgate in Rajshahi city yesterday, as demand for such stoves surged after LPG traders announced a halt to LPG sales across the country. Each stove sells for Tk 250-350. However, the LP Gas Traders Cooperative Society Limited later withdrew its indefinite strike following a meeting with the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission.

One missing bridge, thousands left stranded

SAHIDUL ISLAM NIRAB, Jamalpur

The absence of a bridge over the Jamuna river continues to inflict years of hardship on thousands of residents of Jamalpur's Sarishabari upazila and neighbouring Kazipur upazila of Sirajganj.

At the Gamaratala ferry ghat in Pogladigha Union of Sarishabari, people from at least 25 villages rely on boats to meet their daily needs. Locals estimate that several hundred thousand people are directly affected by the lack of a permanent crossing.

A recent visit found that residents of Kazipur routinely cross the river to reach Sarishabari for work, education, healthcare and business. Despite repeated demands over the years, construction of a bridge has yet to begin.

The suffering intensifies during the monsoon, when ferry services become risky and irregular, leaving the area virtually cut off. Many locals describe the region as an isolated and long-neglected pocket even decades after independence.



Important institutions are located on both sides of the river. While Jamuna High School and key connecting roads of Kazipur lie on the western bank, the eastern bank hosts Tarakandi Railway Station, Tarakandi Bus Terminal,

Kandarpara Bazar, Jamuna Fertiliser Company Limited, Pogladigha College, several schools, and various government and private offices. As a result, ferry crossings remain unavoidable.

"Even after 50 years of independence, we still have to wait here every day to cross the river. Our lives seem stuck on this ghat," said Mamunur Rahman, a resident of Guakhara village.

Student Sohag Mia said delays at the riverbank often cause him to miss important classes, while farmer Nasim Uddin said the absence of a bridge hampers agriculture and emergency healthcare.

Upazila Engineer Golam Kibria said the ferry ghat has already been surveyed. "The bridge project is under consideration, and it will be implemented soon," he added.

One dies, two hurt in crude bomb explosion



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

One person was killed and two others injured in an explosion, allegedly while making crude bombs in Zajira upazila early yesterday.

The deceased is Sohan Bepari, 32, of Bilashpur Union. The injured are Arman Molla, 32, and Md Nabin, 28.

The explosion destroyed a tin shed house, blowing away its roof. Sohan's body was later found in a nearby garlic field, said Saleh Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Zajira Police Station.

Police found a destroyed tin-roofed house built about two months ago by Sagar Bepari. They also found bomb-making materials at the site, said OC.

Locals rescued the two injured men and took them to Zajira Upazila Health Complex. Due to their critical condition, doctors referred them to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Police recovered Sohan's body later in the morning.

Based on initial findings, the explosion likely occurred while bombs were being made.

"How the body ended up in the field is still under investigation," the OC said, adding that legal proceedings are underway. Sohan had several cases against him, including assault.

Death anniv of Md Velayet Hossain

CITY DESK

Today is the first death anniversary of Md Velayet Hossain, former deputy executive president of Islami Bank Bangladesh PLC, said a press release.



On the occasion, a milad and doa mahfil will be held after the Juma prayers for the salvation of the departed soul.

On this day last year, Velayet Hossain passed away at a hospital in Dhaka, aged 79. He served Islami Bank Bangladesh PLC for several decades and played a significant role in strengthening the bank's operations as well as promoting ethical and Islamic banking practices.

Three held over rape in Jamalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Three people were arrested on charges of raping a woman after tying up and assaulting her husband in Jamalpur's Sadar upazila.

The arrests were made after the woman filed a case against five people with Jamalpur Sadar Police Station on Tuesday.

The accused are Farhad Mia, 30, and Azam, 24, of Chander Haora village; Rahat Ali Roudro, 24, Suman alias Pacha, 24; and Palash.

Among them, police on Wednesday arrested Farhad, Azam and Rahat and produced them before the local court, which sent them

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Sunlight brings some relief from cold

Sreemangal records lowest temperature at 7°C

STAR REPORT

Sunlight brought a little respite yesterday for the cold-hit people across the country, especially in the northern region, after several consecutive days of bone-chilling cold.

The mercury rose slightly, with the country's lowest temperature recorded at 7 degrees Celsius in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal upazila.

On Wednesday, the lowest temperature was 6.7 degrees Celsius in Naogaon, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

"The sunlight was visible and temperature rose as there was less fog yesterday compared to previous days," said a duty officer of the BMD.

On Tuesday, a mild to moderate cold wave was sweeping over 32 districts in the Rangpur, Rajshahi, Barishal, Khulna and Sylhet divisions. The number of affected districts dropped to 17 yesterday, he added.

"Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged and day temperature may rise slightly over the country," said a BMD bulletin released last evening for the next 24 hours.



As the sun appeared, the intensity of the cold eased during the daytime, but the chill intensified again after sunset as cooler winds continued to sweep across the region, said Jitendranath Ray, acting officer of the Tetulia Weather Observatory.

In the Rangpur region, farmers and agricultural labourers were able to work in the fields during the daytime. "We are feeling relief today after getting sunlight from around 10:00am to the afternoon," said Shafiru Rahman, a farmer of Mominpur village in Rangpur sadar upazila.

Day labourer Pulin Chandra Roy of Mostafi village in Lalmonirhat said, "Thursday noon passed quite comfortably as the sun appeared in the sky. Sunlight warmed our bodies."

Attendance of students at various educational institutions also increased as the weather improved.

Anwar Shahadat, principal of Abdur Rashid Degree College in Thakurgaon sadar, said student attendance was better than in the previous few days due to the improved weather.

[Our correspondents from Moulvibazar, Lalmonirhat and Thakurgaon contributed to the report.]

পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি

POWER GRID BANGLADESH PLC

(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd

স্মারক নং- ২৭.২১.০০০০.০০০.৪২৭.১৮.০০০১.২৬.০৬০ তারিখঃ ০৭/০১/২০২৬খ্রিঃ

বিদ্যুৎ ব্যাহতির বিজ্ঞপ্তি

জনসাধারণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, দেশের ক্রমবর্ধমান বিদ্যুৎ চাহিদা পূরণের লক্ষ্যে গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার ও চীন সরকারের যৌথ অর্থায়নে বিদ্যুৎ, জ্বালানি ও খনিজ সম্পদ মন্ত্রণালয়ের বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগের অধীন পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি কর্তৃক বাস্তবায়নাধীন "Power Grid Network Strengthening Project under PGCB" শীর্ষক প্রকল্পের আওতায় বরিশাল-পটুয়াখালী ১৩০কিভি সঞ্চালন লাইন নির্মাণ কাজ বর্তমানে চলমান আছে।

উক্ত রাষ্ট্রীয় গুরুত্বপূর্ণ উন্নয়নমূলক কাজের নিরাপত্তা ও নিরবিচ্ছিন্নতা বজায় রাখার স্বার্থে আগামী ১০ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬ খ্রিষ্টাব্দে সকাল ০৬:০০ ঘটিকা হতে বিকাল ০৫:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত সারাদিন পায়রা-পটুয়াখালী ১৩২কিভি সঞ্চালন লাইন দ্বারা বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ বন্ধ থাকবে। ফলশ্রুতিতে, জাতীয় গ্রিডের পটুয়াখালী ১৩২/৩৩কিভি গ্রিড ও বরগুনা ১৩২/৩৩কিভি গ্রিড উপকেন্দ্র হতে উক্ত সময়ে কোনরূপ বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ করা সম্ভব হবে না।

ফলশ্রুতিতে, এ সময়ে পটুয়াখালী ও বরগুনা জেলার কিছু অঞ্চলে বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহের নিরবিচ্ছিন্নতা সাময়িকভাবে ব্যাহত হতে পারে। জাতীয় স্বার্থে সম্মানিত বিদ্যুৎ গ্রাহকদের সাময়িক অসুবিধার জন্য পাওয়ার গ্রিড কর্তৃপক্ষ আন্তরিকভাবে দুঃখিত।

মোঃ আলমগীর হোসেন
প্রকল্প পরিচালক ও প্রধান প্রকৌশলী (অতিরিক্ত দায়িত্ব)
পাওয়ার গ্রিড নেটওয়ার্ক স্ট্রেন্গেনিং প্রকল্প (জিটুজি)

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Principal
Bhola Govt. Technical School and College
Bhola

E-mail: tsc.bhola@gmail.com
Website: www.tsc.bhola.gov.bd

Reference No. 57.03.0918.501.07.014.26.11 Date: 08/01/2026

e-GP Tender Notice

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

Tender ID	Package No.	Name of package description	Starting date & time	Closing date & time
1203547	BTSC/R-2025-26	Supply and Installation of Furniture	11-Jan-2026, 12:00	25-Jan-2026, 12:00
1203546	BTSC/R-2025-26/GD-8	Supply and Installation of Teaching and Learning Equipment	11-Jan-2026, 12:00	25-Jan-2026, 12:00
1203545	BTSC/R-2025-26/GD-7	Supply and Installation of Office Equipment	11-Jan-2026, 12:00	25-Jan-2026, 12:00
1203544	BTSC/R-2025-26/GD-6	Supply and Installation of Engineering Equipment	11-Jan-2026, 12:00	25-Jan-2026, 12:00
1203542	BTSC/R-2025-26/GD-5	Supply of Stationaries materials	11-Jan-2026, 12:00	25-Jan-2026, 12:00
1203535	BTSC/R-2025-26/GD-4	Supply of Computer Accessories	11-Jan-2026, 12:00	25-Jan-2026, 12:00
1203528	BTSC/R-2025-26/GD-3	Supply of Raw Materials and Spare parts	11-Jan-2026, 12:00	25-Jan-2026, 12:00

These are online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Suffier Rahman
Principal
Bhola Govt. Technical School & College
Bhola
Phone: 02478893117

GD-62

১০ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়ন

ঢাকা সেনানিবাস, ঢাকা-১২০৬

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১। ১০ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়নের প্রশিক্ষণ মাঠ সংস্কার করার জন্য জিটাবালু এবং মাঠের পানি নিষ্কাশনের জন্য ঢাকনাসহ ড্রেসেজ সিস্টেম নির্মাণ কার্যক্রম সুষ্ঠুভাবে সম্পাদনের নিমিত্তে প্রয়োজনীয় প্রবাসাম্মী ক্রয় করা হবে। অগ্রাধী প্রকৃত সরবরাহকারী সংস্থার নিকট হতে নিম্নে বর্ণিত কর্তৃপক্ষের বরাবরে দেশীয় মুদ্রায় সীলমোহরযুক্ত উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে। ক্রয়তথ্য প্রবাসাম্মীর তালিকাসহ বিস্তারিত বিবরণ দরপত্রের সিডিউলে উল্লেখ থাকবে।

২। আগামী ১৪ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬ইং তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে (০৯০০ ঘটিকা হতে ১৪০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত) ৭৫০.০০ (টাকা সাতশত পঞ্চাশ মাত্র) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য) প্রদানপূর্বক প্রয়োজনীয় বিনির্দেশ/শর্তাবলীসহ দরপত্রের সিডিউল অর অফিস হতে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। উক্ত সিডিউলের শর্তাবলী মোতাবেক আগামী ১৯ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬ তারিখ সকাল ১১০০ ঘটিকার সময় অর অফিসে রক্ষিত দরপত্র ব্যাংক দরপত্র ফেলতে হবে এবং এদিন ১১৩০ ঘটিকায় দরপত্রদাওয়ার উপস্থিতিতে দরপত্র বাস্তব খোলা হবে।

আইএসপিআর/সেনা/১১

ভারপ্রাপ্ত অধিনায়ক
১০ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়ন
ঢাকা সেনানিবাস

জিডি-৫৮

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Project Director
Accelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) Project
Directorate of Technical Education
Plot -F-4/B, Agargaon, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
www.asset-dte.gov.bd

Memo No: 57.03.0000.051.07.956.25-100 Date: 08 January, 2026

e-Tender Notice No: 08/2025-26

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

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Package Description	Tender Document last selling Date and Time	Tender Closing Date and Time
1209467	G73	Supply of Goods & related service for programs/events under framework contract	25-Jan-2026 17:00	26-Jan-2026 15:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is mandatory.

The fees for the e-Tender Document Price have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's Branches up to 5:00 PM of one day before the Closing Date.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

Mir Zahid Hasan
Project Director (Additional Secretary)
ASSET Project
Telephone: 880-02-41024953
E-mail: pd@asset-dte.gov.bd

GD-65

বাংলাদেশ সরকারী কর্ম কমিশন

Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Public Service Commission Secretariat
Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.
www.bpsc.gov.bd

Memo No: 80.00.0000.404.26.008.25-06 Date: 08.01.2026

e-Tender

This is to notify all concerned that the following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of goods as follows-

Name of Goods	Package No & Tender ID	Publication, Last Selling and Closing Date & Time
Supply of Sedan Car	Invitation Reference No.: 80.00.0000.404.26.008.25-05 Tender ID: 1208359	Tender Publication: 12-Jan-2026, 09:00 am Last Selling: 25-Jan-2026, 04:30 pm Closing: 26-Jan-2026, 11:00 am

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

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Dr. Mohammad Golam Mostafa)
Deputy Secretary (Finance and Service)
Telephone No: 55006639

GD-61

Foreign troops in Ukraine to be targets: Russia

REUTERS, Moscow

Russia said yesterday that any troops sent to Ukraine by Western governments would be “legitimate combat targets”, after Britain and France announced plans to deploy a multinational force there in the event of a ceasefire.

A Russian Foreign Ministry statement said “militaristic declarations” by a coalition of pro-Ukraine Western governments were becoming increasingly dangerous.

Russia was responding for the first time to a meeting of the “coalition of the willing” in Paris on Tuesday at which Britain and France signed a declaration of intent on the future deployment.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said it paved the way for a legal framework whereby “British, French and partner forces could operate on Ukrainian soil.”



Colombian President Gustavo Petro attends a rally in Bogotá on Wednesday, defending national sovereignty after US President Donald Trump suggested possible military intervention in Colombia, days after the US struck Venezuela and captured President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores.

PHOTO: REUTERS

RUSSIAN OIL IMPORTS
Trump backs bill to sanction China, India, Brazil: senator

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump will allow a bipartisan sanctions bill targeting countries doing business with Russia to move forward in Congress and it could be put to a vote as early as next week, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said on Wednesday.

