

SEAT-SHARING TURMOIL Discontent in 11-party combine deepens

RASHIDUL HASAN and MAMUNUR RASHID

The seat-sharing discord within the 11-party alliance has intensified, with mistrust growing between Jamaat-e-Islami and other key partners, particularly Islami Andolan Bangladesh and Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis.

The crisis has cast doubt on whether a final understanding can be reached before the January 20 deadline for nomination withdrawal.

The rising uncertainty became more clear yesterday when the alliance abruptly postponed a pre-scheduled press conference meant to announce its final seat-sharing plan for the February 12 national election.

IAB leaders said they learned of the announcement through the media, while Jamaat later said the programme was deferred due to a lack of preparations.

IAB held back-to-back meetings — one stretching late into Tuesday night at a madrasa in Rampura and another yesterday at its central office in Purana Paltan.

At both meetings chaired by IAB Ameer Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, leaders sharply criticised Jamaat for what they described as unilateral decisions that had eroded trust within the alliance.

Speaking to this newspaper, IAB Secretary General Yunus Ahmed said the dispute had raised a fundamental question over how much progress could still be made on seat sharing under the current circumstances.

He alleged that Jamaat had adopted a “go alone” approach, ignoring partners while taking key alliance decisions.

“To our utter surprise, we came to know about the matter from the media, which is really unexpected,” Yunus said, referring to Jamaat’s sudden announcement of the press conference.

After the meeting at the IAB central office, the party’s Joint Secretary

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IAB accuses Jamaat of making unilateral decisions on seat sharing, alliance matters

Jamaat offers 40 seats, but IAB wants 50

Jamaat says not all expectations of partners can be fulfilled

IAB says all options open, including breaking away from alliance



Students from seven colleges block the road at Tanti Bazar intersection yesterday, demanding the promulgation of an ordinance for the proposed Dhaka Central University. This blockade and several others resulted in gridlocks across the city, causing immense sufferings to commuters throughout the day. Story on Page 3.

PHOTO: STAR

MIGRATION TO US ‘Bangladesh, 74 countries to be hit by visa freeze’

AGENCIES

The United States will suspend processing immigrant visas from 75 countries, including Bangladesh, Fox News reported.

While the US has long denied visas to individuals deemed likely to rely on government welfare, the State Department said it will now use the same authority for a blanket suspension of immigrant visas based on nationality.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Iran, US cut contact

Trump vows ‘very strong action’ as Iran unrest toll tops 2,600; Tehran tells neighbours hosting US bases to expect retaliatory attacks

AGENCIES

Direct contact between the United States and Iran has broken down amid rising tensions over Tehran’s violent crackdown on protesters and growing fears of US military intervention.

A senior official told Reuters that communication between Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US special envoy Steve Witkoff has been suspended.

The development came as US President Donald Trump renewed his threat of “very strong action” on Iran, where rights groups say more than 2,600 people have been killed in one of the biggest protest movements against clerical rule since 1979.

Tehran, meanwhile, warned neighbours hosting US troops that it would hit American bases if Washington strikes.

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EDITOR’S NOTE

Thank you dear readers, patrons, well-wishers and advertisers

Yesterday, we completed 35 years of our “Journalism without Fear or Favour” and we did so “Unbowed”. This we could only do but for your unbridled, SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



We are pleased to launch a five-part, 200-page special supplement series beginning today, marking the newspaper’s 35th anniversary. The opening part, titled

“SHAPING TOMORROW WITH PEOPLE AND RIVERS.”

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5 STAR
SAFETY RATING

BNP slams EC 'silence' over rivals' polls code violations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday alleged that the Election Commission is failing to take action against candidates and supporters of some rival parties who are campaigning in violation of the electoral code of conduct.

"The Election Commission's indifference and the silence of election officials are creating obstacles to a fair election environment. This is inappropriate, and we hope they will change their ways," said Nazrul Islam Khan, chairman of BNP's Central Election Steering Committee, at a press conference in Gulshan last night.

Calling for a level playing field and equal opportunity for all parties, he pointed out that the EC issued a show-cause notice to a less prominent BNP leader for seeking votes using the sheaf of paddy symbol at a prayer gathering.

He also said a BNP nominated candidate and his daughter were served show-cause notices over a Facebook post.

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Iranians attend the funeral of security personnel killed in recent protests, in Tehran, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Media convention against attacks on free press Saturday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A media convention will be held in Dhaka on Saturday to protest against organised attacks on freedom of expression and democratic values, and to demonstrate a united stance in support of independent, responsible and courageous journalism.

The programme is being jointly organised by the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) and the Editors' Council.

Titled Media Convention 2026, it will take place at the auditorium of the Krishibid Institution, Bangladesh complex, from 10:00am to 1:30pm.

Organisers said democratic values in the country have come under sustained assault in recent times, particularly through incidents of mob violence, marking an unprecedented challenge to freedom of expression and democratic principles.

Journalists will speak at the convention on the need to protect democratic space and media freedom, ensure the safety of journalists, and uphold the professional dignity and rights of media workers.

Leaders of various journalist organisations, including the Association of Television Channel Owners, Broadcast Journalist Centre, Jatiya Press Club, Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, Dhaka Union of Journalists, Dhaka Reporters Unity, Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh, Economic Reporters' Forum, Photo Journalists Association and Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh, have been invited to the event.

Journalists working outside Dhaka, as well as editors, publishers, invited media professionals and columnists, will also take part in the programme, which aims to stand united in defence of responsible and courageous journalism.

Discontent in 11-party combine deepens Iran, US cut contact

FROM PAGE 1

General and spokesperson Gazi Ataur Rahman acknowledged the strain openly.

"There is no scope to deny that there are problems and crises in the alliance. We carry out our politics independently. So why should we be made to accept anything imposed on us by others?" he told journalists.

"If anyone does injustice to us, or insults or ignores us, we cannot take that lightly. Everyone has a sense of self-respect," he said, adding that compromise could only work in an environment of mutual respect. "If such an environment existed, the issue of more or fewer seats would not be a major problem."

Ataur also alleged that Jamaat candidates were campaigning in constituencies as if they were the sole nominees of the alliance. "If a party's candidate or their local leaders engage in such falsehoods, then it becomes difficult to move forward together," he said.

The IAB leader also hinted at the possibility of breaking away from the existing alliance and forging a new electoral arrangement with four like-minded Islamist parties.

"Anything can happen before the January 20 deadline for nomination withdrawal," he said, adding that discussions were continuing with parties that maintained relations of respect with IAB.

Asked whether the party might contest the election on its own, Ataur said no final decision had yet been taken, as talks were still underway with several groups and the next steps would depend on an overall assessment of the situation.

At the same time, he said, the situation had not deteriorated to a point where negotiations with Jamaat had completely collapsed.

Despite mounting dissatisfaction, IAB insiders said the party ameer has yet to take a final decision on whether to leave the alliance.

On its future, IAB Secretary General Yunus said, "Jamaat didn't do justice with us. In that case, we will finalise our decision whether to remain in the alliance, after discussion with our like-minded parties within a day or two."

IAB leaders said tensions grew after Jamaat allegedly held separate meetings with the National Citizen Party, Liberal Democratic Party and Amar Bangladesh Party to bring them into the seat-sharing arrangement without informing existing partners beforehand.

They also expressed resentment over Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman's meeting with BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, where he spoke in favour of forming a national government after the election. IAB leaders said they were not informed about the matter in advance.

IAB leaders recalled that the alliance talks began after the July mass uprising, when the party took the initiative to unite Islamist forces under a single banner and field single candidates in each constituency.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Majlis, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon and Bangladesh Nezam-e-Islam Party later joined the process, followed by Jamaat, and then Jatiya Ganatantrik Party and Bangladesh Development Party, as negotiations

expanded.

From the outset, IAB sought to contest more than 100 constituencies under the alliance, later scaling down its demand to more than 50 seats.

Jamaat, however, has offered 40 seats, an offer many IAB leaders remain unwilling to accept.

Khelafat Majlis, meanwhile, has demanded 25 to 30 seats, while Jamaat is reportedly willing to allocate a maximum of 20. If no agreement is reached, the party wants to keep its candidates open in those constituencies.

Several leaders of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, led by Mamunul Haque, also voiced concern over the renewed uncertainty. Its Secretary General Ahmad Abdul Qader said, "I believe the unity will remain. But some seats may have to be left open. We have said this before as well."

Multiple sources said Jamaat wants to retain around 190 to 200 seats for itself and negotiate with other parties for the remainder.

Responding to the allegations made by alliance partners, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General and alliance coordinator Hamidur Rahman Azad said, "Those who are making such allegations [regarding mistrust, division and conflict in the alliance] -- it is their own views."

Without naming IAB, he added, "If someone expects a lot, not all expectations can be fulfilled. We have to move forward together, taking everything into account."

On the postponed press conference, Azad said it would be held "soon", adding that the seat-sharing issue would also be finalised "very soon".

FROM PAGE 1

According to an Israeli assessment, Trump has decided to intervene, although the scope and timing of this action remains unclear, an Israeli official said.

The three diplomats told Reuters that some personnel had been advised to leave the US military's Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar by Wednesday evening. One of the diplomats described the move as a "posture change" rather than an "ordered evacuation".

Defying Trump's warnings and international pressure, Iranian authorities vowed to fast-track trials for what they describe as "rioters". Tehran has branded the protests as foreign-backed "acts of terror".

Iran's judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei said on a visit to a prison holding protest detainees that "if a person burned someone, beheaded someone and set them on fire then we must do our work quickly", in comments broadcast by state television.

Iranian news agencies also quoted him as saying the trials should be held in public.

Iranian prosecutors have said authorities would press capital charges of "waging war against God" on some detainees.

Trump has been openly threatening to intervene in Iran for days, though without giving specifics.

In an interview with CBS News on Tuesday, Trump vowed "very strong action" if Iran executes protesters. "If they hang them, you're going to see some things," he said. He also urged Iranians on Tuesday to keep protesting and take over institutions, declaring "help is on the way".

The Iranian official, a senior figure speaking on condition of anonymity, said Tehran had asked US allies in the region to "prevent Washington from attacking Iran".

"Tehran has told regional countries, from Saudi Arabia and UAE to Turkey, that US bases in those countries will be attacked" if the US targets Iran, the official said.

Iranian Defence Minister Aziz

Nasirzadeh said that his country has "many surprises" in store for any enemy that attacks it.

"If these threats are turned into action, we will defend the country with full force and until the last drop of blood, and our defence would be painful to them," Nasirzadeh said at a security meeting, according to Press TV.

He also warned countries that provide assistance for any strike on Iran that they "will be legitimate targets".

The flow of information from inside Iran has been hampered by an internet blackout.

US-based HRANA rights group said it had so far verified the deaths of 2,403 protesters and 147 government-affiliated individuals. An Iranian

of large funeral processions for people killed in the unrest in Tehran, Isfahan and Bushehr, and other cities. People waved flags and pictures of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and held aloft signs with anti-riot slogans.

Hengaw, an Iranian Kurdish rights group, has reported a 26-year-old man, Erfan Soltani, arrested in connection with protests in the city of Karaj, was to be executed on Wednesday. Hengaw yesterday told Reuters it had not been able to confirm whether the sentence had been carried out. Reuters could not independently confirm the report.

UN and the Amnesty International yesterday called on Iran to immediately halt all executions, including Soltani's.

While Iranian authorities have weathered previous protests, the latest unrest is taking place with Tehran still recovering from last year's war, and with its regional position weakened by blows to allies such as Lebanon's Hezbollah since the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led attacks against Israel.

Asked what he meant by "help is on its way", Trump told reporters on Tuesday they would have to figure that out. Trump has said military action is among the options he is weighing.

"The killing looks like it's significant, but we don't know yet for certain," said Trump upon returning to the Washington area from Detroit.

Once he has the numbers, he said, "We'll act accordingly."

Trump on Monday announced 25 percent import tariffs on products from any country doing business with Iran, drawing strong reaction from China which relies on Tehran for its oil needs.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov yesterday vowed to continue working with Iran despite threats of attacks and tariffs from the US.

Asked about US pressure on Iran, Lavrov said Russia will implement bilateral agreements, adding no external power can alter the nature of ties between the two countries.

- Defying Trump, Iran vows fast trials for 'rioters'
- US intervening; scope, timing unclear: Israel
- US withdraws some personnel from ME bases
- Russia says US actions damaging global order

official told Reuters on Tuesday that about 2,000 people had been killed.

A Western official said it did not appear the Iranian government was facing imminent collapse and its security apparatus remained in control. The crackdown had restored some calm, though the authorities had been impacted, the official added.

An Israeli government official said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet was briefed late on Tuesday about the chances of regime collapse or US intervention. Israel fought a 12-day war against its arch-foe last year.

Iranian state TV broadcast footage

Bangladesh, 74 countries to be hit

FROM PAGE 1

"The Trump administration is bringing an end to the abuse of America's immigration system by those who would extract wealth from the American people," Fox News quoted State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott as saying.

"Immigrant visa processing from these 75 countries will be paused while the State Department reassesses immigration procedures to prevent the entry of foreign nationals who would take welfare and public benefits," he added.

The spokesperson did not elaborate on the plan. According to the report,

the pause will begin on January 21.

Fox News said Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Somalia, Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, Brazil, Nigeria, and Thailand are among the affected countries. The State Department has not yet released a full list.

US President Donald Trump has long expressed his desire to reduce immigration from non-European countries.

The State Department said Monday that it has revoked more than 100,000 visas since Trump returned to office, setting a one-year record. The Department of Homeland Security reported last

month that the administration has deported more than 605,000 people, while 2.5 million others left voluntarily.

The latest measure does not affect tourist, business, or other visas, including those for soccer fans attending this year's World Cup, though the Trump administration has pledged to vet all applicants' social media histories.

In November, Trump vowed to "permanently pause" migration from all "Third World countries" following a shooting near the White House by an Afghan national that killed a National Guard member.

Stick to polls code or face action

FROM PAGE 12

Local party units have been asked to immediately report any incidents involving offensive language, provocative slogans or actions that could be used by rivals to file complaints or trigger legal complications.

Sources said the BNP's Central Election Steering Committee reviews such reports daily and, when necessary, contacts candidates directly to caution them against repeat violations.

