

## Driver, two helpers held over rape on moving bus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A woman was allegedly raped on a moving bus by its driver and his assistants early yesterday on the Dhaka-Tangail highway.

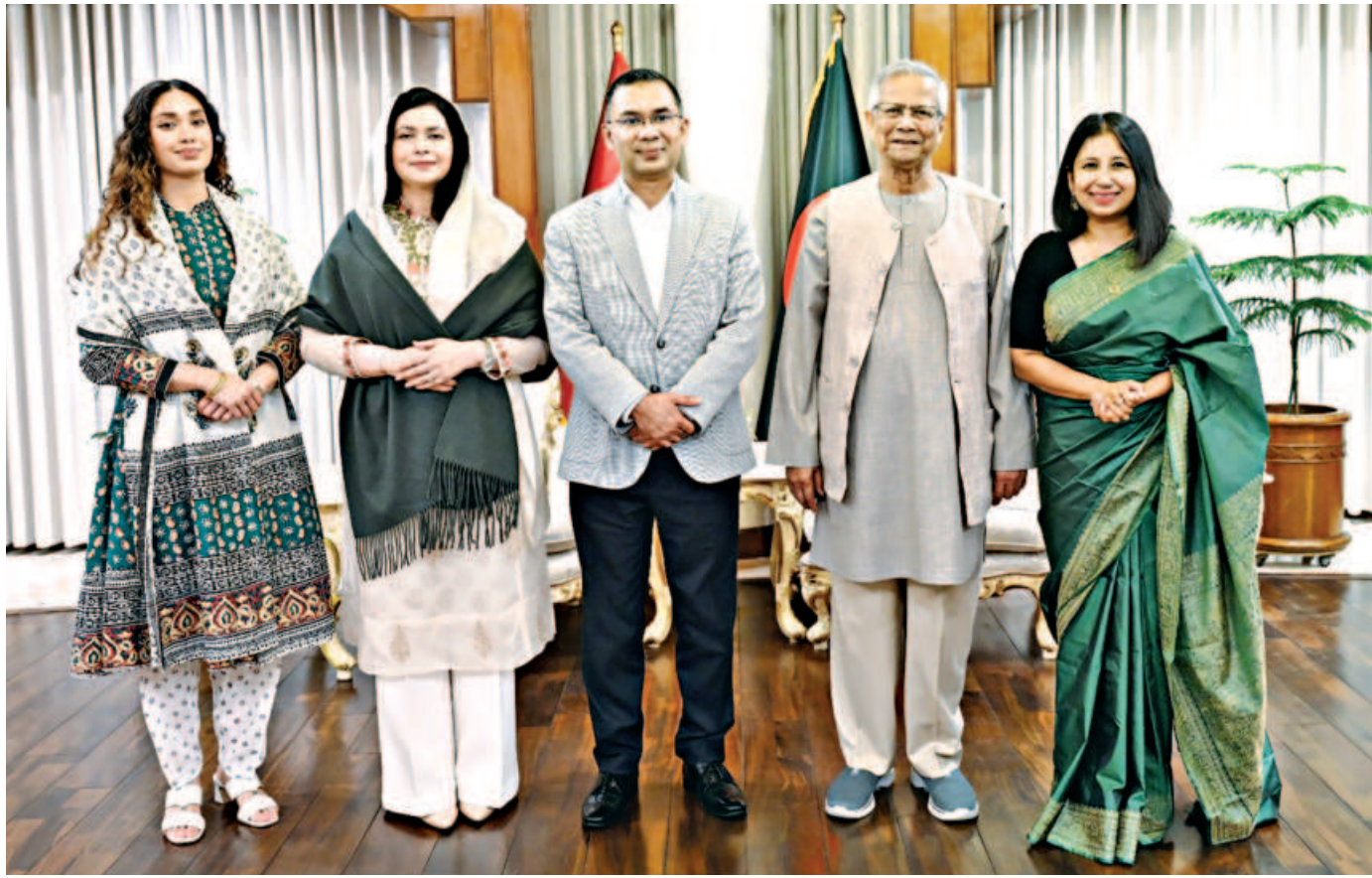
Bus driver Md Altaf, 25, and his helpers, Md Sagar, 24, and Md Rabbi, 21, were arrested in connection with the incident, said Ruhul Amin, officer-in-charge of Tangail Sadar Police Station.

Police said the woman boarded a Savar Paribahan bus from Radio Colony in Savar around 11:30pm on Wednesday to go to the Ashulia Police Station to file a GD against her husband.

Quoting the victim, the OC said after two passengers got off, she was alone on the bus. Taking advantage of the situation, the driver and his helpers snatched her gold jewellery, money, and mobile phone, and raped her.

