



‘2,000 killed in Iran unrest’

Regime official tells Reuters as Trump urges Iranians to keep protesting, promises ‘help’ on its way

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump yesterday urged Iranians to continue nationwide protests, promising that help “was on its way,” as the death toll from more than two weeks of violence crossed 2,000.

World condemnation of Iran’s crackdown on protesters also intensified, with the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the European Union summoning Iran’s ambassadors to demand answers over what they described as horrific reports of mass killings.

With the Islamic Republic’s clerical establishment facing its biggest demonstrations since 2022, Trump has repeatedly warned of intervention if force is used against protesters.

➔ Trump announces 25% tariffs on Iran trade partners

➔ China vows retaliation over new US tariff

➔ Iran to press capital crime charges for ‘rioters’

He was scheduled to meet his national security team at the White House to discuss options on Iran, as the country’s foreign minister said Tehran was “ready for any action.”

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Charred musical instruments, documents, and books stand in quiet testimony during an exhibition of items recovered after the December 19 mob attack and arson at the Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigosthi office. The exhibition was organised at the office on Topkhana Road yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BCB unmoved in ICC video conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Cricket Board yesterday reaffirmed its decision not to travel to India for the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup, citing security concerns, during a video conference with the International Cricket Council.

During the meeting, ICC urged BCB to reconsider its position, pointing out that the schedule for the tournament, to

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BNP man dies in army custody

Family alleges torture; army forms probe body, withdraws officers concerned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kustitia

A BNP leader died in army custody in Chuadanga in the early hours of yesterday, triggering protests and condemnation.

The deceased was identified as Shamsuzzaman Dablu, 52, general secretary of the BNP’s Jibannagar municipal unit.

Family members, local residents and party leaders alleged that he was tortured to death after being picked up by some army personnel.

However, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), in a press release yesterday afternoon,



Shamsuzzaman Dablu

said Dablu died after falling ill during a joint forces operation.

According to the release, joint forces conducted a special operation around 11:00pm on Monday, acting on specific intelligence to recover illegal firearms.

During the operation, Dablu was detained from a pharmacy near Jibannagar Upazila Health Complex, on allegations of possessing illegal weapons, the release said.

Based on information obtained from him, the patrol team later searched the pharmacy and recovered a 9mm pistol, one magazine and

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11-party plans contingency

Mulls leaving up to 10% seats ‘open’ if seat-sharing deal not sealed

MAMUNUR RASHID

If the 11-party alliance is unable to agree on backing a single nominee in some constituencies, it will keep those seats “open” for its all members.

Sources in the coalition said the number of such seats could be up to 10 percent of the 300 constituencies.

Leaders of the 11 parties, including Jamaat, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, and the National Citizen Party (NCP), have been engaged in seat-sharing discussions since the first half of December but are yet to finalise a deal.

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Bangladesh sets record by parachute jumps with 54 flags

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh has secured a place in the Guinness World Records by setting a new record for flying the highest number of flags while parachuting on Victory Day, December 16, 2025.

On Monday, the World Records Management Team officially informed Team Bangladesh of the achievement, said a press release issued by the chief adviser's press wing yesterday.

According to the description published on the Guinness World Records website, "The most flags flown simultaneously while skydiving [parachute jump] is 54 and was achieved by Team Bangladesh in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on December 16, 2025.

"The team attempted this record to unite skydivers from across Bangladesh in a single historic achievement and demonstrate national collaboration. The attempt was made to commemorate Bangladesh's 54th Victory Day."

Expressing joy at Bangladesh's official inclusion in the Guinness World Records, Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun, executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), said, "Today is a day of pride for everyone in the country. We want to share this joy with all the people of Bangladesh."



Firefighters work at the site of a private delivery company's logistics hub hit by Russian missile strikes in Kharkiv, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'2,000 killed in Iran unrest'

FROM PAGE 1

In a Truth Social post, Trump also urged protesters to take over institutions and record the names of "killers and abusers."

"Iranian Patriots, KEEP PROTESTING," Trump wrote yesterday. "I have cancelled all meetings with Iranian Officials until the senseless killing of protesters.STOPS.HELP IS ON ITS WAY."

Asked what he meant by "help is on its way" to protesters in Iran, Trump told reporters that they would have to "figure it out".

On Monday, Trump announced a 25 percent tariff on any country doing business with Iran, intensifying pressure on nations that import oil from Tehran, including China.

The tariff would "immediately" target the Islamic Republic's trading partners that also do business with the US, Trump said in a social media post. "This order is final and conclusive."

The White House said Trump remained "unafraid" to deploy military force against Iran but was pursuing diplomacy as a first resort.

Axios, citing an unidentified senior US official, reported that White House envoy Steve Witkoff over the weekend met with Reza Pahlavi, the exiled son of Iran's last shah and a prominent voice in the fragmented opposition, to discuss the protests roiling that country.

Iranian authorities have insisted they have regained control after successive nights of nationwide protests since Thursday.

Rights groups, however, accuse the government of using live ammunition against demonstrators and obscuring the scale of the crackdown through an internet blackout that has lasted more than four days.

As international phone calls resumed after days of disruption, an Iranian official yesterday told Reuters that about 2,000 people, including security personnel, had been killed in the unrest.

Later, the US-based HIRANA rights group said it had verified the deaths of 2,003 people during Iran's protests, including 1,850 protesters, 135 government-affiliated individuals, nine people aged under 18, and nine non-protester civilians.

The Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights estimated that about 10,000 people had been arrested.

Iranian state media reported that dozens of security force members had been killed. Authorities have declared three days of national mourning.

The protests, which began on December 28, have spread across all provinces of Iran, according to the BBC and other international media. Protesters are now calling for an end to the clerical rule of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Meanwhile, the Tehran prosecutor's office said authorities would seek capital charges against some suspects arrested over the demonstrations.

State television quoted prosecutors as saying an unspecified number would be charged with "moharebeh," or "waging war against God," a Sharia law offence that carries the death penalty.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi

told Al Jazeera that the government had been "in dialogue" with protesters in the early phase of the movement and that the internet was cut only after authorities confronted what he described as "terrorist operations" directed from abroad.

Addressing Trump's threats, he said: "We are prepared for any eventuality, and we hope Washington will choose a wise option. It doesn't matter which option they choose—we are ready for it."

On Monday, the government sought to reassert control with mass nationwide rallies that Khamenei hailed as proof the protest movement had been defeated, issuing what he called a "warning" to the US.

Rising deaths drew condemnation alongside calls for restraint from regional and global powers.

The UN human rights chief said he was "horrified" by mounting violence against peaceful protesters.

Iran's National Security Council.

US TARIFF IRKS CHINA

China threatened retaliation after Trump announced the new tariffs.

Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese embassy in Washington, said Beijing would "take all necessary measures" to safeguard its interests.

China is Iran's largest trading partner, purchasing 77 percent of its oil exports in 2024, according to Kpler. Other major partners include India, the UAE, Japan and South Korea.

It remains unclear how the tariff would be applied and whether it would be imposed in addition to existing US import taxes. China already faces tariffs of up to 45 percent, while India faces a 40 percent levy over Russian oil imports.

REGIME STILL FORMIDABLE FORCE Analysts caution that despite the scale of protests, predicting the regime's immediate collapse would be premature.

Iran's security apparatus—anchored by the Revolutionary Guards and Basij forces numbering nearly one million—makes external pressure without internal fracture difficult, said Vali Nasr.

"For this to succeed, crowds must stay in the streets much longer, and parts of the state, particularly security forces, must defect," he said.

Supreme Leader Khamenei, 86, has weathered several uprisings since 2009, said Paul Salem of the Middle East Institute, calling this the fifth major challenge to the regime.

Alan Eyre, a former US diplomat, said protesters would need to overcome entrenched institutions, loyal constituencies and the scale of a country of 90 million people.

'IRAN SEIZES US ARMS, AMMO' Iran's intelligence agency said it seized US-made weapons and explosives from "militants" who allegedly planned assassinations and sabotage. State television reported arrests of suspected "terrorist groups" linked to Israel in Zahedan.

Separately, Iran's top military commander accused the US and Israel of deploying ISIL fighters inside Iran, without presenting evidence.

Araghchi claimed authorities possessed recordings of foreign voices directing "terrorist agents" to fire on police and protesters.

TRUMP MULIS IRAN OPTIONS

The office of US Vice President JD Vance said senior officials were preparing diplomatic and military options for Trump.

"Vice President Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio are presenting a suite of options ranging from diplomacy to military action," said Vance's communications director William Martin.

The remarks came as Senator Lindsey Graham urged Trump to escalate pressure, calling the collapse of Iran's clerical leadership the "biggest prize" of his presidency.

He said US action should target "the infrastructure that allows the killing," while warning that deploying US ground forces would risk heavy casualties.

The US last year bombed Iranian nuclear sites after joining Israel's 12-day war with Iran.

BNP man dies in army custody

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four rounds of ammunition, it added.

After the operation, Dablu reportedly fell ill and lost consciousness. He was immediately taken to the upazila health complex, where the on-duty physician declared him dead at around 12:25am, according to the release.

Describing the incident as "unexpected and unfortunate", the ISPR said it was "in no way acceptable". It added that the camp commander and all other army personnel concerned had been withdrawn to the cantonment following the death.

A high-level investigation committee has been formed to determine the actual cause of the incident, the release said, adding that legal action would be taken under army law against those found responsible.

Local Sramik Dal leader Shafiqul Islam Khoka said Dablu owned Hafiza Pharmacy, located opposite Jibannagar Upazila Health Complex.

He alleged that army personnel picked Dablu up from the pharmacy on Monday night and took him about 50 metres away to the BNP's local office.

Khoka showed journalists a room inside the office and claimed Dablu was assaulted there for nearly two hours.

He also alleged that Dablu was gagged during the assault.

Habibur Rahman, general secretary of BNP's Ward No. 8 unit in Jibannagar municipality, said he was present when Dablu was taken to the party office.

He told journalists that Dablu was tied up and slapped, after which the mobile phones of those present were seized.

Dablu was then taken inside, his

hands tied, and beaten severely for about one and a half hours, Rahman alleged, adding that he died there.

Army personnel later took Dablu to hospital, both Rahman and Khoka said.

Jibannagar Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Mokbul Hossain said Dablu was brought to the health complex at 12:16am yesterday.

Speaking to The Daily Star at the health complex yesterday noon, Dablu's wife Jesmin Nahar said, "How can a healthy person die just after being picked up? This was a planned killing. Army personnel picked him up from his own pharmacy and killed him."

Chuadaंगा Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Kamal Hossen said the autopsy was completed yesterday at Chuadanga Sadar Hospital, and the body was handed over to family members in the evening.

Protesting the death, locals and BNP activists staged a demonstration from morning to noon, blocking the main gate of the Jibannagar Upazila Health Complex and chanting slogans demanding justice.

District BNP leaders also submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner, demanding a fair trial.

"We have already informed the Cabinet Division, the Election Commission and the home ministry about this matter," the DC said.

Chuadaंगा Superintendent of Police Mohammad Monirul Islam said police were not informed about the operation.

"The army conducted an operation around 11:00pm on Monday night. We later came to know about it. Police were not informed," he said, adding that doctors declared Dablu dead after he was taken to hospital.

Court orders seizure of Saifuzzaman's foreign assets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered the relevant authorities to confiscate 330 foreign properties owned by former minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury and his related persons and entities in connection with corruption allegations.

The properties include condominiums, apartments and villas. They were bought between January 2011 and September 2023, shows the documents submitted by the Anti-Corruption Commission before the court.

Of the 330 properties, 117 are located in Cambodia, 59 in the UAE, 47 in Malaysia, 40 in the US, 33 in Vietnam, 23 in Thailand, nine in India and two in the Philippines, according to ACC records.

Judge Md Sabbir Faiz of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka yesterday passed separate orders after ACC Deputy Director Md Moshir Rahman, who is the head of the enquiry, filed eight applications with the court, said Riaz Hossain, bench assistant of the court.

"During the course of enquiry, it has been learned through confidential sources that Saifuzzaman Chowdhury along with his related persons and entities is attempting to transfer or dispose of their immovable properties to other parties," said ACC official Moshir Rahman in the applications.