In several cases, party leaders said candidates were advised to publicly clarify or tone down remarks after concerns were raised by the central leadership.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission has issued show-cause notices to at least five BNP nominees over violating the electoral code of conduct.

In Rajshahi-1, BNP candidate Sharif Uddin was served a notice for allegedly distributing warm

clothes and party flags among drivers. Joypurhat-2 BNP contender Abdul Bari and Sherpur-3 candidate Mahmudul Haq also received a notice for breaching the election rules.

In Chattogram-15, the EC took action against BNP nominee Nazmul Mustafa for seeking votes during a prayer event. Naogaon-6 BNP candidate Sheikh Md Rezaul Islam was served a notice for allegedly putting up posters and stickers before the official start of campaigning.

The BNP has also intensified surveillance of social media platforms, which party leaders see as a growing risk area for reputational damage.

Party sources said monitoring teams are tracking Facebook, YouTube, X and other platforms to identify speeches, video clips or live broadcasts by party leaders and activists that could harm the BNP's image or provide ammunition to rival parties.

In some instances, party officials

said statements made by local leaders on digital platforms were found to be poorly worded or politically counterproductive, opening the door for criticism from opponents.

"We have seen how a single clip can be taken out of context and spread widely. That is why we are paying close attention to what is being said online," said a party insider.

According to party insiders, some leaders have already been asked to remove or edit posts, while others have been advised to avoid live broadcasts without proper preparation.

BNP has circulated internal guidelines reminding candidates and activists of acceptable language, campaign etiquette, and legal boundaries to address the issues.

Party leaders said the guidelines emphasise issue-based campaigning, focusing on economic challenges, governance, public services and voter concerns rather than personal attacks or emotional rhetoric.

Mahfuz Anam
Editor and Publisher



Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, along with journalists and employees of the newspaper, celebrated Staff Day with much enthusiasm yesterday. On the occasion, many were recognised for their outstanding performance in 2025.

PHOTO: STAR

Star celebrates Staff Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star yesterday celebrated its Staff Day, marking the newspaper's 35th founding anniversary.

The event, held on the rooftop of The Daily Star Centre in the capital, began with a Pitha Utsab and cultural performances.

The programme also honoured journalists and staff for their dedication, courage, and excellence.

At the event, Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said the newspaper's 35-year journey is closely intertwined with Bangladesh's democratic history.

"Bangladesh's democratic journey is the journey of The Daily Star," he said, adding that the daily always strives to hold every government accountable.

Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of Prothom Alo, called The Daily Star "not just a newspaper, but a moral benchmark and a courageous voice for Bangladesh".

Referring to recent attacks on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, he said, "You can burn newsrooms, you can break buildings, but you cannot destroy the truth."

He described the attacks as "an attack
SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Protests, blockades paralyse the capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka experienced severe traffic congestion for at least five hours yesterday due to protests and blockades at key points, causing immense suffering for commuters throughout the day.

Students of Tejgaon College blocked the Farmgate area, demanding justice for their fellow student, while students of seven colleges blocked Science Lab, Technical Intersection and Tanti Bazar in Old Dhaka, demanding the issuance of an ordinance for Dhaka Central University.

Tejgaon College students blocked the Farmgate area, demanding justice for their fellow student, while students of seven colleges blocked Science Lab, Technical Intersection, and Tanti Bazar, demanding the issuance of an ordinance for Dhaka Central University.

The seven college students threatened to continue their blockade for an indefinite period until the government issued the ordinance. The protests brought several parts of the capital to a standstill, forcing many to walk for kilometres.

Police attempted to divert vehicles to alternative routes, but the move had little impact, leaving vehicles and passengers stranded on the roads for several hours.

An ordinary workday turned into an ordeal for thousands of commuters. Buses stood motionless while passengers, tired and
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DHS MOTORS

A subdued Sakrain

Last day of Poush arrives in Old Dhaka with fewer kites and fading traditions

RAKIB MADDER

The last day of Poush once meant Old Dhaka's rooftops bursting with laughter, with colourful kites filling the sky and engaging in playful aerial battles. This year, however, the familiar celebrations seem noticeably subdued.

Sakrain is a festival that has long defined winter in Old Dhaka.

Across neighbourhoods like Shakhariabazar, Sutrapur, Gandaria, Narinda, Kagitola and Lakshimbazar, kite shops stood stocked.

"Kite sales are much lower this year for various reasons. Last year, sales were much better," said Jitu Roy, a seller at Shakhariabazar.

His disappointment was echoed by

Santosh of Lakshimbazar, "We thought sales would increase on the final day, but it was disappointing. The Sakrain vibe just isn't there anymore."

The skies told the same story. A handful of kites appeared in the morning, but by afternoon, the air was still. As evening fell, fireworks, lanterns and music drowned out the traditional kite-flying that once defined the festival.

"Our Sakrain then and now are completely different," said Jamir, 42, a resident of Sutrapur. "Previously, the sky would be covered with kites. Now Sakrain mostly means DJ parties and fireworks."

Locals believe the nature of Sakrain has shifted over time, which is reflected

SEE PAGE 8 COL 8



NY Bangla book fair to be held from May 22 to 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 35th edition of the "New York International Bangla Book Fair" will be held from May 22 to 25 at the Jamaica Performing Arts Center in New York, USA.

Launched outside Bangladesh in 1992, the fair dedicated to Bangla-language books is marking its 35-year milestone this year with the slogan "As many books, so many lives."

The information was shared at a press conference yesterday at Jatiya Press Club. The event was organised by the fair's organiser, the Mukta dhara Foundation.

Mukta dhara Foundation President Prof Ziauddin Ahmed said, "The greatest joy of the book fair is that it brings together Bangla book lovers from all over America. Not only Bangla-speaking writers from Bangladesh and West Bengal, but also writers and readers scattered across Europe and other parts of the world join this fair, coming together out of love for the Bangla language in a land far from their roots."

Convener of this year's fair, economist Dr Nazrul Islam, gave the welcome address. Writer Sadat Hossain also spoke.

Cold persists in the north

Tentulia logs lowest temperature for sixth day



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A mild cold wave has continued to sweep across the northern districts of Panchagarh and Thakurgaon, disrupting daily life.

Tentulia in Panchagarh recorded the country's lowest temperature for the sixth consecutive day, with the mercury dropping to 8 degrees Celsius at 9:00am yesterday. Earlier, Tentulia recorded 7.5 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, 8.4 degrees on Monday, 7.3 degrees on Sunday, 8.3 degrees on Saturday and 6.8 degrees on Friday.

Wind speeds ranged between 8-10 kilometres per hour, while humidity stood at 98 percent, said Jitendranath Ray, acting officer of the Tentulia Weather Observatory.

Elsewhere in the region, temperatures were recorded at 9 degrees Celsius in Thakurgaon, 10.6 degrees in Dimla Nilphamari, 11.5 degrees in Dinajpur, 12.6 degrees in Rangpur, and 10.2 degrees in Rajshahi of Kurigram.

Despite the cold spell, residents have found some relief and engaged in normal outdoor activities with bright sunshine over the past two days. Meteorological officials said icy winds from the Himalayan region, coupled with nearly clear skies, have been intensifying the cold in northern districts. The weather situation is likely to remain unchanged over the next few days.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, temperatures between 8-10 degrees Celsius are classified as a mild cold wave, 6-8 degrees as a moderate cold wave, and below 6 degrees Celsius as a severe cold wave.

Seventy-two more aspirants now back in race

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seventy-two more aspirants yesterday regained their candidacy to contest the 13th national polls scheduled for February 12.

The Election Commission heard 100 appeals on the fifth day of reviewing appeals against returning officers' decisions to reject nominations. Of these, 73 were declared valid, EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said in a statement from the commission's headquarters in Dhaka.

Ten appeals were kept pending, he said.

In Kurigram-4, Jatiya Party candidate KM Fazlul Mandal filed an appeal against the candidacy of Bangladesh Supreme Party candidate Shefali Begum.

The EC upheld the appeal, noting that Shefali had retired from government service only a year ago, which disqualified her from contesting. Her candidacy was cancelled.

Of the 72 candidates who regained their nominations through yesterday's appeals, 24 belong to Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB).

Over the five days of hearings, the EC heard a total of 380 appeals. Of these, it approved 277 and rejected 81.

Akhtar said 23 appeals were kept pending for further hearing due to several reasons. The hearings will continue till January 18.

Asked about allegations that the government is campaigning for the referendum in violation of the Referendum Ordinance, the EC secretary said, "Ask those who are campaigning, why are you asking me?"



Hortex Foundation

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Memo No: Hortex/MD Recruitment/2026-784

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For details: Please see the website <https://hortex.portal.gov.bd>, www.hortex.org and Hortex Foundation Notice Board. This is the summary of the Recruitment Notice.

Dr. Mohammad Jahangir Alam

Joint Secretary (IC Branch), Ministry of Agriculture and
Managing Director (Addl. Charge)
Hortex Foundation

PRAYER TIMING	
JANUARY 15	
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7:30	
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ProNurse Project in Bangladesh

Cowater International Inc.
House-100 Road-25, Block-A
Banani, Dhaka-1213

INVITATION FOR TENDER

Memo No: PRN/GAC/Cowater Int/742/2026

Date: 15.01.2026

01. Procuring Entity Name	Dr. Lubana Ahmed, Project Director, ProNurse Project in Bangladesh Cowater International				
03. Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)				
04. Source of Funds	ProNurse Project, Cowater International Inc. (The Government of Canada provides funding for this initiative).				
05. Tender Name	Construction of Kumudini Nursing College, Mirzapur, Tangail				
06. Time for Completion of the Works.	The duration for completion of work (From the date of Commencement of Work as per contract) is described in the table in SL/No 9 below.				
07. Eligibility of Tenderers:	This invitation for Tender is open to all eligible Tenderers as per following criteria:				
	(a) PWD, HED, MES and/or LGED enlisted Contractors/Construction firms who have a minimum of 5 (Five) years of general experience in constructionworks under PWD, HED, MES and/or LGED.				
	(b) ABC Category of Electrical Supervisory License from Bangladesh Electrical Licensing Board is essential.				
	(c) Having experience in successful completion of at least 2(Two) number of construction work with a minimum 10 storied building foundation in a single tender under Government /Semi-Gov./Autonomous Organizations of Bangladesh during the last 3 (three) years mentioned in the table in SL/No 9 below. Work experience with basement and the construction of any training institution is an asset.				
	(d) Certificate to be submitted as per attached "Work Completion Certificate". The certifying authority shall be an officer not below the rank of Executive Engineer.				
	(e) The tenderers shall have a minimum average annual construction turnover during the last 5 (five) financial years (from FY 2020/21-2024/25) as mentioned in the table in SL/No 9 below.				
	(f) The minimum amount of liquid assets or working capital or credit facilities of the tenderer shall be as per the table mentioned in SL/No 9 below. Document submitted along with the tender must be issued within three months from the submission date of the tender.				
	(g) Working on construction projects funded by international donors/organization will be considered as an extra qualification.				
	Other required eligibility and conditions of the tender are shown in the Tender Data Sheet of tender documents.				
08. Price of Tender Document	Tk. 2,000/- (Taka two thousand) only in cash. The original money receipt must be enclosed with the tender.				
09. Amount of Tender Security	To be submitted in the form of a Bank Draft/Pay Order/Bank Guarantee. The amount is mentioned in the table below.				
	Location	Completion time, (Para 6) in Days	Amount single tender, Para 7(c) Tk. In Crore	Average turnover Para 7(e) Tk. In Crore	Liquid asset Para 7(f) Tk. In Crore
	The proposed Kumudini Nursing College will be built in the empty plot within Kumudini Welfare Trust, Mirzapur, Tangail.	18 months	10 Crore	15 Crore	3Crore
10. Name and address of the	Office of the ProNurse Project, House-100Road-25, Block-A Banani, Dhaka-1213.				
	a. Office Selling Tender Documents b. Office receiving Tenders c. Office Opening Tenders				
11. Tender publication date.	15.01.2026				
12. Tender selling last date and time	28.01.2026 up to 16.30 hours				
13. Tender submission last date and time.	29.01.2026 up to 11.30 hours				
14. Tender opening date and time	The tender will be opened on 29.01.2026 at 12.00 PM in the Office of the ProNurse Project, House-100Road-25, Block-A Banani, Dhaka-1213. Intending Tenderers or their authorized representatives may remain present during the opening of tenders.				
15. Name, Designation, and address of official inviting tender.	Dr. Lubana Ahmed, Project Director, ProNurse Project, Cowater International, House-100Road-25, Block-A, Banani, Dhaka.				
16. Contact detail of official inviting tender	Email: info@cowater-pronurse.com 01819245607				
17. Brief Description of Works	Construction of Kumudini Nursing College, Mirzapur, Tangail				
18. The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all the tenders or annul the tender proceedings at any stage of the tendering process.					
19. Special Instruction,	Tenders shall be examined and evaluated only on the basis of the criteria specified in the tender document. At the time of purchasing the Tender Schedule, the following documents must be produced and submit with the Tender document. a) Updated PWD/HED/MES/LGED enlistment certificate. (2024-2025) b) Updated ABC Category Electrical Supervisory License c) Up-to-date income tax clearance certificate. d) Valid VAT registration certificate. e) Up-to-date trade license. (2024-2025) f) Work completion certificate issued from PWD/HED/MES/LGED NOA/Work Order will be offered to the successful tenderer following the standard procurement process.				

Dr. Lubana Ahmed
Project Director
ProNurse Project in Bangladesh
Cowater International

Hortex Foundation

Strategic Partner of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Ministry of Agriculture under
Program on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Entrepreneurship and Resilience in Bangladesh (PARTNER)
Sech Bhaban (3rd Floor), 22 Manik Mia Avenue, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh
Telephone: +8802-48113239
hortex@hortex.org, hortex@hortex.gov.bd, <https://hortex.portal.gov.bd>, www.hortex.org

Request for Expression of Interest (REOI)

Memo No. HORTEX/PARTNER/SP of DAE/REOI/2026-983

Date: 14/01/2026

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has received credit (IDA Credit No. 7299-BD and IFAD Loan No. 200004603) respectively from the International Development Association (IDA) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) towards the cost of "Program on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Entrepreneurship, and Resilience in Bangladesh (PARTNER). PARTNER Program is designed to promote diversification, food safety, entrepreneurship and resilience in the agrifood value chains of Bangladesh. PARTNER is being implemented from July 2023 to June 2028 by seven implementing agencies (DAE-Lead agency, DAM, BARC, BADC, BARI, BRRI and BMDA) under the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, there are another eight agencies (BINA, BIRTAN, BJRI, BVMRI, SRDI, BSRI, CDB and Hortex Foundation) as Strategic Partner of the PCU-DAE. As Strategic Partner of DAE, Hortex Foundation is going to engage one program staff under the PARTNER Program.