Graham said in a statement Trump had “greenlit” the legislation after the pair met on Wednesday, reports Reuters. The legislation, which Graham has been working on with fellow Republicans and Democrats for months, would impose sanctions on countries doing business with Russia, including buyers of its energy exports, over Moscow’s failure to negotiate a peace deal with Ukraine. Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

“This bill will allow President Trump to punish those countries who buy cheap Russian oil fueling Putin’s war machine,” Graham said, citing China, India and Brazil as potential targets of the legislation.

Graham, a senator from South Carolina, said he is looking forward to a “strong bipartisan vote” on the legislation to take place as early as next week.

Leaders in the Senate and House of Representatives have held off bringing the legislation to a vote as Trump has preferred to impose tariffs on goods imported from India, the world’s second-leading buyer of Russian oil after China.

Venezuela to buy US goods under oil deal
Says Trump, invites Colombia president to White House

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump said Wednesday that Venezuela will purchase American products with revenue from its oil sales.

“I have just been informed that Venezuela is going to be purchasing ONLY American Made Products, with the money they receive from our new Oil Deal,” Trump said in a post on his social media platform Truth Social.

The president said the purchases will include agricultural products, medicine, medical devices and equipment to improve Venezuela’s grid and energy facilities, reports CNBC online.

Trump said Tuesday that Venezuela would turn over 30 million to 50 million barrels of oil to the US after the overthrow of President Nicolás Maduro. The oil will be sold at market prices, Trump said. The sales, if executed, would

» US attack put ‘stain’ on ties, says Venezuelan leader

» Interior minister reports 100 dead, dozens hurt in US attack

total more than \$2 billion at oil’s Wednesday closing price.

Energy Secretary Chris Wright said Wednesday that the US will control Venezuela’s oil sales indefinitely. Trump also appeared to lift a threat to take military action against Venezuela’s neighbour Colombia. Trump invited Colombia’s leftist leader, whom he had previously called a “sick man”, to visit Washington.

“Only time will tell” how long the United States will oversee Venezuela, Trump said in an

interview published on The New York Times. When asked by the newspaper if it would be three months, six months, a year or longer, Trump said: “I would say much longer.”

In Venezuela, interim leader Delcy Rodríguez said Wednesday that US forces’ attack to depose her predecessor put a “stain” on the countries’ relations, but defended plans to sell oil to Washington. But she added it was “not unusual or irregular” to trade with the United States now, following the announcement by state oil firm PDVSA that it was in negotiations to sell crude to the US.

The US attack in Caracas left 100 people dead, Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello said. Thousands of people marched in Venezuela Wednesday to demand the release of Maduro, while an official video showed grieving relatives mourning those killed in the attack.

Pakistan, Saudi in talks on JF-17 jets-for-loans deal

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are in talks to convert about \$2 billion of Saudi loans into a JF-17 fighter jet deal, two Pakistani sources said, deepening military cooperation months after the two nations signed a mutual defence pact last year.

The talks underscore how the two allies are moving to operationalise defence cooperation at a time when Pakistan is facing acute financial strain and Saudi Arabia is reshaping its security partnerships to hedge against uncertainty about US commitments in the Middle East.

The mutual defence deal was signed following Israel’s strikes on what it said were Hamas targets in Doha, an attack that shook the Gulf region.

One of the sources said the discussions were limited to the provision of JF-17 Thunder fighter jets, the light combat aircraft jointly developed by Pakistan and China and produced in Pakistan, while the second said the jets were the primary option among others under discussion.

The first source said the total deal was worth \$4 billion, with an additional \$2 billion to be spent on equipment over and above the loan conversion.



Israel strikes Gaza City launch site
Four Palestinians killed

REUTERS

Israel’s military said yesterday it had carried out a targeted strike on a rocket launch site near Gaza City after identifying a failed launch, as questions mount over when the next phase of the Gaza ceasefire will begin.

At least four Palestinians were killed om the strike. The military said the projectile did not cross into Israeli territory and that the launch site was struck shortly after the attempt was detected.

It accused Hamas of violating the ceasefire twice in the past 24 hours. A source from the Palestinian group told Reuters it was checking the allegation.

Meanwhile, the UN’s beleaguered agency for Palestinian refugees said Wednesday that a “dire” financial crisis has this week forced it to fire hundreds of Gaza staff who had left the territory.

“On Tuesday, 571 local UNRWA staff, outside Gaza, were informed that they were being separated from the agency with immediate effect,” a spokesperson told AFP in an email.



8 political killings since polls schedule: ASK

FROM PAGE 1

According to Ain o Salish Kendra and media reports, at least eight political killings have occurred since December 11.

Human Rights Support Society data shows 60 incidents of political violence in December alone, leaving four dead and 528 injured. At least 10 attacks on leaders and activists resulted in 10 deaths, including three from the Awami League, four from the BNP, and one from Jamaat-e-Islami.

Experts have expressed concern over the rising violence and called for urgent law enforcement action to curb the growing insecurity.

Rights activist Nur Khan Liton said that while the reasons behind the killings are varied, two key trends are emerging: political party leaders and activists and people of minority communities are being targeted.

He expressed concern that such incidents are still occurring, including the most recent one in the capital on Wednesday night, reflecting weaknesses in law and order.

Liton criticised the measures taken so far, calling them insufficient and pointing to weak responses from law enforcement.

He also raised concerns about the growing mob

culture, where organised groups continue to act in their own interests.

Former inspector general of police Muhammad Nurul Huda, however, said he doesn’t see any major problem, noting that similar situations have occurred before past elections.

He acknowledged weaknesses in the police force but said incidents on the scale of the July uprising, which left around 1,200 dead, are unprecedented.

“It’s natural for the police to be concerned after such events,” he said. “However, 20,000 to 25,000 new personnel have joined, and they have been urged to perform their duties properly, so some positive impact is expected.”

KILLINGS

The latest incident took place near the Super Star Hotel in Dhaka’s Karwan Bazar around 8:30pm, when unidentified assailants shot dead former Swechhasebak Dal leader Azizur Rahman Musabbir and injured another man.

Two days back, on January 5, Jane Alam Sikder, 48, a former leader of BNP’s youth wing, was shot dead by assailants on a motorcycle in the Rausha area of Chattogram.

The incident took place just 500 metres from a police investigation centre.

Similarly, on January

3, another BNP leader, Alamgir Hossain, 55, was gunned down in Jashore. Alamgir was on his way home when assailants attacked him, shooting him in the head.

Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, an independent MP aspirant from Dhaka-8 and spokesperson for Inqilab Moncho, was shot on December 12. He died while undergoing treatment in Singapore on December 18, sparking outrage and protests across the country.

On December 24, a Chhatra Dal activist was killed in Bhola when he was travelling to Dhaka to join an event organised to mark the return of BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman.

The police reported that Rizwan Amin Sifat, 25, was attacked by armed assailants who hacked him to death in the Rajapur area of the district.

On December 26, Saiful Sardar, 45, a BNP leader, was hacked to death in Alladanga, Faridpur, amidst a local power struggle.

Also, on December 24, Farid Sarkar, 41, a leader of the Jatiyatabadi Social Cultural Forum, was murdered in the Gosinga area of Sreepur, Gazipur.

On December 17, Biru Mandal, 48, a BNP leader in Ishwardi, was shot dead over an alleged land dispute.

BCB alerts ICC to security concerns

FROM PAGE 1

Yesterday, Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain echoed Asif Nazrul’s stance.

“We will certainly play outside India... We have an interest in our players’ safety in not sending them to India,” Touhid said.


Meanwhile, former Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal urged the board to consider Bangladesh cricket’s future and advocated for continued dialogue.

“One must consider Bangladesh cricket’s interest, future and everything before making any decision. There is nothing better than solving something through dialogue,” Tamim said while attending the trophy unveiling ceremony of Zia Inter-University Cricket Tournament at City Club ground yesterday.

“What I would have done if I were there [in the BCB] is that since it is a sensitive issue, before making a public comment, we would discuss the matter ourselves [within the board]. Because when you publicly make a comment, right or wrong, it is difficult to move from that position.”

“Bangladesh cricket’s future comes before anything else. Around 90-95 percent of our finances come from the ICC. So, you have to take the decision based on what will help Bangladesh cricket,” he added.

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Invitation for e-GP Tender Notice (OTM)

Memo No. 01 (2)/Engg. Dated: 07/01/2026

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

Sl No.	ID Tender	Package No.	Name of work	e-Tender last selling date & time	e-Tender closing date & time
1	1176518	SE/ELEC-1/DU/2025-2026/05	Fortnightly Checking & Monthly Servicing of 4 (four) Nos. 1000kgs, 20 stops Passenger/Bed Lift for Shahid Sheikh Russel Tower Bhaban, University of Dhaka for the Session of 2025-2026.	18-Jan-2026 17:00	19-Jan-2026 14:00
2	1170532	SE/ELEC-1/DU/2025-2026/06	Supply and fixing of 320 Nos. Ceiling Fan (Size-56") with ancillary electrical works for the Students rooms (Prottoy, Prodipta, Protikha and 4th floor of the Administrative Building) of Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall, University of Dhaka.	20-Jan-2026 17:00	21-Jan-2026 12:00
3	1163549	SE/ELEC-1/DU/2025-2026/02	Fortnightly Checking & Monthly Servicing of 32 Nos. Lift of Different Place in Dhaka University Campus with minor spare parts for the Session of 2025-2026 (Group-A)	18-Jan-2026 17:00	19-Jan-2026 14:00
4	1202707	SE/ELEC-1/DU/APP/2025-2026/17	Repair and renovation of Electrical works at the Chemistry Department at Mukarram Hossain Khandaker Science Building, Dhaka University.	18-Jan-2026 17:00	19-Jan-2026 12:00
5	1201881	SE/ELEC-1/DU/2025-2026/04	Fortnightly Checking & Monthly Servicing of 6 Nos. Lift (04 Nos. Hall Block & 02 Nos. HTQ Block) for 7 March Bhaban, Ruqayyah Hall, University of Dhaka with minor spare parts for the Session of 2025-2026	18-Jan-2026 17:00	19-Jan-2026 14:30

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


07/01/2026
Md. Ahsan Habib
Superintending Engineer-Elect (Zone-1)
University of Dhaka

GD-59

The LPG market must be disciplined

Supply chain cartel manipulating prices is the key problem

As temperatures continue to plummet, households relying on liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) are feeling a different kind of bite: a financial one. As per the price set by Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC), a standard 12kg LPG cylinder should cost Tk 1,306, but in the alleyways of Dhaka and Chattogram, cylinders are reportedly changing hands for as much as Tk 2,200—a markup of 68 percent. The gap between the official rate and the street price illustrates regulatory impotence in the face of a de facto market cartel.

On the surface, the economics suggest prices should be falling. According to data from the National Board of Revenue, Bangladesh imported 14.64 lakh tonnes of LPG in 2025, a slight increase from the previous year, while the total cost to importers fell 2.7 percent year-on-year to about Tk 11,780 crore. Global energy prices have softened, and supply is robust. In a functioning market, this should depress prices. In Bangladesh, however, it has done the opposite.

The market is dominated by a clutch of powerful private conglomerates that control the import terminals and bottling plants. Dealers allege that these companies have formed a nexus, wholesaling cylinders at rates that exceed even the government's maximum retail price. This newspaper's report also points to price gouging. Tax documents from early January reveal that top importers were selling cylinders to distributors for as much as Tk 1,329. When the wholesale price is higher than the mandated retail price, compliance down the line becomes a mathematical impossibility.

Mohammed Amirul Haque, president of the LPG Operators Association of Bangladesh (LOAB), has admitted: "I cannot say all of us are honest." That's a rare admission in an industry notorious for its opacity. That said, the association insists the real culprits are structural: a lack of government permission to expand distribution units and tax policies that front-load costs. They have proposed shifting the VAT burden from the production stage to the import stage, arguing this would streamline costs. The government's response to the crisis, however, has been mostly performative so far. It has resorted to sporadic "drives" or raids on small retailers who, however, argue that they are being punished for the sins of the importers. To make matters worse, the LP Gas Traders Cooperative Society launched an indefinite strike on Thursday. Squeezed by the price mismatch, the traders demanded a restructuring of margins, seeking to raise distribution charges from Tk 50 to Tk 80 and retailer fees from Tk 45 to Tk 75. Their argument was blunt: if BERC cannot enforce the wholesale cap, it must raise the retail ceiling.

The standoff proved short-lived, however, as following a meeting with the regulator, the traders called off the strike, averting a crisis that had threatened to leave thousands of families without fuel. But all this illustrates a broader failure of governance. BERC operates on the assumption that it can dictate prices by administrative fiat in a market controlled by politically connected oligopolies. Until the regulator can enforce discipline at the import terminal—rather than just raiding the corner shop—the "official price" will remain a piece of fiction.