If the immovable properties are transferred or relocated, there is a strong likelihood of substantial loss to the state.

"So, it is imperative that the said properties be immediately confiscated and that the confiscation orders are transmitted to the concerned country through MLAR for collecting evidence," he added.

Trump envoy met exiled Iranian crown prince: report

Iran seizes US arms, explosives; FM says protest 'planned'

UK, France summon Iran ambassador

UN slams 'horrific' killings; EU vows swift sanctions

"This cycle of horrific violence cannot continue. The Iranian people and their demands for fairness, equality and justice must be heard," Volker Turk said, also voicing concern that the death penalty could be used against thousands of detainees.

His remarks came amid reports that Erfan Soltani, a 26-year-old protester detained last Thursday, could be executed as early as tomorrow.

The EU said it stood "ready to propose new sanctions," adding to measures already in place.

"When a regime can only hold on to power through violence, it is effectively finished," German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said during a visit to India. "I believe we are witnessing the last days and weeks of this regime."

Reza Pahlavi, the US-based son of Iran's ousted shah, said Trump was a leader who "means what he says and says what he means."

"The red line has definitely been surpassed by this regime," he said.

Some countries, however, urged caution amid threats of US intervention.

Qatar called for restraint and said it was working to mediate rising tensions. "Any escalation would have catastrophic results in the region and beyond," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed al-Ansari said.

Russia's Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu condemned what he called "foreign interference" in Iran's internal affairs following talks with

Ahmed said the board is still in negotiations with cricket's governing body, and therefore, he was not in a position to comment further.

BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul, vice-presidents Md Shakawat Hossain and Faruque Ahmed, Cricket Operations Committee chairman Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, and chief executive officer Nizam Uddin Chowdhury represented Bangladesh in the meeting.

The identities of the ICC representatives were not stated in the BCB press release. However, it was learned that ICC CEO Sanjog Gupta was among the attendees.

Earlier on Thursday, BCB had sent a second letter to the ICC detailing its security concerns, following a request from the ICC in response to the board's initial correspondence. On January 4, Bangladesh formally asked ICC to relocate its T20 World Cup matches from India due to security reasons.

The situation stemmed from Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman being released by the Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Kolkata Knight Riders on January 3, following directives from the Board of Control for Cricket in India after protests against the pacer's inclusion in the IPL in India.

BCB unmoved in ICC video conference

FROM PAGE 1

be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7, has already been announced, as per the BCB press release issued after the meeting. However, BCB maintained its stance, as both parties agreed to continue discussions in search of a possible solution, the press release added.

"The BCB remains committed to safeguarding the well-being of its players, officials and staff, while engaging constructively with the ICC to address the matter," the release stated.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, BCB vice-president Faruque

and in some cases even three, want these seats. There appears to be no alternative but to keep them open. But the alliance will remain... that is certain."

Meanwhile, several top coalition leaders have raised questions about Jamaat's "authoritarian approach" in the seat-allocation process.

Mojibur Rahman Monju, chairman of Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party, said everyone says this is an 11-party alliance. "But so far, we have not seen the 11 parties hold a joint meeting even once. That leaves us somewhat confused."

He said NCP and his party sought 50 seats -- 35 for NCP and 15 for AB Party.

"Later, we saw that they [Jamaat] spoke with the NCP and with us separately. We expressed our dissatisfaction over this."

Although there has been discussion that a meeting of the coalition's top leaders is likely to take place today, Monju said he had not been invited as of yesterday evening.

Asked, Jamaat leader Zubayer said, "There are discussions with everyone, more or less. There is a liaison committee for seat-sharing talks, with members from eight parties. Representatives of three parties that joined the alliance recently may not be there, but contact is maintained with everyone as required."

On September 18 last year, Jamaat, Islami Andolan, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Khelafat Majlish, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan, Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa), Nezame Islam Party and Bangladesh

Development Party launched a movement, demanding the next nation election under a proportional representation system and a referendum before the polls.

As the election drew closer, talks began on turning this platform into an electoral alliance.

On December 28, on the eve of the nomination submission deadline, NCP and LDP announced their entry into the alliance followed by AB Party the next day.

Jamaat submitted nomination papers in 276 constituencies, while Islami Andolan has done so in 268. In at least 240 seats, candidates from the two parties are facing each other.

Alliance sources said Islami Andolan Bangladesh might get 45 seats, much lower than its demand for 150. Party sources say Islami Andolan Bangladesh leader Syed Rezaul Karim, also Charmonai Pir, is still dissatisfied with that.

Discontent is also evident among several other parties. Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish had sought 50 seats, but it is likely to get 13 to 15 seats.

Similarly, Khelafat Majlish, which had demanded more than 25 seats, now has to remain content with five or seven. Nezame Islam and Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan are said to have secured two seats each, while BDP and Jagpa have managed to ensure one seat each.

NCP, a new entrant to the talks, sought around 50 seats. It reportedly reached a preliminary understanding with Jamaat over 30 seats, but even that is yet to be finalised.

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BORDER FIRING

Foreign ministry summons Myanmar envoy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry yesterday summoned Myanmar Ambassador to Bangladesh U Kyaw Soe Moe and expressed deep concern at the recent instance of gunfire from Myanmar towards Bangladesh near Whykong Union of Teknaf, Cox's Bazar.

A 12-year-old Bangladeshi girl was injured by a stray bullet during heavy fighting reportedly between the Arakan Army and Rohingya armed groups across the Myanmar border, a foreign ministry statement said.

Besides, another youth named Mohammad Hanif, 28, of Lombabil area under Whykong union was critically injured in a landmine explosion along the Teknaf border.

Bangladesh reminded that the unprovoked firing towards Bangladesh is a blatant violation of international law and a hindrance to neighbourly relationship.

Bangladesh asked Myanmar to take full responsibility and requisite measures to stop such cross-border firing.

Bangladesh also asked the Myanmar envoy to ensure that whatever happens

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Laughter drifts through Pangsha village as two elder sisters gently push their little sister on a swing, enjoying a winter afternoon in Barishal's Babuganj upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Ward-level Jamaat leader killed at Rajabazar home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A leader of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami was killed at his home in Dhaka's Paschim Rajabazar early yesterday.

The deceased -- Anwar Ullah, 65, a homeopathic practitioner -- was vice-president of ward-27 of Dhaka North City Corporation.

His son-in-law, Md Shamsuddoha, said two masked men entered the house around 2:00am after cutting the grille and tortured Anwar, tying his hands.

"My mother-in-law called me around 5:00am and informed me about the incident. I rushed to the house and found him unconscious. A scarf was wrapped around his neck," he told The Daily Star.

The killers took away some valuables and gold jewellery.

Anwar was taken to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead, Shamsuddoha added.

Originally from Cumilla, Anwar Ullah was a teacher and had been living in the first-floor flat with his wife.

Police and members of the Crime Scene Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department rushed there and collected evidence.

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Without accountability, democracy will fail

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Democracy in Bangladesh cannot survive without accountability, said speakers at a dialogue yesterday, warning that promises lose meaning when governments are not answerable to the people.

They stressed the need for internal reforms within political parties, greater transparency, and stronger engagement with civil society to improve governance.

Speakers also highlighted the importance of social protection for women and marginalised groups, addressing economic inequality, and incorporating citizens' voices into policymaking.

The dialogue, titled "Citizen Manifesto 2026: Expectations for National Election and Democratic Transition," was held at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Agargaon. It was organised by Prapti with support from the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury stated that accountability must function both within and outside parliament.

"Without accountability, promises disappear again and again," he said, adding that civil society is a key partner

in governance and that restricting its role signals the rise of authoritarianism.

He also said parliamentary committees must function effectively to ensure oversight.

On the economy, Khosru said it should be democratised so that all citizens benefit, not just a small group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reform parties for internal democracy

Guarantee security so candidates, voters can participate without fear

Reduce influence of money, muscle power in polls

Strengthen institutions to protect rights, prevent abuse of power

He noted that while governments enjoy an initial "honeymoon period," many fail because they cannot accept criticism despite rising public expectations.

Saiful Alam Khan Milan, a central executive committee member of Jamaat-e-Islami, said security during elections is a major concern.

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Fair polls futile without major reforms

Speakers tell Shujan event, raise alarms about 'security vacuum'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Politicians, academics and civil society members yesterday warned that a fair election alone cannot ensure a democratic transition without major structural reforms.

At a dialogue, they also raised concerns about a "security vacuum" and the risk posed by unrecovered weapons.

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) organised the divisional dialogue titled "Expectation of the July Mass Uprising, Reforms and Election Manifestos" at the CIRDAP Auditorium in the capital.

Presenting the keynote, Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said without far-reaching reforms, any future elected government could again turn authoritarian.

He stressed the need for an active Election Commission, an end to the influence of money in elections, and a neutral media.

Badiul further demanded strict accountability of law enforcement agencies to prevent extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

He said the Anti-Corruption

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BNP alleges bias in postal ballots

Flags 'unfair' placement of party symbol

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday filed a complaint with the Election Commission (EC), alleging that its name and symbol are not clearly visible on postal ballots sent to expatriate voters for the upcoming 13th National Parliamentary Election.

The party claimed that its name and symbol had been positioned in the middle of the postal ballot, while those of several other political parties were deliberately placed in the first row, raising concerns of bias.

Speaking to reporters after meeting the Chief Election Commissioner at the EC headquarters in Agargaon, BNP Standing Committee member Nazrul Islam Khan said the placement was "intentional" and makes it difficult for voters to identify the party when the ballot is folded.

When the ballot is folded, the BNP's name and symbol are not easily visible, he said. He said the EC admitted that it had not paid sufficient attention to the issue.

Nazrul said three major political parties had their names and symbols in the first row of the postal ballot. He added that if the ballot had five or six columns instead of four, such placement would

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FEB 12 REFERENDUM

Campaigning for 'no' vote anti-people: Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party (NCP) Convener Nahid Islam yesterday alleged that a certain political party is using various tactics to campaign for a "no" vote in the referendum scheduled for February 12.

"Those who never wanted reforms are now taking a stand for a 'no' vote. Those who advocate a 'no' vote do not want the welfare of the country," he said while inaugurating the "NCP Caravan" in Dhaka as part of the party's referendum campaign.

Nahid said when the referendum commission was formed, the same party questioned why the interim government was pursuing reforms, arguing that no reforms were needed even after the referendum.

Referring to the referendum, he said supporting a "no" vote would go against the will of the people. "I believe those who oppose the reforms will not be able to win the election. To succeed, they must support a 'yes' vote and stand for reforms," he said.

He also alleged that the said party was promising schemes such as "Family Cards" and

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Include cancellation of Adani power deal in polls manifestos

CAB's youth wing urges parties, candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The youth wing of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) has demanded that political parties and candidates contesting the upcoming national election include the cancellation of the power purchase agreement with Indian company Adani Power in their election manifestos.

They also placed 12 other demands on power and energy issues at a press conference at the auditorium of Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday, calling for commitments from election contestants.

The other demands include postponing an increase in imports of liquefied natural gas for at least the next five years; prohibiting any increase in coal-based power generation; transforming the sector into a service-based one from a profit-driven model; reducing imports of fossil fuels by at least 5 percent within the next five years; increasing solar power generation to 15 percent; ensuring 100 percent onshore gas exploration by state-owned BAPEX; cancelling deals with all furnace-oil-based power plants under the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010; ensuring compensation from those companies; preparing a roadmap for using the explored gas in Bhola and Chatak;

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Holding banners and placards to raise awareness about noise pollution, a group of people stood at the Science Lab intersection in Dhaka yesterday as part of the environment ministry's 10-day campaign across the capital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

July activists, NCP breakaways to unveil new platform Friday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A new political platform led by demonstrators of the July uprising and breakaways from the National Citizen Party is set to make its debut this Friday.

The platform, ideologically rooted in social democracy, will also be joined by current and former leaders of the left-leaning Bangladesh Chhatra Union, as well as socio-cultural activists who played active roles in the uprising and the movement to topple the Sheikh Hasina government.