(i) **Value Chain Promotional Officer: 01 (One) Position**
Academic Qualifications & Experience

- Academic:**
 - At least B.Sc in Agriculture/Agricultural Economics/Agricultural Engineering/Bachelor of Business Administration degree from a recognized University.
 - Masters in Agribusiness & Marketing, Food Technology or MBA in Marketing degree and professional certifications on supply chain, value chain development of agro-commodities from any recognized University/Institution will be given preference.
- Experience:**
 - At least 02 (two) years of relevant work experience in any Government/Autonomous/Private/International Organization
 - Minimum 01 (one) year of work experience in supply chain and value chain development of agro-commodity /Formation of farmers group/Production planning/Postharvest management (PHM)/Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)/Marketing/Export promotion etc.
 - Analytical capability in identifying and resolving value chain development issues.
 - Strong coordination and communications skills in presenting, discussing and resolving value chain promotional issues.
 - Ability to work efficiently and effectively in a stakeholder/farmers organization (FO) among other multidisciplinary team.
 - Excellent computer literacy/skills (MS Word, Excel, Power Point, statistical software etc.) are essential.
 - Excellent English writing and speaking ability.

- Now, Managing Director (Addl. Charge), Hortex Foundation invites eligible applicant (s) to indicate their interest in providing the services mentioned above. Interested candidates need to provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the services. Applicants are required to submit their Expressions of Interest (EOI) comprising of a CV (including employment history with duties and responsibilities) [one hard copy submit in sealed envelope and also a soft copy (MS word format) send to HORTEX official email hortex@hortex.org, hortex@hortex.gov.bd], a recent passport size photograph and a forwarding letter describing briefly the reasons that the applicant considers him/her-self best suited to perform the assignment under the Program.
- Details Terms of Reference (ToR), CV Template and other information will be available upon request from the address provided below either through email or in person. ToR and CV Template are also available in HORTEX Website: <https://hortex.portal.gov.bd>, www.hortex.org
- The Program Staff will be selected following the Public Procurement Rules and Act.
- Expression of Interest shall have to be submitted to the address below (in person, by mail or through email) by **29 January, 2026 by 5:00 pm** and be clearly marked as "Expressions of Interest for the position of Value Chain Promotional Officer" in the email's subject line or on top of the envelope. Any application submitted later than the specified date and time shall not be entertained.
- The Hortex Foundation authority/Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs without assigning any reason whatsoever. No TA/DA will be provided for attending interviews.

Dr. Mohammad Jahangir Alam
Joint Secretary (IC Branch), Ministry of Agriculture and
Managing Director (Addl. Charge), Hortex Foundation

'We want change, not destruction'

Iranian protesters reject US, Israeli interference

AGENCIES

As he wished the world happy new year, former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo extended particularly a warm message to Iranian protesters who had taken to the streets over spiralling living costs and state repression.

"Happy New Year to every Iranian in the streets. Also to every Mossad agent walking beside them," he wrote on X.

The message baffled and alarmed many, and helped feed speculation pushed by the Islamic Republic, the US and Israel itself that the protesters were being led by, or had at least been infiltrated by, Israeli operatives.



Observers use mobile phones to document, as one blows a whistle to alert people to the presence of Border Patrol commander Greg Bovino's convoy at a gas station, days after an ICE agent fatally shot Renee Nicole Good in Minneapolis, in Columbia Heights, Minnesota, US, on Tuesday. PHOTO: REUTERS



Sara, a 39-year-old from Tehran who was among those demonstrating, said she was confused by what Pompeo was implying.

"I don't know what Mike Pompeo really meant by that tweet saying Mossad agents were among the protesters," she told Middle East Eye. "Personally, I am suspicious that some parts of the protests were deliberately pushed toward violence."

"When you see the videos of places being set on fire, you feel this cannot be the work of ordinary people. It looks like they just want destruction," said Sara.

"We want regime change, but we do not want our country to be destroyed. And given Israel's record, it would not be surprising if they tried to exploit this situation."

She was also not thrilled by the prospect of an Israeli intervention.

Israeli army kills 6 in Gaza despite truce

US expected to unveil post-war leadership, say sources

AGENCIES

The Israeli military said yesterday it had killed six Palestinians in an updated toll from an exchange of fire in Gaza the day before, accusing them of violating the ceasefire in the territory.

The military said in a statement late on Tuesday that it had "killed two of six militants it had identified adjacent to its troops in western Rafah and that tanks had fired on them". It said they were killed in an ensuing exchange of fire, including aerial strikes, while troops continued to search for the rest, reports AFP.

Under a truce that entered into force in October following two years of war between Israel and Hamas, Israeli forces in Gaza withdrew to positions behind a demarcation known as the "yellow line".

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump was expected later yesterday to push ahead with his phased plan for Gaza's future by announcing the administration that will run the war-ravaged Palestinian territory, four Palestinian sources said.

Israel and Hamas in October signed off on Trump's 20-point plan which says that a technocratic Palestinian body overseen by an international "Board of Peace" is meant to govern Gaza for a transitional period. It is not to include Hamas representation.

The 14-member Palestinian body will be headed by Ali Shaath, a former deputy minister in the Palestinian Authority who had been in charge of developing industrial zones, the Palestinian sources said.

US control of Greenland 'vital' for air defense

Says Trump; Danish FM braces for Vance talks

AFP, Copenhagen

US President Donald Trump yesterday insisted the US needs to take control of Greenland, with Nato's support, just hours before crunch talks about the Arctic island with top Danish, Greenlandic and US officials.

Just hours before the meeting with US Vice President JD Vance was due to start, Trump said that US control of Greenland -- an autonomous territory belonging to Nato ally Denmark -- was "vital" for his planned Golden Dome air and missile defense system.

"Nato becomes far more formidable and effective with Greenland in the hands of the UNITED STATES. Anything less than that is unacceptable," he wrote on social media.

He said Nato "should be leading the way" in building the multi-layer missile defense system. "IF WE DON'T, RUSSIA OR CHINA WILL, AND THAT IS NOT GOING TO HAPPEN!" Trump wrote.

Just prior, Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen had sought to ease US concerns about security in Greenland, telling AFP Denmark was boosting its military presence there and was in talks with allies on "an increased Nato presence in the Arctic."

Trump has repeatedly threatened to take over the vast, strategic and sparsely populated Arctic island, and he has sounded emboldened since ordering a deadly January 3 attack in Venezuela that removed its president.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen and his Greenlandic counterpart were to hold talks later yesterday in Washington with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Vice President JD Vance.

Løkke said he was hoping to "clear up certain misunderstandings." But it remains to be seen if the Trump administration also sees a misunderstanding and if it wants to climb down.

Trump, when asked Tuesday about Greenland's leader saying that the island prefers to remain part of Denmark, said: "Well that's their problem."

"Don't know anything about him, but that's going to be a big problem for him," Trump said.

Trump said on Friday that he wanted Greenland "whether they like it or not" and "if we don't do it the easy way, we're going to do it the hard way."

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that an attack on a Nato ally would end the alliance.



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বিদ্যুৎ বন্ধের বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি এর জিএমডি, সিরাজগঞ্জ দপ্তরের আওতাধীন শাহজাদপুর গ্রিড উপকেন্দ্র আগামী ১৬ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬ তারিখ, রোজ শুক্রবার, সকাল ৮:০০ টা হতে বিকাল ৪:০০টা পর্যন্ত সম্পূর্ণ সাইট ডাউন থাকবে। এ সময়ে সিরাজগঞ্জ জেলার সিরাজগঞ্জ পল্লী বিদ্যুৎ সমিতি-১ এর আওতাভুক্ত এলাকা (শাহজাদপুর উপজেলার সম্পূর্ণ এলাকা), সিরাজগঞ্জ পল্লী বিদ্যুৎ সমিতি-২ এর আওতাভুক্ত এলাকা (বেলকুচি ও চৌহালী উপজেলার আংশিক এলাকা), পাবনা জেলার পাবনা পল্লী বিদ্যুৎ সমিতি-২ এর আওতাভুক্ত এলাকা (বেড়া ও সাখিয়া উপজেলার আংশিক এলাকা) ও নেসকো এর আওতাভুক্ত ইরিশেশন ফিডার বিদ্যুৎ বিহীন থাকবে।

অত্র এলাকার বিদ্যুৎ ব্যবস্থার উন্নয়নের স্বার্থে সম্মানিত বিদ্যুৎ গ্রাহকগণের সাময়িক অসুবিধার জন্য পাওয়ার গ্রিড কর্তৃপক্ষ আন্তরিক দুঃখ প্রকাশ করছে।

মোঃ মামুন সবুর
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, জিএমডি, সিরাজগঞ্জ

রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি
RUPALI BANK PLC
উত্তম সেবার নিশ্চয়তা

গাবতলী হাট শাখা, ঢাকা।

শাখার নাম পরিবর্তন

রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি-এর গাবতলী হাট শাখা ঢাকা এর নাম পরিবর্তিত হয়ে মাজার রোড শাখা ঢাকা নামে ব্যাংকিং কার্যক্রম শুরু করছে।

পুরাতন নাম রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি গাবতলী হাট শাখা ঢাকা উত্তর সিটি করপোরেশন গাবতলী, ঢাকা।	বর্তমান নাম রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি মাজার রোড শাখা ঢাকা উত্তর সিটি করপোরেশন গাবতলী, ঢাকা।
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সম্মানিত গ্রাহক, পৃষ্ঠপোষক এবং শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের ব্যাংকিং সেবা গ্রহণের জন্য মাজার রোড শাখা ঢাকায় যোগাযোগের অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

Govt inaction

FROM PAGE 12

He clarified that he does not blame political parties, as no party officially called for attacks on newspapers or journalists. Instead, he said, "Exactly eight months and 28 days after we submitted the report, the building where I work [The Daily Star] has been set on fire, and 28 media workers were almost burned alive. Even the fire service was obstructed from rescuing them."

He also expressed concern that the recommendations of the report might never be implemented by the current government.

Kamal made the remarks at a dialogue titled "Media Reforms: Present Progress and Future Imperatives", organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) at the Cirdap Auditorium in Dhaka yesterday.

Describing the attack on the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star buildings on the night of December 18, he said, "If the incident had occurred a few hours earlier, I too would have faced the same fate."

The journalist questioned the government's apparent inability to protect media institutions and highlighted how social media is increasingly being used to target journalists.

He accused the government of fostering a "culture of fear" by creating and validating mobs as "pressure groups."

CGS Chairman Zillur Rahman also criticised the government's inaction over the attacks on the two media houses. At the same time, he expressed concern that media organisations themselves appear disinterested in addressing their own problems or achieving true independence.

Ruhin Hossain Prince, former general secretary of the Community Party of Bangladesh, said a culture of fear has replaced traditional censorship in the media.

Other speakers at the event included journalists M Abdullah, Muktaadir Rashid, Kazi Jesin, Supreme Court lawyer Shihab Uddin Khan, NHK TV representative Parveen F Chowdhury, and BNP member Mir Arshadul Huq.

31 killed after crane falls on train in Thailand

64 hurt; construction firm vows to compensate victims

REUTERS, Sikhio District

A train derailed in northeastern Thailand yesterday after a construction crane fell on two of its carriages, killing at least 31 people and injuring 64, the health ministry said.

The accident took place in the morning in the Sikhio district in Nakhon Ratchasima province, 230 km (143 miles) northeast of Bangkok, on a train from the capital bound for Ubon Ratchathani province.

Transport Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn said in a statement that there were 195 people on board, adding that he had ordered a thorough investigation to be carried out.

Will boycott all matches

FROM PAGE 12

If Najmul does not step down by today's first match of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) between Chattogram Royals and Noakhali Express, scheduled to begin at 1:00pm at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka, CWAB president Mithun has threatened to "announce a boycott of all cricket".

Earlier in the day, Najmul told the media that the board owes no compensation to players if Bangladesh miss the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup, set to begin on February 7 in India and Sri Lanka, arguing that the BCB has never sought refunds from cricketers after poor performances at global events.

"The question [of compensation] does not even arise. We have invested so much on them, they haven't been able to achieve anything, anywhere. Have we won a single global trophy till now?" Najmul said.

"Then we could've said every time, you have failed to perform, whatever we have spent on you, now we will take it back. Return it to us," he added.

Following these comments, CWAB held an internal discussion before announcing its demand, during which the BCB issued a press release, saying it won't take any responsibility for Najmul's remarks.

"The board expresses its sincere regret for remarks that may be deemed inappropriate, offensive, or hurtful. Such comments do not reflect the values, principles, or official position of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, nor do they align with the standards of conduct expected from individuals entrusted with the responsibility of serving Bangladesh cricket," the press release read.

"The BCB reiterates that it does not endorse or take responsibility for any statement or remark made by any director or board member unless issued formally through the board's designated spokesperson or the Media & Communications Department.

"The Bangladesh Cricket Board also makes it clear that it will take appropriate disciplinary action against any individual whose conduct or comments show disrespect towards cricketers or cause harm to the reputation and integrity of Bangladesh cricket," it further read.

Najmul had previously courted controversy after labelling former Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal an "Indian agent" in a social media post after the cricketer had urged the board to consider the interests and future of Bangladesh cricket during its communications with the ICC to relocate World Cup matches from India.

Several national team and first-class cricketers then rallied behind Tamim, expressing displeasure at the comments made against a former captain.

CWAB demanded a public apology from the BCB director and sought appropriate action from BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul.

The BCB president had stated during a press event in Sylhet that the board had requested the director to issue a clarification, but also noted that his comments were made in a personal capacity.