Stop border killings and violence

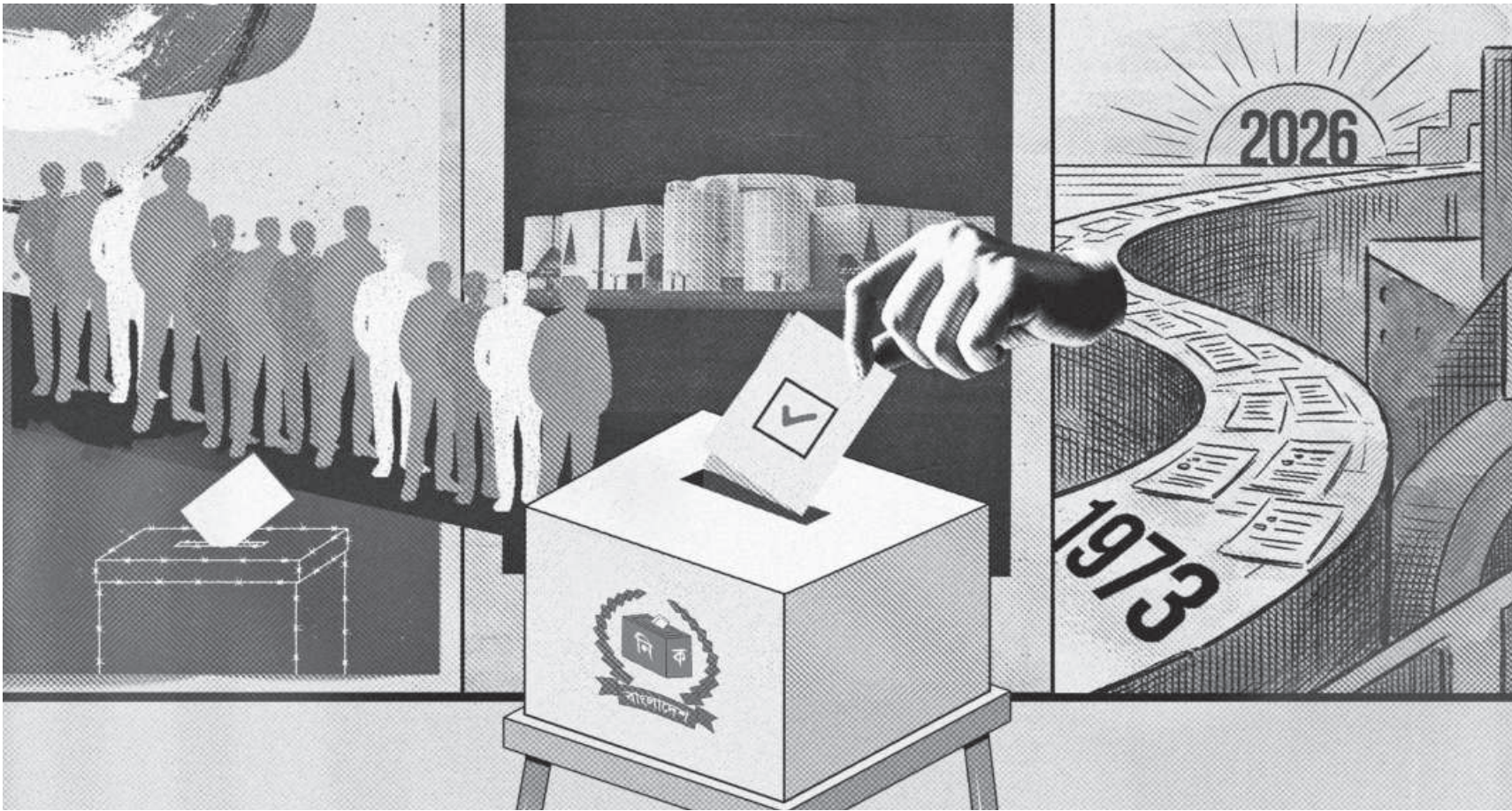
Systematic human rights violations by India must stop

Fifteen years after the killing of Felani Khatun, violence along the Bangladesh-India border remains an unresolved and deeply troubling reality. Felani, a Bangladeshi teenager, was shot dead by India's Border Security Force (BSF) on January 7, 2011, while crossing the barbed-wire fence at the Anantapur border in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram. Her body remained hanging from the fence for hours. The incident sparked widespread outrage at home and abroad and drew global attention to human rights abuses at the border. Yet killings, torture and other abuses have not only continued but become disturbingly routine. The persistence of such violence by Indian forces points to a failure of accountability and an erosion of respect for international law and bilateral commitments.

The testimonies of victims' families and rights activists at a recent event made clear that such violence has continued unabated. From the killing of teenage Jayanta Kumar Singh in September 2024 to reports of detention, torture and sexual violence against women, there is a clear pattern of excessive and unlawful force used by India's BSF. According to Odhikar, at least 625 Bangladeshi citizens, including 25 children and adolescents, were killed, and 808 were injured between 2009 and 2025 by BSF gunfire or torture. These are not isolated incidents; they reflect a systemic problem that has gone unaddressed for far too long.

Equally alarming are the continued reports of push-ins from India during recent months. Despite Bangladesh's formal protests, Indian agencies have allegedly pushed nearly 2,500 Bangla-speaking people, including Rohingya refugees and even individuals holding Indian documents, across the border without any diplomatic procedures. Families have been rounded up in raids, detained, abused, and dumped at border points under the cover of darkness. Allegations have also been raised that India is involved in the enforced disappearances of Bangladeshi citizens. Such acts blatantly violate international human rights norms and established repatriation procedures, deepen mistrust and strain bilateral relations.

We urge the Indian authorities to stop border killings and all kinds of violence once and for all. Our government should robustly raise these concerns through diplomatic channels and, if necessary, at international forums to ensure accountability for such grave human rights violations. Silence or passivity will only embolden further abuses. The government must ensure justice for victims' families, compensation and transparent investigations. The legacy of Felani Khatun demands that border violence is no longer accepted as inevitable, and that Bangladesh's sovereignty, dignity, and the rights of its citizens are defended with resolve.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

Facing the most vital election ever

There is no way forward without it



THE THIRD VIEW
Mahfuz Anam
is editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

MAHFUZ ANAM

After the last three manipulated elections, the people of Bangladesh are eagerly waiting to exercise their fundamental right to vote. Any deprivation of this right will not be acceptable, and those who are trying to scuttle it will be at the receiving end of public wrath, never to be forgiven.

We are now heading towards the long-awaited poll that will, no doubt, reflect the people's choice. Though the absence of a major party—Awami League—will create its own debates, its failure to acknowledge and apologise for the crimes it committed, such as enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, the destruction of democratic institutions, and finally wanton killings during the 2024 July uprising, has left the party deeply distanced from the people.

To hold the election peacefully, we need to stabilise civic life to some extent. While we not only acknowledge but also support every group's right to protest, we cannot be oblivious to others' right to earn their daily bread, perform essential chores, attend offices, allow businesses to operate, banks to function, retail shop owners and poor hawkers to carry on earning their meagre incomes, and rickshaw pullers to provide food for their families—in short, allowing people to enjoy their basic rights and freedoms. The intention of protesters may not be to stop anything, but it often ends up doing exactly that. The paralysing traffic jams say it all.

Being a highly emotion-driven nation, we tend to forget that whatever we may do internally, we must adhere to a set of international norms and practices to be accepted as a credible player in the global system. For example, if we want to export garments, we must comply with certain labour, environmental and quality standards to attract international buyers. Similarly, if we want other countries to invest in Bangladesh, we need to guarantee a fair legal framework, a certain standard of safety and security in daily life, a dependable law-and-order situation, and a governance system that inspires confidence among investors so that they choose to invest here rather than elsewhere. Vietnam is a communist country, yet the entire capitalist world competes to invest there. Shouldn't we ask why?

As the election nears, we feel there is much to learn from the past. Why, after five decades, is our democracy still so weak? What were our past mistakes? Did we learn anything from them? If not, why not? And why do we still consider our political opponents as "enemies"?

As far as our memory serves, our parliament has largely functioned as a rubber stamp since 1973. Otherwise, how could we have transformed our constitution, betrayed the values of the Liberation War, and instituted BAKSAL? Later, even when the opposition had a large presence in the House, why did parliament fail to become the centre of transparency and to hold the executive branch

accountable? Why didn't a single MP become a "conscientious objector" when enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings became rampant? Too often, our MPs lacked the moral courage to serve voters and instead served merely as cogs in the party machinery.

As we prepare to hold the coming election with earnestness and hope, we need to reflect on why so many of our past elections have been controversial. We have held a total of 12 elections to date: in 1973, 1979, 1986, 1988, 1991, February 1996, June 1996, 2001, 2008, 2014, 2018 and 2024. Of these, only four—1991, June 1996, 2001, and 2008—are generally seen as credible, while the remaining eight are widely considered controversial.

A closer examination of our first election held in 1973 shows how we started on the wrong foot. With a voter turnout of 55 percent, Awami League (AL) won 293 out of 300 seats. There were many reasons

of the *Bangladesh Observer*.

Such absolute control of parliament got us started on a flawed course, the consequences of which proved fatal. It gave birth to a culture of intolerance, an incapacity to accept criticism, and a deep disdain for dissent. The overwhelming majority effectively turned our first elected legislature into a one-party parliament, sowing the seeds of BAKSAL that would become a nightmarish reality within a few years.

The anti-Ershad movement and his subsequent fall gave Bangladesh a chance to relaunch its journey towards democracy. The interim government under Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed conducted a superb election and generated public confidence in the caretaker system, which was further strengthened by the performances of Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman in 1996 and Justice Latifur Rahman in 2001. Although the caretaker government of Fakhruddin Ahmed, backed by the then army chief General Moinuddin, faced controversies because of the way it was formed, the election it conducted under Chief Election Commissioner Shamsul Huda enjoyed a certain degree of credibility.

Tragically, after returning to power, Sheikh Hasina abolished the caretaker system, resulting in three disastrous elections that destroyed all institutions of accountability and undermined free and fair electoral processes.

With the current interim

that gets elected and anyone who is elected as party chief gets to head the government.

Although Bangladesh follows the same parliamentary system in theory, our practices are completely different. Our political tradition is not conducive to nurturing what we cited above. For us, the leaders run their parties with total control. In no way does the party determine what and how the leader will act. For us, the party is always leader-driven. Bangabandhu personified the AL, President Ziaur Rahman was synonymous with BNP, General HM Ershad symbolised the Jatiya Party, Khaleda Zia later stood for BNP, and Sheikh Hasina for Awami League. Parties seemed to have little independent existence beyond their leaders.

The impact of this reality is that MPs also exist largely at the pleasure of party leaders. While it is the voters who make or unmake an MP, that power, in reality, lasts only for a while. The moment the result of the polls is out, those who win turn their attention away from the voters and onto, not the party, but its leaders. What we call a parliamentary system thus operates more like a presidential form of government under the guise of a parliamentary form. This practice is not likely to change immediately, but the process of holding the party leader accountable by the party itself must begin, however modestly.

Another lesson that we must learn from our past is that in our political culture, a ruling party gives no importance to the opposition, except in devising how to divide, dismantle, or discredit it, and finally to oppress it in every possible way. The ruling party does not think of the opposition as a political competitor. This political culture must change. For good governance—and, philosophically, for its own success—the ruling party needs a strong opposition. Without an effective, vibrant and responsible opposition, Bangladesh is unlikely to sustain a functioning democracy.

There is, however, a contrary lesson too. We need a responsible opposition also. What we have often seen is a culture of "opposition for opposition's sake," not opposition for the benefit of the country, or for good governance, accountability, transparency, and efficient resource management, etc. Just as the ruling party thinks of the opposition as "enemy", so too does the opposition, resulting in trying to embarrass the government, scuttle its projects, or make processes dysfunctional. The most destructive practice that we saw evolve during the first term of Khaleda Zia's government is the culture of walkouts, followed by boycotts, and finally resignations. Unfortunately, this was later emulated by subsequent oppositions, too.

Much, therefore, needs to change as we begin anew. Above all, all political parties must contest the election, help ensure its peaceful conduct, and accept the outcome as the will of the people. The notion that elections are fair only when one wins and bad when one loses must be abandoned. In every election, not everyone can be a winner; there will be losers too, and that outcome must be accepted with grace, dignity and respect for the voters. So please put the country first, democracy second, and your victory third. If you win, congratulations. If you lose, congratulations as well, for you have honoured the people's verdict and helped restart our democratic journey.

When law arrives after the video spreads



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H. M. NAZMUL ALAM

On a winter morning in Dhaka's Gulshan, a place better known for embassies, cafés and the illusion of order, a woman was tied to an electric pole and doused with water. The cold was real, the humiliation public, the violence spectacular enough to be recorded, edited and circulated for collective consumption. By the time the video reached our phones, the act had already done its job. It had entertained, shocked, outraged and, in a disturbingly large number of cases, amused. Only later did the state wake up, as it often does these days, alerted not by conscience but by virality.

The official explanation now unfolding is familiar, almost ritualistic. The woman was suspected of theft. She had entered a madrasa. Stories emerged about changing identities, contradictory statements, and moral suspicion layered upon criminal suspicion, all of which served to render the victim suitably ambiguous, morally complicated, and perhaps even “deserving” of what followed. This is an old social reflex. When violence shocks us too deeply, we rush to muddy the character of the violated, hoping it will soften our discomfort.

But strip away the justifications, and the image remains stubbornly simple: a woman restrained in public, punished by a crowd, while others watched, filmed and

occurred. The news has been framed as swift action. Yet, it is difficult to ignore that this action by law enforcers arrived only after the video went viral. Before that, there was silence. In a society increasingly governed by algorithms, justice now seems to require trending status.

This dependence on virality reveals a deeper malaise raising the question: had no video, no outrage, no digital echo chamber been amplifying the scene, would the incident have mattered? Or would it have quietly dissolved into the vast archive of unrecorded humiliations endured daily by the poor, homeless, and the nameless?

The justification offered by those involved follows a predictable script. Punishment administered in the name of discipline, protection and social order. The crowd, as always, believed itself righteous. After all, what is a little public humiliation when compared to the alleged crime of theft? Especially when the accused is a woman with no visible social protection, influential relatives, or immediate defenders.

There is something profoundly convenient about mob justice. It is fast, emotionally satisfying and requires no paperwork. It allows ordinary people to play judge, jury and executioner, all before breakfast. It also provides a moral spectacle, one that

of the act. This is not an anomaly but a symptom of a broader educational failure, one that prioritises rote obedience over ethical reasoning and moral responsibility. When education becomes detached from humanity, it produces graduates fluent in discipline but illiterate in compassion.

It would be comforting to treat this as an aberration, an unfortunate deviation from our values. But recent years suggest

outsider also deserves scrutiny. It subtly shifts attention away from the violence inflicted upon her and redirects it towards her supposed character flaws. It reassures society that the real problem is not the act, but the person it was done to.

This is where the cruelty becomes systemic. Once we accept that certain people are morally disposable, extraordinary violence begins to feel ordinary. The law, instead of

voiceless.

If we are honest, the most frightening aspect of this incident is not that it happened, but that it felt familiar. We have seen variations of this story before, with different victims and slightly altered justifications. Each time, we express outrage, promise reflection and then we move on.

Societies do not collapse overnight. They erode gradually, normalising cruelty



Mob justice provides a moral spectacle, one that reinforces power hierarchies and reminds the vulnerable of their place.

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Educational institutions are meant to resist such impulses. They are supposed to cultivate restraint, empathy and respect for the rule of law. Yet here, students and teachers themselves appear at the centre of the act. This is not an anomaly but a symptom of a broader educational failure, one that prioritises rote obedience over ethical reasoning and moral responsibility. When education becomes detached from humanity, it produces graduates fluent in discipline but illiterate in compassion.

participated. No warrant, no police station, no court, no due process. Just rope, water and the confidence that nothing serious would happen to the perpetrators. That confidence, more than the rope or the water, is the most disturbing element of this story.

We are told that five people have been arrested, some of them minors, all connected to the institution where the incident

reinforces power hierarchies and reminds the vulnerable of their place. In that sense, tying a woman to a pole is not merely punishment. It is a performance.

Educational institutions are meant to resist such impulses. They are supposed to cultivate restraint, empathy and respect for the rule of law. Yet here, students and teachers themselves appear at the centre

otherwise. Beatings, lynchings, public shaming and crowd-led punishment have steadily entered the social mainstream. Each incident is followed by familiar statements of regret and resolve, only to be replaced by the next spectacle.