Based on suspicion, highway police halted the vehicle on the Dhaka-Tangail highway in the Karatia underpass area of Tangail Sadar upazila, rescued the woman, and arrested the three around 12:10pm yesterday.

"In the primary investigation, we have found evidence of the incident," OC Ruhul told reporters. A rape case was filed against four people, including the arrestees, with Tangail Sadar Police Station, the OC said.



BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, his wife Zubaida Rahman and daughter Zaima Rahman and Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and his daughter Deena Yunus pose for a photo at the state guesthouse Jamuna. Tarique's family made a courtesy call on Yunus yesterday evening.

## WEF report flags crime, illicit economy as biggest risks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Economic Forum has identified crime and illicit economic activity as the two most significant economic risks for Bangladesh over the next two years.

In its 21st edition of the Global Risks Report 2026, published on Wednesday, the WEF also identified geo-economic confrontation, including the rising use of sanctions, tariffs, and tighter investment screening, as another major challenge for the country. This could disrupt trade flows and investment prospects, it said.

The report identified inflation as the third biggest challenge, reflecting persistent price pressures that continue to weigh on households and businesses.

The WEF report, underpinned by the Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS), also warned of risks related to economic downturns and stagflation, noting that slowing growth combined with elevated prices could pose a serious challenge for the economy.

Debt vulnerabilities were highlighted as well, spanning corporate, public, and household segments, which could amplify financial stress during periods of economic uncertainty.

This year's GRPS drew insights from more than 1,300 experts from academia, business, government, international organisations, and civil society.

Responses for GRPS 2025-2026 were collected between August 12 and September 22, 2025. The global GRPS data also incorporated findings from the WEF's Executive Opinion Survey, which gathered views from over 11,000 business leaders across 116 economies. This data identified the risks perceived

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## 179 for Jamaat, 30 for NCP; IAB

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Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis 20, Khelafat Majlis 10, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) seven, Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party three, while Bangladesh Nezam-e-Islam Party and Bangladesh Development Party have been allotted two seats each.

Which candidate will contest which seat was not mentioned, nor was any such list provided to journalists present.

In his opening remarks at the briefing, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Ameer Mamunul Haque said, "Under the one-box policy, whichever candidate is ultimately nominated for each seat on behalf of the 11 parties, we will call on all party leaders, activists, and the people of the country to work together in support of that candidate."

NCP Convener Nahid Islam said, "A number of political parties that stand for reforms, for freedom, and for a Bangladesh free of discrimination and corruption have come together on one platform. We have decided to participate collectively in the upcoming national election and referendum. This is therefore a historic moment and journey for us."

LDP President Oli Ahmed said, "You have seen the rule of the Awami League and the rule of the BNP. Now I ask you to witness a system based on

"We were the initiator of the one-box policy for the country's Islamist people and forces, meaning there will be single candidate for all the Islamist parties contesting the election. But the 11 party alliance is no longer remaining an Islamist alliance as other parties have been included."

He said Jamaat's top leadership was making one decision after another without consulting other partners in the alliance, which he described as humiliating.

"It seems they have adopted a 'go-alone' policy. Jamaat appears least concerned about taking the opinions of other alliance members. They are distributing seats to different parties as if they own all 300 constituencies."

"Why should we accept their authoritarian attitude just for the sake of some seats? We don't do politics just for seats."

Ataur said they had tried their best to remain in the alliance. "But Jamaat's authoritarian attitude left no environment for us to remain there."

He added that IAB would consult like-minded Islamist scholars and formally announce whether it would remain in the alliance or forge a new one.

Later last night, IAB said it would brief the media on the issue at its

around 1:30pm, saying that although some discomfort had emerged, the time had not yet come to make any final comments.

"Leaders were continuing multi-prong and multi party talks. Once a position is reached where a final decision can be shared, Islami Andolan and the other parties will formally inform the nation," the statement read.

Around the same time, Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman wrote on his verified Facebook page, "Recently, I have noticed that some people, in showing solidarity and sympathy towards Jamaat-e-Islami, have begun making undesirable and misleading comments and posts on social media about our brotherly organisation Islami Andolan Bangladesh."

"I humbly request you -- if you truly love Jamaat-e-Islami, please refrain from such undesirable activities."

Late last year, when the government and the Election Commission were discussing holding a national election in early February, Jamaat, IAB and eight other parties launched joint street programmes demanding the implementation of the July charter before the polls.

As the February election schedule was finalised, the parties moved towards a seat-sharing arrangement.

## Players withdraw boycott, BPL to resume today

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Earlier in the night, CWAB had issued a press release, demanding BCB director M Najmul Islam to issue a public apology over his comments on Wednesday.