Meanwhile, there was no progress on Bangladesh's request to relocate its T20 World Cup matches. On Tuesday, the BCB reaffirmed its decision not to travel to India for the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup, citing security concerns, during a video conference with ICC officials.

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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

BNP man's death in custody demands proper probe

It is also in the interest of the army's public image

It is concerning to learn that Shamsuzzaman Dablu, 52, general secretary of the BNP's Jibannagar municipal unit in Chuadanga, died while in army custody supposedly during a late-night joint forces operation, a fact acknowledged by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). Any death in custody, regardless of the allegations involved, raises grave constitutional and legal concerns.

The sharply conflicting narratives provided by the army and eyewitnesses about the incident demand scrutiny. According to the ISPR, Dablu died after "falling ill" during the joint forces operation on Monday. The ISPR press release also states that he was detained from a pharmacy near an upazila health complex on allegations of possessing illegal weapons. It further claims that the patrol team later searched the pharmacy and recovered a 9mm pistol, one magazine, and four rounds of ammunition. However, two local BNP leaders and eyewitnesses have alleged that Dablu was tied up, gagged, and beaten for between one-and-a-half to two hours at the BNP party office before being taken to hospital. Family members have also alleged that he was tortured to death.

These divergent accounts make an independent investigation imperative. According to our report, the Chuadanga superintendent of police confirmed that the local police had not been informed about the army operation. This is quite puzzling and raises procedural questions about oversight, coordination, and accountability in internal security operations. We welcome the army's immediate withdrawal of the personnel involved and its promise of a high level investigation. But while an internal probe is necessary, it will not, on its own, be sufficient to ensure public confidence.

Protests by local residents and BNP activists indicate that this has become a matter of broad public concern. Human rights organisations Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) and Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF) have described the incident as a grave violation of human rights, emphasising that no member of the security forces is above the law and that the state bears an absolute responsibility to protect those in custody. According to ASK, 29 people were killed extrajudicially or died as a result of torture in custody between January and November last year.

We therefore call for a transparent and independent investigation, not just an internal military inquiry. The army must also fully cooperate with any such investigation, including by producing all personnel involved, operational records, medical reports, and CCTV footage, if available. This is essential not only for justice but also for upholding the army's public image and institutional credibility. Accountability must be visible and lawful, reinforcing that the rule of law applies to all institutions. Failure to act decisively risks normalising deaths in custody—a chilling phenomenon reminiscent of Awami League-time authoritarian trends, and one that must be unequivocally rejected by any future elected government.

Make roads safer for our children

Enforcing road safety measures must be a national priority

Road crashes remain one of the worst threats to children's safety in Bangladesh. According to the latest report by the Road Safety Foundation, in 2025, as many as 7,359 people were killed by road crashes, of whom 1,008—13.7 percent—were children. This is a stark reminder of the state's failure to protect its youngest citizens from a preventable death. The Road Safety Foundation has found that most child deaths from road mishaps occur in rural areas, where reckless traffic, unsafe road conditions, and lack of pedestrian infrastructure combined create a deadly situation.

Alarming, pedestrian deaths accounted for nearly half of child fatalities last year. Of the children who died on the roads, 44 percent were aged 13-17 years. Rural roads, which run close to homes and lack traffic control, are particularly unsafe for children. Additionally, small vehicles such as three-wheelers pose a serious risk to children on the highways. Analyses also show that midday is the most dangerous time, when children are moving between homes, schools, and playgrounds.

Children are inherently more vulnerable on the roads, as experts point out: their height and lack of experience make them less visible to drivers, and they are often inattentive when moving in groups. Therefore, taking particular measures for children's safety is necessary. Common measures taken in other countries include adult supervision while crossing roads, school buses, road awareness campaigns, and special measures around schools. But such measures are largely absent in Bangladesh.

The report by the Road Safety Foundation should serve as a warning that urgent, efficient action is needed to prevent further child fatalities and injuries on the roads. The government must treat road safety as a national priority, with targeted policies to protect children. Families, schools, and communities must be educated on safe road use, while strict law enforcement, improved road design, child-friendly infrastructure, and regulation of drivers and vehicles are urgently required. Political parties must include road safety in their manifestos as they prepare for the upcoming national election. Without proper measures and effective enforcement of the law, our children will remain vulnerable on the roads.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Wikipedia founded

On this day in 2001, Wikipedia, a free internet-based encyclopaedia that operates under an open-source management style, was launched. It was founded by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger.



The interim has little to show in foreign aid governance



Muhammad Muktadirul Islam Khan is principal researcher and head of consultants at the Sustainability Action Learning Lab. He can be reached at muktadir@sustainabilitybd.org.

MUHAMMAD MUKTADIRUL ISLAM KHAN

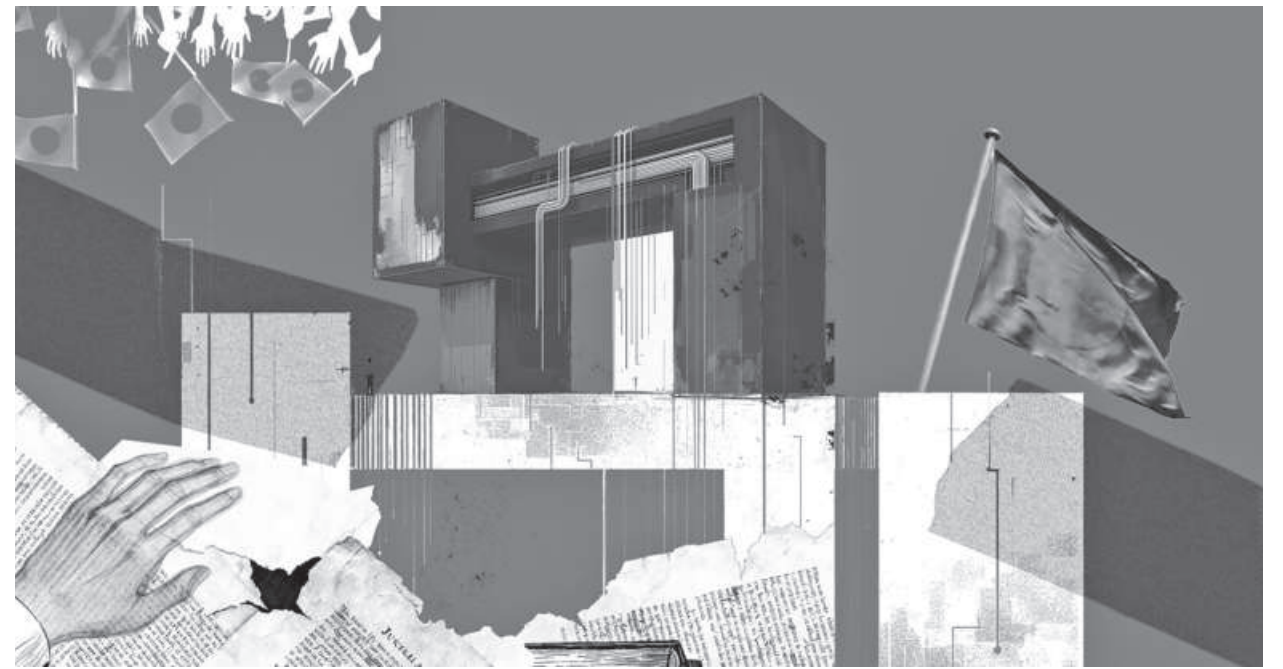
It has been 17 months since the interim government assumed office. Given that several advisers and key policymakers are known for their familiarity with the foreign aid ecosystem—some having played important roles in shaping the country's development trajectory—the nation expected visible improvement in the management of external loans and grants channelled through the government system. If we take into account the FY2024-25 budget ratios, foreign aid accounted for 37.7 percent of the Annual Development Programme (ADP), the core policy instrument through which the country's development priorities are operationalised. Expectations from the interim government rose further when it placed governance reform at the centre of its mandate. Yet, as the country moves closer to a national election scheduled for February 12, the critical question dominating the policy debate is: how far has the interim administration actually strengthened foreign aid governance in practice, and what key lessons must the next elected government carry forward?

The interim government assumed office at a time when Bangladesh, under the previous administration, had been mobilising large annual external resource flows. Disbursement of foreign assistance reached a record high of \$10 billion in FY2021-22. Although foreign fund utilisation hovered between 11 percent and 13 percent from FY2010-11 to FY2020-21, it improved over the next three fiscal years, reaching as high as 19 percent by FY2023-24—the highest in more than a decade. External partners also continued to provide large-scale financing, including budget support, indicating their confidence in macroeconomic management and stated reform commitments, at least at the negotiating table. However, the country remained constrained by a structural absorptive capacity bottleneck driven by chronically weak execution. Foreign aid was also loan-dominated. Using FY2023-24 data, the loan-to-grant ratio stood at 92:8, showing how the country's external financing was structurally debt-based rather than grant-driven.

In this context, the interim administration was expected to deliver measurable improvements and governance innovations in foreign aid management and implementation, creating replicable benchmarks for

the next elected government. So, if the promise was reform, and the measure is performance, how much has the government actually delivered?

Compared to FY2023-24, foreign aid commitments fell by 22.5 percent and disbursements by 16.6 percent in FY2024-25, the first full fiscal year under the interim administration. The external resource model also remained structurally loan-dominated: in the first six months of FY2024-25, the loan-grant composition stood at around 87:13, and by year-end it worsened further to 94:6 (as per an ERD report), reinforcing the country's



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

deepening reliance on borrowing rather than concessional grants. Early FY2025-26 data show that commitments and disbursements of foreign loans have picked up again, with loan commitments rising by 133 percent in the first five months, even as debt repayment pressures continue to climb.

Yet, external financing has not stopped flowing. Japan announced a \$1.063 billion package in FY2024-25, including a \$418 million development policy loan and a \$641 million loan for rail modernisation. The World Bank signed a \$850 million financial package in April 2025 to help Bangladesh with developing the Bay Terminal deep sea port and modernising the national social protection system. Earlier in

December 2024, it announced a \$1.16 billion package to help with inclusive and climate-resilient development. The Asian Development Bank also approved a \$400 million loan in June 2025 to build resilience against climate impacts, curb emissions in climate-critical sectors, and promote inclusive development. This steady stream of loans underscores an uncomfortable truth about aid governance.

Bangladesh is receiving external resources largely as concessional debt that is increasingly policy-driven, but the interim government has not demonstrated commensurate improvement in delivery systems, absorptive capacity, or the institutional discipline required for effective aid governance. In effect, the state is becoming better at mobilising loans than at utilising them for timely implementation and measurable development outcomes.

The deeper concern, however, lies in absorptive capacity—where foreign aid governance either succeeds or collapses—and Bangladesh's recent

months.

Foreign aid governance is ultimately judged by delivery, yet the state's absorptive capacity continues to erode under layers of procurement delays, overcentralised approvals, and weak project readiness. When implementation remains hostage to slow contracting, poor monitoring, and a culture of spending without results, every new loan agreement becomes a future repayment burden rather than a development gain.

The interim government's foreign aid record so far reveals some hard realities. Loans and financing packages continue to arrive, yet commitments and disbursements have declined, and absorptive capacity has weakened further. In a loan-dominated aid regime, this is not merely inefficiency; it is a fiscal risk. Seventeen months was sufficient time for the interim administration to establish a visible reform footprint in foreign aid governance. At a minimum, the country should have seen a stronger project readiness

regime, faster procurement cycles, stronger monitoring discipline, and a public transparency framework for the aid pipeline and its results.

The lesson for any future elected government is clear: foreign aid governance cannot remain a negotiation-centred exercise; it must become an execution-centric discipline. Bangladesh needs a rules-based delivery system that enforces readiness, compresses procurement timelines, rationalises the pipeline, and links every external loan to measurable outcomes and repayment capacity. Without these reforms, the country will remain trapped in a cycle of borrowing to finance its development ambitions, while failing to build the institutions needed to deliver them.

Is Greenland the 'two-bigha land' of Upen?



Md. Firoj Alam is a development consultant.

MD. FIROJ ALAM

The world has felt the tremor. In a move ripped from a darker, forgotten chapter of history, the United States under President Donald Trump invaded Venezuela, abducting its leader Nicolás Maduro and his wife. The international community stood stunned. The justification was thin, the act brazen: a raw demonstration of power that seemed less a product of 21st-century statecraft and more a relapse into the law of the jungle. The clock appeared to turn backwards to an era where kings captured rival kings, holding them for ransom in a dungeon. This, we are told, is the new "greatness." And from this audacity, a new target has been fixed: Greenland.

Trump's initial threat to seize the vast, icy landmass has now softened, at least in rhetoric, to an offer to purchase it. However, in the context of the Venezuelan gambit, this offer rings not as a business proposition, but as an ultimatum disguised as a deal. Greenland, an autonomous territory under the Kingdom of Denmark, finds

itself in the precarious position of a chess piece on a board where only one player seems to be making the rules. Its strategic location, closer to Washington than to Copenhagen, is cited as geographical logic for a political *fait accompli*. However, the US itself holds territories adjacent to other nations. Does proximity alone confer a right of possession? The precedent being set is chilling, a 21st-century echo of the Doctrine of Discovery, where might, not right, redraws the map.

The European response has been a predictable chorus of outrage and protest. Denmark and fellow European nations voice their disapproval. Yet, beneath the diplomatic statements lies a profound and unsettling helplessness. Europe's capacity for meaningful resistance has atrophied. Decades of sheltering under the American security umbrella, of allowing their own martial muscles to weaken within the comfortable confines of Nato, have left them mostly

strategically enfeebled. They entrusted their defence to the very power that now flexes its strength against their interests. Their protest is the formal complaint of a tenant to a landlord who has already decided to sell the building.

For the US, Greenland is like Upen's two bighas of land. The wealthy landlord covets his poor neighbour's

Greenland, an autonomous territory under the Kingdom of Denmark, finds itself in the precarious position of a chess piece on a board where only one player seems to be making the rules.

small, adjacent plot not for its inherent value, but to perfect the geometry of his own estate. The irregularity offends him; its acquisition would make his property a flawless rectangle. Similarly, Greenland represents a missing piece in the puzzle of security for the US. Its acquisition is about strategic tidiness, about eliminating irregularity in the nation's defensive perimeter.