What makes this case particularly unsettling is its setting. Gulshan is not a remote village where state presence is minimal and desperation high. It is one of the most policed and privileged areas of the capital. If such an act can unfold here, in daylight, near institutions of religious and moral learning, it raises uncomfortable questions about the depth of our collective moral erosion. Geography, it seems, no longer offers protection from barbarity.

The language used to describe the woman repeatedly as a thief, a liar, a social

being a shield, becomes a distant abstraction, selectively applied and easily bypassed. The crowd, emboldened by precedent and impunity, steps in eagerly.

The lack of knowledge about the whereabouts of the victim adds another layer of discomfort. Is she safe? Has she received medical or psychological support? In a system obsessed with perpetrators and process, victims often disappear quietly, their suffering acknowledged only as a footnote.

We are repeatedly reminded that the law will take its course. This phrase has become a kind of national lullaby, soothing enough to quiet outrage without demanding real accountability. Yet the same law often moves slowly, selectively and unevenly, especially when the victims are marginalised and

one incident at a time. Today it is a woman accused of theft. Tomorrow it may be someone else, accused of something equally unproven. The law will arrive late. The victim will disappear.

When violence becomes acceptable order begins to rot. When humiliation is treated as justice, justice loses meaning. And when society learns to look away, barbarity no longer needs accountability.

The question, then, is not whether arrests have been made or investigations initiated. The real question is whether we are willing to confront the culture that made this incident possible, predictable and, for a brief moment, entertaining. Without that reckoning, the electric pole in Gulshan will not remain an isolated symbol. It will become a warning we chose to ignore.

The cost of Bangladesh’s intellectual exodus

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MD ABDUL LATIF and SHIRIN SULTANA

Each year, thousands of Bangladesh's brightest leave for Canada, the US, the EU or Australia, seeking better pay, security, and respect. Once, migration was a survival strategy; now the departure of skilled workers reveals a contradiction: what sustained the economy is draining its future. Talent, in countries like

wealthy nations intensify efforts to draw the talented from the Global South. After Covid, many European states eased entry for foreign medical staff; Canada recruits nurses and IT experts from South Asia. Meanwhile, prospects at home are limited: rural doctors are underpaid, researchers lack funding, and entrepreneurs face

can make talent flows mutual and developmental, rather than one-sided and extractive.

When skilled graduates leave Bangladesh, the primary loss is economic. Doctors and engineers trained at public expense become a subsidy from poor taxpayers to rich countries when they settle abroad. A doctor educated in Dhaka but practising in London is a public investment serving another state.

The second loss is institutional. Health systems, universities, and the civil service steadily lose talent. Hospitals and rural clinics face shortages; universities lose potential teachers and researchers; capable officials look overseas instead of building careers at home. This erodes state capacity, weakens policy-making, and hampers basic services.

The health sector shows this most sharply. Bangladesh has too few doctors and nurses. Patients at home endure long waits and overworked staff, while publicly trained doctors fill foreign vacancies. The pattern repeats in higher education and the technological sector. Losing skilled workers deepens a knowledge gap, increases reliance on foreign expertise and technology, and weakens self-reliance as the country seeks a knowledge-based economy.

Remittances have long served as a political safety valve in Bangladesh's economy. In fiscal year 2024, they brought in about \$23.9 billion, easing deficits and sustaining consumption. This apparent success masks an imbalance. Most remittances come from low- and semi-skilled workers in Gulf countries, not from the skilled professionals who migrate to the West.

These funds largely cover household expenses rather than productive investment, and they seldom generate technology transfer, research partnerships, or industrial development. Policymakers praise remittance inflows but ignore the forgone tax revenue, innovation, and institutional leadership that emigrating professionals might have provided. The myth of a

“remittance dividend” conceals a long-term structural deficit in human capital.

The goal is not to stop migration, but to turn “brain drain” into “brain circulation”—a two-way flow where knowledge, skills, and resources move between Bangladeshi migrants and their homeland. Bangladesh can move in this direction by (i) creating return incentives such as research grants, startup funding, and faculty exchange or visiting scholar programmes; (ii) strengthening ties with the diaspora to support mentorship, technology transfer, collaborative research, and

investment networks; (iii) negotiating fair migration agreements with destination countries that include training partnerships, recognition, and reintegration support; (iv) investing in domestic research and innovation ecosystems so that young professionals see credible futures at home, not only abroad.

Countries like South Korea, China and Taiwan once saw large outflows of talent but reversed them by aligning education, industrial policy, and innovation incentives. Bangladesh has the talent to do the same if it creates compelling reasons for its

citizens to stay, return, and build. Yet this is not a one-country issue; it is a global one. Today's system allows the Global North to relieve its labour shortages with professionals trained at the expense of the Global South—a quiet transfer of public investment from poorer states to richer ones, and a deepening capacity gap.

The real challenge is not whether people will move—they will—but whether that movement can be made fair? If talent truly has no borders, then responsibility for nurturing and sharing it should not have borders either.

Today’s talent extraction echoes older dependency. Where colonialism drained raw materials, current migration channels siphon intellectual capital. Bangladesh’s English-speaking, globally trained middle class is absorbed into richer markets, deepening inequality under the banner of ‘mobility.’ The issue is not people’s right to leave, but whether global rules can make talent flows mutual and developmental, rather than one-sided and extractive. When skilled graduates leave Bangladesh, the primary loss is economic. Doctors and engineers trained at public expense become a subsidy from poor taxpayers to rich countries when they settle abroad. A doctor educated in Dhaka but practising in London is a public investment serving another state.

Bangladesh, is often celebrated as an opportunity to go abroad, but behind the success stories is a stark loss of human capital that weakens health systems, slows innovation, and undermines self-reliance. Brain drain is not just economic; it is a political question of development justice.

Migration is often framed as personal choice, but those “choices” are shaped by the rich countries. Facing ageing populations and labour gaps, states in the Global North design policies to attract skilled workers from places like Bangladesh.

Bangladesh's young, educated, digitally savvy population has become a recruitment target. As demand for healthcare staff, engineers, and tech workers grows,

heavy bureaucracy. Migration becomes less a free choice than a rational escape from structural stagnation.

This raises ethical questions: is it fair for rich countries to benefit from doctors trained with Bangladesh's public funds? Should their labour shortages be solved at the expense of the Global South's development?

Today's talent extraction echoes older dependency. Where colonialism drained raw materials, current migration channels siphon intellectual capital. Bangladesh's English-speaking, globally trained middle class is absorbed into richer markets, deepening inequality under the banner of “mobility.” The issue is not people's right to leave, but whether global rules

Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat Administration Section Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1225 www.parliament.gov.bd		
Invitation for Tender		
1	Ministry/Division	Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat
2	Procuring entity name	Deputy Secretary, Administration Section, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat.
3	Invitation for	Supply of Laptop, Display Monitor & CCTV for Data Center.
4	Invitation Ref. No.	11.00.0000.000.604.07.0011.25/10, Date: 06.01.2026
5	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (National).
6	Budget and source of funds	Revenue Budget.
7	Tender package name and short description of goods	Package 10 (Lot-2)-IT Device
8	Tender selling place	Reception Room (Inside Tunnel), Parliament Secretariat.
9	Tender selling date	12/01/2026-21/01/2026 (Time: 10:00am-4:00pm)
10	Tender submission date, time and place	Submission date: 22/01/2026, Time: 9:30am-12:00pm, Reception Room (Inside Tunnel), Parliament Secretariat.
11	Tender opening date, time and place	Opening date: 22/01/2026, Opening Time: 12:05pm Deputy Secretary (Admin-1), Level-7, Block-East, Room No. 7, (Lift-13, 14, 15 & 16).
12	Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	Reputed Firms/Suppliers having valid trade license (2025-2026), income tax clearance certificate (2024-2025) (for company 2023-2024), BIN, Experience Certificate & Distributor/Reseller Authorization letter & (b) Detailed terms & conditions will be mentioned in tender schedule.
13	Price of tender schedule	Price of schedule Tk. 2000/- (Two thousand) only (As mentioned in the schedule).
14	Tender security & tender validity period	50,000/- (Fifty Thousand) only. Validity period: 150 days.
15	Name, designation, address & phone number of official inviting tender	Md. Mahbub Jamil, Deputy Secretary (Administration), Block: North-East, Ground Floor, Room No. 131, Parliament Secretariat (Phone: 55029007).
16	Special instructions	▪ The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings. ▪ Lot based lowest bidders will be selected.
GD-60		
07.01.2026 Md. Mahbub Jamil Deputy Secretary Phone: 55029007		

Breaking typecast, Sunerah brings new flair to ‘Aatka’

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Chorki has unveiled the first look of its upcoming web series *Aatka*, drawing attention for its vibrant visuals and lively ensemble. At the centre of the series is Sunerah Binte Kamal, who steps into a flamboyant character that marks a noticeable shift from her recent on-screen roles. As curiosity around the project grows, the actress shares what made working on *Aatka* a particularly enjoyable and fulfilling experience.

This marks the second collaboration between Sunerah, Arafat Mohsin Nidhi and Raba Khan, following their work on the Chorki flash-fiction film *Khuh Kacheri Keu*. Reflecting on the reunion, Sunerah said, “Honestly, my experience is something I could talk about forever. I’ve worked with Nidhi and Raba before, so they’re people I’m very close to. Raba writes brilliantly, Nidhi’s direction is excellent, and I felt completely comfortable working with them. There’s a lot of mutual understanding.”

Speaking about how *Aatka* came together, Sunerah said, “Before anything was finalised, Nidhi told me

we’d do this project and asked me to keep the date free without giving any other details. I agreed. Later, when I heard the story and the planning, I was like, ‘Oh my God, I’m so happy!’ Finally, someone was considering me for a character like this. Usually, I’m cast in slightly sad or gloomy roles, but Chumki, the character I’m playing, is fun and very exciting.”

Sunerah also shared light-hearted moments from the set. “The shooting location was a little unusual, maybe even a bit eerie. I joked that even if there were supernatural things, we wouldn’t get scared. There’s one scene with my co-artist where our first scene is a little flirty. That was really funny for me because I’m usually not such a flirty person. During that scene, everyone was laughing and amazed at how I did it.”

Sunerah’s on-screen pairing with Arosh Khan has already resonated with television audiences, and the two are now collaborating on a larger production. “What excites me even more than working with all these senior artistes is that it’s not just about Arosh

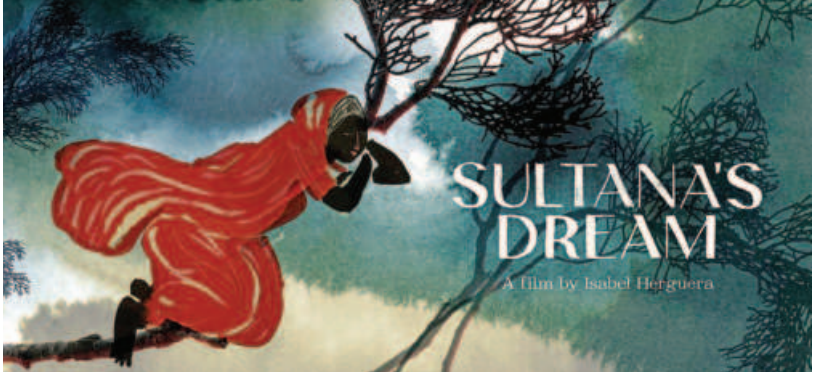
Khan or me—it’s about the whole team. The teamwork is strong, and every character is interesting. Arosh is doing a great job, and our friendship adds to the chemistry.”

Speaking about her next project, *The Difficult Bride*, Sunerah said, “Rubaiyat Hossain *Apu* works very meticulously. I’ve never done a character like this before. It’s a female-centric film with a strong technical team and a good budget. Rubaiyat *Apu* even texted me to say I looked very beautiful and that my acting was excellent.”

Wrapping up, she shared her excitement for *Aatka*: “I had a lot of fun shooting for *Aatka*. I hope

audiences will love it as well. Don’t forget to catch it on Chorki on January 15.”

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



‘Sultana’s Dream’ to hit Bangladeshi theatres this month

An animated feature inspired by Begum Rokeya’s groundbreaking feminist novella *Sultana’s Dream* is set to be released in Bangladeshi cinemas later this month.

Directed by Spanish filmmaker Isabel Herguera, the 86-minute Spanish-German co-production premiered at the San Sebastián International Film Festival in 2023, and released in Spain. It later screened at major

international festivals, winning several awards. Star Cineplex announced the Bangladesh release on Wednesday by sharing the film’s official trailer, though no exact date has been confirmed.

Sultana’s Dream imagines a society where women lead public life, and men remain in domestic roles, a radical vision articulated by Rokeya more than a century ago.



Apurba, Bindu reunite for ‘Headline’

Popular small-screen stars Ziaul Faruk Apurba and Afsan Ara Bindu are set to reunite after a long gap in the upcoming web series *Headline*.

The political thriller is directed by Saleh Sobhan Auneem, based on a screenplay by Syed Ahmed Shawki, best known for acclaimed projects such as *Taqdeer* and *Karagar*. The series is being produced for the OTT platform Hoichoi.

Multiple sources have confirmed to The Daily Star that both Apurba and Bindu will be playing key roles in the series, marking their return as an on-screen pair after years.

Apurba is expected to join the shooting later this month after returning to the country from the United States.

WHAT’S THE HAPS?



‘Brushstrokes Across Generations’

This intimate father-daughter exhibition unfolds as a quiet dialogue between two artistic voices. Through layered textures and shared memory, the private viewing offers an early glimpse into how lineage, time, and emotion converge on canvas.

DATE: TODAY | JANUARY 9, 2026

TIME: 4PM ONWARDS

VENUE: SHALA ART SPACE, ALOKI

NEWS

LPG supply disruption likely to continue

FROM PAGE 12

told the regulator yesterday that it would not be possible for them to sell the standard 12kg LPG cylinder for less than Tk 1,500 after they agreed to call off their indefinite strike.

The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) fixed Tk 1,306 as the retail price for January, up from Tk 1,253 the previous month.

However, since mid-December, the product has been selling at much higher prices than the government-set rate, hitting Tk 2,200 in parts of Dhaka last week.

BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed is hopeful that the supply will increase in the middle of January.

“LOAB leaders told us that they have opened LCs but are facing problems regarding shipments – many consignments booked in December are yet to reach the country,” he told journalists after a meeting with representatives of LP Gas Traders Cooperative Society, the association that called for an indefinite countrywide strike in the marketing and supply of LPG on Wednesday night.

Importers are arranging alternative measures to bring the fuel amid the vessel shortage, he added.