"We have informed the BCB that if he [Najmul] publicly apologises and the process regarding [removing] his directorship continues, we will be ready to return to cricket from Friday," the press release read.

However, sources at the BCB said that the board had not agreed to the conditions set by CWAB, and was mulling postponing BPL indefinitely if the players do not agree to play.

The BCB had another meeting with CWAB members, where BPL franchise owners were also present, after which the players agreed to withdraw their boycott while the board assured them it would carry on with its procedures against Najmul.

"A few unfortunate incidents have taken place over the past two days, which is why we were unable to hold

today's BPL matches," BCB director Iftekhar Rahman Mithu said at the press conference.

"The director who made the comments, he has been removed from his committee [finance committee]. We follow our constitution, and according to it, we have given him a show cause notice. He has been given 48 hours to respond, which will end at noon on the 17th. Then it will go to the disciplinary committee, as per the constitution and the process will continue."

"We tried to contact him throughout the day. We wanted to bring him here, but we couldn't reach him," he added.

CWAB president Mithun was hopeful that the board will carry on with its disciplinary procedure against Najmul.

"They have assured us that they will reach him and fulfill our demands as early as possible. They will complete our demands following the procedures as early as possible,"

he said.

The BCB has already released a revised schedule for the rest of the tournament. Matches scheduled to take place on Thursday will instead take place on Friday.

The matches originally scheduled for January 16 and 17 have been shifted by a day. The Eliminator and Qualifier 1, previously scheduled to be held on January 19, have been shifted to January 20.

Earlier on the day, the players did not turn up for their previously scheduled BPL matches in Dhaka, following through on their threats on Wednesday to boycott all cricket if Najmul is not removed from the board. On Wednesday, Najmul had told the media that players were not owed any compensation if Bangladesh do not participate in the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup, starting on February 7, arguing that the BCB has never sought refunds from cricketers after poor performances at global events.

## Govt in many cases became hostage

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power relations. "We have had caretaker governments before. Those arrangements were also dismantled. The question is not whether reforms are necessary, but whether there is a social force capable of protecting them."

He added that reforms failed because citizens and stakeholders beyond politicians were not mobilised. "There was dialogue, but it was largely among political leaders. There was no national awakening, no broad-based participation of stakeholders."

Debapriya said these during a programme of Citizen Platform for SDGs at a city hotel yesterday.

At the programme, Toufiqul Islam Khan, additional director (research) at Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), and CPD Distinguished Fellow Prof Mustafizur Rahman presented a reform package as part of the organisation's 10 national action programmes and 12 selected policy recommendations for the next government.

Universal minimum income, school meals, youth loans and a national health card headlined in the package.

The universal minimum income programme is aimed at reducing inequality and provide financial security. Under the plan, each eligible family would receive Tk 4,540 per month in cash assistance. The rollout is proposed in three phases.

Initially, 28 lakh families in 11 districts would be covered, followed by 80 lakh families in 36 districts in the second phase, and 1.47 crore families across all 64 districts in the final phase.

Beneficiaries would be selected and reassessed every two years using a poverty scorecard.

The platform said the scheme would protect vulnerable populations from job insecurity, disasters and limited access to credit. The estimated annual cost is Tk 40,600 crore, equivalent to 0.73 percent of the GDP for the first 36 districts.

The platform also proposed midday meal scheme for government and MPO-affiliated schools, providing one nutritious meal per day to students. The programme would cover 1.18 crore primary and secondary school students.

The proposal aims to improve enrolment, attendance and learning outcomes, and reduce dropout rates, child labour and child marriage, particularly among girls. Annual implementation is estimated to cost Tk 8,288 crore, or 0.13 percent of the

GDP.

For youth, the platform suggested a youth credit card programme offering interest- and collateral-free loans of up to Tk 1 lakh per person. About 1 lakh young people aged 18-24 would benefit annually, enabling them to pursue education, skills training and job applications without financial barriers.

Implementation would require Tk 1,000 crore annually as a revolving fund, along with Tk 134 crore for service costs, amounting to 0.01 percent of the GDP.

A National Health Card programme was also proposed to provide families with medical coverage worth Tk 1 lakh per year. The programme would initially cover 61 lakh elderly families, ensuring access to emergency treatment for poor and vulnerable groups.

The estimated annual budget is Tk 61,000 crore, or 1 percent of the GDP, depending on usage.

For the agriculture and labour sectors, the platform proposed a Farmer Smart Card for 1.65 crore farming families, linking incentives to farmers' needs and reducing costs. The annual allocation is estimated at Tk 159 crore, or 0.002 percent of the GDP.

A National Labour Market Platform was also suggested to connect jobseekers, mainly youth, with employers in Bangladesh and abroad, with initial government funding of Tk 10 crore, or 0.0001 percent of the GDP.

