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Bias claims by rivals put EC in a bind

Parties making allegations to preempt commission leanings: expert

MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR

The political atmosphere heats up ahead of the start of formal electioneering, with major parties alleging that the Election Commission and the administration are selectively enforcing rules against their candidates.

Over the past week, leaders of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and National Citizen Party have repeatedly voiced these concerns during meetings with the Election Commission, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and at public programmes.

Such allegations are often part of a political strategy to deter the commission from leaning towards any party, said an analyst and an election commissioner.

However, experts warned that the growing exchange of accusations may fuel voter anxiety at a critical juncture, as candidates are set to hit the campaign trail on Thursday.

They stressed that the EC must investigate complaints thoroughly and take a clear, objective stance to ensure a free, fair and widely acceptable election.

At a meeting with an NCP delegation yesterday, Chief Adviser Yunus said, "Any complaints or suggestions regarding the election should be immediately conveyed to the government. The government will take whatever measures are possible. Steps will be taken to ensure that no one can break the law."

To guarantee neutrality, changes in the field administration have been made through lottery. There is no scope for bias in this election.

"This is an election that will determine the nation's destiny. This is an election that can transform the country. This election must be free and fair."

Contacted by The Daily Star last night, two senior EC officials, requesting anonymity, acknowledged that the commission was indeed under pressure due to recent comments and demonstrations by political parties. It even had to revise the in-country postal voting ballots.

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Growing exchange of accusations may fuel voter anxiety at a critical juncture, as candidates are set to hit the campaign trail on Thursday.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Plumes of smoke from factories along the southern bank of the Karnaphuli river swirl skyward, slowly staining the amber horizon with a haze of pollution. The photo was taken around dawn from the Shah Amanat Bridge area of the port city recently.

MANIFESTO EXPECTATIONS

With the national election less than a month away, political parties are finalising their manifestos. The Daily Star spoke to economists to identify the pressing issues that should top the agenda for parties.

Next govt must tackle poverty, wage freeze

AHSAN HABIB

Two years ago, Mahbubur Rahman, a resident of Savar, worked in a garment factory on the outskirts of Dhaka. Following a prolonged illness, he was forced to leave his job and now struggles to support his wife and two daughters on meagre wages by working as a nursery labourer.

Mahbubur, who completed secondary education, represents the fragile reality of the labour force. While he remains hopeful that the upcoming election will stabilise the industrial sector and allow him to return to factory work, his descent from formal employment to precarious survival illustrates a trend that leading economists recommend must take

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Newly appointed US Ambassador Brent T Christensen pays a courtesy call on BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman at the latter's political office in Gulshan yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

'US very excited about upcoming election'

New US ambassador tells Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed US Ambassador to Dhaka Brent Christensen has said that the United States looks forward to working with all Bangladeshi political parties to advance shared peace and prosperity.

He made the comment in a post on X after meeting BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday, his first meeting with a political leader since arriving on January 12.

"I met today with BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman to hear his perspective on upcoming elections," he said.

Ambassador Christensen arrived in Dhaka on January 12, two days after taking the oath of office in Washington, DC.

After an hour long meeting between the BNP chief and the US ambassador, BNP Joint Secretary General Humayun Kabir told reporters that a democratic transition was underway and would continue.

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Rab member killed in Sitakunda attack
Three others of his team injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Rapid Action Battalion officer was beaten to death and three others injured after a group of criminals attacked a Rab team in the Jungle Salimpur area of Chattogram's Sitakunda upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Deputy Assistant Director Abdul Motaleb of Rab 7, police confirmed.

The incident occurred near the local BNP office in No. 1 Jungle Salimpur of the Chhinnamul area, according to police and Rab officials.

Rab 7 Media Officer ASP ARM Mozaffar Hossain said the team was attacked by local thugs while conducting an operation in the area.

"After being rescued, one succumbed to his injuries at a hospital, while the remaining three were admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH)," he added.

However, SI Nur Alam Ashek, in-charge of the CMCH police outpost, said no Rab members had been admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital until 8:30pm.