Meanwhile, to ease the ongoing

supply shortage, the government recommended reducing the value-added tax (VAT) at the import stage for LPG from 15 percent and exempting the 7.5 percent VAT on local bottling, other VATs at the trader level and the advance income tax.

The ministry of power, energy and mineral resources wrote to the National Board of Revenue to take necessary steps in this regard.

Moreover, the ministry wrote to the Bangladesh Bank to ease the procedure of opening letters of credits for LPG and provide loans from the bank’s green funds considering the product as “green fuel”.

Business leaders welcomed the government steps.

“Now it’s up to us how fast we can bring them [LPG] in,” said Haque, also the managing director of Delta LPG.

During the meeting with BERC, the traders, mostly dealers and distributors, placed three demands: an end to ongoing administrative drives across the country, increasing distribution and retailers’ charges and assurance of uninterrupted supply of LPG.

Though the importing companies have not been following the fixed rate, the distributors and retailers are being treated as “villains” to consumers

and they are being penalised by the administrative drives.

Ahmed assured them that the commission would discuss the administrative drives with the authorities and take legal steps to revise the charges.

He termed the demands “logical” but said it was unnecessary to call a strike to press home the demands.

Following the meeting, Md Selim Khan, president of the society, withdrew the strike.

But he said the traders cannot sell a 12-kg cylinder for less than Tk 1,500 as they purchase it from operators for more than Tk 1,300. “None of us can get LPG at the fixed rate, then how can we sell them at a fixed rate?”

In response, Ahmed said there is no logic for selling LPG above the commission’s fixed January rate of Tk 1,306 per 12-kg cylinder and the traders may sell it at more than that rate once the charges are formally hiked.

As many as 33 companies have taken their licence, but now only nine of them are importing LPG, according to Ahmed.

“We will talk to the companies that are not in operation about whether they will continue their businesses.”

an immunity law was enacted for freedom fighters.

“In light of these precedents, the law ministry has prepared a draft of the indemnity ordinance. God willing, it will be placed for approval at the next meeting of the advisory council,” he said.

“It is our sacred duty to keep the July warriors safe,” the adviser added.

July warriors to get immunity

FROM PAGE 12

right to immunity,” he wrote on his verified Facebook account.

Asif Nazrul said there is also a need to enact a law granting them immunity for the preventive actions they carried out against the killers of the fascist regime of Sheikh Hasina during the uprising.

“Such laws are completely legal,” he

BNP aspirant’s loan defaulter status upheld

FROM PAGE 12

aspirant BNP candidate for the Cumilla-4 constituency, where NCP leader Hasnat Abdullah is contesting from the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party alliance.

Following the stay order, Manjurul will be treated as a loan defaulter and will therefore be ineligible to contest the election, said Barrister Bivuti Tarofder, lawyer for Premier Bank.

He said Manjurul’s company, MAM Power Limited, took a loan from the bank in 2005, and the outstanding amount now stands at Tk 89 crore.

Manjurul’s lawyer, Muhammad Saifullah Mamun, said the HC had earlier issued an injunction preventing his client’s company from being listed as a loan defaulter in the Credit Information Bureau.

He said Premier Bank and IDLC

later filed leave to appeal petitions against that order, following which the chamber judge stayed the HC ruling.

Responding to a query, Mamun said the issue of whether Manjurul can contest the election is a separate matter, as there was no specific prayer or order barring him from doing so.

In the Cumilla-4 constituency, BNP has yet to field any alternative candidates.

Visitors to be hit the hardest

FROM PAGE 12

Another PhD student in California said, “I wanted my parents to attend my graduation, but now that seems almost impossible.”

Many Bangladeshi visa applicants, business owners, echoed the same sentiment.

Under the new policy, Bangladeshi citizens applying for US business or tourist visas – known as B1 and B2 visas – may require to deposit a refundable bond of \$5,000 to \$15,000.

In Bangladeshi currency, this amounts to roughly Tk 6 lakh to Tk 19 lakh, a sum many say is difficult to arrange.

The US State Department recently expanded its visa bond list from seven countries to 38. Bangladesh was added on January 6, and the new requirement will take effect on January 21.

The visa bond programme began in August last year. The bond applies only to B1 and B2 visas, and the amount – \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000 – will be determined during the visa interview.

Consular officers will decide whether a bond is required and, if so, the amount, based on the applicant’s personal circumstances and interview assessment. They may also issue a visa without requiring any bond.

Payment must be made through Pay.gov, the official online payment platform of the US Treasury, using a government-issued link. US authorities have warned against using third-party websites. Payments made without official instruction or through unofficial platforms will not be refunded.

The State Department has also clarified that paying a bond does not automatically guarantee a US visa.

WHY DID THE US INTRODUCE THE BOND RULE?

US officials say the bond requirement is intended to reduce visa overstays and illegal immigration, a major focus of the administration of US President Donald Trump.

According to the Fiscal Year 2024

Entry/Exit Overstay Report by US Customs and Border Protection, Bangladesh recorded a total overstay rate of 5.73 percent. Of this, 5.60 percent were suspected in-country overstays, meaning more than 2,200 of 38,590 expected departures either overstayed their visas or were suspected of doing so. The report said India’s overstay rate was 1.28 percent, Nepal’s 3.12 percent, and Pakistan’s 3.46 percent.

Immigration experts say countries with overstay rates significantly above the global average of 2.33 percent for non-visa waiver countries are more likely to face stricter entry controls.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshi business leaders have warned that the new US visa restrictions could disrupt trade and export activities.

AK Azad, chairman and managing director of Ha-Meem Group, one of the largest apparel exporters to the US, said the company could face serious challenges due to changes in visa regulations.

He explained that many staff members travel to the US frequently to carry samples, meet clients, and perform other business-critical tasks at customers’ request.

“If our staff cannot travel as required, this will significantly affect us,” he said.

Ashraf Ahmed, former president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), said the restrictions could affect smaller businesses in particular.

Mir Nasir Hossain, former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), urged the government to seek clarification from US authorities.

Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury, president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, echoed his peers and said any curb on travel would negatively affect exports.

Rizwan Rahman, another former DCCI president, said Bangladesh’s weak standing in global reports had led to the move, though he said it would not affect large entrepreneurs.

Experts also say the US move may hit travel agencies, airlines, and tour operators badly, and it could damage the country’s international image, potentially prompting other countries to tighten visa rules for Bangladeshis.

Abdus Salam Aref, former president of the Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB), said the new visa bond rule would sharply reduce travel from Bangladesh.

He said if flights are not increased to the three airports designated for Bangladeshi travellers – Boston Logan International Airport, New York’s John F Kennedy International Airport, and Washington Dulles International Airport – ticket prices may soar.

Using other airports would violate bond conditions and complicate refunds, he said.

According to Aref, the bond may be forfeited if a visitor overstays, applies for asylum, seeks a change of visa status, or violates the approved duration of stay. If the traveller leaves the US within the permitted time or does not travel at all, the bond will be refunded, he said, adding that it is not clear how it will be done.

Prof Tasneem Siddiqui, acting executive director of Refugee and Migratory Movements, said the policy could disrupt overall migration to the US.

“While major businesses may not be affected, small business owners will face the greatest difficulty because they cannot block such large sums as bonds for a fixed period.”

Foreign Ministry Adviser Touhid Hossain described the decision as “unfortunate, but not abnormal.” “It is not imposed on Bangladesh alone... To me, it is nothing abnormal, but certainly unfortunate,” he told reporters yesterday.

He added that the government has been working to prevent illegal migration and crack down on brokers facilitating irregular travel.

“Dhaka will, in a natural way, reach out to Washington to have Bangladesh removed from the list,” he said.

Bangladesh suspends visa services

FROM PAGE 12

Meanwhile, visa services in the other two Deputy High Commissions in Chennai and Mumbai remain operational.

In recent weeks, there have been large-scale protests near Bangladesh missions in several Indian cities, with demonstrators citing alleged violence against minorities in Bangladesh.

Defence seeks discharge of Ziaul

FROM PAGE 3

After hearing both sides, the tribunal, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, fixed January 14 for an order.

The prosecution also informed the tribunal that former army chief Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan will testify as a prosecution witness. Countering the defence arguments, Tajul read out portions of Karim's statement to the investigating officer, describing Ziaul's conduct as "horrific".

According to the statement, Iqbal once asked then Major General Mujib to restrain Ziaul, after which incidents of "crossfire" deaths apparently declined. However, Ziaul allegedly continued his activities covertly and dumped bodies after killings. The statement further claimed that abnormal killings surged after Ziaul became additional director general of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab). Brig Gen Jaglul was later asked to persuade him to stop, but

Jaglul reportedly said it was impossible, describing Ziaul as "a man whose head is filled with stone and brick chips".

Ziaul's counsel, senior advocate Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury, read out the allegations under charge 1 relating to the killing of Sajal and three unidentified persons. He told the tribunal that a regular FIR was filed over Sajal's killing, followed by inquest and investigation, which ended in a final report. Fifteen years later, after a change of government, Ziaul was implicated despite the victims' family not accusing him or any Rab member. He said there was no eyewitness to the murder.

In response, Tajul Islam mockingly remarked that "two angels who record people's deeds saw it". The defence then urged the tribunal to ensure that no fabricated witnesses are produced, likening them to those angels.

Ziaul was present in the dock during the

proceedings.

The defence also read out allegations under two more charges and defended Ziaul.

Tajul countered that during the 15-year period many people were forcibly disappeared and killed, but none could speak out, which, he said, led to the July uprising.

Referring to Ziaul's service record and awards, his sister and defence team member Nazneen Nahar told the tribunal that his postings in the army and other organisations followed regulated military processes based on seniority, qualifications and institutional needs, and were not politically motivated.

Meanwhile, at ICT-2, defence lawyer Aminul Ghani Titto, representing three accused in a crimes-against-humanity case over the killing of Begum Rokeya University student Abu Sayed, sought an early adjournment. The tribunal fixed January 13 for the next hearing.

Shibir sweeps

FROM PAGE 3

In the central union, Shibir-backed Md Riazul Islam was elected vice-president with 5,558 votes, defeating Chhatra Dal and Chhatra Odhikar Parishad-backed AKM Rakib, who received 4,688 votes.

For general secretary, Shibir-backed Abdul Alim Arif won with 5,475 votes, while Chhatra Dal-backed Khadijatul Kubra secured 2,223 votes.

In the assistant general secretary race, Shibir-backed Masud Rana was elected with 5,020 votes, ahead of Chhatra Dal-backed BM Atikur Rahman Tanjil, who received 4,022 votes.

Of the 11 secretarial posts in the central union, Shibir-backed candidates won eight, and the JCD-Chhatra Odhikar panel won three secretarial posts.

Seven candidates were elected as central union executive members, five of whom were backed by Shibir. One is from the JCD-backed panel, while another is independent candidate Md Jahid Hasan.

In the university's only female students' hall union, the Chhatra Sangstha-backed "Odommo Jobian Oikya" panel won the top three posts.

Jannatul Ummi Tarin was elected VP with 550 votes, while Sumaiya Tabassum was elected GS with 571 votes. Redwana Khawla won the AGS post with 545 votes.

Chhatra Sangstha-backed candidates won four secretarial positions in the hall union. The other two positions were won by a JCD-backed candidate and an independent candidate, respectively.

According to election officials, voter turnout was 65.33 percent in the central students' union election and around 77 percent in the hall union election. A total of 16,637 voters were registered.

Voting was held at 39 centres with 178 booths across the campus. In total, 190 candidates contested 34 posts, including 157 candidates for 21 central union posts and 33 candidates for 13 hall union posts.

Three held

FROM PAGE 4

to jail, Officer-in-Charge Mizanur Rahman of Jamalpur Sadar Police Station said yesterday.

According to the case statement, the incident occurred on January 1 at Mesta Union in Sadar upazila.

Rahat Ali called the victim's husband, a day labourer, out of his house in the evening on the pretext of offering him work. Sensing something suspicious, the woman followed them and reached the bank of the Jhinai River in Chander Haora area, where she saw five men tying her husband with a towel and beating him.

When she tried to intervene, Farhad and Azam allegedly restrained her and took her to a nearby maize field, where they raped her.

Later, Rahat Ali and Suman also raped her, the complaint said.

OC Mizan said efforts are ongoing to arrest the remaining accused.

DU syndicate

FROM PAGE 3

Uddin, Prof Zeenat Huda, and Prof Mashhur Rahman.

According to a source, a fact-finding committee was earlier formed following student allegations against the teachers. After reviewing the committee's findings, the syndicate decided to form a probe committee to conduct further investigation and bring charges against them.

Among the four, Prof Sadeka Halim is a former vice-chancellor of Jagannath University, Prof Zeenat Huda is the general secretary of the Dhaka University Teachers' Association, and Prof Jamal Uddin is the newly appointed convener of Neel Dal, the pro-Awami League teachers' organisation at Dhaka University.

In 2024, students of the sociology department boycotted classes and examinations of Prof Jamal and Prof Zeenat, accusing them of branding students involved in the Students Against Discrimination movement as Jamaat-Shibir, threatening them with lawsuits, and making other allegations.

US wants to send back 5k

FROM PAGE 12

South and Central Asian Affairs Paul Kapoor was expected to join the meeting.

Sergio Gore, the US ambassador to India and special envoy for South and Central Asian Affairs, was initially expected to attend but left for New Delhi on Wednesday night, a diplomatic source in Washington told The Daily Star.

Khalilur is also scheduled to meet US Assistant Trade Representative Brendan Lynch to discuss trade-related issues. He is expected to attend the oath-taking ceremony of US ambassador-designate to Bangladesh Brent Christensen at the US State Department on Friday. Christensen is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on January 12.

"The Trump administration's priority is quick repatriation of undocumented migrants and reducing the trade gap," a Washington-based diplomat said.

Over the past year, the US repatriated about 300

undocumented Bangladeshis. Another 300 are currently eligible for repatriation, while an estimated 4,000 others are believed to be living in the US with irregular status, with cases pending in court, according to US government estimates.

"We are trying various ways to speed up the repatriation process," a diplomatic source said.

Trade imbalance is also expected to feature prominently in the discussions.

According to the US Department of Commerce, the US imported goods worth \$8.37 billion from Bangladesh in 2024, while exports to Bangladesh stood at \$2.21 billion.

In 2025, Bangladesh began importing a broader range of US products, including wheat, cotton and liquefied natural gas (LNG), while also paying higher tariffs on certain exports to the US.

"We are seeking a reduction in tariffs on some commodities. These issues will continue to be discussed," the diplomatic source said.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 4

courtesy calls on the chief adviser and the foreign adviser.