Social and urban reform proposals include community-based childcare centres for working mothers, covering 24,000 children, and an integrated urban transport system to reduce congestion and unfair competition, benefiting low- and middle-income residents.

The platform also proposed digital and governance reforms, including an integrated tax system with automatic returns, e-payments and verification, as well as a national data platform linking citizen information to improve service delivery and programme monitoring.

The organisation emphasised that successful implementation would require structural reforms, digital transformation, anti-corruption measures, political commitment and interlinked data systems.

It estimated the overall funding need at about 2 percent of the GDP over one to two years, to be met through government-private partnerships, national budget allocations and foreign financing.

Rights activist Sultana Kamal, a member of the CPD board, highlighted the growing distance

between citizens and those in power. "This country is not owned only by those in government. It belongs to ordinary citizens," she said, adding that dignity must accompany rights.

"Every person should be able to live a peaceful and dignified life."

On the media's role, she stressed that journalists are the fourth pillar of democracy. "Without you, how will people's voices reach society?"

She called for freedom of expression and safety for journalists, saying the struggle would continue until the ideals of the Liberation War are fulfilled.

Former caretaker government adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury said structural reforms, transparency, and accountability are essential for meaningful change.

"If corruption is reduced by half, GDP could increase by four percent," she said, highlighting economic losses from corruption and violence against women.

She added that digital systems alone cannot ensure reform. "Digital systems lose meaning when middlemen control them."

Rasheda urged media engagement to track reforms and called for changes in political culture, bureaucracy and civil society. Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, voiced concern over attacks on minority communities. "For months, we have seen attacks, killings, and vandalism of homes, businesses and religious institutions of minority communities, but no justice was served to the victims."

She criticised the government's limited response and called on journalists to follow up. "Ensuring citizens' security is a state responsibility, and the media has a key role in holding authorities accountable."

Prof Mustafizur emphasised the importance of planned development and parliamentary accountability. "Our resources are limited, and we must set priorities and implement them scientifically. Five-year plans are created, but they are often not implemented. Parliamentary accountability should ensure that every ministry reports regularly on what has been achieved and what gaps remain."

He added that strong administration and institutional capacity are key to effective implementation.

Asif Ibrahim, vice chairman of Newage Group of Industries, and Anisatul Fatema Yousuf, coordinator of Citizens' Platform for SDGs Bangladesh, also spoke at the event among others.



justice, good governance, free from extortion and corruption.

"This is where freedom fighters and the July fighters of 2024 have come together. Such a convergence has not happened anywhere else."

Asked if IAB's absence indicates that the alliance has broken, Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur said, "The alliance has not broken; it still exists. One party did not agree for some reason. That does not mean the alliance has collapsed. In fact, this is not even an alliance -- it is an electoral unity."

Without naming IAB, he said, "One party was with us from the outset but is not seen here today. This is not a matter of rupture. They are having further internal discussions. We are in touch with them. They will convey their final decision. We hope they will remain with us."

Contacted by The Daily Star after the press conference, IAB Joint Secretary General and spokesperson Gazi Ataur Rahman said they did not join the press conference due to divisions and mistrust within the alliance.

central office at 3:00pm today.

Around 11:00am, top leaders of 10 parties met at the Jamaat's central office in Moghbazar to finalise the seat-sharing arrangements. IAB leaders were not present at the meeting.

In an effort to keep IAB in the fold, Mamunul Haque was tasked with holding talks with the IAB's top leadership.

Following the meeting, he expressed hope that the seat allocation could be announced with IAB on board, adding that he had already spoken to its leaders. Nahid Islam said that although differences had emerged, they would be resolved soon. "Every effort will be made to keep this alliance intact. Even if there are disagreements, the alliance process will move forward."

He added that there would be no party candidates in any of the 300 constituencies, with all contenders contesting as alliance candidates. "Everyone will support everyone."

While the 10-party meeting was under way, IAB issued a statement

Two days before the nomination deadline, NCP and LDP joined the alliance. Around the same time, AB Party also joined, expanding it to an 11-party combine.

After the inclusion of the three new parties, tensions emerged between Jamaat and IAB over seat sharing.

IAB alleged that Jamaat brought in the three parties without consulting alliance partners. It also accused Jamaat of unilaterally promising 30 seats to NCP.

As a result, a sense of discontent, distrust and unease grew among leaders and activists of IAB and several other alliance partners.

Against this backdrop, Hamidur Rahman Azad, coordinator of the 11-party alliance and assistant secretary general of Jamaat, called a press conference on Wednesday to announce the final seat-sharing arrangement.

However, three hours later, the press conference was postponed. IAB again alleged that it had not been consulted in this regard.