The official launch will be announced from the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital on January 16, said founding member Anik Roy, a former joint convener of the NCP.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Anik said, "We want to carry forward the generational fight." He added that the platform's economic framework would be based on the concept of a "democratic economy".

Distinguishing itself from traditional political parties, the organisers plan to introduce a rotating leadership structure to prevent the accumulation of power.

"The leadership structure will be fluid, meaning the chief of the platform will

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Political leaders start getting

FROM PAGE 12

requested action to strengthen security, including gunmen, for three political figures: Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, emir of Islami Andolon Bangladesh (IAB); BNP's Meherpur-1 candidate Masud Arun; and Zonayed Saki, the chief coordinator of Ganosambhati Andolon.

The move to provide security to political leaders and July protagonists comes amid concerns over candidates' safety following the shooting of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, an MP aspirant for Dhaka-8, a day after the election schedule was announced on December 11.

So far, eight political killings have taken place since the announcement of the election schedule, according to media reports and Ain o Salish Kendra.

After the incident sparked widespread discussion and criticism at home and abroad, the government decided to provide adequate security to political party leaders, according to home ministry officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity as they are not authorised to speak with the media.

The government directed that a list be prepared of leaders facing security risks. In line with that instruction, police units carried out detailed inquiries and prepared a report containing such a list.

The list includes names of 127 leaders from almost all parties, including the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and the National Citizen Party. The list was compiled with key leaders from Dhaka and different districts.

In another major development on December 14, the government issued policy guidelines on granting firearm licences and appointing retainers (persons to carry firearms) for individuals who are politically important and candidates contesting the national election.

Under the policy, the government will grant a licence or retainer after scrutiny by the district magistrate and intelligence agencies. The guideline says an approved firearms licence issued under this framework will remain valid until 15 days after the election results are published, after which it will be treated as automatically cancelled.

Police are also providing a gunman to the returning officer of the Dhaka 13 and Dhaka 15 constituencies, according to DMP officials.

They are also providing security to Bangladesh Jatiya Party Chairman Andaleebe Rahman Partho; Gono Odhikar Parishad General Secretary Rashed Khan; BNP's Dhaka-13 candidate Bobby Hajjaj; and Biplobi Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Huq.

Besides these two,

the DMP also provided a gunman and a house guard to the editors of two national daily newspapers.

M o h a m m a d Moniruzzaman, special superintendent (protocol) of the SB, declined to disclose the exact number of people receiving police protection citing security reasons.

"We are providing security, and gunmen based on threats and risks, and the number is updated every day," he told The Daily Star.

Besides this, different police units across the country are providing security to vulnerable candidates based on security assessment, according to home ministry officials.

Without disclosing the exact figure, Hasib Aziz, commissioner of the Chattogram Metropolitan Police, said that they have already provided security to some individuals and the list is constantly updated.

Meanwhile, at least 153 election candidates now possess licensed firearms. BNP has the highest number of candidates with firearms (92), followed by Jatiya Party (12), IAB (five), Jamaat-e-Islami (four), Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon and Gono Odhikar Parishad (two). Around 28 independent candidates reported licensed firearms.

The remaining eight candidates with licensed firearms belong to other parties.

Yunus seeks UN support

FROM PAGE 12

the two also discussed the upcoming referendum, the need for institutional reforms, the work of the Enforced Disappearance Commission, the formation of the National Human Rights Commission, and the global geopolitical situation.

Türk stressed the importance of establishing "a truly independent" National Human Rights Commission to carry forward the work related to

enforced disappearances.

In response, Yunus said the NHRC ordinance has already been promulgated and the commission would be reconstituted ahead of the February 12 elections, adding, "We will do it before we leave."

He further said he had shared the final report of the Enforced Disappearance Commission with the UN high commissioner for human rights, describing it as a crucial document that would go a long way toward

ensuring accountability and justice for the victims of enforced disappearances during the authoritarian regime from 2009 to 2024.

Türk praised the chief adviser's efforts over the past year and a half, and said his office had supported the work of the Enforced Disappearance Commission and would continue to do so.

SDG Coordinator and Senior Secretary Lamiya Morshed was present during the conversation.

Topsoil extraction threatens agriculture in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Topsoil, rich in organic matter and nutrients, is vital for agriculture. Yet large volumes of this valuable layer are being excavated from farmlands and diverted to brick kilns, particularly in Magura's Mohammadpur upazila.

According to local sources, farmers from all eight unions of the upazila are selling topsoil to meet the growing demand of brickfields, with little obstruction.

The extraction intensifies every year from December, coinciding with the peak brick production season.

Agricultural soil is preferred by kiln owners for producing higher-quality bricks. Through intermediaries, soil traders buy topsoil from farmers at low lump-sum rates, often under the pretext of land levelling, and resell it to kiln owners at much higher prices. For nearly four months, from December to March, the practice continues unabated.



Ignoring existing rules, excavators are used to cut soil, which is then transported by trolleys and trucks, damaging rural roads and local infrastructure. An estimated 18 brick kilns are operating in the upazila this season, with fertile cropland serving as their primary

source of raw material.

Agricultural experts warn that the removal of topsoil strips land of essential nutrients such as gypsum and zinc and disrupts beneficial microorganisms, leading to declining soil fertility and crop yields. Many farmers, due to a lack of awareness, are

unknowingly selling away the productive capacity of their land.

Rabiul Islam Russell, a farmer from Raypasha village, said cutting soil from croplands invites long-term losses and urged greater awareness among farmers.

Mezbahul Islam, owner of Arab Bricks, said they purchase soil through contractors and claimed ignorance about how or where the soil is sourced.

Upazila Agriculture Officer Piyush Roy warned, "Topsoil is the nutritional core of farmland. If it is removed, good yields cannot be expected from that land for at least the next 10 years. This could eventually lead to food shortages."

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shahnur Zaman said action is taken whenever reports of topsoil extraction are received, adding, "Protecting arable land requires not only enforcement of the law but, more importantly, raising awareness among farmers and the general public."

Police block July Oikya march to EC

Activists call for barring JP, 14-party alliance, NDF from polls



PHOTO: COLLECTED

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of activists under the banner of July Oikya was stopped by police yesterday while marching towards the Election Commission with several demands, including the cancellation of the candidacies of nominees from the Jatiya Party, the 14-party alliance and the National Democratic Front (NDF) ahead of the February 12 election.

July Oikya, an organisation that emerged after the July uprising, also demanded the removal from the administration of individuals who participated in the 2018 and 2024 elections.

The group further demanded ensuring security on election day, the recovery of illegal weapons, and the mandatory use of body-worn cameras on polling day.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

JULY KILLINGS SAD files ICT complaint against 25 businessmen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students Against Discrimination (SAD) yesterday filed a complaint with the International Crimes Tribunal against 25 prominent business figures and around 200 unnamed businessmen, alleging their involvement in facilitating mass killings during the July 2024 uprising.


A delegation of SAD leaders submitted the complaint to the office of the ICT chief prosecutor, seeking a formal investigation and legal action against those named.

Speaking to journalists at the ICT premises after lodging the complaint, SAD President Rifat Rashid said former adviser to deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Salman F Rahman, was among

the businessmen accused. He, however, declined to disclose the identities of the other individuals named in the complaint.

According to the complaint, the businessmen attended a meeting with Hasina on July 22, 2024, during the nationwide internet shutdown, under the leadership of Salman. At the meeting, they allegedly assured the then government of their support and pledged assistance in suppressing the student-led movement.

Prosecutor Gazi Monawar Hossain Tamim said, "The complaint names 25 individuals and around 200 unidentified persons. It includes photographs of the July 22 meeting, video statements made during the meeting, and reports published in several newspapers."



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This is to notify all concern that the following tender have published through National e-GP portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

Sl. No.	Tender ID, Package No. & Date of Publishing	Name of the Work	Tender last Selling and Closing Date & Time
01.	Tender ID: 1209170 Package No: e-GP-EMM-07 Date of Publishing: 11.01.2026	Supply, installation, testing & commissioning of 218 Kwp on-grid rooftop solar power plant at Head Office Building Jalalabad Gas Transmission and Distribution System Limited (JGTDSL).	Last Selling: 25.01.2026, 14:00 Closing date & time: 25.01.2026, 15:00 Opening date & time: 25.01.2026, 15:00


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GD-95



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Greenland could vote to join Russia

Says Medvedev

REUTERS

Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev said Greenlanders could vote to join Russia if US President Donald Trump did not move quickly to secure the Arctic island, Interfax reported on Monday.

“Trump needs to hurry. According to unverified information, in a few days there could be a sudden referendum, at which the entire 55,000-strong Greenland could vote to join Russia,” Interfax reported, quoting Medvedev, a former Russian president. “And then that’s it. No new little stars on the (US) flag.”

Trump has revived his push for the United States to take control of Greenland. The Arctic island’s Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen told a press conference in Copenhagen yesterday that Greenland chooses Denmark over the US.



Palestinians inspect a collapsed war-damaged building in Gaza City on a windy winter day. A rainstorm swept the Gaza Strip yesterday, flooding tents, collapsing homes of displaced families, and killing at least six people, local health officials said. PHOTO: REUTERS

India accuses Pak of cross-border drone incursions

REUTERS, New Delhi

India’s army chief said yesterday that the head of Pakistan’s military operations had been told to control what he said were drone intrusions from Pakistan into India, months after the nuclear-armed rivals engaged in their worst fighting in decades.

An Indian military source said there were five drone intrusions on Sunday evening on the frontier in the Jammu region of Indian Kashmir.

In another incident on Friday, a drone from Pakistan was suspected to have dropped two pistols, ammunition magazines, 16 bullets and one grenade that were recovered following a search.

Indian army chief General Upendra Dwivedi said at least eight drones had been sighted since Saturday. “These drones, I believe, were defensive drones, which want to go up and see if any action was being taken,” Dwivedi told reporters.

JAMMU & KASHMIR REGION

China rejects India’s claim over Shaksgam valley

Asserts the territory belongs to Beijing

DAWN ONLINE

Beijing has rejected New Delhi’s claim over the Shaksgam valley in Jammu and Kashmir and said that the territory “belongs to China”.

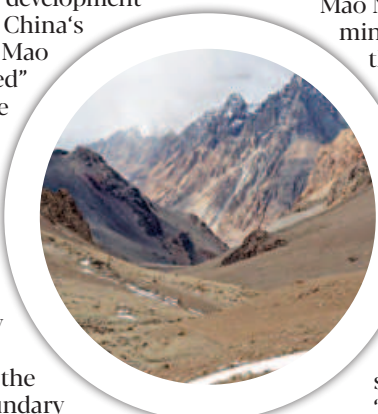
At a press conference on Monday, when asked by the Press Trust of India (PTI) for comment on the Indian criticism of China’s infrastructure development projects in the Shaksgam valley, China’s Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning said that it was “fully justified” for China to conduct infrastructure construction “on its own territory”.

“The territory you mentioned belongs to China,” she said. India’s foreign ministry spokesperson had on Friday said that it reserved the right to take necessary measures to safeguard its interests as the Shaksgam valley was “an Indian territory”.

“We have never recognised the so-called China-Pakistan boundary agreement that happened in 1963. We have consistently maintained that the agreement is illegal and invalid,” he said at a press conference in response to a question from India’s state-owned public television broadcaster Doordashan.

The Indian spokesperson added that New Delhi also does not “recognise the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor”.

“The entire union territories of Jammu and



Kashmir and Ladakh are an integral and inalienable part of India,” he maintained, adding, “This has been clearly conveyed to Pakistani and the Chinese authorities several times”.

He added that India had “consistently protested with the Chinese side against attempts to alter the ground reality in Shaksgam Valley”.

Mao Ning, in response to the Indian foreign ministry spokesperson’s comments, said that China and Pakistan had in the 1960s signed a boundary agreement and delimited the boundary between the two countries, terming it “the right of China and Pakistan as sovereign countries”.

“The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as an economic cooperation initiative, aims at promoting local socio-economic development and improving people’s livelihood,” she said.

“The China-Pakistan boundary agreement and CPEC do not affect China’s position on the Kashmir issue and the position remains unchanged.”