During the meetings, the two sides discussed a wide range of issues, including the PCA, the upcoming general elections and referendum, combating illegal migration, cooperation in renewable energy, and expanding trade and investment.

Pampaloni stressed the importance of a peaceful election in Bangladesh, noting that Bangladesh-EU relations could reach new heights following a successful democratic transition, ushering in a new era of engagement between Dhaka and the world's largest economic bloc.

Govt eases

FROM PAGE 3

imprisonment, leaving financial penalties as the sole form of punishment.

"Millions of people in Bangladesh use Facebook and Google, and companies such as Meta and Alphabet raised some concerns regarding certain provisions of the Personal Data Protection Ordinance. Two changes were made to address those concerns," said Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser.

"With this amendment, we hope Bangladesh will now be able to attract more investment in data and cloud-related services," he added.

Restricted personal data refers to any personal data that may impact national security, public order, defence, critical infrastructure, or an individual's fundamental rights and freedoms, and is therefore subject to the strictest controls.

It may also include classified datasets, critical health or security-related information, or any other personal data designated as "restricted" by the authority or the government.

CEC vows level

FROM PAGE 3

to challenge it, or if any financial institution raises an objection, or if anyone is aggrieved, we will take action in accordance with the law," he said.

Asked about allegations that the law-and-order situation has not improved and a level playing field has not been ensured, he said in the past there had often been violence and deteriorating conditions on nomination filing days.

"This time, the nomination filing process has taken place very smoothly. We have not received any information about clashes, bombings, or violence during nomination filing anywhere. This is a positive sign," he said.

Meanwhile, chief of the EU Election Observation

Mission to Bangladesh Ivars Ijabs said around 200 EU observers will monitor the upcoming national election and referendum.

Speaking to reporters after meeting the CEC at Nirbachan Bhaban, Ijabs said the mission will include short-term observers on February 12, as well as members of the European Parliament.

The EC has also opened a law-and-order coordination cell at the Nirbachan Bhaban. The cell became operational yesterday and will remain active until February 13.

On the fourth day of filing appeals against ROs' decisions, 174 applications were submitted to the EC, raising the total number of appeals to 469.

Today is the last day for submitting appeals.

Musabbir murder

FROM PAGE 3

In front of BNP's central office in Nayapaltan around 2:30pm, attended by a large number of party leaders.

Speaking to reporters before the janaza, BNP Joint Secretary General Habib-Un-Nabi Khan Sohel expressed concern over the repeated killings of party activists and reiterated the 24-hour ultimatum to arrest the perpetrators.

"I urge the government to take effective action. Mere assurances will not solve the problem," he said.

Sohel added that under the leadership of BNP Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman, the party's struggle to establish a people's government will not be halted by any murder.


Dhaka Metropolitan North BNP Convener Aminul Haque said Musabbir's killing was part of a plot to sabotage the upcoming election and destabilise the country.

Swecchhasebak Dal Senior Vice Chairman Yasin Ali said tougher programmes would be announced if the killers were not arrested within 24 hours.

Meanwhile, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said some "isolated incidents" are taking place, but they will not derail the election.

"This could be a conspiracy of fallen fascist forces trying to disrupt the election and make the path to democracy harder. But their efforts will never succeed. The people of this country are determined and committed to bringing back democracy," Salahuddin said in front of the BNP Chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday morning.

Musabbir, former general secretary of Dhaka City North Swecchhasebak Dal, was shot dead by unidentified assailants on Wednesday night.

 <p>বাংলাদেশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী কমিশন</p>	<p>বাংলাদেশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী কমিশন University Grants Commission of Bangladesh আগারগাঁও, শেরে বাংলা নগর, ঢাকা-১২০৭ website: www.ugc.gov.bd</p>
<p>স্মারক নং- ইউজিসি/প্রশা:৩৩১(২৬)/২০২৫/৯০</p> <p>বিজ্ঞপ্তি</p> <p>এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট পরীক্ষার্থীগণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, বাংলাদেশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী কমিশনের সহকারী সচিব/সহকারী পরিচালক পদে জনবল নিয়োগের নিমিত্ত হ্রিগতকৃত নিয়োগ পরীক্ষা (এমসিকিউ পরীক্ষা) আগামী ১৬-০১-২০২৬ তারিখ শুক্রবার সকাল ১০:০০ হতে ১১:০০ টা পর্যন্ত বাংলাদেশ প্রকৌশল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় (বুয়েট), ঢাকা এর ক্যাম্পাসে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। পরীক্ষার্থীদের সংশোধিত আসন বিন্যাস ০৮-০১-২০২৬ তারিখ কমিশনের ওয়েবসাইটে প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে।</p> <p style="text-align: right;">০৮-০১-২০২৬ ড. মোঃ ফখরুল ইসলাম সচিব</p>	<p>তারিখ : ২৪ পৌষ ১৪৩২ ০৮ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬</p> <p style="text-align: right;">GD-64</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার তথ্য ও সম্প্রচার মন্ত্রণালয় চলচ্চিত্র-২ শাখা বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা www.moi.gov.bd</p>	
<p>নম্বর-১৫.০০.০০০০.০৪১.০২.০০৩.২০.২০</p>	<p>তারিখ: ২৪ পৌষ ১৪৩২ ০৮ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">সরকারি অনুদানে পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য ও স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণের জন্য প্রস্তাব আহ্বান।</p>	
<p>চলচ্চিত্র শিল্পে মেধা ও সৃজনশীলতাকে উৎসাহিত করা এবং বাংলাদেশের সকল জনগোষ্ঠির আবহমান সংস্কৃতির প্রতিনিধি করার লক্ষ্যে মানবিক মূল্যবোধ সম্পন্ন, জীবনমুখী, শিল্পমান সমৃদ্ধ ও বহুস্বর বিবৃত করে এমন পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য ও স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণের জন্য ২০২৫-২৬ অর্থবছরে সরকারি অনুদান প্রদানের উদ্দেশ্যে কাহিনি এবং চিত্রনাট্য বাছাইয়ের জন্য প্রযোজক/পরিচালক/প্রযোজনা প্রতিষ্ঠান/চলচ্চিত্র ব্যক্তিত্বগণের নিকট থেকে পূর্ণাঙ্গ প্যাকেজ প্রস্তাব আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। প্রস্তাব জমাধানের ক্ষেত্রে নিম্নোক্ত শর্তাবলী অনুসরণ করতে হবে:</p>	
<p>শর্তাবলি:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> শুধু বাংলাদেশের নাগরিকগণ অনুদান প্রাপ্তির জন্য যোগ্য বিবেচিত হবেন। অনুদানপ্রাপ্ত চলচ্চিত্রের সকল শিল্পী/কলাকুশলীকে বাংলাদেশের নাগরিক হতে হবে। তবে বিশেষ ভূমিকায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য যদি কোনো বিদেশি শিল্পী/কলাকুশলীর প্রয়োজন হয় তাহলে মন্ত্রণালয়ের অনুমতিক্রমে উক্ত শিল্পী/কলাকুশলী চলচ্চিত্রে অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন। অনুদানপ্রাপ্ত পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্রের নির্মাণ অনুদানের প্রথম চেক প্রাপ্তির পর কাহিনিচিত্রের ক্ষেত্রে ১৮ (আঠারো) মাস এবং প্রামাণ্যচিত্রের ক্ষেত্রে ২৪ (চব্বিশ) মাসের মধ্যে সমাপ্ত করতে হবে। স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্রের নির্মাণ অনুদানের প্রথম চেক প্রাপ্তির ১২ (বারো) মাসের মধ্যে সমাপ্ত করতে হবে। নির্মাণাধীন, সমাপ্ত বা মুক্তিপ্রাপ্ত কোনো চলচ্চিত্রের চিত্রনাট্য অনুদানের জন্য বিবেচিত হবে না। অনুদানে নির্মিত/নির্মিতব্য চলচ্চিত্র মৌলিক নয় বলে প্রমাণিত হলে অথবা চুক্তিনামার শর্ত ভঙ্গ করলে প্রযোজক অনুদান হিসেবে গৃহীত সমুদয় অর্থ ও সেবার মূল্য রাষ্ট্রীয় কোষাগারে প্রদানিত হারে সুদসহ ফেরত দিতে বাধ্য থাকবেন মর্মে ৩০০/- (তিনশত) টাকা নন-জুডিশিয়াল স্ট্যাম্পে অঙ্গীকারপত্র মূলকপিসহ ১২ (বারো) সেট ফটোকপি আবেদনপত্রের সঙ্গে জমা দিতে হবে। শর্ত ভঙ্গকারী সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রযোজকের বিরুদ্ধে প্রয়োজন মোতাবেক সরকার আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করতে পারবে। ২০২৫-২৬ অর্থবছরে প্রাপ্ত বরাদ্দের আলোকে সর্বোচ্চ ১২(বারো)টি পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য ও ২০(বিশ)টি স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্রকে অনুদান প্রদান করা হবে। উপযুক্ত প্রস্তাব না পাওয়া গেলে অনুদান প্রদান বন্ধ অথবা অনুদানের সংখ্যা কমানো যাবে। অনুদান প্রাপ্তির জন্য নির্বাচিত এবং অনুমোদিত পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্রের প্রযোজককে পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণে সরকারি অনুদান প্রদান নীতিমালা-২০২৫ এবং স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্রের প্রযোজককে স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণে সরকারি অনুদান প্রদান নীতিমালা-২০২৫ এর আওতায় অনুদান প্রদান করা হবে। এ ক্ষেত্রে সংশ্লিষ্ট অনুদান কমিটির সিদ্ধান্ত চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে। সরকারি অনুদান প্রদান সংক্রান্ত উল্লেখিত নীতিমালা দুটি তথ্য ও সম্প্রচার মন্ত্রণালয়ের ওয়েবসাইটে (www.moi.gov.bd) পাওয়া যাবে। কোনো বিষয়ে অস্পষ্টতা থাকলে মন্ত্রণালয়ের চলচ্চিত্র-২ শাখায় (ই-মেইল: film2@moi.gov.bd/ফোন: ৫৫১০০৪৬৩) যোগাযোগ করা যেতে পারে। পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্র অনুদান প্রাপ্তির লক্ষ্যে গল্প, চিত্রনাট্য ও চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণের সার্বিক পরিকল্পনাসহ পূর্ণাঙ্গ প্যাকেজ প্রস্তাবের সাথে ক্ষীপ্ট/চিত্রনাট্যের একটি মূলকপিসহ ১২ (বারো) সেট ও স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্র অনুদানের জন্য একটি মূলকপিসহ ১২ (বারো) সেট নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফরম (ক, খ ও গ) পূরণপূর্বক জমা দিতে হবে। আবেদন ফরম (ক, খ ও গ) হার্ডকপি ও সফটকপি আকারে তথ্য ও সম্প্রচার মন্ত্রণালয়ের ওয়েবসাইটে (www.moi.gov.bd) পাওয়া যাবে। উল্লেখ্য যে, ক্ষীপ্ট/চিত্রনাট্যে কোন অবস্থাতেই প্রযোজক/পরিচালক/প্রযোজনা প্রতিষ্ঠান/চলচ্চিত্র ব্যক্তিত্ব/আবেদনকারীর নাম উল্লেখ করা যাবে না। আবেদন ফর্মের নির্দেশনা অনুযায়ী নিম্নবর্ণিত তথ্যাদি/কাজজপত্রাদি দাখিল করতে হবে: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> প্রস্তাবিত গল্প, চিত্রনাট্য ও প্রামাণ্যচিত্রটি শিশুতোষ/রাজনৈতিক ইতিহাস/আবহমান বাংলার সকল রাজনৈতিক অভ্যুত্থান, আন্দোলন ও বিপ্লব যা এই অঞ্চলের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ রাজনৈতিক পটপরিবর্তনের নিয়ামক সংক্রান্ত/সাম্প্রতিক ইতিহাস তথা বাংলার ইতিহাস, মিথ ও ফোকলোর সংক্রান্ত কি-না তা আবেদনে স্পষ্টভাবে উল্লেখ করতে হবে; দেশি গল্প/কাহিনির ক্ষেত্রে সংশ্লিষ্ট লেখক/সংস্থা/প্রকাশকের লিখিত সম্মতি/অনুমতি নিতে হবে। বিদেশি গল্প বা কাহিনির ক্ষেত্রে কপিরাইট আইনের আওতায় সংশ্লিষ্ট লেখক/সংস্থা/প্রকাশকের অনুমতি নিতে হবে এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রমাণক দাখিল করতে হবে; প্রযোজকের নাম (জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র অনুযায়ী), জীবন-বৃত্তান্ত (পিতা-মাতার নাম, স্থায়ী ঠিকানা, বর্তমান ঠিকানা, ই-মেইল ও মোবাইল নম্বর) সুস্পষ্টভাবে অবশ্যই উল্লেখ করতে হবে। বর্তমান ঠিকানা পরিবর্তন হলে তা তাত্ক্ষণিকভাবে মন্ত্রণালয়কে অবহিত করতে হবে; কাহিনি ও চিত্রনাট্যকারের স্পষ্টাক্ষরে পূর্ণ নাম (জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র অনুযায়ী) এবং পরিচালকের স্পষ্টাক্ষরে পূর্ণ নাম (জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র অনুযায়ী), স্থায়ী ও বর্তমান ঠিকানা, শিক্ষাপত্র যোগ্যতা, প্রশিক্ষণ ও সংশ্লিষ্ট অভিজ্ঞতার বর্ণনা সংবলিত জীবন-বৃত্তান্ত, মোবাইল নম্বর, টেলিফোন নম্বর অবশ্যই প্রস্তাবের সঙ্গে দাখিল করতে হবে; পূর্ণাঙ্গ প্যাকেজ প্রস্তাবে চলচ্চিত্রের প্রস্তাবিত শিল্পী ও কলাকুশলীদের নাম, ঠিকানা, তাদের শিক্ষাপত্র যোগ্যতা ও সংশ্লিষ্ট অভিজ্ঞতার বর্ণনা, নির্মাণ সংস্থার কারিগরি, আর্থিক ও অবকাঠামোগত সক্ষমতার বিবরণ, আউটসোর্স শ্যুটিং স্পটের বিবরণ, পরিচালক কর্তৃক পূর্বে নির্মিত একটি চলচ্চিত্রের নমুনা (যদি থাকে) ও প্রস্তাবিত চলচ্চিত্রের যৌক্তিক বাজেট বিভাজনসহ নির্মাণ সমাপ্তির শেষ তারিখ উল্লেখ করে দাখিল করতে হবে; প্রস্তাবিত চলচ্চিত্রের কাহিনি সংক্ষেপে দাখিল করতে হবে; এবং পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্রের স্থিতিকাল (দৈর্ঘ্য) ন্যূনতম ৭০ (সত্তর) মিনিট এবং স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্রের স্থিতিকাল (দৈর্ঘ্য) অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ (ত্রিশ) মিনিট পর্যন্ত হতে হবে। অনুদানপ্রাপ্ত পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণ শেষে সার্টিফিকেশন সনদ গ্রহণ ও দেশের কমপক্ষে ০৫ (পাঁচ)টি সিনেমা হলে মুক্তি অথবা কমপক্ষে ১০ (দশ)টি বিভিন্ন জেলা তথ্য কমপ্লেক্স/শিল্পকলা একাডেমি/পাবলিক অডিটোরিয়াম/ওটিটি প্ল্যাটফর্মে প্রদর্শন করতে হবে। অনুদানপ্রাপ্ত স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণ শেষে সার্টিফিকেশন সনদ গ্রহণ করতে হবে। অনুদানে নির্মিত চলচ্চিত্রসমূহ বাংলাদেশ টেলিভিশনের চাহিনা মোতাবেক প্রদর্শনের লক্ষ্যে প্রযোজক সরবরাহ করবেন এবং বাংলাদেশ ফিল্ম আর্কাইভে সংরক্ষণের জন্য জমা দিবেন। কোনো প্রযোজককে সর্বমোট দুবারের বেশি অনুদান প্রদান করা হবে না এবং কোনো প্রযোজক পর পর দুবছর অনুদান পাওয়ার জন্য বিবেচিত হবেন না। পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য অনুদানপ্রাপ্ত প্রথম চলচ্চিত্র মুক্তি না দেওয়া পর্যন্ত এবং স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্রের সার্টিফিকেশন সনদ গ্রহণ ব্যতীত কোনো প্রযোজক পুনরায় আবেদন করার যোগ্য হবেন না। পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য ও স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণের জন্য অনুদান প্রাপ্তির লক্ষ্যে গল্প, চিত্রনাট্য এবং চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণের সার্বিক পরিকল্পনাসহ পূর্ণাঙ্গ প্যাকেজ প্রস্তাব আগামী ২৯ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬ তারিখ বিকাল ৫:০০ টার মধ্যে তথ্য ও সম্প্রচার মন্ত্রণালয়ের চলচ্চিত্র-২ শাখায় পৌছাতে হবে। উক্ত তারিখ ও সময়ের পরে কোনো প্রস্তাব/আবেদন গ্রহণ করা হবে না। একই ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান যথানিয়মে পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্য ও স্বল্পদৈর্ঘ্য চলচ্চিত্র উভয় ক্যাটাগোরিতে সরকারি অনুদানের জন্য আবেদন করতে পারবে। তবে এ ক্ষেত্রে পৃথক পৃথক প্রস্তাব দাখিল করতে হবে। অনুদান প্রদানে সরকারের সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত হিসেবে গণ্য হবে এবং অনুদান প্রদানের পরেও সরকার যে কোনো নতুন শর্তারোপ করতে পারবে। 	



