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DHAKA METRO RAIL PROJECT

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Khalilur, Taiyeb, Akhtar land spots in Biman board

Expert says move 'surprising'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed the national security adviser, a special assistant to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, and a senior secretary as directors of the state-run Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

They are Khalilur Rahman, national security adviser and high representative for the Rohingya issue, Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser on ICT, and Akhtar Ahmed, senior secretary of the Election Commission.

In a gazette notification on Wednesday, the civil aviation and tourism ministry said the appointments were made in the public interest and would take effect immediately.

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THREE LITTLE BIRDS

Three blue-cheeked bee-eaters huddled together on a cold winter morning on a tomato field in Rajshahi's Godagari upazila, their fluffed feathers pressed close for warmth. Native to South Asia, the Middle East and parts of Central Asia, this migratory bird frequents open countryside, riverbanks and cultivated fields during the colder months. It feeds almost entirely on flying insects such as bees, wasps and dragonflies, caught with swift aerial sallies. The blue-cheeked bee-eater is listed as Least Concern by the IUCN, though pesticide use and habitat disturbance remain ongoing threats.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

'Over 3,400 dead in Iran'

Say rights groups; Trump to 'watch situation' as he says Iran 'killing has stopped'

- 'US sends aircraft carrier to ME from South China Sea'
- Iran FM says there would be 'no hanging today or tomorrow'

AGENCIES

Iran yesterday vowed to defend itself against any foreign threat, after US President Donald Trump said he would "watch it and see" about military action over the crackdown on protesters.

Iran's judiciary said a protester who the United States and rights groups feared faced imminent execution would not be sentenced to death, after Trump had warned of strikes should people arrested for demonstrating be killed.

The protests were sparked by economic grievances but evolved rapidly into a nationwide movement that

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1952-2026

Jayasree Kabir passes away

BULBUL HASAN

Renowned film actress and former Miss Calcutta Jayasree Kabir passed away at a nursing home in Romford, Essex, in Greater London, on January 12.

She was 73.

The news of her death came to light two days later, when her nephew, Javed Mahmood, posted about it on his Facebook profile.

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BNP flags bulk deliveries of postal ballots

Says 200-300 being sent to same address

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and AHMED DEEPTO

The Election Commission's first-ever initiative to digitally register Bangladeshi expatriates and allow them to vote through postal ballots has sparked controversy, with the BNP raising concerns over the process.

Over the past three days, two BNP delegations met Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin to express reservations about how the initiative is being carried out.

After one such meeting, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the party has "serious concerns" and questioned the role of officials overseeing the process.

Referring to social media videos, he alleged that batches of 200-300 ballots were being delivered to a single address, even though each postal ballot should have been sent individually to the designated voter.

He also claimed that the process seemed to favour a particular party and demanded clarification on how ballots are being prepared, dispatched, and collected abroad.

On Tuesday, a video showing 160 postal ballot envelopes in a room in Bahrain went viral. It was recorded while the envelopes were being sorted for distribution.

Asked about the incident, EC Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said

the Bangladeshi ambassador in Bahrain was investigating and insisted that none of the envelopes had been opened. Bahrain postal authorities are also reviewing whether proper procedures were followed in delivering the ballots, he added.

In a press release, the EC explained that on January 11, the Bahrain postal service contacted several expatriate voters to deliver the ballots. As they were at work, they requested postal officials hand over the envelopes to a colleague living in the same area.

Later, 129 undelivered envelopes were returned to the embassy, which, the EC said, would be delivered individually

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Govt in many cases became hostage to 'extremist group'

Says Debapriya; Citizen Platform for SDGs unveils reforms package for next govt

PLATFORM'S PROPOSALS

Tk 4,540 per month for eligible families under universal minimum income scheme

Midday meal for students in govt, MPO-affiliated schools

Tk 1 lakh per year medical coverage for families in need through National Health Card

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government in many cases became hostage to a "small and extremist group", said CPD Distinguished Fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya yesterday.

"They spoke of new forces but, in the final analysis, in many cases ended up being held hostage to a small and extremist group. Because of this, they could not act properly. They could not ensure the safety of citizens. Now the question is, will they even be able to conduct the election impartially?"


He added that reform efforts in Bangladesh have repeatedly failed because they focused on surface-level institutional changes while ignoring the need to organise social and economic forces capable of defending democracy.

"Changing the superstructure alone cannot bring a new political settlement. Unless the forces that support democracy are organised and empowered, reforms will always be captured by vested interests and traditional politics."


Referring to past initiatives, Debapriya said political actors often prioritised constitutional and administrative changes without addressing deeper socioeconomic

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WE DEEPLY MOURN



The UAP family is deeply saddened by the death of **AL-HAJ MOHAMMAD MOHSIN, Amb** Honorable Member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Asia Pacific, former Ambassador & Foreign Secretary of the Government of Bangladesh, and former Assistant Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)



University of Asia Pacific

Draft energy plan copying AL's playbook: CPD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has followed the wrong practices of the ousted Awami League government in preparing the master plan for the power and energy sector, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

Preparing the masterplan should have had the involvement of local energy experts following research-based methods on decision-making, and it should have been done through an open and democratic process.

"But nothing happened - it has become another bureaucracy-driven plan which doesn't match the energy sector goals mentioned in other policy papers," said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at CPD, at a press briefing titled Quick Reaction on Interim Government's Energy and Power Sector Master Plan (2026-50).

On January 7, Fouzul Kabir Khan, the adviser to the ministry of power, energy and mineral resources, submitted the draft plan to Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. The ministry is yet to unveil the draft, saying it may be disclosed after Yunus's signing.

The newly proposed draft masterplan has failed to address, accommodate and answer the criticisms, concerns and questions raised in the previous Integrated Master Plan of 2023, said Helen Mashiyat Preoty, senior research associate at CPD, while presenting the keynote paper.

The emergence of domestic coal, intensified LNG needs and reluctance towards renewable energy expansion raise serious concerns.

"In no way should the existing version of the draft masterplan be approved without major revision. The draft version is no better than the previous one, and in some cases, it might prove to be more degrading," she added.

The CPD said the draft plan estimated the future power demand based solely on the GDP growth rate and set it at 59,351 megawatts for 2050.

At present, local and imported natural gas dominates the fuel mix with a 45 percent share; in 2050, it will be brought down to 29 percent in 2050, while generation from coal would be doubled by then, the CPD said, quoting the draft plan.

Though the plan will reduce electricity generation

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CITIZENS' TRIBUTE

Citizens from all walks of life of Bangladesh are gathering at the South Plaza of the National Parliament building at 2:30 pm today (16 January) with a blend of respect and mourning. This civic gathering is being organized to pay profound respect to the contribution and life of the late former Prime Minister, invincible leader of the country Begum Khaleda Zia.

This mourning meeting will be presided over by former Chief Justice Syed J. R. Mudassir Husain. Eminent citizens of the country, irrespective of party affiliation, will participate to express their grief, respect as well as to cite their memories regarding various facets of the beloved state leader. Thus the civic gathering will stand as a resolute pledge of national unity and humane solidarity.

— Civil Society