This pursuit is primarily motivated by a strategic desire to enhance national security and establish a

more robust defensive posture. By acquiring Greenland, the US could consolidate its influence over the Arctic—an increasingly important geopolitical region—and expand its network of early warning radars and missile defence infrastructure. This move would strengthen the northern defensive perimeter and limit the ability of rival powers, such as Russia or China, to establish a strategic presence in the North Atlantic. Ultimately, such a move is designed to secure long-term American regional dominance and reduce the strategic options available to global competitors.

The conclusion echoes Upen's landlord's cold calculation: "If we get it, the width will be two bighas and the length will be equal, that must be given." The "must" here is not one of mutual agreement, but of imperial will in a world where rules are for those who lack the strength to break them.

The story of Greenland, therefore, is more than a potential real estate deal. It is a litmus test for our age. It asks whether the international system built over the last 75 years can withstand the return of the kind of logic it was designed to prevent. When one partner decides to become an overlord, the fragility of alliances is revealed. The world holds its breath, watching to see if the map of the 21st century will be drawn in diplomatic ink, or etched by reckless, retrograde ambition.

When institutions falter, the defence of RTI falls to citizens

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SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

While 2025 was a year marked by despair over the paralysis of Bangladesh's right to information (RTI) regime, the beginning of 2026 has brought a welcome note of resistance and resolve. One may recall that the departure of all three information commissioners in September 2024 effectively rendered the Information Commission defunct, leaving RTI users frustrated and the law itself dangerously adrift. Yet, rather than surrendering to institutional inertia, RTI activists who persisted in using the law throughout 2025, however hesitantly, began the new year with a clear and defiant pledge: transparency and accountability will not wither through neglect.

At a meeting held in Dhaka on January 8, activists from across the country, joined by prominent representatives of leading civil society organisations, announced plans to form a citizens' platform to coordinate collective action, support embattled RTI users, and confront the persistent intransigence of public authorities who continue to treat the



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

With the Information Commission inactive, oversight mechanisms have effectively vanished. Public officials, already inclined towards secrecy, now face little consequence for ignoring requests, delaying responses, or invoking exemptions indiscriminately. Predictably, RTI applications have declined and successful disclosures have become rare. A law that exists only on paper risks becoming a symbol rather than a tool.

institutional enforcement but because of the quiet perseverance of a relatively small yet committed group of users—journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens—trained and supported by a handful of dedicated NGOs. Their steady engagement demonstrated that access to information could improve service delivery, expose maladministration, and strengthen democratic participation. It was never a mass movement; it was a living one.

That fragile ecosystem has been severely shaken in recent times. With the Information Commission inactive, oversight mechanisms have effectively vanished. Public officials, already inclined towards secrecy, now face little consequence for ignoring requests, delaying responses, or invoking exemptions indiscriminately. Predictably, RTI applications have declined and successful disclosures have become rare. A law that exists only on paper risks becoming a symbol rather than a tool.

Yet, the response of RTI activists at the dawn of 2026 signals an important truth: transparency is not solely an institutional function; it is also a civic practice. Laws alone do not guarantee accountability;

citizens do, too. When oversight bodies fall silent, organised public pressure becomes indispensable. The proposed citizens' platform reflects this understanding. Its objective is not confrontation per se, but rather coordination, sharing strategies, offering legal and moral support to users facing obstruction, and reminding public authorities that the right to information is neither suspended nor negotiable.

This development also invites broader reflection on why RTI regimes struggle not only in Bangladesh, but also globally. Across countries, similar patterns recur: bureaucratic resistance rooted in colonial-era secrecy; weak record management; overbroad exemptions; under-resourced oversight bodies; and political cultures uncomfortable with scrutiny. Even mature democracies struggle with delayed disclosures and administrative gatekeeping. The lesson from this is sobering but instructive: transparency requires constant vigilance. This is more so in Bangladesh where an interim government that came to power riding on popular support for democracy and people's power seems to

have fallen into familiar patterns of resistance to transparency and accountability.

Bangladesh's experience underscores another uncomfortable reality. While governments often champion transparency rhetorically, commitment tends to waver when disclosure becomes inconvenient. The absence of information commissioners for more than a year is not a technical oversight; it reflects a deeper ambivalence towards accountability. Restoring the commission with qualified, independent, and adequately supported members is therefore essential, a task that the interim government was well-placed to perform but failed to do. However, restoration alone will not suffice unless accompanied by a clear political signal that the RTI Act truly matters.

In this context, the emergence of a citizens' platform serves as a corrective to the state's failure. But civil society and citizens cannot, and should not, permanently fill an institutional vacuum. However, history shows that reform is often propelled from below. In the absence of formal enforcement, collective civic action by an alert citizenry can keep the

law alive, prevent further erosion, and build pressure for institutional revival.

The timing is also crucial. As Bangladesh approaches another political transition, commitments to democratic governance will inevitably be tested again. Political parties, policymakers, and public officials should recognise that a functioning RTI regime is not a threat but an asset. Transparency enhances trust, improves policy outcomes, and strengthens the legitimacy of public institutions. Conversely, neglecting RTI fuels suspicion, alienation, and cynicism—costs no society can afford.

The activists who gathered in Dhaka on January 8 have issued a quiet but powerful reminder: that rights, once granted, cannot be allowed to lapse through indifference. Their determination to organise, support one another, and persist despite institutional paralysis deserves not only admiration but also support from civil society, the media, and all citizens who value accountable governance.

The RTI story for Bangladesh in 2026 is still being written. It can either become a lullaby of a democratic promise quietly allowed to fade, or a testament to how citizens can revive a stalled reform through collective resolve. The choice lies not only with the state, but with all of us. Transparency, after all, is not merely a legal entitlement; it is a shared civic responsibility.

The forthcoming national election provides a timely opportunity for political parties to renew their pledge to the people for better governance, an objective that can best be achieved with the active participation of citizens ready to unearth the failings, inaction, negligence, misdeeds and outright corruption of public officials entrusted with serving the public interest, through the effective use of the RTI Act. But for the citizens' resolve to be fully unleashed, political parties aspiring to form the next government must make their commitment unmistakably clear: that they are genuinely prepared to promote a participatory democracy in which citizens are encouraged to act as vigilant watchdogs of good governance.

No other law matches the scope of the RTI Act in enabling this vital democratic purpose. To demonstrate their seriousness, political parties must commit that, if voted to power, they will immediately fill the three vacant information commissioner posts with independent, competent, and politically neutral individuals. Equally important is a clear pledge to make the law more citizen-friendly by removing provisions that obstruct transparency and deter accountability.

Bangladesh needs lawmakers, not dealmakers



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ABU AFSARUL HAIDER

A total of 3,407 aspirants collected nomination papers after the schedule for the 13th national election and the July Charter referendum was announced. Of them, 2,582 candidates have submitted nomination papers to contest 300 parliamentary seats. This will be the first national election after the mass uprising that toppled the previous regime. Once again, the country has entered a familiar season of promises, posters, processions and political bargaining. For ordinary citizens, elections should be a time of hope. Yet, for many, they have become a reminder of how little changes after the votes are counted. At the heart of this disappointment lies a hard truth: in Bangladesh, politics has stopped being a service and has turned into a business.

As a political career has become highly profitable and full of material rewards, more and more people are drawn to it, and new parties continue to emerge. In healthy democracies, politics is about serving citizens. Members of parliament are elected to make laws, represent people, and hold the government accountable. In Bangladesh, however, many MPs have been historically more involved in financial and executive matters than in lawmaking. They influence which development projects are approved, who receives government contracts, and who is appointed to key local posts. Tenders, land deals, and public works often move forward not on merit, but on political connections. As a result, an MP seat has become one of the most attractive business opportunities in the country.

In Bangladesh's 54-year political history, many candidates have entered parliament with modest assets, only to leave office with

If Bangladesh is serious about change, reform must begin by redefining the role of MPs, who should have no authority over development projects, tenders, recruitment or administrative postings. Their responsibility should be limited to making laws, reviewing policies, debating the budget, and holding the government accountable. Local development should be handled by strong and transparent local governments that answer to citizens.

vast wealth, multiple properties and business interests. Studies by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) have shown that a large number of MPs report sharp increases in wealth during their time in office, often without clear or believable sources of income. Over the years, newspapers have routinely reported how MPs act as informal authorities over procurement committees, land allocation and even local policing decisions. This mixing of political power with financial control has turned parliamentary seats into high-return investments.

The problem begins even before election day. Election campaigns are extremely expensive, far beyond legal limits. Candidates borrow heavily, invest their own funds, or depend on wealthy backers. Once elected, they feel pressure to recover their investment by using access to public resources. Development projects, instead of being chosen based on need or technical value, become tools for making money. Bureaucrats, contractors and local power brokers become part of this system, creating a cycle where corruption becomes normal.

As the next election approaches, if the deep link between politics and money stays firmly in place,

it will have serious consequences. MPs who benefit from government contracts cannot properly question ministers. Parliamentary sessions become weak, poorly attended and unproductive. Laws are passed with little debate, while real decisions are made outside parliament. At the same time, local government institutions remain weak because MPs dominate roles that should belong to elected local bodies and

in wealth should automatically trigger an investigation. The privileges linked to political office also need review. MPs receive cars, allowances, housing and pensions that are far removed from the lives of ordinary citizens. At a time when people struggle with rising prices, unemployment and poor public services, such benefits send the

wrong message. Politics should not promise comfort. It should demand sacrifice and responsibility.

Making politics unprofitable will not be easy. Those who benefit from the current system will strongly resist change. But the cost of inaction is far greater. Inequality will deepen, institutions will weaken further, and public

trust will collapse. This election gives Bangladesh a chance to reflect and reset. If we are serious about fighting corruption and restoring trust in democratic institutions, we must remove money from politics and politicians from money. Only then can the parliament reclaim its rightful role as the guardian of people's interests.

বিসিএসআইআর চট্টগ্রাম গবেষণাগার
বাংলাদেশ বিজ্ঞান ও শিল্প গবেষণা পরিষদ

Issue No. 39.02.1506.068.17.043.26 Date: 14-01-2026

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of tender	Last date and time for tender selling	Last date and time for tender closing	Date and time for tender opening
01.	1213152	Repair & Maintenance works of 3 Nos. Flats at Rupsha-2 in the campus of BCSIR, Ctg Labs.	27-Jan-2026 16:00	28-Jan-2026 16:00	28-Jan-2026 16:00
02.	1213153	Repair, Maintenance & Renovation works of Medicinal & Aeromatics Research Division Essential Oil Separation and Product Formulation Laboratory Room No. 331, 332 in the campus of BCSIR, Ctg Lab.	27-Jan-2026 16:00	28-Jan-2026 16:00	28-Jan-2026 16:00

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

Dr. Barun Kanti Saha
Dr. Barun Kanti Saha
Director (Additional In-charge)
BCSIR Chattogram Laboratories
Chattogram-4220

GD-107

Huzaiifa on life support at NINS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nine-year-old girl from Cox's Bazar who was struck by a stray bullet fired from Myanmar on Sunday has been placed on life support at the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospital (NINS) in Dhaka.



She is under observation at the ICU, said Humayun Kabir Himu, an associate professor at NINS, and her uncle, Shawkat Ali.

Huzaiifa Anan, a class 3 student from Teschi Bridge of Whykong union, was shot during clashes between Arakan Army and Rohingya armed groups inside Myanmar.

She was taken to CMCH and later shifted to NINS after doctors failed to remove the bullet lodged in her throat. The bullet remained stuck in her throat, but she suffered a stroke as it damaged the veins that supply blood to the brain. This also increased pressure on her brain, and she was put on mechanical ventilation (life support), said doctors.



Sixty-year-old Rahima Begum sits in a newly planted Boro paddy field under the winter morning sun, shaping lumps of mud to make a stove. The photo was taken recently in Babuganj upazila of Barishal.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Star celebrates Staff Day

FROM PAGE 3

on freedom of expression and the right to question power" and urged journalists to remain courageous while exercising caution.

Kamal Ahmed, consulting editor of The Daily Star, said the spirit of practising journalism without fear or favour will endure as long as the newspaper survives.

Aasha Mehreen Amin, joint editor of the newspaper, said, "Yes, many challenges came our way last year, but there were positive moments too – several of our journalists received awards for investigative and business reporting."

"Over the years, our journalism has improved, but there is always room for growth, and that is what we must strive for in the future," she added.

In a message read out by Aasha Mehreen Amin, Simeen Rahman, director of Mediaworld Limited, said the newspaper remains "a fearless guardian of facts and a pillar of Bangladesh's

democracy".

She praised the Daily for upholding "journalism without fear or favour" since 1991, reflecting the vision of its founding chairman Latifur Rahman.

The event, hosted by Naziba Basher, also featured speeches from Imran Faiz Rahman, director of Mediaworld Limited, among others.

During the programme, 34 journalists and staff members were honoured for outstanding performance.

Mashfiq Mizan and Naimur Rahman won the Best Investigative Reporting-2025 award for their joint investigation by The Daily Star and Tech Global Institute, which revealed how a Dhaka neighbourhood became a hotspot of state-sanctioned killings during the July uprising.

Md Mohiuddin Alamgir was named Best Reporter, while Md Abbas and Sajjad Hossain received the "Special Recognition-2025" award for their outstanding

performance throughout the year.

Osham-ul-Sufian Talukder was awarded "Best Sub-Editor-2025".

Nafis Almas Siam and Subrata Roy won the "Most Promising Sub-Editor - 2025" award.

S Dilip Roy was named Best District Reporter, and Palash Khan won the Best Photographer award.