India and China have long clashed over border disputes, but had reached a milestone pact in 2024 on lowering military tensions on their Himalayan border, which escalated after a military clash in 2020 in which 20 soldiers from India and four from China were killed.

MYANMAR POLLS

Pro-military party claims majority of seats

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar’s dominant pro-military party yesterday claimed a majority of elected lower house seats in the country’s junta-run polls, which democracy watchdogs say will prolong the armed forces’ grip.

The junta is overseeing a staggered election it pledges will return power to the people after the third and final phase of voting on January 25.

With Suu Kyi detained and her party dissolved, democracy advocates say it has been rigged by a dissent purge and a ballot stacked with military allies.

A USDP official told AFP they “won 87 seats out of 100” in Sunday’s second phase of the vote.

Combined with overwhelming wins in the first phase, the official’s figures give the party 176 lower house seats so far -- just over half the 330 elected positions, even before the third phase has taken place.

Russia strikes Ukraine power plant in barrage

Four killed; ‘several hundred thousand’ households near Kyiv without power

AFP, Kharkiv

Russia battered Ukraine with more than two dozen missiles and hundreds of drones early yesterday, killing four people and pummeling another power plant, piling more pressure on Ukraine’s brittle energy system.

An AFP journalist in the eastern Kharkiv region, where four people were killed, saw firefighters battling a fire at a postal hub and rescue workers helping survivors by lamp light in freezing temperatures.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said “several hundred thousand” households near Kyiv were without power after the strikes, and again called on allies to bolster his country’s air defence systems.

“The world can respond to this Russian terror with new assistance packages for Ukraine,” President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on social media. “Russia must come to learn that cold will not help it win the war,” he added.

Authorities in Kyiv and the surrounding region rolled out emergency power cuts in the hours after the attack, saying freezing temperatures were complicating their work.



Pressure grows on Venezuela govt to free more prisoners

AFP, Caracas

Washington announced Monday Venezuelan opposition figure Maria Corina Machado will meet President Donald Trump this week as pressure grew on the interim leadership in Caracas to speed up the release of political prisoners.

Machado has been sidelined by Washington since US forces seized long-term authoritarian leader Nicolas Maduro on January 3 and the Trump administration announced it would be “running” Venezuela.

Disregarding Machado and her understudy Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, Trump has been working instead with acting president Dely Rodriguez, left in power with other Maduro allies.

Trump has warned Rodriguez to toe Washington’s line or face the consequences -- particularly on granting access to the South American country’s vast oil reserves. A US official told AFP the Republican president will meet Machado at the White House tomorrow.

DB raid spirals into internal investigations

FROM PAGE 12

commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) and chief of the DB, confirmed the matter to The Daily Star, saying the issue was under investigation.

In light of the development, DB chief Shafiqul Islam authorised an inquiry into Tareq Sekander, then assistant commissioner of the Tejgaon division DB, who oversaw the November 8 raid.

The probe was entrusted to his superior officer, Rakib Khan, then serving as acting deputy commissioner of the division.

Rakib submitted a probe report on December 4, but higher authorities later ordered a second inquiry for the sake of impartiality, which is currently underway.

This decision may be connected to an incident that occurred just before the report was filed, involving Rakib, Tareq and Didarul Islam, the informant behind the tip-off on the Wari counterfeit currency raid.

The incident occurred outside Hotel Givenci International in Farmgate.

CCTV footage collected by The Daily Star from the hotel shows that on December 2, around 4:00am, Tareq arrived outside the hotel and found Rakib there. Shortly after his arrival, the two officers engaged in a scuffle.

In a complaint to the Inspector General of Police, Tareq said Rakib assaulted him when he attempted to

rescue his missing informant, Didarul Islam, who, according to intelligence, was being held at Hotel Givenci.

This newspaper has obtained a copy of the complaint.

Contacted regarding the confrontation, Tareq explained that Didarul was his source and had gone missing from Cox’s Bazar on November 29, prompting his family to inform the local police.

“When I learnt of Didarul’s location in Farmgate and that my superior officer was present there, I also went to the spot.”

Tareq alleged that Rakib became enraged upon seeing him and physically assaulted him. “So, I have filed a written complaint with the police chief.”

Contacted, Rakib dismissed the allegations, saying senior officials never assault junior officers.

“He [Tareq] conducted a raid that appears to have been pre-planned, and there are indications that a large amount of money may have been misappropriated during that operation,” Rakib told The Daily Star.

On the issue of Didarul, Rakib said the source had come to DB seeking assistance over a personal issue. “If a source wants to stay somewhere, would you not arrange a room for him?” he remarked.

Rakib denied that Didarul had been picked up, adding, “If we bring someone in, we keep them in DB custody. We

would not bring someone and keep them at a hotel.”

Asked, DB chief Shafiqul Islam said the informant was not in detention but had come to Dhaka to provide testimony, as he was a key source in the drive.

On December 1, Didarul’s wife, Momtaz Begum, filed a general diary with Ukhiya Police Station in Cox’s Bazar, saying her husband had gone missing from the Ukhiya Boat Bazar area on November 29.

Didarul later returned home on December 4, and the GD was withdrawn.

Hotel records show Room 805 was booked from November 30 to December 2 in the name of “Mr Didar”, with “DB” written in parentheses.

Rakib is currently posted at the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit. Tareq, on the other hand, is in Rangamati. His transfer order had been issued earlier, but he was serving in the DB at the time. After allegations arose over the raid, he moved to Rangamati in the first week of December.

Meanwhile, the second inquiry into the discrepancy in the seizure list is presently being conducted by Munshi Shahabuddin, joint commissioner of the CTTC unit, confirmed Md Sarwar, additional commissioner (admin) of DMP.

Contacted, Munshi Shahabuddin, however, declined to comment.

100 children killed in Gaza since ceasefire

FROM PAGE 12

442 fatalities.

“Additionally, seven children have died from exposure to cold since the beginning of this year,” Zaher Al Wahidi, Director of the Computer Department at the Ministry of Health, told AFP.

Elder stressed that the ongoing Israeli attacks came after more than two years of war which has “left life for

Gaza’s children unimaginably hard”.

“They still live in fear. The psychological damage remains untreated, and it’s becoming deeper and harder to heal the longer this goes on,” he said.

In November, authorities in Gaza said more than 70,000 people had been killed there since the beginning of the war waged by Israel in response to Hamas’s

October 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

Nearly 80 percent of buildings in Gaza have been destroyed or damaged in the relentless air and ground offensive, according to UN data.

On January 1, Israel suspended 37 international aid agencies from accessing the Gaza Strip, despite what the UN said at the time was an “outrageous” move.

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Stay out of Gaza ISF

Bangladesh must not be drawn into this misadventure

The interest expressed by National Security Adviser Khalilur Rahman in participating in the proposed International Stabilisation Force (ISF) for Gaza is both perplexing and troubling. It is difficult to comprehend the rationale behind such an initiative by an interim government that is expected to leave office within a month or so, but still appears willing to saddle the country and its armed forces with a commitment that borders on an outlandish adventure.

The clarification offered by the chief adviser's press secretary, Shahiqul Alam, regarding the adviser's discussions with US officials is neither convincing nor coherent; indeed, it appears internally contradictory. Referring to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2803, he stated, "As one of the largest contributors to UN peacekeeping forces and an ardent supporter of the Palestinian cause, Bangladesh's interest in participating in the ISF is contingent on the fulfilment of a number of principles." These, he explained, include the force being temporary and operating under a clear UNSC mandate, the establishment of a permanent ceasefire and complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, and the transfer of responsibility for Gaza to the Palestinians.

However, Resolution 2803 tells a different story. It states that "as the Force establishes control and stability, the Israel Defense Forces will withdraw from the Gaza Strip based on standards, milestones, and timeframes linked to demilitarisation that will be agreed between specified parties—save for a security perimeter presence that will remain until Gaza is properly secure from any resurgent terror threat." The language of the resolution makes it abundantly clear that the proposed multinational force is not intended as a peacekeeping mission. Rather, it is designed to secure Gaza while the IDF retains a continuing presence. In effect, the IDF's withdrawal is conditional and open-ended.

It is also noteworthy that although the UNSC adopted the resolution, two veto-wielding members—Russia and China—abstained, citing the lack of clarity and warning that the force "could actually transform it into a party to the conflict." Even members who voted in favour expressed reservations about the resolution's vagueness. While attempting to justify the interim government's interest in the ISF, the government's spokesperson pointed out that all Muslim members of the UNSC supported the resolution. Yet, Pakistan and Somalia explicitly voiced concerns over the absence of any meaningful role for the Palestinian Authority and the lack of a clear pathway towards Palestinian statehood.

Against this backdrop, the interim government's reiteration of Bangladesh's long-held policy—steadfast support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al Sharif as its capital—rings hollow due to the willingness to deploy Bangladesh's armed forces in support of an ill-defined mission.

It is well-documented that Israel is among the most persistent violators of UN resolutions adopted by both the Security Council and the General Assembly. Since the ceasefire mediated by President Donald Trump came into effect on October 10, 2025, Israel has reportedly violated it nearly 1,200 times, including through airstrikes, shelling, and the demolition of homes, resulting in the deaths of at least 439 Palestinians. Extending support to a security operation that risks becoming a direct party to the conflict—particularly one that may operate against Palestinian interests—would mark a departure from Bangladesh's long and principled history of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle against illegal and brutal occupation. Moreover, an interim government scheduled to hand over power within weeks has no authority to entangle the country in such a complex conflict situation.

A manifesto that must not be ignored

Political commitment essential to ensuring workers' rights

The 15-point manifesto placed by the National Workers' Rights Advocacy Alliance for the political parties ahead of the upcoming national election is a timely and necessary step. At a time when parties are preparing to seek public mandates, the alliance's call to prioritise labour rights and social justice deserves serious attention. Workers have historically been at the heart of political movements in this country, yet their interests have routinely slipped down the list of priorities by successive governments. Job insecurity, low wages, unsafe workplaces, and weak social protection continue to define the lived reality of millions of workers. That these issues persist despite constitutional guarantees exposes a deep gap between legal measures and practice.

Central to the manifesto is the demand for a national minimum wage that ensures a dignified living standard for workers. This reflects long-standing demands from labour rights groups and aligns with the basic idea that work should provide more than mere survival. However, our past experience shows that announcing rights is much easier than enforcing them, especially in an economy where most workers are in the informal sector. Without strong enforcement, clear monitoring, and real political commitment, a national minimum wage may remain a promise on paper rather than a force for real change.

Equally important are the proposals to amend labour laws to ensure universal legal recognition and protection, guarantee freedom of association and collective bargaining—including in export processing zones—and strengthen workplace safety and accident compensation. Given our history of industrial tragedies and lack of accountability, transparent investigations and fair compensation are essential to ensuring justice and preventing future accidents. The emphasis on gender equality, protection from harassment and violence, and six months of paid maternity leave reflects a broader understanding that labour rights are also human rights.

Workers are often praised for their contribution to the nation, only to be sidelined once ballots are counted. This should not happen this time. As election manifestos take shape, political parties must move beyond verbal support and commit to implementing these demands with clear timelines and accountability. Establishing a permanent national labour commission could be an important step, provided it is empowered, independent, and effective. Ultimately, if political parties are serious about change, they must show it by placing workers' rights at the centre of their agenda.

Bangladesh needs institutional repair, not tougher policing



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ABDULLAH A DEWAN

People are increasingly weary and frustrated with the pace of improvement in law and order. This is reasonable given the little visible remission in nationwide crime, with gun shootings, knife killings, beatings with sticks and rods, street clashes, and mob attacks continuing to punctuate public life. As a result, the interim government is being branded weak, incompetent, and indifferent, accused of lacking clues about how to reverse the situation. But weak or incompetent compared to whom? And measured against which standard of "order"? To demand a restoration of law and order requires an honest analytical starting point: restore it to what period, exactly? This question is almost never asked, yet it is an important gateway to understanding the present crisis.

It bears recalling that the violence of knives, guns, and organised street terror also existed throughout the 15-and-a-half-year rule of Sheikh Hasina, but for the large part it took quite a different institutional form compared to what Bangladesh is witnessing now. This distinction matters because it explains why today's violence feels chaotic, retaliatory, and socially diffused rather than centrally controlled. During the klepto-fascist phase of Hasina's governance, violence was not an accidental failure of law and order—it was an instrument of rule.

