



Noab, Editors' Council to host media convention today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A media convention will be held in Dhaka today 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.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7



US President Donald Trump meets Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado in the Oval Office, where she presented him with her Nobel Peace Prize, Washington DC, US, on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Mob kills suspected thief after woman stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A woman was stabbed to death after she spotted an attempted theft, while the accused was later beaten to death after being snatched from police custody in Narayanganj's Rupganj upazila yesterday.

The incident occurred in the afternoon at Kerabo intersection in Kanchan municipality, said Mehedi Islam, senior assistant superintendent of police (Circle 'C') in Narayanganj.

The woman was identified as Amena Begum, 45, wife of local grocery shop owner Babul Dewan.

The accused, Mehedi Islam, 32, of the Birabo Khalpar area in the same upazila, died after being beaten by locals, police said. He was a mason by profession.

ASP Mehedi Islam said Mehedi had recently worked at Babul Dewan's newly built house, which was completed just four days ago.

"On Friday around 3:00pm, Mehedi allegedly entered the house after finding it empty and attempted to steal a mobile phone. When Amena spotted him, he stabbed her in the neck," the police official said.

Hearing her screams, locals rushed to the scene and caught Mehedi. Amena was taken to a local hospital, where she later died.

Shortly after news of her death spread, enraged relatives and locals assaulted Mehedi, who died on the spot, the police official added.

The two deaths occurred within a span of around 30

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

NPA debuts with call for justice, social democracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The left-leaning political platform Network for People's Action (NPA), led by a group of July uprising activists and four former members of the National Citizen Party, was officially launched yesterday at Dhaka's Central Shaheed Minar.

The platform formally began its journey at 4:00pm, when NPA leader Mir Huzaifa Al Mamduh announced the names of 99 members of its 101-member central council.

He said the platform would outline its next course of action at a press conference next week.

The NPA has three spokespersons -- Tuhin Khan, former joint member secretary of the NCP; Nazifa Jannat, vice president of the Chhatra Union's central unit; and poet-activist Ferdous Ara.

The three jointly read out the platform's manifesto at the event.

Addressing the programme, NPA key leader Nazifa Jannat said the platform had emerged under the leadership of student activists, outlining five core principles and seven goals and objectives, including democracy, equality, human dignity and social justice, and the protection of life, nature and the environment.

In the welcome speech, NPA founding member Anik Roy said the platform had been formed to unite

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8

MIGRATION TO US Visa freeze pushes families into uncertainty

PORIMOL PALMA

Tamim Hossain applied for a US immigrant visa two years ago to reunite with his family -- his wife and two daughters -- who have been living there for more than a decade.

He was expecting a visa appointment this February. But his hopes of reunion have been thrown into uncertainty after the US government announced a pause on issuing immigrant visas to nationals of 75 countries, including Bangladesh.

Tamim, 51, said his wife is a college teacher in New York, while his elder daughter, 19, is studying at a university and working part-time.

"My family is working hard to survive and paying taxes. They are not dependent on any welfare scheme. As my daughters are still students, I rather send money for them," the mid-career professional at a private company told The Daily Star.

He said he has already sold his assets and planned to resign from his job, while his sick father-in-law is undergoing treatment in the US. His elder daughter was supposed to move to another state for university but decided to stay back in New York, hoping to be with her father.

"Altogether, it is a family reunion that I am missing. I am

frustrated," Tamim told this correspondent.

Tamim is one of hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis and other nationals who have applied for immigrant visas but now face total uncertainty over reuniting with their families in the US -- a country built by immigrants and their children.

In a statement on January 14, the State Department said President Trump has made clear that immigrants must be financially self-sufficient and applications and attend interviews, and the department will continue to schedule appointments. However, no immigrant visas will be issued to these nationals during the pause.

No immigrant visas have been revoked as part of the guidance. Tourist and business visas do not fall under the new suspension order.

However, an earlier visa bond policy introduced by the Trump administration has also made it difficult for ordinary visitors and businesses to travel to the US.

On January 6, the US State Department expanded its visa bond list from seven countries to 38, including Bangladesh, with the measure taking effect on January 21.

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

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis and other nationals who have applied for immigrant visas now face total uncertainty over reuniting with their families in the US -- a country built by immigrants and their children.

Iran protests ease after crackdown

Say residents, rights group; heavy security presence reported in Tehran, other cities

AGENCIES

Iran's deadly crackdown appears to have broadly quelled protests for now, according to a rights group and residents, as state media reported more arrests yesterday in the shadow of US threats to intervene if killing continues.

After President Donald Trump's repeated threats of military action against Iran in support of protesters, fears of a US attack have retreated since Wednesday, when Trump said he'd been told killings in the crackdown were easing.

US allies including Saudi Arabia and Qatar conducted intense diplomacy with Washington this week to prevent a US strike, warning of consequences for the wider region that would ultimately impact the United States, a Gulf official said.

The White House said on Thursday that Trump is closely monitoring the situation on the ground, adding that the president and his team have warned Tehran there would be "grave consequences" if killings linked to its crackdown continue.

Trump understands that 800 scheduled executions were halted, White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt added, saying the president was keeping "all of his options on the table".

The United States stands by the "brave people of Iran," and President Donald Trump "has made it clear all options are

- Sporadic unrest continues, with reports of 3,000 arrests
- US stands by Iranian people, all options on the table
- Iran warns of lawful response to any aggression
- Putin offers Netanyahu Russia's help in mediating with Iran
- New Zealand shuts embassy in Iran

on the table to stop the slaughter," US Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz told the UN Security Council on Thursday.

Iran's Deputy UN Ambassador Gholamhossein Darzi said Iran does not seek escalation or confrontation and accused Waltz of resorting "to lies, distortion of facts, and a deliberate misinformation campaign to conceal his country's direct involvement in steering unrest in Iran to violence."

Around 3,000 people were arrested during the recent protests in Iran,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Star TECH CORNER

Google to develop high-end phones in Vietnam



STAR REPORT

Google plans to begin developing and manufacturing high-end smartphones in Vietnam this year, Nikkei Asia has reported.

The company already works with a broad network of suppliers in Vietnam that assemble a range of Google products, including Pixel smartphones. Under the new plan, Google is expected to start the "new product introduction" (NPI) process for its premium Pixel, Pixel Pro and

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



Traders and labourers crowd Karwan Bazar's wholesale vegetable market as winter produce arrives in abundance, turning the capital's largest hub into a hive of activity. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Board of peace' formed for Gaza Says Trump; Israeli strikes in enclave kill 10, including senior Hamas figure

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump on Thursday announced the formation of a Gaza "board of peace," a key phase two element of a US-backed plan to end the war in the Palestinian territory.

"It is my Great Honor to announce that THE BOARD OF PEACE has been formed," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform, adding that the members of the body will be announced "shortly."

"I can say with certainty that it is the Greatest and Most Prestigious Board ever assembled at any time, any place," Trump said.

The board's creation comes shortly after the announcement of a 15-member Palestinian technocratic committee, charged with managing the day-to-day governance of post-war Gaza.

The committee will work under the supervision of the board of peace,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7