Rab sources later confirmed that the injured officers were taken to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Chattogram.

Chattogram district Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime and Operations) Sirajul Islam told The Daily Star, "We have learned that a Rab team went to the area to conduct an operation. A group of criminals suddenly attacked the team and abducted four members. Of them, one Rab member died at a hospital. We visited the spot and are investigating the incident."

Meanwhile, rumours that Rab officials had been gunned down

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Vote 'yes' to build a new Bangladesh

Yunus urges in address to nation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday called on citizens to vote "yes" in the upcoming referendum, saying the responsibility of building a new Bangladesh now lies in the hands of the people.

In a televised message, Yunus described the July uprising as an extraordinary achievement in the nation's history, creating an

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

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Shab-e-Barat on February 3

UNB, Dhaka

Muslims in Bangladesh will observe Shab-e-Barat on the night of February 3 as the Sha'ban moon was not sighted yesterday.

As the moon was not sighted, the month of Sha'ban will begin on January 21.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee held at the Islamic Foundation's Baitul Mukarram office in the evening, with Religious Affairs Ministry Secretary Kamal Uddin in the chair.

The announcement was made after analysing data collected from the district administrations, the Islamic Foundation, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department and the Space Research and Remote Sensing Institute.

Shab-e-Barat is observed on the 15th night of the Arabic month of Sha'ban.

Muslims offer special prayers, recite the Holy Quran and take part in other religious rituals on Shab-e-Barat.



Ballot boxes are being dispatched to regional election offices in various districts across the country ahead of the February 12 national election, which is just weeks away. The photo was taken outside the Election Commission headquarters in the capital's Agargaon yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Bias claims by rivals put EC

FROM PAGE 1

"The EC is under some pressure. Ensuring law and order during the campaign period will be a major challenge for us," said one official.

The poll body is scheduled to meet with representatives of all political parties today to provide a detailed explanation of postal ballot procedures and the overall voting process.

BNP MISLEADING VOTERS: JAMAAT

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General and head of its central publicity department Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair said, "The point is that we are not seeing the kind of neutral behaviour we expect from the Election Commission.

Within the commission itself, there are certain officials who seem to be leaning towards one particular party, giving them some advantage."

Earlier, after meeting the chief adviser on Sunday, Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher said the party informed Prof Yunus that the conduct of some SPs and DCs at the field level appeared to be "biased".

"We said we have no objection if anyone is given enhanced security or protocol. But as one of the major parties, the ameer of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami must also be treated equally," he said.

Taher also accused BNP activists of deceiving voters by distributing "so-called family cards and farmer cards door to door".

EC BIASED: NCP

During the meeting with Yunus yesterday, NCP Convener Nahid Islam drew his attention to several election-related issues and urged the government to take a proactive role in the scheduled time in violation of the electoral code.

He claimed that sections of top EC officials, returning officers, assistant returning officers, superintendents of police and other officials in some constituencies were working in favour of "one party".

He also accused the EC of engaging in questionable conduct on several issues, with the postal ballots for expatriate Bangladeshis being the most prominent and unresolved one.

Fakhrul further alleged that Jamaat activists were collecting copies of national identity cards, bKash numbers and mobile numbers from households. "This breaches privacy and is a criminal offence," he said.

He also claimed that in several Dhaka constituencies, a party had resorted to unethical tactics by transferring large numbers of voters from other parts of the country to ensure victory for its nominated candidates.

US very excited

FROM PAGE 1

"The US is very excited about the upcoming national election. It is satisfied with the environment and believes Bangladesh is moving towards a good process..." he said while addressing a press briefing.

Humayun said the meeting discussed ways to improve Bangladesh-United States bilateral relations, particularly in trade and investment. He added, "The US would remain an important development partner for Bangladesh."

Humayun also said Tarique and the US ambassador discussed the Rohingya issue.

"They discussed how the Rohingya issue could be resolved in the future through a multilateral process. The issue was described as a matter of national security and one of the top priorities, with emphasis on seeking multilateral support."