For more than a decade, coercion replaced political competition. Opposition parties were systematically suppressed, journalists intimidated, and dissent criminalised. Enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings were not aberrations but rather signals carefully calibrated to instil fear without provoking decisive international rupture. At the grassroots level, ruling party activists and student wings functioned as informal enforcers, using knives, rods, and machetes not randomly, but rather selectively—to silence opponents and control tenders, campuses, and neighbourhoods.

That era produced suppressed violence, not peace. Crime statistics appeared manageable because fear discouraged reporting, and streets looked calm because dissent had been crushed, not resolved. The state monopolised violence but delegated its execution to party-aligned actors, creating a system in which brutality was rewarded with protection. Justice did

not fail accidentally; it was deliberately suspended for loyal perpetrators. What Bangladesh is experiencing now is the "leakage" of that violence from the state back into society. Today's violence is decentralised and retaliatory—anger released after years of humiliation, suppression, and forced silence. This is a classic post-authoritarian pattern: when fear collapses faster than institutions can be rebuilt, the muscle memory of violence remains. Klepto-fascism reprogrammes social behaviour, teaching citizens that law is irrelevant and that survival requires aggression. When such a system ends,



FILE VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

society does not instantly revert to civic norms; it suffers the withdrawal symptoms of a long coercive regime.

This is why framing current violence simply as the result of a "law and order failure" is analytically shallow. While current law enforcement has undoubtedly left a lot to be desired, we must acknowledge that what Bangladesh is dealing with are the aftershocks of a long coercive regime, compounded by a persistent security vacuum. The interim government did not inherit a neutral administrative machine, but a hollowed-out shell. The police force, civil service, and security apparatus were shaped by years of loyalty-based internal politics, partisan capture, and

exclusion—that policing alone cannot neutralise.

International experience points towards a different architecture for stability. Societies that experience low levels of everyday violence—such as the Nordic countries, Canada or New Zealand—are not peaceful because their citizens are inherently more virtuous or their police more brutal. They are peaceful because their economic and institutional systems prevent despair from becoming the dominant condition of youth. When people believe tomorrow will be better than today, violence loses its appeal long before police intervention becomes necessary. Bangladesh requires a three-fold structural transformation that

be met with swift, transparent legal consequences for all perpetrators, regardless of their current or former political alignment. Only when citizens see the courtroom as more effective than the street will the demand for mob justice subside.

Ultimately, restoring law and order does not mean restoring the past. It means dismantling a legacy of fear and replacing it with institutions that citizens trust and opportunities that young people can see. Idle, politicised young men cannot be policed into peace; they must be reintegrated into productive economic life. Law can suppress symptoms, but only dignity, opportunity, and legitimacy can cure the disease.

Why values-based education is crucial for our youth



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SYED ABDUL HAMID

Human life is not a calm, still lake; rather, it is a vast and often storm-tossed sea. In this sea, favourable winds sometimes blow, while at other times sudden cyclones disrupt everything and throw life off course. At every stage of life, these storms may take different forms—during childhood, they appear as challenges of discipline and behaviour; in adolescence, as emotional turbulence and identity crises; in youth, as temptation and loss of direction; and in adulthood, as moral compromise and neglect of responsibility.

Modern civilisation has placed in our hands fast-moving technology, comfortable lifestyles, and the alluring promise of glamorous careers. Yet amid this glittering surface, confusion, self-centeredness, consumerism, and moral laxity quietly take root. The question is, while sailing on this dazzling vessel, are we truly moving towards the real destination of life, or are we losing ourselves in a directionless journey driven by the illusion of visible success?

In today's reality, success is often

measured by exam scores, certificates, salary figures, etc. What these measures fail to capture, however, are honesty, compassion, a sense of responsibility, and the ability to make ethical decisions in moments of crisis. As a result, despite educational advancement, society is witnessing a visible erosion of humanity—corruption, violence, intolerance, and moral decay. Technology may enhance our capacity, but without moral development, that same power can become a tool of destruction. A technologically skilled but ethically bankrupt young person may engage in cybercrime, just as a highly educated but value-deficient professional can inflict grave harm on society.

Therefore, education without values cannot help individuals navigate life's storms. At every stage of life, different forms of moral guidance are required. If children are taught honesty, responsibility, and respect, they are far less likely to drift towards violence, dishonesty, or harmful subcultures during adolescence. Adolescence, in particular, is a highly

sensitive phase. Without value-based education, they can easily fall prey to substance abuse, violence, extremism, or self-destructive behaviour.

In youth, life's storms take on yet another form, containing career pressure, competition, financial success, and social recognition. When values-based education has already taken root, a young person learns that not all shortcuts lead to success, and not every gain brings genuine well-being.

In this context, education needs to be more than exam-based; it needs to be life-oriented. One effective and practical expression of such education is the establishment of wellbeing clubs in our schools and colleges, where extracurricular activities can represent a conscious and structured effort towards character development. Through these platforms, students can learn to recognise and manage their emotions and mental stress, cultivate empathy and teamwork, develop the courage to make ethical decisions, and form a positive and meaningful outlook on life. These qualities ultimately serve as a reliable navigation system for the turbulent sea of life.

In the present era, rising levels of mental stress, depression, and lack of self-confidence among adolescents and youth are deeply concerning. These challenges are often accompanied by growing intolerance and violent tendencies. Without institutional emphasis on mental well-being and values-based education, future generations will face

even greater risks. Wellbeing clubs can create opportunities for students to understand themselves, recognise their strengths and limitations.

However, such initiatives require the coordinated involvement of teachers, parents, and society. Teachers must become examples of values and ethical conduct. Parents must understand that character formation is far more important than academic grades. Society, in turn, must create an environment where honesty and humility are seen not as weaknesses, but as strengths.

At the state level, clear and structured action is essential. National education policies must prioritise mental well-being, life skills, and values-based education. Alongside the formal curriculum, effective implementation of initiatives such as wellbeing clubs can lay a strong foundation for future good governance, social stability, and humane development.

Ensuring that our children do not lose their way in the stormy sea of life is a shared responsibility. If we place a moral compass in their hands today, they will be able to steer the helm with courage even amid the fiercest storms of tomorrow. Let us therefore make a collective commitment to integrate values with education, humanity with skills, and ethics with success. Let this shared resolve become the lighthouse of the future, guiding coming generations towards a peaceful, dignified, and truly humane destination.

How Khaleda Zia approached economic reforms in 2001-06



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SADIQ AHMED

As the World Bank's sector director for Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM), I worked very closely on the reform programme in Bangladesh led by former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in 2001-06. As PREM sector director, I was responsible for managing policy-based lending operations, known as development support credit (DSC). I managed four such credits amounting to over \$1 billion, of which the first three were administered during 2003-2005. This lending, along with support from the IMF, was necessary to stabilise the balance of payments.

Below, I provide my analysis of how the reform programme was developed and implemented, and the major outcomes of the programme, with a view to demonstrating that substantial reforms can be implemented with good results under astute political leadership and a strong economic team.

To set the stage for the reforms, in early 2003, my vice-president and I called on Khaleda Zia at her office near the old Dhaka airport. She received us warmly and we had a one-hour conversation on the multiple economic challenges facing her government and the need for far-reaching reforms.

She listened intently as we described these issues and stated firmly that she was committed to implementing all necessary reforms. She said she would empower her finance minister, Saifur Rahman, and his team and provide all required political support. That was a stunning message and a clear signal of her delegated and inclusive management style, which is somewhat rare

in today's mostly autocratic global political leadership.

At the end of our meeting, her principal secretary, Dr Kamal Siddiqui, introduced me to her in Bangla, saying I was the leader of the World Bank's economic team and the senior-most Bangladeshi staff in Washington DC. She turned towards me and smilingly said, "I am delighted to meet you, and I hope you will keep an eye on our needs."

Since that meeting, there was no turning back. The Bangladesh core reform team was headed by Finance Minister Saifur Rahman and included Commerce Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, Principal Secretary to the PM Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, and Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan. This was, undoubtedly, an outstanding team of well-trained and seasoned policymakers. They combined academic excellence with sound administrative experience and political savviness—a rare combination these days.

The multi-year reform programme was far-reaching and was grounded in the government's own poverty reduction strategy paper. The reforms encompassed macroeconomic management, public finance, banking sector, trade policy, public enterprises, public financial management, procurement, public administration, and anti-corruption.

The reform programme was not only comprehensive, but also tough in many areas requiring careful political management. One such sensitive reform was the liberalisation of the exchange rate. In May 2004, I received a phone call from Finance Minister Saifur

Rahman, who said local Bangladeshi economists were strongly opposed to the liberalisation of the exchange rate as doing so would destabilise it. Since I believed that this reform was essential to support the expansion of exports, I suggested that I first talk with the Principal Secretary Kamal Bhai.

Kamal Bhai promised to brief the PM. I then called the finance minister and briefed him about my conversation with Kamal

commitment and delegated management style. Economic reforms are only meaningful if they yield results. The broad macroeconomic performance in the post-reform period is summarised in Table 1. The evidence paints a remarkable picture of progress. GDP growth expanded by an average of 1.3 percentage points per year, fuelled by increases in private investment and exports. Private investment responded to the deregulation drive in trade

The macroeconomy was stable despite exchange rate liberalisation. Inflation rate increased owing to taka depreciation and an increase in demand from rising investment, exports and GDP growth. The nominal exchange rate moved from Tk 57.9 per US dollar in FY2003 to Tk 67.1 per dollar in FY2006, amounting to an average depreciation of five percent per year. This re-alignment of an overvalued exchange rate was a critical factor for the surge in exports, which also benefited from trade reforms. But unlike the fear expressed by critics, the exchange rate did not overshoot or destabilise, and inflation hovered around six to seven percent per year.

Fiscal performance also improved as total revenues grew modestly and there was a reduction in subsidies owing to performance improvements in SoEs, energy pricing adjustments, and better management of the power sector. The increase in fiscal space and cutback in subsidies allowed some modest improvements in spending on health, education and social protection.

There was solid improvement in the banking sector as deregulation raised the asset share of private banks and lowered the share of the corruption-infested public banks. The portfolio quality improved dramatically as gross NPLs fell sharply from 28 percent to 13 percent. The number of banks with NPL exceeding 10 percent fell substantially from 21 in 2003 to 12 in 2006.

Moving forward, the main lesson is that only comprehensive and sustained economic reforms hold the key to improved economic performance. A second message is that there is no alternative to a first-rate economic team working seamlessly under the guidance of a strong finance minister. A final message is that astute political leadership is the ultimate key to success. The example set by Begum Khaleda Zia through her uncompromising political support for the reform programme and delegation of responsibilities to a competent reform team seals her place as a core champion of economic reforms in Bangladesh.

REFORM OUTCOMES FY2001-FY2006		
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	PRE-REFORM FY2001-FY2003	POST-REFORM FY2004-FY2006
Average yearly real GDP growth rate (%)	5.0	6.3
Average inflation rate (%)	3.0	6.5
Investment rate (end of period % of GDP)	30.8	33.2
Average yearly export growth rate (%)	7.1	17.2
Exports (\$ billion, end of period)	6.5	10.4
Reserves (\$ billion, end of period)	2.5	3.5
Nominal exchange rate (Tk/\$)	57.9	67.1
Gross NPL end of period (%)	28.6	13.1
Revenue to GDP (end of period %)	10.3	10.7
Fiscal deficit (end of period % of GDP)	3.4	3.2
Debt to GDP (end of period %)	51.1	49.3
Poverty (UPL Headcount %)	48.9 (2000)	38.4 (2005)
Labour productivity (Tk 000, 1995-96 prices)	53.5	60.0
SOURCE: BANGLADESH BUREAU OF STATISTICS, BANGLADESH BANK, MINISTRY OF FINANCE		

Bhai. The next day, Finance Secretary Zakir Bhai called to say the PM had approved. This is a strong testimony to Khaleda Zia's sound leadership. In similar tough situations involving banking, privatisation, and energy pricing reforms, the then PM again provided solid backing to her economic team. This was a remarkable demonstration of her reform

and investment. The surge in exports by 17.2 percent was truly remarkable. These laid the foundations for growth of employment and incomes. Average labour productivity expanded by 3.9 percent, supporting the rise in real wages and incomes. Poverty declined by an unprecedented 9.5 percentage points over the five years of 2000-2005.