Other awardees included Tamanna Khan (Best in Editorial & OP-ED-2025), Debashis Kumar Day (Best in Creative Graphics-2025), Prabir Das (Most Talked-About Photo-2025), Mohammad Refayet Ullah Mirdha (Best Business Reporter-2025), Masukuj Jaman Tapader (Best in Star Sports-2025), Prajukta Roy Chowdhury (Best in Digital Desk [English]-2025), SK Abdullah Ibne Karim (Best in Social Media-2025), Abu Talha (Best in Digital Desk [Bangla]-2025), Maisha Tasnim Sreshtha (Best in Arts & Entertainment-2025) and Rahfat Salman Abir (Best in Print Business-2025). Staff members from

other departments were also recognised. They are Md Monsur Ali (Evergreen Employee of the Year-2025), Muhammad Tanjim Ferdous (Best in Development Sector-2025), Rajeeb Ahmed Khan (Best in Marketing-2025), Anowar Hossain (Best in Accounts-2025), Gulam Kibria (Production Person of the Year-2025), Mazidul Mobarok Rayhan (Circulation Person of the Year-2025), Md Istiak Ahmed Bappy (Best in HR & Admin-2025), SM Intisab Shahriyar (Best in Star Lifestyle-2025), Shams Rashid Tomoy (Best in Tech & Startup-2025), Abir Hossain (Best in Campus, Rising Stars & Star Youth-2025), Miftahul Jannat (Best in Slow Reads-2025), Tafsir Ahmed Sagar (Best in Multimedia-2025), Md Imam Hossain Chowdhury (Best in IT-2025) and Md Arif Hossain (Best in Digital Operations-2025).

The DS Revenue Team received the Team of the Year-2025 award.

Protests, blockades paralyse

FROM PAGE 3

reaching Shahbagh, he got stuck in a severe traffic jam. It took him three hours to travel from Shahbagh to Farmgate, he said.

"With traffic like this, I don't even know if I can earn enough to pay today's CNG deposit," Hamid said.

Jahangir Alam, 55, a resident of Gazipur, spoke to this correspondent at 4:15pm at Farmgate.

He said he had gone to Banglamotor for some work. After finishing, he boarded a bus to return home. However, it took him over half an hour to move just 100 to 150 yards from Banglamotor.

"As I heard that students had blocked roads in the Farmgate area, I got off the bus and walked to Farmgate," he said.

As the students withdrew the blockade around 4:30pm, traffic started moving at a snail's pace.

Meanwhile, students of Dhaka College and Eden Mohila College blocked the Science Lab intersection around 12:30pm, demanding the issuance

of an ordinance for Dhaka Central University. They first gathered on their campuses and later marched towards Science Lab. Vehicular movement in the area came to a halt.

The students withdrew their blockade around 5:45pm. Before leaving the Science Lab area, they held a press conference, where they said they would block the three key points again today.

Students of Government Bangla College blocked the Technical Intersection around 12:00pm with the same demand. They left the area around 3:30pm, according to SM Jakaria, officer-in-charge of Darussalam Police Station.

The traffic situation in the area worsened as a result, he added.

Students of Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College and Kabi Nazrul Government College blocked the Tanti Bazar area around 11:15am, creating a huge tailback.

The students left the area around 2:15pm, said OC Mahfuzul Haque of Bangshal Police Station.

A subdued Sakrain

FROM PAGE 4

in dwindling sales and a shift in forms of celebrations.

A Gandaria resident said, "We have been celebrating Sakrain since childhood. It was always the festival of Old Dhaka's people. But now that spirit seems to have been lost."

Jannatul Ferdous Ela, a student from Kaltabazar, recalled how people from different areas once gathered. "That doesn't happen anymore. I fear the festival may slowly disappear." Police, meanwhile, focused on safety. Assistant Commissioner Fazlul Haque of Kotwali zone said kite flying is permitted, but steps were taken to curb fireworks and DJ parties at night.

"We have held several meetings with local representatives, and police patrols remain active to handle any untoward situation," he said.

Ziaul charged with over 100 killings

FROM PAGE 12

Ziaul stood up and replied, "Not guilty, sir."

According to the first charge, acting on Ziaul's planning and with his direct participation, one Sajal and three unidentified individuals were shot dead along the Bypass Road in Pubail, Gazipur, on July 11, 2011.

The second charge alleges that between 2010 and 2013, at least 50 people, including former BDR member Nazrul Islam Mallik and Alkas Mallik, were shot dead at the confluence of the Baleswar River in Barguna, and their bodies were dumped into the river on Ziaul's instruction.

The third charge states that between 2010 and 2013, Ziaul was involved in the killing of another 50 people in Barguna and the Sundarbans in Bagerhat, among other places, under the guise of anti-forest bandit operations.

Earlier, on January 8, Ziaul's defence counsel, Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury, sought his client's discharge, claiming his client was innocent. He argued that none of the three charges was supported by evidence and that the allegations were unfounded.

The prosecution opposed the plea, saying it had established a prima facie case and urged the tribunal to frame charges. After hearing both sides, the tribunal fixed yesterday to deliver its order.

Earlier on December 17, the prosecution brought formal charges accusing Ziaul of orchestrating a systematic campaign of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

It alleged that while serving in key intelligence and operational roles in Rab, Ziaul directly participated in and commanded operations in which detainees were abducted, tortured, and killed, and their bodies were disposed of to conceal evidence.

The former director

general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre faces charges of murder, abduction, torture, enforced disappearance, and other crimes against humanity, including complicity in and failure to prevent crimes under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

Meanwhile, upon a plea by a member of Ziaul's defence team and his sister, Nazneen Nahar, the tribunal directed jail authorities to allow the defence to play a piece of video evidence for the accused in jail.

In a separate development, the tribunal granted a plea filed by Md Tabarak Hossain Bhuiyan, a defence counsel representing seven former Rab officials accused in another case of crimes against humanity, to visit the alleged crime scene related to enforced disappearance, confinement and torture at the Task Force Interrogation (TFI) cell, accompanied by a prosecution team.

The defence also sought a tribunal order directing the Rab chief to provide official documents, including Rab's organogram and Charter of Duties, to prepare defence materials. The prosecution opposed the request, saying it would communicate and try to provide authenticated copies.

Prosecutor Abdus Sattar Palwan told the tribunal the defence was filing petitions to "kill time", prompting Tribunal chair Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder to caution him, saying that the defence has the right to defend.

Defence lawyer Tabarak also filed a petition seeking bail for one of the accused, Brig Gen Md Jahangir Alam, citing his heart ailment. He argued that Jahangir surrendered while commanding a brigade, despite having the opportunity to flee, and would not abscond if granted bail. The tribunal kept the petition on record for consideration.

AL supporters are spreading fake news and misinformation in an attempt to create confusion about the elections, he said. "But people are alert. Increasingly, they can detect AI-generated misinformation videos," he said.

Gombis agreed that fake news had emerged as "one of the main enemies" of democracy worldwide and stressed the need for greater efforts to combat the threat.

During the hour-long meeting, Yunus and the visiting diplomats discussed a wide range of

Bangladesh halts on-arrival visas

FROM PAGE 12

Force (ISF) for Gaza, Touthid said Bangladesh has not yet taken a decision on sending forces.

"It is still at the discussion level. It has not been determined who will be part of this initiative. Most importantly, three conditions have been mentioned clearly. Under no circumstances will Bangladesh join without an environment consistent with those conditions."

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shaful Alam on Monday said the conditions

include that the ISF must be temporary and operate under a clear UN Security Council mandate, there must be a permanent ceasefire and complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Gaza, and responsibility for Gaza must be transferred to the Palestinians.

Asked whether such discussions were appropriate as the interim government's tenure nears its end, Touthid said, "The tenure is ending with the February 12 election, but a government will be there."

He added that the

country's engagement and interests do not change overnight and the government would not act against national interests.

On recent conflicts in Rakhine spilling over into Bangladesh, he said his ministry summoned the Myanmar government envoy and protested the firing incident that injured a child in Teknaf, seeking assurances to prevent any recurrence.

"The Myanmar government does not recognise the rebel group as a legal entity and

Bangladesh cannot formally communicate with it," he said, adding that the conflicts in Rakhine began long ago and are unlikely to end anytime soon.

On reports of Bangladesh and China working towards setting up a military drone factory in Bangladesh, Touthid said the country's military capacity needs to be developed and efforts are underway to do so. "We will not do anything to deteriorate our relations with any country. We'll keep a balance," he said.

UK gov't retreats on mandatory digital ID to work

AFP, London

The UK no longer plans to make a new digital ID card mandatory to work in Britain, finance minister Rachel Reeves confirmed yesterday, in the latest U-turn by her embattled government.

The climbdown follows an intense backlash to contentious plans to introduce a free digital ID for both nationals and those residing in the country in a bid to curb illegal migration.

After officials briefed British media late Tuesday that the new ID would no longer be mandatory for employment, Reeves insisted the right to work would still become contingent on providing a form of digital verification.

"We are saying that you will need mandatory digital ID to be able to work in the UK," she told the BBC.

"Now the difference is whether that has to be one piece of ID – a digital ID card – or whether it could be an e-visa or an e-passport," Reeves added.

BNP slams EC 'silence'

FROM PAGE 2

"But the same standard is not being applied to other parties. Important leaders, even top leaders, are continuing election campaigns openly. No action is being taken," he told reporters at the party's Election Steering Office.

Drawing the EC's attention to what he described as further violations of the electoral code of conduct, Nazrul alleged that leaders and activists of a political party are going door to door of voters from low-income and less educated households to collect their NID numbers, "mobile phone numbers and bKash numbers", with the intention of committing vote fraud.

"We fear they may attempt to create fake NIDs and cast fake votes. They may also use bKash numbers to give money to voters to influence them to vote in their favour. This is not only unethical, it is illegal and a serious barrier to holding a fair election."

Despite these allegations conveyed recently, Nazrul said the EC has yet to take any visible action.

Nazrul also alleged irregularities in the printing and distribution of postal ballots sent to expatriate voters in different countries.

He claimed that the BNP's name and its electoral symbol, the sheaf of paddy, were deliberately placed along the folding line of the postal ballots, making them less visible.

"In the same ballots, the names and symbols of certain other political parties have been placed prominently on the first line, while ours were positioned in the middle, where they become less visible once the paper is folded."

Raising concerns over the distribution of postal ballots abroad, Nazrul said videos circulating on social media show activists of a Jamaat-e-Islami handling large numbers of ballot papers in Bahrain and Oman.

"We again found today that a person was handling a large number of ballot papers on top of cars at a garage in Oman. His name is Humayun Kabir. Local residents there have said he is an activist of Jamaat. These incidents are extremely worrying," Nazrul

said.

He warned that similar incidents could occur in other countries as well, using the same methods.

"We requested the EC to treat this as an illegal act. If swift punitive action is taken against those involved, others may become cautious."

"But if no action is taken and such reports continue to emerge from other countries, the credibility of elections conducted through postal ballots will come under serious question."

Stating that the BNP wants a free and fair election, Nazrul said the party does not want any allegation that the government formed through the election came to power through manipulation.

Nazrul said that at the request of the EC, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman postponed his scheduled tour of the northern region.

"We want the election to be held on time on February 12, and we want all political parties to participate. To avoid any confusion about our conduct, our chairman postponed his programme."

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ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

A mix of magic and reality

Review of Mojaffor Hossain's 'Between Two Lives' (Panjeree Publications Ltd., 2024), translated by Haroonuzzaman

“The Spy” is a story of extreme injustice, deprivation, and exploitation. It is a story which depicts the real picture of Bangladesh, where dishonesty, misuse of power, tyranny, and occupation of others’ resources are common.

MOHAMMAD SHAFIQU L ISLAM

Between Two Lives is a collection of short stories by Mojaffor Hossain, a notable fiction writer of Bengali literature. The stories of the collection are translated into English by Haroonuzzaman, who has rendered quite a few important literary works from Bangladesh. Besides being a translator, he is also an academic. *Between Two Lives* contains 11 short stories, well chosen and adroitly translated by Haroonuzzaman.

The collection explores a diverse range of themes and subject matters, which mesmerise the readers to a great extent. Among the most prominent issues that the author deals with in the stories, memory and trauma are noteworthy. They give an account of the human condition in general and the deplorable state of Bangladeshi people in particular. Bonnie Chau, a Chinese-American fiction writer based in New York, comments on Mojaffor Hossain's stories: “Hossain has the ability to conjure worlds that exist somewhere in the shadows of the uncanny valley—somehow both defamiliarized and explicit about contemporary horrors. Bangladesh and its modern history may be at their core, but the stories point broadly to the larger systems of dehumanization recognizable as pervasive in all of our everyday lives.”

Mojaffor Hossain is an extraordinary storyteller, who has already earned fame for his distinctive style and out-of-the-box themes. Among the established and new or emerging fiction writers of Bangladesh, he is well-known. He employs surrealism and magical realism in his stories and novels.

Reading the stories in *Between*

Two Lives, a reader is launched on a captivating journey that ends in awe and sometimes shock. Like famous fiction writers of the world, Mojaffor Hossain writes his stories with twists and turns, at times keeping the readers in a trance of magical spellbinding. His narratives are not aloof from what we encounter in our everyday life, but the author weaves the everyday experience of the people, especially the people of Bangladesh, into a tapestry of a wide range of elements, such as satire, humour, and wit. The stories finally turn extraordinary and unique because of the narrative style. The readers go through something familiar, but then they experience something bizarre—and this makes the narratives unearthly. As a writer of surrealist and magical realist fiction, Mojaffor Hossain must have already earned a signature name.

One can in no way spell out the psyche or the mind of people, which are replete with weird, unidentifiable, and unfamiliar kinds of violence, destructive acts, strange behaviours, and so on. It seems that the crimes and violence have become normal, the victims sometimes internalise the destiny of persecution. People seem to have started believing that this is how society has reformed and that they are destined to suffer. Mojaffor Hossain subtly sketches out these pictures in the landscape of his fictional world.

In *Between Two Lives*, the writer portrays the reality of Bangladesh in relation to how the people of the country have resorted to violence, depravity, greed, lust, corruption, extortion, killing, and so on. They are also taking all measures to achieve whatever they want at any cost, no

matter the means, whether illegal or if it costs someone else's life. Greed and gluttony of the people have reached such a stage that they seem to be worse than animals.

Readers must be flabbergasted at the very first line of one of Mojaffor Hossain's stories, in which he talks about someone dead talking to a stranger, someone rising up from the grave or a dead person drinking tea with other people in a tea stall. The story “The Flautist,” thus, begins, “I stumble upon Mozzel, today. To the best of my recollection, he had passed from this world some 15 years ago, either in May or June.” The narrator of the story meets Mozzel who died 15 years back, but they're walking together, talking about several subjects such as the sea, family, flute, etc. They talk as if it were a normal everyday conversation between two living persons. This is how the storyteller keeps readers awestruck and at some point the readers begin to internalise the matters as mundane happening in their routine. And in between such bizarre incidents occurring in the story, the writer also adds some truths which turn out to be universal, consequently becoming valuable quotes, “We cannot always expect to find clear reasons for death; it's not so straightforward.”