ILLUSTRATION : ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

Why the disappearance of digital third spaces matters

Spaces that still exist, like Reddit or Discord, feel different now. They can still function as third spaces, but with caveats. Servers fracture, communities migrate, and conversations are increasingly shaped by platform rules, monetisation tools, moderation pressures, and censorship.

NUZHAT TAHIYA

For much of the early internet, online forums, chat rooms, fan sites, and message boards functioned as third spaces – places that weren’t home or work, but where people gathered, lingered, and formed community. They were messy, niche, and wonderfully human. You logged on after school, wandered into forums, chat rooms, fandom spaces, or niche blogs, and stayed because you wanted to. Today, many of those spaces have faded, fragmented, or been absorbed into corporate platforms that prize engagement metrics over genuine connection.

In 2024, Pew Research Center examined samples of webpages from 2013 through 2023 and found that about 25 percent of all pages sampled are no longer accessible as of late 2023. That figure rises when you look at older snapshots – roughly 38 percent of pages from 2013 have gone missing, compared with only about eight percent of pages from 2023 that are now unreachable. While this pattern of digital decay isn’t unnatural, the rapid erosion of digital third spaces isn’t just a nostalgic concern; it reshapes how we relate to one another, how we build relationships online, and even what “community” means in a highly commercialised internet.

One major reason digital third spaces are disappearing is platformisation and monetisation. The internet is no longer made up of small, semi-independent communities. Instead, it’s dominated by a handful of massive platforms – think Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube – that prioritise scale, profit, and data extraction. Algorithms have replaced chronological feeds, siloing users into hyper-specific bubbles. Metrics replaced conversation. Likes, shares, follower counts, and engagement rates turned social interaction into a measurable competition. Posting stopped being casual and started feeling strategic. Even personal expression started feeling stressful.

In contrast, older internet spaces ran on a different logic. You could disappear for weeks and return. You could lurk, post badly, change your mind, or reinvent yourself. Many of these spaces were

anonymous or pseudonymous, which meant identity was flexible and low-stakes. Maintaining these spaces took time, moderation, and often unpaid labour. As corporate platforms grew, smaller communities struggled to survive. Hosting costs rose. Moderators burnt out. Search engines began favouring big sites over independent ones. As a result, many older digital third spaces were acquired by bigger companies and stripped of their authenticity, shut down, over-moderated, or hollowed out. Slowly, the digital commons shrank.

Spaces that still exist, like Reddit or Discord, feel different now. They can still function as third spaces, but with caveats. Servers fracture, communities migrate, and conversations are increasingly shaped by platform rules, monetisation tools, moderation pressures, and censorship.

While moderation is essential for safety, scale often forces platforms to rely on automated systems and blanket rules. These systems struggle with context, cultural nuance, and good-faith conflict. Smaller communities once relied on people who knew the group, its history, and its values for moderation. As platforms grew, this became unsustainable, leading either to over-policing or neglect. In both cases, users disengage.

Another problem is the collapse of boundaries. In the past, your online third space wasn’t necessarily connected to your personal life. Today, everything feels searchable, screenshot-able, and permanent.

This creates a culture of self-censorship. People think twice before speaking freely, vulnerability feels dangerous, and people feel pressured to curate their identities.

Ironically, a hyper-connected internet has made many users feel more isolated. When every interaction is potentially public or monetised, casual connection starts to disappear.

Digital third spaces mattered, and still do, because they gave young people room to grow. They were places to try out ideas, discover interests, and meet people outside your immediate social circle. Without them, social life becomes split between private group chats and

highly public platforms. Younger users, having grown up within platformised ecosystems, are often acutely aware of surveillance, algorithmic manipulation, and burnout. Many seek semi-private or ephemeral spaces as a response. Yet these alternatives remain fragile, constantly threatened by platform shutdowns or commercialisation.

Mental health is part of the equation, too. Constant performance and comparison can intensify anxiety and burnout. When you can’t just “log on and chill”, the internet no longer feels like an escape from these pressures but an extension of them.

The disappearance of digital third spaces raises a fundamental question: what do we want the internet to be *for*? If every space is optimised for profit, visibility, or efficiency, there is little room left for social life that is slow, uneven, and unproductive. Third spaces matter precisely because they allow people to exist without being optimised.

Reimagining digital third spaces does not necessarily mean returning to a nostalgic past. It means recognising that community requires certain structural conditions: persistence, accessibility, shared governance, and freedom from constant monetisation. It also means valuing smallness, friction, and care – qualities that run counter to the dominant logic of platform capitalism.

Ultimately, the disappearance of digital third spaces is not inevitable. It is the result of design choices, economic incentives, and cultural priorities. If the internet is to remain a place for genuine social connection, those priorities may need to change. Otherwise, we risk losing not just platforms, but the quiet, sustaining spaces where people once gathered simply to be together.

Reference:
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Nuzhat is a compulsive doodler and connoisseur of bad early aughts television. Send her recommendations at nuzhat.tahiya@gmail.com

Learning how to write fiction as an adult

BIPRA PRASUN DAS

Most people who write fiction often begin their literary endeavours relatively early in life, when adopting new hobbies is easier, adult responsibilities are minimal, and both the mind and body are still developing. In adulthood, however, writing creatively can be more challenging, especially if one has not written in a long time, and even more so without prior experience in creative writing. Learning how to write fiction as an adult can feel like quite a leap. Nonetheless, with the right approach, anyone can pick up this hobby even as an adult.

Unlearning “business” writing
For most people, a large fraction of the writing they do include writing emails, memos, and reports. These are concise, functional, and devoid of any emotion. In professional writing, complete clarity is of utmost important. In contrast, fiction has room for a bit of ambiguity, which enriches subtext and opens up space for the reader’s interpretation.

Thus, the first step to writing good fiction is to stop summarising facts and start writing more descriptively, using the “show, don’t tell” rule.

The “Taste vs. Skill” gap
Popularised by radio producer Ira Glass, this concept suggests that for adult novice writers, the greatest obstacle is rarely a lack of ideas, but rather a crisis of confidence. With years of exposure to quality literature and the work of seasoned writers, adults often develop a strong sense of what excellent prose sounds like.

When their own writing fails to meet these subconsciously high standards, the resulting gap can make their work feel amateurish, leading to frustration. This frustration, in turn, causes many aspiring writers to abandon the craft prematurely. The solution is a shift in mindset, and embracing the “Shitty First Draft” – a concept explored by author Anne Lamott, allowing room for imperfect work and more practice.

Managing time
Learning how to write is a slow process. Managing time to write regularly while balancing all other commitments can sometimes feel overwhelming. But instead of waiting for a muse, or a free weekend that never comes, practicing how to write for 10 or 20 minutes a day could prove to be effective. You can also write during commutes, breaks, or early mornings. The important thing is to consistently hone your craft.

Reading
The next time you read something, it might help to notice how the author uses language to evoke certain emotions, how the pacing changes, and how the dialogues are formatted. It might slow down your reading and take a bit more effort than just reading for pleasure, but it is one of the ways you can significantly improve your writing.

As an adult, you bring richer life experiences and a deeper understanding of emotions and ideas to your writing, which can strengthen your fiction. Writing well requires attention to both craft and feeling; technique gives structure, while emotional insight gives the work depth.

There is also a quiet joy in being a beginner and gradually noticing improvements. Writing, like any other skill, can be learned and refined. So, just because you did not pick up writing as a child, doesn’t mean you can’t start now.



Understanding psychological reactance

ELMA TABASSUM

Most of us do not like to be told what to do. From toddlers adamant about choosing their own bedtimes to adults who should have grown out of it, it’s a fact that when faced with advice, instructions, or even a pushy advert, we oftentimes interpret it as a threat to our freedom of choice and end up wanting to do the exact opposite.

This feeling demonstrates the phenomenon of psychological reactance—for us, as children, students, and employees, it can be liberating, but it can also serve as a pathway to crippling guilt and self-sabotage. And for when we are people whose entire job is to tell others what to do, like team leaders and parents, psychological reactance will most certainly be the bane of our existence.

What is psychological reactance?
First proposed in 1966 by Jack W Brehm and researched extensively over the past five decades, psychological reactance is a motivational state experienced when a person identifies a limitation being placed on their freedom to act and choose as they wish, motivating them to reclaim that freedom.

Whether that limitation is a well-meaning suggestion or a real order, we like making our own decisions so much that our automatic responses to these threats often involve acting



ILLUSTRATION : ABIR HOSSAIN

in ways opposite to those recommended or secretly grumbling to ourselves and agreeing anyway, albeit with great resentment.

Reactance may be an attempt to avoid losing options; nonetheless, there are occasions when we have no other choice. This is well illustrated by an instance where, after a particularly bad day, I once watched a grown adult curse out the GPS for suggesting a left turn to avoid traffic. They did not make that left turn and so remained stuck in traffic for

the next hour. I think the fact that the GPS continued to have many more opinions did not help, as, according to The Decision Lab, the larger the number of freedoms restricted, the more reactance experienced.

How to deal with psychological reactance as a leader
Unfortunately for those in authoritative positions, the easiest way to get someone to do something is to make them want to do it, and so, even if they get everything else

right, psychological reactance is likely to be their one weakness. However, there are some tactics one can follow to minimise provoking reactance significantly.

Rephrasing our instructions in a way that allows people to have a sense of control, perhaps by including options and alternatives, is often recommended. For example, when telling your teammate that their choice of orange marker will most definitely clash with the pink poster paper, you can present them with a choice between purple and dark blue. Similarly, one may choose to encourage collaboration, where you might try to appeal to your teammate by choosing the colour of the marker together. Parents can participate in similar strategies to give their children more autonomy over what they do.

How to navigate psychological reactance as a teammate
Despite society encouraging obedience to authority in almost every facet of life, people remain stubbornly resistant. When one has identified that their constitutional right to personal liberty is not being threatened when asked to go to sleep at a reasonable hour and that their protests in this scenario are unreasonable, they can try to deal with the unpleasant feeling in a responsible way.

According to Psychology Today, the best way to manage the feeling, while keeping

our reactions in check, is simply reminding ourselves that by agreeing to act in the ways advised, we are not being controlled or patronised. Besides that, acknowledging that sometimes not choosing to do something simply because someone else told us to do it can be quite counterproductive—especially if the advice is ultimately beneficial to us.

Reactance is such a fundamentally human experience that it defines our most turbulent foundational years, that is, our adolescence, and is the psychological phenomenon behind the main conflict points in almost all the stories about teenage rebellion.

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3. Steindl C, Jonas E, Sittenthaler S, Traut-Mattausch E, Greenberg J (2015). *Understanding Psychological Reactance: New Developments and Findings*.
4. Psychology Today (2019). *Why We Hate People Telling Us What to Do*.

Elma Tabassum has an obsession with never using her new notebooks, and now her storage cabinets are giving up on her. Send her ways to cope at elmatabassum2020@gmail.com



Shakib’s tips work wonders for Waseem

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN from Sylhet

UAE opener Muhammad Waseem carried his ILT20 form into the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), hitting a blistering half-century on his return to the tournament to help Rajshahi Warriors beat Noakhali Express by four wickets at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium on Thursday.

Ahead of BPL 12, Waseem featured for MI Emirates -- the runners up in the recently concluded ILT20 -- where he finished as the second-highest run-scorer with 370 runs in 13 matches at a strike rate of 131.67.