Bring courts and legal aid closer to the people



Md. Arifujaman is additional district judge at Solicitor Wing of the Law and Justice Division at the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. He can be reached at arfujaman.md@gmail.com.

MD. ARIFUJAMAN



VISUAL: FREEPIK

Bangladesh's constitution promises equal legal protection for all, yet millions of citizens, especially in the rural areas, are left out of the justice process due to distance, delay, and exploitation. As courts and legal aid offices remain concentrated in district towns, pursuing justice becomes an unaffordable journey for many.

Take the case of Salma Begum (not her real name), clutching a folded bundle of papers at the Rangpur bus terminal. The documents include a police report, a legal aid certificate, and a handwritten list of dates she cannot read. Salma has been travelling since 4:00 am from her village to attend a hearing in a district court she never saw before. She knows that if she returns without progress, she will have to borrow money again.

For millions of Bangladeshis, this journey—physical, financial, and emotional—is what it takes to reach the justice system. The constitution promises equality before the law and protection of legal rights for all citizens. The state has enacted legal aid legislation to support those who cannot afford representation. Courts exist, judges are appointed, and reforms are regularly announced. Yet justice, for many, remains distant in the most literal sense.

Most judicial magistrate courts

and civil courts in Bangladesh have historically operated from district headquarters, even when they are formally assigned to serve individual upazilas. Legal aid offices are similarly concentrated in district towns. Abdul Karim (not his real name), a marginal

The constitution promises equality before the law and protection of legal rights for all citizens. The state has enacted legal aid legislation to support those who cannot afford representation. Courts exist, judges are appointed, and reforms are regularly announced. Yet justice, for many, remains distant in the most literal sense.

farmer from Bakshiganj, filed a civil suit after a neighbour encroached on his land. To attend hearings, he travelled more than 60 kilometres to the district court. Each visit meant losing a day's wage and paying for

transport and food. After months of adjournments, Karim stopped attending. The case did not end. His participation did. "I did not lose in court," he says. "I lost on the road." Such attrition is common. Cases collapse because persistence requires resources that the poor do not have.

Theoretically, legal aid is supposed to fill this gap. In practice, it often

constitution also empowers the state to organise and expand subordinate courts to meet public necessity, and recent judicial reforms mean that there could be more of them in the future. But the scarcity of upazila-level courts persists. This is not a legal limitation; it is a policy choice.

Establishing magistrate and civil courts at the upazila level would not be revolutionary. It would be corrective. Litigants would spend less on travel and lose fewer working days. District courts would see

reduced congestion. Court-annexed mediation could operate where disputes arise, rather than as a distant procedural option. Most importantly, relocating legal aid services to the upazila level would widen access. Justice functions best when it is local, visible, and accountable.

Neighbouring countries have experimented with bringing justice closer to citizens through local courts and community-based dispute resolution mechanisms like Gram Nyayalayas, which are

mobile, village-level courts in India, established under the Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008. Such models are not flawless, but they recognise a basic truth: justice that remains far away favours the powerful and exhausts the poor.

Bangladesh does not need sweeping new laws or ambitious declarations. It needs functional courts where disputes arise, and legal aid offices where poverty resides. A justice system that cannot be accessed cannot protect.

**AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment**

Invitation for Tenders

Notice No. 300/Ad/68/E-3/14

Dated: 06 January 2026

Military Engineer Services

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defence			
2	Agency	Military Engineer Services			
3	Procuring entity name	E in C			
4	Procuring entity district	Dhaka			
5	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)			
6	Budget and source of funds	GOB			
7	Development partners (if applicable)	None			
8	Project/programme name (if applicable)	Construction of Cancer Center at Dhaka CMH (2nd Phase)			
9	Selling of tender will commence from	15 January 2026 (During office hour).			
10	Selling of tender will close on	29 January 2026 (During office hour).			
11	Last date & time of submission of tender	01 February 2026 at 1200 hours.			
12	Date & time of opening of tender	01 February 2026 at 1230 hours.			
13	Name & address of the office(s)				
	- Selling tender document	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka & AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment.			
	- Receiving tender document	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka			
	-Tender Selling & Information document	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka			
14	Eligibility of tenderer	a. MES enlisted contractors Class 'C' for Lot No. 15(a). b. On receipt of DGFI clearance with others Department (equivalent classes) contractors may also apply for tender. c. Contractors having experience in similar works with enlistment in other govt., semi, government & autonomous organization may also apply. d. Having experience of similar work mentioned in Lot No. 15(a) amounting Tk. 2,60,00,000.00 in a single tender during last 05 (Five) years.			
15	Brief description of works				
Lot No.	Identification of Lot	Location	Price of tender document (non-refundable)	Tender Security in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order in favour of AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantt. (Taka)	Completion time in weeks/ months
1	2	3	4	5	6
a.	Manufacture & Supply of furniture for Construction of Cancer Center at Dhaka CMH (2nd Phase) (GP-01).	Cancer Center Dhaka CMH	5000.00	11,20,000.00	12 (twelve) months
16	Name of official inviting tender				
17	Designation of official inviting tender				
18	Address of official inviting tender				
19	Contact details of official inviting tender				
20	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders				

আইএসপিআর/সেনা/৯৮

GD-96

XEN E/M
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Works Directorate
Engineer in Chief's Branch
Dhaka Cantonment
Tel: Mili: 8711111 Ext: 2886
Civil: 9832886



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Dhaka Theatre announces Selim Al Deen memorial festivals

Dhaka Theatre has announced a multi-day programme to mark the 18th death anniversary of Natyacharya Selim Al Deen, one of the most influential figures in Bangla theatre, who passed away on January 14, 2008. Closely associated with Dhaka Theatre as its founding ideologue, Selim Al Deen's creative and theoretical contributions continue to shape modern Bengali theatre. The commemorations will begin on January 14 with floral tributes at his grave at 10am. Later that afternoon, Dhaka Theatre will host a seminar at the National Theatre of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, focusing on Selim Al Deen's ideas on Bengali aesthetics and his dualist-non-dualist theatre theory. The evening will feature a staging of his play Deyal, directed by Anik Islam. The programme continues with performances of Nimajjan on January 15, directed by Nasir Uddin Yousuff, and Rangmahal on January 17, directed by Faruk Ahmed, reaffirming Selim Al Deen's enduring legacy on the Bangladeshi stage.

Bangladesh Army x Pritom Hasan: Artiste opens up on unique collab

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

When Pritom Hasan recently shared a behind-the-scenes glimpse of himself singing amid army personnel, fans immediately sensed that something special was on the way. The image hinted at a unique and exciting collaboration between the popular singer and the Bangladesh Army. Anticipation grew further yesterday when the first official look was unveiled – a photograph of an army uniform accompanied by the caption, “15.01.26.”

Curious to know how this unique project came together, The Daily Star reached out to Pritom Hasan for more insight into the collaboration and the journey behind it.

“We were talking about this project for a long time,” Pritom shared. “We probably started discussing it back in December, but due to time constraints,



we couldn't execute it properly then. Still, we were determined to do something meaningful around the idea.”

For Pritom, the collaboration holds deep personal significance. “Ever since I was a child, I wanted to join the Army. Unfortunately, that dream never materialised because I was terrible at

studies, especially math. So when this opportunity came, I wanted to give my maximum effort and create something truly meaningful,” he said.

That childhood fascination eventually found its expression through art. Pritom explained that after initial discussions, he began shaping the project creatively. “We had several conversations and then created an audio concept. Monzur Anik came on board as the director. Rasel Mahmud *bhai* has penned the lyrics for this song. Previously, I've already worked extensively with Anik and Rasel *bhai* before, so there was a strong understanding between us.”

He went on to describe how the project evolved from an idea into a



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

visual reality. “I created a vision through the audio and showed Anik exactly what I wanted to do. He captured the shoot brilliantly. I'm extremely grateful to the Bangladesh Army for their cooperation. They supported us in every possible way during the shoot.”

For Pritom, the goal was clear from the start: to create something exceptional, both visually and sonically. “We definitely wanted to do something that hasn't been done before,” he said. “I'm truly happy with the outcome. Hopefully, it will resonate with the younger generation who are often drawn towards Hollywood and different styles. For them, this will be a real treat.”



Bella Hadid, Pedro Pascal raise \$5.4m for children in Palestine, Sudan

A Los Angeles benefit concert raised \$5.4 million for children's medical aid in Palestine and Sudan, bringing together musicians, poets and activists under the Artists for Aid banner. Organised by Canadian Sudanese artiste Mustafa the Poet and co-hosted by Bella Hadid and Pedro Pascal, the show took place at the Shrine Auditorium on January 10.

Proceeds will support the Palestine Children's Relief Fund and the Sudanese American Physicians Association. Performers included Alex G, Clairo, Daniel Caesar, Jazmine Sullivan, Lucy Dacus, Omar Apollo and Shawn Mendes. Chappell Roan appeared during Dacus's set; Mendes duetted with Maggie Rogers to cheers from fans.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?



'DHET!'

The Bangladeshi premiere of ***DHET!*** plunges viewers into a chaotic Dhaka night, following a ride-sharing motorcyclist racing against time to reach his next passenger. Written and directed by Ummid Ashraf, the short film captures the pulse of the city, blending suspense, urgency, and the unpredictability of urban life.

Date: Thursday | January 15, 2026
Time: 11am
Venue: Stamford University

NEWS

BNP rolling out centralised system

FROM PAGE 12
10C, Road 90 in Gulshan for that purpose. A research cell is also functioning from the premises, supporting campaign planning and analysis.

Party insiders said many of those working at the office are leaders and organisers affiliated with Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and other associate bodies.

The Election Steering Committee is coordinating logistics and monitoring whether candidates are implementing party instructions at the constituency level.

A central monitoring team is tracking candidates' activities, including voter engagement, compliance with party directives and use of digital platforms.

“The steering committee is closely watching how candidates are campaigning, how they are using social media and whether they are following central guidelines,” a senior organiser said on condition of anonymity.

The BNP's campaign strategy places strong emphasis on digital coordination. Party insiders said the digital operation includes an open hotline number, constituency-based committees, dedicated social media teams and legal aid committees to support candidates and activists.

The party's IT cell is preparing responses to what it describes as misinformation campaigns by rival parties, while IT wing members have been deployed to district units to coordinate with booth committees, form WhatsApp groups and train local organisers.

Campaign songs have also become a key tool for online mobilisation, party sources said, offering a simple way to spread messages and energise supporters through digital platforms.

Alongside digital efforts, the Election Steering Committee is providing technical and organisational support to

candidates nationwide.

Multiple rounds of training and workshops, both online and in person, have focused on voter outreach, message discipline and campaign coordination.

Social media managers assigned to candidates have received separate training, and coordinators have been appointed to supervise online activities and maintain consistency in messaging.

Specialised sessions have also been organised for polling agents, underlining the party's focus on election-day preparedness.

ABNP official familiar with the process said the party is seeking to professionalise its campaign by clearly defining roles and responsibilities at every level.

The party has also launched a call centre to maintain quick contact with grassroots activists and voters, respond to complaints and address election-related issues.

At the same time, the BNP is collecting detailed feedback from constituencies on rival campaign tactics and local voter concerns, including issues related to prices, agriculture, employment and public services.

Party leaders said this information is being fed back to the central office to shape issue-based campaigning and ensure candidates focus on local priorities rather than relying solely on national slogans.

Azharul Islam Mannan, the BNP candidate for Narayanganj-3, said he has been receiving regular instructions and guidance to strengthen public engagement.

“We are getting party instructions and advice to increase public engagement through local outreach,” he said, adding that the party has provided training both online and offline.

Mannan said workshops have been organised on working with the proposed

family card programme and engaging with farmers, reflecting the party's emphasis on social protection and rural issues.