“The Spy” is a story of extreme injustice, deprivation, and exploitation. It is a story which depicts the real picture of Bangladesh, where dishonesty, misuse of power, tyranny, and occupation of others' resources are common. “The Spy” indeed represents, to some extent, the Liberation War, since the man who is doubted as a spy lost everything and everyone in the war.

Now alone, the main character of the story wanders as if he were a lunatic or the people have made him a lunatic.

“Between Two Lives,” the story after which the collection is titled, feels like watching a short film about memory, trauma, illness, family, and dilemma. Rahman, the central character of the story, goes through a state of delirium on the hospital bed, while his wife, sons, daughters-in-law plan on minimising the cost of his burial. The story can also be studied through the lens of psychoanalysis. “So Near, Yet So Far” is about dislocation during the Partition, when the subcontinent witnessed unprecedented riots, killings, burnings, and migration. It is the story of Hari, Mira, Shubir, Haradhon, and several others who were the victims of the division based on religion. While going down the memory lane, the characters also talk about politics, sports, and films of the two countries.

“Farewell to Poetry” is a wonderful story replete with wonder, magic, and twists. Vyada, who is known as a poet in the village, has a deep connection to land and river. Coming from a poor family, he sits by the river and composes poetry, but the way of his writing is not common—he rarely writes using words; he composes poetry in his imagination using sound, smell, and scenes. The villagers sometimes chide him and his wife for his strange way of leading his life and writing poetry. One evening, he goes out to the river to write poetry but never returns. But the interesting part of the story is that the narrator meets Vyada at his home, talks to him and seeks his poems for his magazine, although he was no more. Misri, the poet's wife, acknowledges that he has

gone to God but she also says that he's around. The story ends with two notes: “Note-1: Once Misri Shundori shared her heart with Vyada to deliver poems. She herself became his poetry today. Note-2: Most probably, Vyada's passing was the best poetry he could ever create.”

The other stories in the collection such as “A River Story” and “Bonsai Baba,” among a few others, move readers in a variety of ways. *Between Two Lives*, to justifiably comment, is a collection of well crafted stories, which have a lot of qualities to both entertain and enlighten readers. Moreover, the stories also evoke thoughts as the contemporary society enmeshed with the normal and paranormal reality is depicted in the stories.

The translation has a good flow of reading as the translator has attempted to keep to the essence of the original, and at the same time, he has tried to maintain readability in the target language. Just a few glitches are noticeable, especially in the cases of word selection, spellings, and structures. They're maybe typos, but still a more serious and sincere copyediting could have made the collection better. But *Between Two Lives* is doubtless a commendable piece of literary work, which merits wider readership.

Mohammad Shafiqu Islam, a poet, translator, and academic, is Professor in the Department of English, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet. His latest collection of poetry *On the Other Side of Silence* has appeared from Red River, India. He may be communicated at msislam-eng@sust.edu.

BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

‘Reuters-er Dingulo’: A must-read masterpiece

Review of ‘Reuters-er Dingulo’ (University Press Limited, 2025) by Serajul Islam Quadir

JAGLUL ALOM

It is a known fact that not all historical documents, even memoirs of prominent politicians, researchers, authors, or historians, are prepared from a purely objective viewpoint. Every author brings their own perspective and analysis, shaped by a different outlook. It is often observed that history, written by the winners and the defeated groups, is always contradictory. Seldom do the winners genuinely incorporate the views and analysis of the defeated, and vice versa. This inherent conflict is a primary cause of distortion and manipulation of historical facts.

The only way to achieve an objective understanding of historical facts and analysis is to find a researcher or narrator who is non-partisan, unbiased, and was a direct participant or observer of the events. Ideally, this individual should have no personal or practical interest in the background and impact of the actions. While they may be a direct stakeholder, they must possess the courage to accept the reality and consequences of the events.

When I read *Reuters-er Dingulo* by Serajul Islam Quadir, it had three immediate



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

impacts on me: As a journalist and fact-collector during the same time frame (though not near his degree of capability), I was immediately visualising the events. I was mesmerised by his competence and felt deep nostalgia for the period. Following, I clearly understood that as a practicing journalist, I had missed and lost a host of important events and crucial reviews of the situations. Additionally, I felt a touch of jealousy toward Quadir and frustration with myself because I could not match even a quarter of his work ethic.

In his book, Quadir collected and narrated events from a pivotal and tumultuous period in Bangladeshi history, covering a long span of 23 years. His method involved physically visiting locations, taking detailed notes, and interviewing significant personalities of the time. He skillfully leveraged his position in an internationally leading news agency, extracting every possible drop of potential information—an effort that many seniors, past and present, either intentionally missed or did not spare the time for as an “extra job without pay.”

Quadir's script chronicles Bangladeshi history spanning the period 1996-2019, covering most major events. This includes

political behaviours and transitions, general, local, and institutional elections, important socio-economic developments, the relationships between major political parties, and the frequent ups and downs of the economy. He analyses the background and possible impacts using his interviews and studies, examining the peculiar character of the national media, along with many other areas that I don't have the space or memory to mention.

The book blends this wealth of information with literary excellence, making the entire script a masterpiece on contemporary issues of national and international importance—a true standout among the writings of that era.

If anyone wants to delve into the past, including the events and the masterful analysis, Quadir's book is a must-read script. It provides authentic information and important data, substantiated by a series of interviews and non-biased fact sheets. Students, researchers, and political enthusiasts will undoubtedly find it to be a gold mine for their respective works.

Jaglut Alom is a veteran journalist, a noted author, and a senior researcher.



BANGLADESH WELCOMES FOOTBALL'S ULTIMATE PRIZE

Bangladesh national team captain Jamal Bhuiyan and Gilberto Silva -- a member of Brazil's World Cup-winning squad in 2002 -- pose with the FIFA World Cup trophy as it arrived in Bangladesh on Wednesday morning as part of the "FIFA World Cup Trophy Tour by Coca-Cola" ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup in the USA, Mexico, and Canada. On his first visit to Bangladesh, the Brazil legend thanked fans "for the warm welcome" and hoped the trophy tour would mark an occasion that "inspires the young generation to play sports, especially football." The trophy was received at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka by Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) president Tabith Awal, joined by BIDA chairman Ashik Chowdhury and NBR chairman Abdur Rahman Khan. Under tight security, the trophy was then escorted from the airport to the Radisson Blu Hotel, where fans had the opportunity to view and take pictures with the iconic prize. This time, the World Cup trophy is being showcased at 75 locations across 30 countries, including Bangladesh, which was also part of the trophy tour ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup. PHOTO: COCA-COLA

'GOOD START' Bangladesh open with a draw against India

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh began their campaign in the inaugural SAFF Futsal Championship with a dramatic 4-4 draw against India in Bangkok yesterday, with captain Rahbar Wahed Khan expressing satisfaction over his side's performance.

Bangladesh twice surrendered the lead in a pulsating contest, with Rahbar and Monir Khan netting a brace each.

"We took the lead a few times and tried to keep it. But I am very happy with the boys, as we put in a very good performance. It is a good start to the tournament," Rahbar said after the match.

Under the guidance of Iranian coach Saeid Khodarahmi, Bangladesh repeatedly asked questions of a strong Indian side and looked the better team for long spells in the first half, which ended 2-2.

Moin opened the scoring for Bangladesh before Anmol Adhikari equalised for India. Rahbar then restored Bangladesh's lead, but Lasawmpuia brought India back on level terms before the break.

After resumption, Roluahpuia put India ahead, only for Moin to equalise once again. India reclaimed the lead through Roluahpuia's second



of the match, before Rahbar struck late to salvage a point for the men in red and green.

The captain had reasons to be pleased as Bangladesh displayed impressive control, endurance, and skill in a new format played on a hard surface with a smaller ball -- a demanding test that hinted at a tough regional tournament involving seven nations. Sri Lanka and Bhutan also drew 3-3 earlier in the day in the tournament opener at the same venue.

Manchester City's latest signing Antoine Semenyo has enjoyed a flying start to life at the club. The winger celebrates after scoring City's second goal in a 2-0 win over holders Newcastle United at St James' Park yesterday in the first-leg semifinal of the English League Cup. Semenyo opened his City account in a 10-1 thrashing of Exeter City in the FA Cup on Saturday and followed it up with another strike in only his second game for the club, before Rayan Cherki added a stoppage-time goal to double City's advantage. "I am just taking the confidence I had from Bournemouth here and playing with a smile on my face. I am enjoying every moment," the Ghanaian said. PHOTO: FACEBOOK



Jatrabari seal BCL rise with Senior Div title

SPORTS REPORTER

Jatrabari Kirra Chakra secured the Senior Division Football League title with a match to spare after settling for a goalless draw against Friends Social Welfare Organisation in their penultimate fixture at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur, Dhaka yesterday.

The point was enough to take Jatrabari to an unassailable position at the top of the 17-team table. With 11 wins and four draws from 15 matches, they now sit on 37 points, ensuring that no other side can catch them with only one round of fixtures remaining.

Their title triumph also guarantees them promotion to the country's second-tier competition -- the Bangladesh Championship League (BCL) -- from next season, marking a significant milestone for the club.

Although Jatrabari have already been crowned champions ahead of their final match against T&T Club, the race for the runners-up position remains wide open. Mohakhali Ekadosh and Shadharan Bima Corporation SC are still in contention, currently occupying second and third places respectively.

Mohakhali are in a stronger position, having collected 33 points from 15 matches, while Bima trail them with 27 points from 14 games. However, the equation remains alive. If Mohakhali slip up in their final fixture against Siddiquebazar Dhaka Junior SC, Bima will have a chance to leapfrog them -- provided they manage to win both of their remaining matches against East End Club and Nababpur KC.

At the other end of the table, T&T Club remain anchored to the bottom with just eight points from 15 matches. Their struggles continued yesterday as they suffered a 3-1 defeat at the hands of Qasaituli Somaj Kalyan Parishad, further denting their campaign.

Future stars on show



- The 16th ICC Under-19 Cricket World Cup will be held in Zimbabwe and Namibia from January 15 to February 6, with India facing the USA in the opening match in Bulawayo.
- Australia enter as defending champions with four titles, just behind record holders India with five, while Pakistan have two, and West Indies, South Africa, Bangladesh, and England have one each.
- 2020 champions Bangladesh, pitted in Group B alongside India, New Zealand and USA, begin their campaign against India on January 17.
- Sixteen teams are split into four groups, with the top three from each advancing to the Super Six, then the best two progressing to the semifinals on February 3 and 4 at Queens Sports Club and Harare Sports Club. The final will be played on February 6 in Harare.

AGENCIES

The U19 Men's Cricket World Cup 2026 isn't just a tournament -- it's a launchpad for the next generation of cricketing stars. Legends once began their journeys here; now a new class steps forward, ready to leave their mark on the international stage.

Among them, Bangladesh arrive with quiet determination and thorough preparation. They haven't just trained; they have lived cricket these past months -- touring England and Zimbabwe, testing themselves against Afghanistan and sharpening every department.

Their hopes rest strongly on fast bowler Iqbal Hossain Emon, a returning spearhead whose senior domestic experience has added maturity to his pace and precision. Alongside him, Al Fahad stands as a reliable partner, ensuring Bangladesh always carry threat with the new ball.

With the bat, consistency will define their campaign. Zawad Abrar has already shown resilience with important runs in pressure situations, while Azizul Hakim looks comfortable adapting to conditions away from home.

Lower down the order, Rizan

Hossain offers valuable depth and the ability to change tight matches. The exciting young talents Kalam Siddiki, Rifat Beg, and Shahriar Ahmed could also play crucial roles as Bangladesh push not just to compete -- but to truly contend and challenge for something special.

Around them, the tournament buzzes with anticipation.

Afghanistan arrive battle-hardened after qualifying heroics, led by prolific batter Khalid Ahmadzai, quick Nooristani Ormazi, and spinners Ziaullah Shaheen and Hafieezullah Zadran.

Australia return with leadership from Oliver Peake, supported by quick Charles Lachmund, stroke-maker Jayden Draper, and run-machine Nitesh Samuel.

England blend promise and pedigree through Thomas Rew, spinner Farhan Ahmed, and dependable Ben Dawkins.

India carry massive expectations once again, built around prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, captain Ayush Mhatre, prolific batter Vedant Trivedi, double-centurion Abhigyan Kunder, and consistent seamer Deepesh Devendran.

Ireland believe this may be their strongest ever group, featuring

Sebastian Dijkstra, Adam Leckey, and experienced campaigner Reuben Wilson.

Japan arrive fearless with Charlie Hara-Hinze, Nihar Parmar, and captain Kazuma Kato-Stafford.

Pakistan carry momentum thanks to Farhan Yousaf, incredible run-getter Sameer Minhas, seamer Abdul Subhan, and all-rounder Huzaiifa Ahsan.

New Zealand rely on Tom Jones and Mason Clarke, while Scotland look to Manu Saraswat and Finlay Jones.

Sri Lanka boast bowling threats Sethmika Seneviratne and Vigneshwaran Akash, and South Africa are highlighted by Jorich Van Schalkwyk, Muhammad Bulbulia, and Bayanda Majola.

Associate challengers like Tanzania's Laksh Bakrania and USA's Amrinder Singh Gill are also eager to upset bigger names.

Hosts Zimbabwe proudly back Kian and Michael Blynn, Simbarashe Mudzengerere, and Shelton Mazytorera.

Every squad has a player people are already talking about. Every team has someone dreaming of becoming the name the world remembers.

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'Will boycott all matches unless BCB director quits' Cricketers warn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid growing uncertainty over Bangladesh's participation in the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup, Bangladesh Cricket Board was hit with a fresh crisis yesterday when Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh demanded the immediate resignation of BCB director M Najmul Islam and threatened a boycott from today if he does not step down.