The 31-year-old opener joined Rajshahi on Wednesday as a replacement for Pakistan's Sahibzada Farhan, who left for Sri Lanka due to national team commitments. Waseem made an instant impact in his first appearance, smashing 60 off 35 balls, an innings laced with four fours and four sixes.

With this knock, he not only earned his maiden player-of-the-match award in the BPL but also redeemed himself after a disappointing debut in the league two years earlier.

In the 2023-24 season, Waseem had managed just one run off seven balls for

Chattogram Challengers in his only innings. This time however, he showcased his class and played a decisive role in Rajshahi's victory.

"I am very happy with my performance and contribution to the team, and also with my first player-of-the-match award in the BPL. Inshallah, I will try to carry this momentum into the upcoming games," Waseem told reporters after the match.

Waseem revealed that advice from Bangladesh veteran Shakib Al Hasan, who was his teammate in MI Emirates, played a key role in his successful return.

"Shakib bhai is like a big brother to me. I have played a lot of cricket with him, and he has served Bangladesh immensely. He is a true legend. I learned many things from him both on and off the field. Before coming here, I asked him what I should do in Bangladesh. He gave me some tips, and I used them today [Thursday]," Waseem said.

He also credited Rajshahi's bowlers for restricting Noakhali to 151 for five. "I think after the first 10 overs the wicket played a bit better. I give full credit to our bowlers -- they bowled excellently in the last 10 overs. After that, we got a good start while chasing, which helped us maintain the momentum."

Juairiya earns maiden call-up for T20 WC qualifiers

SPORTS REPORTER

Uncapped wicketkeeper-batter Juairiya Ferdous earned a maiden callup while the experienced Farzana Haque Pinky returned as Bangladesh announced a 15-member squad for the ICC Women's T20 World Cup Qualifiers, set to begin on January 18 in Nepal.

Juairiya, who featured in last year's Under-19 World Cup, was rewarded for her impressive showing in the Women's National Cricket League (WNCL) T20, where she made 189 runs at a strike-rate of 131.25 while Farzana returned to the

T20I fold for the first time since May 2023.

A total of 10 teams divided in two groups will compete in the qualifiers. Bangladesh is in Group A and will begin their campaign against the USA on January 18 before playing Papua New Guinea, Namibia and Ireland on January 20, 22 and 24 respectively.

The top three teams from Group A will advance to the Super 6s, where it will clash against the top 3 teams from Group B. The top four teams in the Super 6s will qualify for the World Cup, scheduled to be held in England and Wales in June and July this year.

Bangladesh squad: Nigar Sultana Joty (c), Nahida Akter (vc), Sobhana Mostary, Farzana Haque, Sharmin Akter Supta, Dilara Akter, Juairiya Ferdous, Ritu Moni, Fahima Khatun, Shorna Akter, Rabeya Khan, Marufa Akter, Fariha Islam Trisna, Shanjida Akther Maghla, Sultana Khatun.

Nat'l Table Tennis C'ships return after 30 months

SPORTS REPORTER

After a two-and-a-half-year hiatus, the 40th National Table Tennis Championships will begin today at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Indoor Stadium in Dhaka, featuring over 450 paddlers -- double the number from the last edition in July 2023.

Like before, there will be two groups, with 309 paddlers, including 72 women, competing across eight events: men's singles, men's doubles, men's team, women's singles, women's doubles, women's team, and mixed doubles. Junior paddlers will also get four new events in the eight-day tournament: boys' doubles, boys' team, girls' doubles, and girls' team. Also, as many as 58 U-19 girls are set to participate.

Participants include 41 districts, Bangladesh Army, Bangladesh Ansar, Jail Police, Bangladesh Biman, Sher-e-Bangla Medical College, Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology, Jagannath University, and BKSP.

BTTF president Shamsu Ahmed admitted the federation is struggling to secure sponsors, some of whom backed out citing the sport's limited popularity.

He further informed BTTF president Shamsuzzaman Nasim stepped in to provide an estimated budget of 25 lakh taka. However, no prize money has been allocated, Ahmed noted, as funds are needed for participants' accommodation, food, and transport.

Australia turn Bazball hype into 4-1 reality check

AGENCIES

Australia sealed a commanding 4-1 Ashes triumph with a five-wicket win in Sydney on Thursday, in a series that exposed England's fading Bazball aura, highlighted Australia's depth and discipline, and reaffirmed the enduring class of two modern greats.

BAZBALL UNDER FIRE

England arrived brimming with belief in their fearless, attacking brand of cricket. But Bazball quickly collided with harsh Australian conditions and elite bowling. Heavy early defeats left England chasing the series, and criticism poured in from former players and pundits. Even Ben Stokes was forced into unusually patient batting, signalling that pure aggression alone was no longer enough. The England and Wales Cricket Board confirmed it had launched an immediate and "thorough" review following the tourists' defeat in the fifth and final Ashes Test.

MCCULLUM IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Brendon McCullum now faces serious scrutiny over England's approach, preparation, and discipline throughout the tour. Questions have been raised about whether England were mentally and structurally ready for such a demanding contest. Stokes, however, remains firmly behind his coach, urging stability rather than knee-jerk reactions.

HEAD RISES, KHAWAJA BOWS OUT

Australia found a new opening spark in Travis Head. Promoted unexpectedly to the top, he smashed a defining century

in Perth and followed it up with more commanding innings, seemingly securing his place moving forward. Meanwhile, veteran Usman Khawaja returned briefly before announcing his retirement after his 88th Test, closing a storied chapter. Jake Weatherald, however, struggled to cement the second opener's role, leaving that position still open for debate.

execution and consistency.

CLASS AT THE TOP

The series also reminded everyone that true quality endures. Joe Root finally broke his drought with a first Ashes century in Australia and added another for good measure, drawing level with Ricky Ponting on 41 Test tons. Steve Smith captained confidently for most of the series



PHOTO: AFP

AUSTRALIA'S BOWLING POWERHOUSE

Perhaps the clearest difference between the sides was depth. Despite missing Josh Hazlewood and having limited appearances from Pat Cummins, Australia's bowling remained relentless and precise. Mitchell Starc led the attack brilliantly, supported by Scott Boland and a capable rotating cast including Brendan Doggett, Michael Neser, and Jhye Richardson. Stokes openly admitted England were outplayed in

and produced another Ashes century of his own, reinforcing his dominance in the rivalry. With over 24,000 combined Test runs, the pair again proved decisive.

There was plenty of criticism over the two-day Tests in Perth and Melbourne, but Australia were sharper, deeper, and more disciplined when it mattered. England leave with major questions about direction and identity, while Australia move forward reassured, refreshed, and firmly in control of Ashes supremacy.

Mohammedan's forever 12th man, Ata Bhai, no more

ANISUR RAHMAN

Every powerhouse football club has its legends. Some wear boots, some wear armbands. Then there are those who never step onto the pitch. They sit in the stands, season after season, rain or shine, victory or humiliation. They sing when the stadium is full and shout even louder when it is empty. For Mohammedan Sporting Club, that voice belonged to Ataur Rahman, affectionately known as Ata Bhai.

That familiar figure will no longer be seen in the heart of the Black and Whites' stands. Ata Bhai passed away on Wednesday night at the age of 82, leaving a silence that will be hard to fill.

Former Mohammedan and national team captain Imtiaz Sultan Jonny, still involved with the club, spoke of him with emotion: "From my playing days, I saw how deep his dedication was to Mohammedan. It's very hard to find a die-hard supporter like him nowadays. He inspired players and fans alike."

"Losing Ata Bhai feels like losing a



brother. My heart feels heavy."

Founded in 1936, Mohammedan is one of Bangladesh's oldest and most successful football clubs, with a storied history of domestic titles and fierce rivalries, particularly with Abahani. During some of Mohammedan's leanest years in the professional league, Ata Bhai could still be heard roaring from the National Stadium. His sharp words for underperforming players and officials became part of the matchday theatre. Rival fans were not spared, but beneath the anger was fierce, unshakable love.

Even after the top-tier league moved outside Dhaka following National Stadium renovations in 2021, his connection to the club never faded.

"It is also tough to describe him. He was obsessed with Mohammedan, more than anything, even more than his own family," said journalist Arifur Rahman Babu.

"He became known in the late 1980s. He once told me he watched Pakistani footballer Ali Newas from the gallery, which means he had been watching matches even before the Liberation."

Around the world, football fans remember Spain's Manolo el del Bombo, Argentina's 'El Tula', or Liverpool's lifelong supporters, whose devotion is woven into the history of their teams. In Bangladesh, Mohammedan had its very own.

The club paid tribute by draping his coffin in the iconic black-and-white flag at his residence in Tikatuli, Motijheel.

Woven into the living memory of the club, Ata Bhai's chant has just ended, but it will continue to echo in the gallery he never abandoned.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Raphinha netted twice as Barcelona strolled into the Spanish Super Cup final with a dominant 5-0 semi-final win over Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday in Saudi Arabia. The La Liga leaders have now won nine matches in a row across all competitions. Last season, Barca went on to win La Liga and the Copa del Rey after Flick's side claimed the Spanish Super Cup -- the first trophy of the German's reign -- and the coach said he wanted to use the competition as a springboard for more success again.



Bangladesh suspends visa services at three missions in India

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Three key Bangladesh missions in India have temporarily suspended visa services on security grounds, said Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain yesterday.

“What I have done is that I have asked our three missions to keep their visa sections closed for the time being. It’s a security issue,” he told reporters at the foreign ministry in response to a question if Bangladesh missions in India have restricted tourist visas for Indians.

Though he did not mention the names of the missions, according to diplomatic sources, they are the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi, the Deputy High Commission in Kolkata, and the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



Amid an acute LPG cylinder shortage, a trader is seen selling the cooking gas canisters from a mini-truck at prices well above the official rate to selective consumers at Farmgate’s Tejgunipara area yesterday. According to consumers, most of the local outlets of the bottled gas have remained closed for days.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

CUMILLA-4 SEAT BNP aspirant’s loan defaulter status upheld

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court chamber judge yesterday stayed for eight weeks a High Court order that had suspended the inclusion of BNP candidate Manjurul Ahsan Munshi’s name in the list of loan defaulters.

Justice Md Rezaul Haque passed the order following a leave to appeal petition filed by Premier Bank, challenging the HC order.

Manjurul Ahsan Munshi is an

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

LPG supply disruption likely to continue

Importers cite difficulty in booking vessels; retailers call off strike following assurances

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The liquefied petroleum gas price will continue to stay above the government-set rate at the retail level, given the instability in the supply chain.

The traders yesterday withdrew their indefinite countrywide strike on marketing and supply of the fuel.

“We are trying our level best to make the supply situation normal as soon as possible, but the problem in the booking

of ships in the Middle East is not in our hands,” said Mohammed Amirul Haque, president of LPG Operators Association of Bangladesh, the body representing LPG importers.

There is a shortage of vessels due to US sanctions, he said.

He couldn’t specify any timeframe for when the supply chain would be back to normal.

Against the backdrop, the LPG traders

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

July warriors to get immunity

Says law adviser

BSS, Dhaka

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul stated yesterday that a draft of an indemnity ordinance will be presented at the next meeting of the Council of Advisers, aiming to grant immunity to those who participated in the July uprising.

“The July warriors freed the country from fascist rule by risking their lives. Of course, they have the



SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

US wants to send back 5k Bangladeshis

PORIMOL PALMA

The US wants the speedy repatriation of around 5,000 undocumented Bangladeshis currently living there, as the Trump administration steps up its anti-immigration drive, diplomatic sources said.

It also wants Bangladesh to increase imports from the US and narrow the trade gap, an issue that has remained a priority since the Trump administration took office in early 2025, they added.

According to the sources, these issues are expected to dominate talks between the United States and Bangladesh during National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman’s five-day visit to Washington.

Khalilur arrived in Washington on Wednesday and was scheduled to hold talks yesterday with US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Allison Hooker. US Assistant Secretary of State for

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

US VISA BOND Visitors to be hit the hardest Experts say it’s bad news for businesses

MD ABBAS and SUKANTA HALDER

Bangladesh’s addition to a US visa bond list could disrupt travel and trade, potentially hurting small businesses and ordinary visitors, experts said.

Expressing disappointment, a Bangladeshi PhD student in Texas told The Daily Star that the bond added to his stress. “We already live far from our families. Now, even short family visits will become a privilege only for wealthy households.”

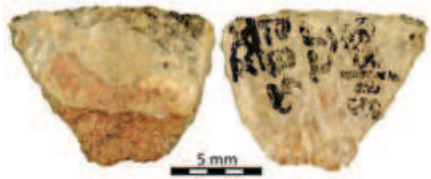
SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Three blue-tailed bee-eaters, perched in a perfect descending line, flaunt their midday catches in Gopalpur of Rajshahi’s Godagari upazila. Often found around mustard fields in winter, these agile birds sweep low over open country, wetlands and farmlands, snatching bees, wasps, dragonflies and other flying insects mid-air. Native to South and Southeast Asia, they migrate seasonally, arriving in Bangladesh with the cooler months. Before swallowing stinging prey, they deftly beat it against a perch to remove the sting -- a neat survival trick. Listed as Least Concern by the IUCN, they remain a lively winter spectacle.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Oldest evidence of poison-laced weapons found



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Peculiar 60,000-year-old Stone Age arrowheads unearthed in South Africa could be the earliest known use of poison-laced weapons by human hunters, archaeologists say in a new study.

For long, researchers have attempted to trace the trajectory of innovations by prehistoric humans to better understand the evolution of hunting technology.

One such innovation is the use of poisoned weapons, which are seen as a hallmark of advanced hunter-gatherer technology.

Until now, the evidence of poisoned hunting tools has been sparse, mostly dating to the last Ice Age around 10,000 years ago.

TANKER SEIZURE Russia accuses US of raising ‘military-political tension’

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday accused the United States of stoking tensions and threatening international shipping with its seizure of a Russian-flagged oil tanker in the North Atlantic a day earlier.

The US has said the ship carried oil for states like Venezuela, Russia and Iran in violation of Western sanctions and seized it after an American raid toppled Moscow’s ally Nicolas Maduro in Caracas.

Moscow’s foreign ministry said the move will “only result in further military and political tensions”, adding that it was worried by “Washington’s willingness to generate acute international crisis situations.”

The US seizure came as Washington grew frustrated with Moscow as little progress on its diplomatic push to end the war in Ukraine has been made.

It seized the ship days after US President Donald Trump said he was “not thrilled” with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



THE MOMENT IS HERE!

The Daily Star
STELLAR WOMEN
SEASON 2
GALA

Tomorrow!

SATURDAY
10TH JANUARY, 2026

A JOINT INITIATIVE BY
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