“Central leaders are keeping regular contact with us, and clear guidelines have been given for campaigning on social media,” he said, adding that a dedicated media cell has been formed to support candidates' digital outreach.

Polling agents have also been identified for each centre, with training set to continue.

Rafiqul Islam Jamal, the BNP candidate for Jhalakathi-1, said the party has placed particular emphasis on grassroots-level training.

“In my constituency, the person handling my social media has been receiving training from the BNP,” he said, adding that potential polling agents have also been trained.

Faridpur-1 BNP candidate Khandaker Nasirul Islam said the party has already provided posters and other campaign materials, along with training for those managing his social media.

He added that polling agents have been instructed to strictly follow the election code of conduct.

Several candidates said they have not yet raised concerns about neutrality on the ground but noted that any irregularities observed during campaigning are being reported to the central leadership for action.

Party insiders said the level of centralised oversight marks a shift in the BNP's election strategy, reflecting lessons from previous polls.

“The leadership wants discipline, coordination and accountability,” a BNP strategist said. “Candidates know they are being monitored, and that creates pressure to follow instructions.” [Our Narayanganj, Faridpur and Pirojpur correspondents contributed to this report.]

82 officers, 13 detention centres identified

FROM PAGE 12

Of them, seven from CTC, four from Rab, two from DB and one police officer were directly identified by the victims by name.

In the report, at least five accounts from officers and soldiers specifically detailed the actions and orders of Major General Ziaul Ahsan, former director general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre (NTMC).

Brigadier Rashidul Alam, who served as Rab-1 commanding officer from 2009 to 2013, recounted an orientation session conducted by Zia where two victims were shot on a bridge in front of him as part of his initiation into the agency.

Hegave details of Zia's involvement in the enforced disappearance of BNP leader Ilias Ali to an internal inquiry board established by the Bangladesh Army in early September 2024 to investigate alleged crimes by Rab.

A soldier deputed to Rab Intelligence described an incident in which a victim tried to escape by jumping into a river. According to his testimony, Zia retrieved the individual and executed him on the spot.

A witness from the armed forces testified that Zia took a detainee out of a vehicle, stripped him, and shot him twice in the head at close range before dumping the body off a bridge.

Another officer described a pattern of executions in which victims were shot in the head at close range under Zia's supervision. He testified that 11 people were killed in succession, their bodies tied to cement bags and dumped into the Buriganga.

Another Rab Intelligence operative testified that Zia ordered the release of a “bomber terrorist” because the arrest had been witnessed by the public, saying it was not a “clean pickup”. The operative added that the individual was later abducted by Rab Intelligence members without witnesses, using interception.

Two security forces members provided direct testimony implicating Major Md Ashrafur Abedin Noushad in two cases of execution.

A witness from the armed forces said Noushad, “following Zia sir's lead”, took a target from a vehicle, shot him, and the naked body was seen falling from a bridge into the water.

Another soldier testified that after an execution, Noushad used tissues to clean faeces passed by victims out of extreme fear before being killed.

Brig Gen MH Hafizur Rahman, who was a senior officer of DGF's Counter Terrorism Intelligence Bureau (CTIB) in 2016, testified that he took part in the abduction of Brig Gen Abdullahil Amaan Azmi, acting on direct orders from then CTIB Colonel GS Col Kamrul.

Witnesses told the commission that Hafizur played a key role in CTIB's operations during a period marked by numerous abductions.

Maj Gen Kabir Ahmed, CTIB director between 2020 and 2022, told the commission he discussed Brig Gen Azmi's captivity with DGF directors general Lt Gen Saiful Alam and Lt Gen Ahmed Tabrej Shams Chowdhury.

Meanwhile, Maj Gen AKM Aminul Haque said the abduction order for Azmi came directly from Lt Gen Md Akbar Hussain, who served as the DGF director general from 2013 to 2017.

The 2024 Army Court of Inquiry also recorded that Akbar authorised the initial abduction and detention of Azmi in 2016.

Akbar admitted to the commission that he discussed Hummam Quader Chowdhury's disappearance and his family's release demand directly with then prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

The report also had a list of those involved with the enforced disappearance of Barrister Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem Arman between 2016 and 2024.

These include former Rab directors general Benazir Ahmed, Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, M Khurshid Hossain, and Md Harun Or Rashid; former additional directors general (operations) Md Anwar Latif Khan, Md Jahangir Alam, Tofayel Mostofa Sorwar, KM Azad, Md Kamrul Hasan, Md Mahbub Alam, and Abdullah Al Momen; and former intelligence directors Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad, Md Mahbub Alam, Md Sarwar-Bin-Kasem, Muhammad

Khairul Islam, Md Moshir Rahman Jewel, and Saiful Islam Sumon.

Former Rab DG Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun stated in his Section 164 testimony before the ICT that both he and the senior Rab leadership were fully aware that Arman was in their custody, stated the report.

Benazir Ahmed reportedly briefed his successor Mamun about Arman's detention at the TFI. Director Md Sarwar Bin Kasem also informed Mamun, while Saiful Islam Sumon was found to have had the key to the detention site as late as October 2024.

Additionally, Sheikh Hasina's security and military adviser Maj Gen Tariq Siddiqi was allegedly informed of Arman's detention and instructed the Rab DG to “keep him there”.

A soldier stationed at the TFI centre also testified against colonels Azad and Mahbub, and intelligence directors Moshir and Saiful Islam Sumon, stating that they visited the site, with the team alerted days in advance. He specifically recalled Jewel inspecting every cell on Eid ul-Fitr in 2023.

“Interviews of security force personnel across multiple years indicate that such inspections were routine, not exceptional. Taken together, the testimonies demonstrate senior-level knowledge, oversight and engagement with detention sites across the years,” the report stated.

The commission also found prima facie evidence against ADC Ahmedul Islam of the CTC, stating that he is accused in several complaints of enforced disappearance.

Meanwhile, a 56-year-old man, abducted by Rab-11 in 2017, testified that former Rab officer Alep Uddin tortured him severely. He said he was hung from cell bars by handcuffs for hours, during which he lost a fingernail from the abuse.

The report stated that all senior Rab leadership are culpable for the enforced disappearance of Arman, who was secretly detained at the TFI centre from 2016 to 2024.

“The assertion that the military lacked awareness of the conduct of its officers while on deputation cannot be sustained,” argued the commission.

Verdict in case against Hasina

FROM PAGE 12
Miah and former members -- Mohammad Khurshid Alam, Tanmoy Das, Mohammad Nasir Uddin, Shamsuddin Ahmad Chowdhury and Nurul Islam -- as well as incumbent director Kamrul Islam, former deputy director Nayeab Ali Sharif and former assistant director Mazharul Islam, and Prime Minister's Office former secretary Mohammad Salahuddin are among the other accused.

The court also set January 18 for arguments in another graft case against 18 people, including Hasina, Tulip and Hasina's nephew Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby.

The prosecution said the verdict in the case would be scheduled for delivery after the arguments.

Earlier, Hasina was sentenced to 26 years' rigorous imprisonment in four graft cases between November 27 and December 1 last year. Her daughter Saima Wazed Putul, son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, sister Sheikh Rehana and niece Tulip were also convicted in one of the four cases each.

Between January 12 and 14 last year, the ACC filed six separate cases with its Dhaka Integrated District Office-1 over alleged irregularities in the allocation of plots under the Purbachal New Town project.

The anti-graft body alleged that Hasina, in collusion with senior Rajuk officials, unlawfully secured six plots -- each measuring 10 kathas -- in the diplomatic zone of Sector-27 of the project for herself, Putul, Joy, Rehana, Bobby and Azmina, despite their ineligibility under existing regulations.

On March 25 last year, the ACC filed six charge sheets with the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka. Hasina was named as a common accused in all six cases.

On July 31, charges were framed against 29 people, including Hasina, Rehana, Joy, Putul, Bobby, Tulip and Azmina, in their respective cases.

Bashar urges Tigers to focus on performance

SPORTS REPORTER

With Bangladesh's participation in the upcoming T20 World Cup clouded by uncertainty, former selector and Chattogram Royals mentor Habibul Bashar has urged the players to focus on confidence gained from recent performances rather than dwelling on off-field issues.

Test captain Najmul Hossain Shanto had earlier remarked during the Sylhet phase of the Bangladesh Premier League that some form of disruption seems to arise before every World Cup, often affecting the team's focus. Bangladesh are currently in talks with the International Cricket Council (ICC) after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) decided not to play its World Cup matches in India, a situation that has inevitably shifted attention while players continue to feature in the BPL.

"You'll notice that before every World Cup, there's always some incident that takes place," Shanto had said in Sylhet. "As a player who has played one or two of these tournaments, I can tell you it affects us. But we act as if nothing affects us because we are professional cricketers."

Addressing the media after Chattogram's practice session on Tuesday, Bashar said the uncertainty should not distract the players.

"This situation is not in the hands of the players. If I were a player, I would focus on performing well in the BPL. While players naturally discuss these things among themselves -- talking about the present and the future is normal -- they are all professionals," Bashar said.

Bangladesh have played 24 T20Is since July last year, winning 14, and Bashar believes those performances should be the team's reference point heading into the World Cup. With the squad already announced and only limited scope for changes by January 31, the BPL remains the final platform for building confidence and pushing for any last-minute inclusion.

"While these are setbacks, we should be confident about how we have played over the last six months. We understand our brand of T20 cricket and our roles as a team. Instead of making excuses, we should focus on doing well in the World Cup," Bashar said.

Although he admitted such situations are undesirable before a major event, Bashar stressed that using them as excuses would only hurt the team's campaign.



Bangladesh usher in SAFF futsal era

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh begin their campaign in the inaugural SAFF Futsal Championship 2026 today against India in one of three opening-day matches at the Nonthaburi Stadium in Bangkok, Thailand.

The match will kick off at 4:00pm (Bangladesh time), a few hours after the Sri Lanka-Bhutan fixture opens the seven-team tournament, which will be streamed live on the Sportzworkz YouTube channel.

The encounter comes at a time of growing diplomatic unease between the two neighbours, adding an extra layer of intrigue to what is already a historic meeting in a new format of the game for both sides.

With traditional 11-a-side football still dominating fan culture across South Asia, the South Asian Football Federation have taken their first step towards promoting futsal in the region by launching separate competitions for men and women.

In the men's tournament, all teams will play each other once, with the table-toppers at the end being crowned champions.

None of the participating teams are established forces in futsal, but Nepal, Maldives and India are viewed as comparatively stronger sides than Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, largely due to their earlier exposure to the format.

For Bangladesh, this will be their second international futsal tournament, following their appearance in the AFC Futsal Asian Cup qualifiers last September. India, Maldives and Pakistan were also part of that competition, but none of them managed to progress.



India recorded a solitary win over Mongolia, while Bangladesh, Maldives and Pakistan lost all their group-stage matches.

Under Iranian coach Saeed Khodarahmi, Bangladesh remain in a learning phase, but the team believe they have taken steps forward after an extended preparation period. Their build-up included a one-and-a-half-month training camp, capped by a 10-day stint on a proper futsal court in Thailand.

"We are getting better every day," said Bangladesh captain Rahbar Wahed Khan at a pre-tournament briefing. "Futsal has just started in South Asia, and I want people in Bangladesh to keep supporting us."

Coach Khodarahmi, however, was keen to stress that the challenge is not unique to Bangladesh.

"Not only for Bangladesh, it is a challenge for every nation," he said.

"If you don't have futsal coaches, referees and stadiums, it becomes really difficult for everyone."

The Bangladesh-India clash also offers an interesting subplot, with both teams being coached by Iranians. India are led by Reza Kordi, who has set measured objectives for his side.

"Our main objective is to show clear progress in our playing style and establish ourselves as a strong emerging team in South Asian futsal," Kordi said, adding that his "players now have a better understanding of the demands of futsal".

Meanwhile, the SAFF Women's Futsal Championship got under way at the same venue yesterday. Bangladesh women's team, led by former national captain Sabina Khatun, will begin their campaign on Thursday against India, who opened with an emphatic 11-1 win over Maldives, while Pakistan and Bhutan played out a 1-1 draw.