"The remark made by the BCB director [Najmul Islam] has hurt the cricket fraternity greatly and it's not acceptable. We demand his resignation," CWAB president Mohammad Mithun said in an online press meet on Wednesday night.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 6



Rescue officials move a body recovered from the site of a train derailment after a construction crane collapsed onto its carriages, causing several casualties, in Sikhio district, Nakhon Ratchasima province, Thailand, yesterday. Story on page 5. PHOTO: REUTERS

'No reconciliation without remorse' CA tells former US diplomats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus yesterday ruled out the possibility of a truth and reconciliation initiative in Bangladesh due to the continued denial by the former regime of its crimes.

"Time is not right. Where do you start? Truth and reconciliation come when you admit that you were wrong, when you repent and show remorse for your crimes, and when you create the right atmosphere," he told two former American diplomats.



The diplomats, who called on him at the State Guest House Jamuna in Dhaka, asked whether a truth and reconciliation initiative -- similar to post-apartheid South Africa -- was possible in Bangladesh, said the CA press wing in a statement.

Yunus said that as a friend of the late Nelson Mandela, he closely followed South Africa's truth and reconciliation process but saw no possibility of a similar move in Bangladesh at this moment due to the continued denial

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

Bangladesh halts on-arrival visas till February 15

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has suspended the on-arrival visa facility for all eligible countries from today until February 15 to prevent any untoward incident during the upcoming election.

Speaking to reporters at the foreign ministry yesterday, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain said, "We've been instructed to do so to avoid untoward incidents during the polls. Unexpected people may come here. They should not come here all of a sudden."

"We are not stopping visas. They can still come with regular visas, not on-arrival ones."

Earlier on Monday, the home ministry issued a guideline to streamline entry procedures for foreigners while maintaining security and effective monitoring during the election period.

The guideline said existing policies must be strictly followed when issuing all types of visas, including verification of required documents, and that coordination among concerned agencies should be strengthened.

It had not, however, specified that on-arrival visas were suspended.

The suspension was later confirmed through a Facebook post by the Bhutan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade, which said the Bangladesh embassy in Thimphu had officially conveyed the decision to suspend on-arrival visas for all eligible countries, including Bhutan.

Asked about the interim government's interest in principle in joining an International Stabilization

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Stick to polls code or face action

BNP warns nominees

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has strengthened internal monitoring of its nominees, stepping up oversight to ensure strict compliance with the electoral code of conduct, so that the party's image is not harmed during the election campaign.

Party insiders said the BNP leadership has instructed candidates and their supporters to follow the election rules strictly, warning that any deviation could damage the party's image and weaken its position at a critical stage of the campaign.

According to party sources, the BNP has already identified around a dozen constituencies where candidates or their supporters allegedly made derogatory or controversial remarks during public meetings or online engagements. In response, the central leadership has sought detailed reports from local units and issued verbal warnings to those concerned.

Senior leaders said the party is keen to avoid statements that could be construed as inflammatory, misleading or in violation of the electoral code.

"Some candidates have made aggressive speeches and even issued threats, which are not acceptable. The party does not want to create any unwanted situation that could benefit its rivals, especially as such speeches spread quickly on social media and tarnish the party's image," said a BNP Standing Committee member, seeking anonymity.

Emran Saleh Prince, BNP joint secretary general, told The Daily Star that the party has repeatedly provided training to its candidates to ensure compliance with the electoral code of conduct.

"We have given candidates training multiple times and issued strict instructions to follow the code of conduct. We also receive guidance on these matters through our internal groups, and we regularly remind candidates to strictly adhere to the rules."

He alleged that leaders and supporters of other parties often make provocative remarks, but no action is taken against them.

"BNP is a major political party, so our candidates remain under constant scrutiny. Candidates from smaller parties are not watched as closely. As a result, even minor mistakes by our candidates are being highlighted and treated as major violations."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Govt inaction to blame for attacks on press

Head of media reform commission tells CGS dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has failed to act on the recommendations of the Media Reform Commission and must therefore bear full responsibility for any harassment or attacks on journalists since the report was submitted, said Kamal Ahmed, who

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

Ziaul charged with over 100 killings, disappearances

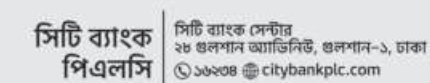

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Maj Gen (relieved) Ziaul Ahsan was yesterday charged with three counts of crimes against humanity involving alleged enforced disappearances and murders of 104 people between 2010 and 2013.

A three-member International Crimes Tribunal-1 indicted Ziaul, rejected his discharge petition, and fixed February 8 to begin trial with the prosecution's opening statement and the start of witness testimony.

Tribunal Judge Md Mohitul Hoque Anam Chowdhury read out the charges one by one with Ziaul in the dock and asked whether he pleaded guilty.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

জমি ক্রয় ও ভবন নির্মাণ বিষয়ে সিটি ব্যাংকের ব্যাখ্যা

গত কদিন ধরে নানা গণমাধ্যমে সিটি ব্যাংকের গুলশানে প্রস্তাবিত জমি ক্রয় ও ভবন নির্মাণ পরিকল্পনাকে ঘিরে কিছু বিভ্রান্তিকর সংবাদ লক্ষ্য করা যাচ্ছে। এ বিষয়ে সঠিক ব্যাখ্যা জনগণের সামনে হাজির করা আমাদের নৈতিক কর্তব্য বলে মনে করি।

সিটি ব্যাংক পূর্বিজাজের তালিকাভুক্ত দেশের শীর্ষ ব্যাংকিং ব্র্যান্ড। এর শেয়ারহোল্ডার কাঠামোয় ওয়ার্ল্ড ব্যাংকের অঙ্গপ্রতিষ্ঠান আইএফসি-র উপস্থিতি ব্যাংকটির করপোরেট গভর্ন্যান্স ও স্বচ্ছতাকে সবসময় প্রমাণিত রাখে। কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংকের মূল্যায়নেও আমরা ২০২৫ সালে দেশের ১ নম্বর টেকসই ব্যাংক (আর্থিক ও পরিবেশগত, দুই টেকসই অঙ্কেই)। দেশের অন্যতম লাভজনক ব্যাংক হিসাবে আমরা শেয়ারহোল্ডারদেরকে নিয়মিত লভ্যাংশ দিই এবং এ খাতের অন্যতম শীর্ষ করদাতা হিসাবে অর্থনীতিতে বড় ভূমিকা রাখি।

এ মুহূর্তে আমাদের প্রধান কার্যালয় ও ব্যাংক-অফিস কার্যক্রম ঢাকার বিভিন্ন জায়গায় ভাড়া নেওয়া ভবনে চলছে। প্রায় ৩৬৫,০০০ বর্গফুট অফিস স্পেসের পেছনে আমাদেরকে প্রতি মাসে ৬.৫০ কোটি টাকা করে ভাড়া গুনতে হচ্ছে। এই প্রেক্ষাপটে আমরা প্রথমে গুলশানে আমাদের নিজেদের মালিকানার ২০ কাঠা জমিতে একটি বহুতল ভবন নির্মাণের পরিকল্পনা করি। কিন্তু পরে আমাদের ওই নিজস্ব জমির ঠিক পাশের আরেকটি ২০ কাঠা প্লট কেনার সুযোগ তৈরি হলে আমরা ভেবে দেখি, সম্মিলিত ৪০ কাঠা জমির ওপরে আসলেই একটি আন্তর্জাতিক মানের হেড অফিস গড়ে তোলা সম্ভব, যা কিনা এ দেশের ব্যাংকিং খাতের সক্ষমতার স্মারক হয়ে উঠতে পারে। আর বলাই বাহুল্য, আলাদা আলাদা দু জায়গায় বিশ-বিশ চল্লিশ কাঠা জমি এক কথা, আর পাশাপাশি এই দুই জমিকে এক করে একটি একত্রিত ভবন নির্মাণ করা অন্য কথা, কারণ সেক্ষেত্রে স্পেসের ব্যবহার বিরাট বাড়ে এবং নির্মাণ ব্যয়ে বড় সাশ্রয় আসে।

এ পর্যায়ে আমরা হিসাব করে দেখি, বর্তমানে ভাড়া অফিস স্পেসের পেছনে আমরা মাসে যে ৬.৫০ কোটি টাকা ব্যয় করছি (বছরে ৭৮ কোটি টাকা), তা ৭ বছরের মধ্যে বেড়ে দাঁড়াতে মাসে প্রায় ১২.৫০ কোটি টাকা, অর্থাৎ বছরে ১৫০ কোটি টাকা। অন্যদিকে পাশের ২০ কাঠা জমি কেনা ও তাতে বিশ্বমানের একটি ভবন নির্মাণে (বেজমেন্ট ৫ তলা ও দালান ২৩ তলা) সব মিলে যদি ১,১০০-১,২০০ কোটি টাকাও ব্যয় হয়, তাতে বছরে অবচয় (depreciation) বাবদ ব্যয় হবে ৫০ কোটি টাকা। অর্থাৎ, ভাড়া অফিস স্পেসের সাপেক্ষে ওই জমি কিনে প্রস্তাবিত ভবনটি নির্মাণ করলে ব্যাংকের মুনাফা বছরে গড়ে বাড়বে প্রায় ১০০ কোটি টাকা।

এখন জমির দাম প্রসঙ্গে আসি। এ জমি কেনার ক্ষেত্রে ব্যাংক একাধিক দফা দর-কম্বাক্ষির পরে প্রতি কাঠা ১৬.৫০ কোটি টাকায় (মোট ৩৩০ কোটি টাকা) কিনতে রাজি হয়। এর আগে, বাজারমূল্য বৃদ্ধিতে দুটি স্বতন্ত্র ও পেশাদার প্রতিষ্ঠানের মাধ্যমে আমরা এর দাম যাচাই করি। ওই দুই প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রতিবেদনে বাজারমূল্য আসে যথাক্রমে ৩৫০ কোটি টাকা (কাঠা ১৭.৫০ কোটি) ও ৩৫৬ কোটি টাকা (কাঠা ১৭.৮০ কোটি)। পরে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক একটি স্বতন্ত্র পরিদর্শন দল পাঠিয়ে জমিটি সরেজমিনে পরিদর্শন করেন এবং জমির প্রকৃত বাজারমূল্য নির্ধারণকল্পে ব্যাংকের আবেদন বিশ্লেষণ করেন। একটি কঠোর মূল্যায়ন প্রক্রিয়ার মধ্য দিয়ে কিছু মাস সময় নিয়ে সব দিক যাচাই-বাছাই শেষে কেন্দ্রীয় ব্যাংক সম্প্রতি আমাদেরকে প্রয়োজনীয় অনুমোদন দেন। জমি কিনতে আমাদেরকে অনুমোদন দেওয়া হয়েছে মোট ৩৪৫ কোটি টাকার, যেখানে রেজিস্ট্রেশন ও অন্যান্য খরচ যোগ করা আছে। আমরা শতভাগ স্বচ্ছ থাকার কারণে জমির পেছনে কর বাবদ দেওয়া অঙ্কও বেশি এসেছে। তবে এখন পর্যন্ত এই জমি কেনার কাজ সম্পন্ন হয়নি কিংবা ভবন নির্মাণ প্রকল্পে একটি টাকাও ব্যয় করা হয়নি।

এখন আসা যাক ভবন নির্মাণ নিয়ে। প্রস্তাবিত ৪০ কাঠা জমির ওপর ভূকম্পন সহনীয়, এনার্জি-এফিশিয়েন্ট ও গ্রিন বিল্ডিং কনসেপ্ট অনুসরণ করে বিশ্বমানের একটি বহুতল বাণিজ্যিক ভবন নির্মাণের জন্য আমরা সর্বোচ্চ ৮৫৫ কোটি টাকা ব্যয়ের অনুমতি পেয়েছি, যা একবারে নয় বরং ৭ বছরে পর্যায়ক্রমে ব্যয় করা হবে। এটি আনুমানিক সর্বোচ্চ ব্যয়। আমরা উন্মুক্ত টেন্ডার ও যথাযথ ক্রয়-প্রক্রিয়া মেনে চলবো এবং চেষ্টা করবো যাতে ওই সর্বোচ্চ ব্যয়সীমার নিচে থাকতে পারি।

পরিশেষে বলতে চাই, আমাদের ইচ্ছা বাংলাদেশে থেকে আমরা ৪০ কাঠা জমির ওপরে এমন একটি বিশ্বমানের বহুতল ভবন নির্মাণ করবো, যা সামগ্রিক অর্থেই হবে একটি ল্যান্ডমার্ক। আর ঢাকার গুলশানে এভিনিউয়ের নর্থ গুলশানে এদেশে একটিই আছে। সেখানে একটি নান্দনিক ল্যান্ডমার্ক স্থাপনা এ দেশের ভাবমূর্তিকে যেমন ওপরে তুলবে, তেমনি সিটি ব্যাংকের আঞ্চলিক পর্যায় পার হয়ে বিশ্বব্যাপী যাবার স্বপ্নেও ভূমিকা রাখবে।

আমরা গণমাধ্যমের দায়িত্বশীল অনুসন্ধানকে সম্মান করি এবং দেশের কোনো মহল যদি এই দামের চেয়ে কম দামে গুলশানে এভিনিউয়ের ওই জমি আমাদেরকে কিনে দিতে সক্ষম হন তা সেটাকে দেশের জন্য ভালো কাজ হিসেবে বরণ করে নিতে আন্তরিকভাবে প্রস্তুত রয়েছি।



লুণ্ঠিত অস্ত্র ও গোলাবারুদ উদ্ধারে

পুরস্কার

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার লুণ্ঠিত বিভিন্ন ধরনের অস্ত্র ও গোলাবারুদ উদ্ধারে আর্থিক পুরস্কার ঘোষণা করেছে। প্রকৃত সন্ধানদাতাদের পুরস্কার প্রদান করা হবে।

পুরস্কারের হার

▶ পিস্তল ও শটগান:	৫০,০০০ টাকা
▶ চায়না রাইফেল:	১,০০,০০০ টাকা
▶ এসএমজি:	১,৫০,০০০ টাকা
▶ এলএমজি:	৫,০০,০০০ টাকা
▶ প্রতি রাউন্ড গুলি:	৫০০ টাকা

লুণ্ঠিত অস্ত্র ও গোলাবারুদের প্রকৃত সন্ধানদাতাকে নিকটস্থ থানায় যোগাযোগ করার জন্য অনুরোধ জানানো হচ্ছে।

সন্ধানদাতার পরিচয় সম্পূর্ণ গোপন রাখা হবে।