Mane, Salah battle for AFCON glory

AGENCIES

Three years after they last shared a pitch, former Liverpool teammates Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah face each other again as Senegal meet Egypt in the Africa Cup of Nations semifinal in Tangiers on Wednesday.

It will be their first encounter since Liverpool's defeat to Real Madrid in the 2022 Champions League final, shortly before Mane left the club.

Mane has since moved from Bayern Munich to Al-Nassr in Saudi Arabia, while Salah remains at Liverpool despite speculation over a move to Saudi Arabia and reports of tension with coach Arne Slot before AFCON.

In Morocco, Salah has rediscovered form, scoring four goals in four matches as Egypt chase an eighth continental title.

However, time is not on his side. Approaching 34, the Egypt captain has twice lost the AFCON final, including the 2022 defeat to Senegal where Mane scored the decisive penalty in the shoot-out after missing earlier in normal time.

Egypt also lost to Senegal in a World Cup qualifying play-off soon after.

Senegal, defending champions, are aiming for a third final in four editions, while Egypt are desperate to reclaim supremacy after missing the 2022 World Cup and failing to lift AFCON since 2010.

Mane has acknowledged that the pressure is lighter on him now that he has already achieved continental success, while Salah openly admits this trophy remains the one major honour he is determined to win with his country.

The pair arrive in Tangiers with contrasting pressures: Mane defending Senegal's status as champions, Salah seeking redemption and a final chance at international glory.



Paris FC's Otavio and Timothee Kolodziejczak celebrate as PSG's Ousmane Dembele cuts a dejected figure after the French champions' shock 1-0 defeat to their capital rivals in the French Cup round of 32 on Monday. PSG midfielder Senny Mayulu described the loss as a "slap in the face" as they were knocked out just four days after winning their fourth consecutive French Super Cup. Newly promoted Paris FC, back in the top flight after a 46-year absence, stunned PSG at the Parc des Princes, with former PSG player Jonathan Ikone scoring the decisive goal in the 74th minute.

PHOTO: AFP

Alonso's swift Real exit: What went wrong?

STAR SPORTS DESK

Xabi Alonso departed Real Madrid saying he was "grateful to the club, players and fans", but the outcome appeared inevitable, waiting for it to be triggered by another fall.

That moment arrived on Sunday, when Real lost 3-2 to Barcelona in the Spanish Super Cup final in Jeddah -- a narrow defeat that was enough to end the reign of a coach appointed just seven and a half months earlier.

Even the scenes after the final whistle seemed to reflect the brevity and tension of Alonso's tenure at one of the most demanding clubs in the world, where the names on the team sheet often carry greater weight than the coach himself.

Kylian Mbappe, the club's top

scorer last season and again so far this term, was seen gesturing to his teammates to head straight down the tunnel instead of offering Barcelona the traditional guard of honour at the King Abdullah Sports City. Alonso appeared to urge him to stay, but eventually relented as Real left the pitch without any sporting gesture to their archrivals, who lead second-placed Los Blancos by four points in LaLiga.

The episode underlined the growing perception that Alonso did not have total control of the dressing room, as reports suggested a rift between him and several of the top players. Speculation about his future had been rife since Real endured a turbulent spell towards the end of 2025, when they lost three, drew three, and won only two of eight

matches. The team later recovered with five consecutive victories, including a Spanish Super Cup semifinal win over Atletico Madrid, before falling to Barcelona in the final.

Alonso had been backed with new signings after taking charge, yet a long list of injuries complicated his task -- a familiar challenge in recent times due to a congested football calendar.

The former Real midfielder was also unable to fully replicate the high-pressing, high-tempo style that had brought him success at Bayer Leverkusen. His players struggled to meet the demands of that system, a factor that ultimately contributed to his departure.

In pure numbers, Alonso's Real recorded 24 wins, six defeats, and four draws from 34 matches -- a return that would not normally prompt such a swift exit, were it not for the wider issues that continued to work against him.





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DB raid spirals into internal investigations

Officers accused of misappropriating Tk 2.8cr of seized cash

TOUSIF KAIUM

Officials at the Detective Branch (DB) of police are facing an internal investigation over alleged misappropriation of Tk 2.8 crore in cash said to have been seized during a raid to recover counterfeit currency in the capital.

The detectives, acting on a tip-off, conducted a raid in Wari on November 8 last year, recovering counterfeit currency and cash, and arresting two people.

In the seizure list prepared after the raid, officials recorded the recovery of counterfeit currency worth Tk 6 lakh and Tk 19 lakh in legitimate cash.

However, during interrogation, the detainees – Nurul Haque, 32, and Saidul Amin, 24, both Rohingya refugees from Teknaf – claimed detectives had seized a total of Tk 3 crore in legitimate cash, leaving out Tk 2.8 crore from official documents.

Shafiqui Islam, additional
SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



A group of women wait in line to buy rice and flour at subsidised rates from a TCB truck yesterday near the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial in Rayerbazar, Mohammadpur. Unable to cope with rising prices of essentials, more and more people from low- and middle-income groups are depending on the OMS (Open Market Sale) initiative.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

CAMPAIGN MONITORING BNP rolling out centralised system

From Gulshan, party seeks grassroots discipline in digital push

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has intensified preparations for the upcoming election, rolling out a centralised system of instructions, monitoring and training aimed at tightening control over grassroots campaigning and candidate activities.

At the heart of the operation is the party's Election Steering Office in Gulshan, which has emerged as the command centre for election planning.

From the office, the BNP is coordinating training programmes for grassroots leaders, overseeing digital campaign strategies and gathering constituency-level information to guide decisions on messaging and tactics.

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman's daughter Zaima Rahman has been regularly visiting the office and often spends several hours there, according to party sources.

The party has rented a four-storey building at House
SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Political leaders start getting armed escorts

127 of them are on 'risk list'

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and BAHARAM KHAN

Law enforcers have started providing security to top political leaders and election officials ahead of the national election after assessing their security risks or threats.

Alongside gunmen, some leaders are receiving police escorts and house guard deployments at their residences.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has provided police security and escorts, and gunmen, to 15 political leaders and government officials, according to officials of the home ministry and the DMP.

Additionally, the Special Branch has provided gunmen to 17 individuals, most of whom reside in Dhaka and nearby areas, Khondoker Rafiqul Islam, additional inspector general of Police Headquarters, told The Daily Star yesterday.

In addition to security for leaders, the government has also decided to issue firearms on application, The Daily Star has learnt from home ministry officials involved with the proceedings.

Following that decision, many leaders have applied for firearms, and at least 100 people have applied for gun licences so far, they said.

Among the top political leaders receiving police escorts are BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman and Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman, said a senior official at the DMP.

Besides them, four election commissioners and the chief election commissioner are also receiving police escorts from the DMP.

For the Jamaat ameer's security, the home ministry issued a letter on January 12 requesting the Inspector General of Police to arrange a gunman and deploy uniformed police members at his residence in Uttara citing existing security risks or threats.

In another letter issued on January 6, the ministry
SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Yunus seeks UN support to counter misinformation

STAR REPORT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday sought support from the United Nations Human Rights Office to counter a surge of misinformation targeting the February 12 elections.

"There has been a flood of misinformation surrounding the elections. It is coming from both foreign media and local sources," he told Volker Türk, the UN high commissioner for human rights, during a phone conversation, according to the CA press wing.

"They have flooded social media with fake news, rumours and speculation. We are concerned about the impact this may have on the elections," he added.

Türk said he was aware of the problem and offered the support of his office to address what he described as a growing challenge. "There is a lot of misinformation. We will do whatever is needed."

He added that the UN rights agency would work closely with Bangladesh to tackle the issue.

During the conversation,
SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

82 officers, 13 detention centres identified

Inquiry report details secret sites, executions and senior-level oversight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 211 uniformed personnel – 100 from the army, 98 from the police, five from the air force, five from the BGB, three from the navy, and one from the coast guard – were interrogated, the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances said in a report released yesterday.

Submitted to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus earlier, the report also contained a list of at least 13 secret detention centres where torture and enforced disappearance had taken place.

The centres were run by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit, the Detective Branch, and police units in Bogura, Cox's Bazar, Dinajpur and Bagerhat.

The cells run by police were located in the respective lines, while the CTTC held its detainees on the first and seventh floors of its office, the commission found.

The sites run by Rab included the Taskforce for Interrogation Cell (TFI) operated by Rab Intelligence, a detention centre referred to as the "clinic" located in a glass-facade building behind

PRIMA FACIE INVOLVEMENT

40 Rab officers

11 DGFI officers

11 police officers

9 officers of CTTC

6 DB officers

3 officers of Lawful Interception Centre

2 NSI officers

the Rab Headquarters, and cells inside Rab-1, Rab-7 and Rab-11.

Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence ran a Joint Interrogation Cell located in the same compound as the DGFI Headquarters, and the National Security Intelligence operated a secret detention centre in its Gulshan office.

The DB and CTTC often maintained weaker secrecy, allowing detainees to identify locations and officers, while Rab Intelligence and DGFI used tightly controlled systems to obscure identity and location, with military officers operating in a culture of institutional secrecy even without formal military oversight, said the report.

The full report details evidence found against key officers involved in enforced disappearance, with the operations codenamed "Golf Operations".

The commission also identified the prima facie involvement of 40 Rab officers, 11 DGFI officers, 11 police officers, nine CTTC officers, six DB officers, three Lawful Interception Centre officers, and two NSI officers.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

53 more aspirants now back in the race

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday upheld appeals from 53 aspirants, restoring their candidacy for the 13th National Parliamentary Election scheduled for February 12.

On the fourth day of hearings on appeals against returning officers' decisions to reject nomination papers, the EC reviewed 70 appeals. Of these, 53 were declared valid and 15 invalid.

The EC rejected the appeal of BNP-nominated candidate TS Ayub from Jashore-4 over allegations of loan default. However, it approved the nomination of his son, Farhad Sajid, who is contesting the same constituency as an independent candidate.

In Dhaka-2, Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Md Abdul Haque also regained his candidacy after the EC accepted his appeal.

The EC began hearing appeals on January 10 and will continue until January 18.

So far, 203 candidates have regained their candidacy over the past four days.

Earlier, 645 appeals were filed between January 5 and 9 during the scrutiny of nomination papers.

On January 4, the EC declared the nomination papers of 1,842 candidates valid and 723 invalid across 300 constituencies.

100 children killed in Gaza since ceasefire

Says Unicef, blames Israeli airstrikes, ground forces

AFP, Geneva

At least 100 children have been killed by Israeli airstrikes and ground forces in Gaza since the start of a tenuous ceasefire three months ago, the United Nations said yesterday.

The UN children's agency Unicef said that at least 60 boys and 40 girls had been killed in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territory since early October.

"More than 100 children have been killed in Gaza since the ceasefire," Unicef spokesman James Elder told reporters in Geneva.

"That's roughly a girl or a boy killed here every day during a ceasefire," he said, speaking from Gaza City.

"These children are killed from airstrikes, drone strikes, including suicide drones. They're killed from tank shelling. They're killed from live ammunition. They're killed from quad copters.

"We are at 100 – no doubt," he said, adding that the true number was likely higher.

"A ceasefire that slows the bombs is progress but one that still buries children is not enough." AFP has sought a response from the Israeli military.

An official at Gaza's health ministry, which maintains casualty records, has reported a higher figure of 165 children killed during the tenuous ceasefire, out of a total

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



The biting cold and thick fog left Sylhet city's streets largely deserted yesterday morning. The photo was taken at 8:30am in the city's Rikabi Bazar area.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

PLOT SCAM Verdict in case against Hasina, Azmina, Tulip on Feb 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday set February 2 to deliver the verdict in a case filed against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 17 others, including her two nieces – British MP Tulip Siddiq and Azmina Siddiq – over the Purbachal plot scam.

Judge Md Rabiul Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka fixed the date after hearing arguments from both prosecution and defence, said Anti-Corruption Commission Public Prosecutor Mir Ahmed Ali Salam.

Former housing and public works state minister Sharif Ahmed, former secretary Kazi Washi Uddin, former additional secretary Md Oliullah, former administrative officer Saiful Islam Sarkar, former senior assistant secretary Purabi Goldar, and Rajuk's former chairman Anisur Rahman
SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