The meeting also covered development cooperation, ways to strengthen bilateral relations, trade and investment, as well as vocational and technical education, he added.

Meanwhile, a delegation of European Union countries also met Tarique Rahman. The delegation was led by European Union Ambassador to Bangladesh Michael Miller.

Ambassadors of Germany, France, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, and Italy were also present at the meeting.

Responding to a question regarding the EU meeting, Humayun said, "In the next election, people will

get the opportunity to vote after 17 years. Many ambassadors have never seen a democratic election. Through a transparent and accountable election, Bangladesh will come out of its dark past of the last 15 years and move towards a new horizon."

Earlier, Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Ajit Singh met Tarique Rahman and BNP leaders, where they discussed progress towards a peaceful and inclusive democratic transition through the upcoming election.

High Commissioner Singh underscored Canada's desire to work with the interim government and the next elected government to build on the momentum created by economic, financial, judicial, and labour reforms, to deepen bilateral relations, and to create a better future for people in both countries.

Canada has been a longstanding advocate for free, fair, inclusive, and participatory elections in Bangladesh, the High Commission on its official page.

In the last 12 days, Tarique met Swiss Ambassador Reto Renggli, Brazilian Ambassador Paulo Fernando Dias Feres, Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma, Germany's Ambassador Rüdiger Lotz, Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Susan Riley, Pakistani High Commissioner to Bangladesh Imran Haider, and Chinese Ambassador in Dhaka Yao Wen, among others.

photographs on posters, billboards and festsos, which are clear violations of the code of conduct.

"When campaigning was prohibited, the entire Dhaka city and the country were flooded with posters of a party chairperson returning home," he said.

Asif further claimed that on Sunday, during the disposal of appeals, the commission legalised the candidacies of dual citizens in violation of several existing laws, including constitutional provisions and the RPO.

EC MUST ACT: EXPERTS

Election experts Abdul Alim and Jesmin Tuli said the commission should investigate specific allegations without any delay to remove confusion.

"But I haven't heard that the Election Commission is conducting any inquiry or investigation into these allegations. If there are specific complaints, the commission should immediately state whether it has taken action, or whether the allegation is true or false. In that case, people would understand that it is indeed taking measures," said Tuli, a former senior EC official.

Alim, also a political analyst, said parties usually make allegations of bias and violation of rules before polls to keep pressure on the authorities.

"However, we did not see allegations and counter-allegations being taken to the EC or the chief adviser, and simultaneous protests in front of the commission after the election schedule was announced under caretaker or interim governments in the past," he said.

He warned that if the situation continues, especially with official campaigning set to begin in just two days, it will become increasingly difficult to control.

"That's why the EC must investigate the allegations and take stern action. The findings must be shared with the public to show where wrongdoing has occurred," he said.

Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmam Masud, when contacted yesterday, said the allegations of bias and the absence of a level playing field were part of political strategies.

"We are not biased towards anyone. We are committed to holding free, fair and acceptable elections," he said.

Trump links threat

FROM PAGE 12

The Norwegian Nobel Committee annoyed Trump by awarding the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize not to him but to Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado. She gave her medal last week to Trump during a White House meeting, though the Nobel Committee said the prize cannot be transferred, shared or revoked.

In his message, Trump also repeated his accusation that Denmark cannot protect Greenland from Russia or China.

"... and why do they have a 'right of ownership' anyway?" he wrote, adding: "The World is not secure unless we have Complete and Total Control of Greenland."

Trump vowed on Saturday to implement a wave of increasing tariffs from February 1 on EU members Denmark, Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Finland, along with Britain and Norway, until the US is allowed to buy Greenland.

EU leaders will discuss options at an emergency summit in Brussels on Thursday. One option is a package of tariffs on 93 billion euros (\$108 billion) of US imports that could automatically kick in on February 6 after a six-month suspension.

Another option is the "Anti-Coercion Instrument" (ACI), which has never yet been used and which could limit access to public tenders, investments or banking activity or restrict trade in services, in which the US has a surplus with the bloc, including in digital services.

The EU said it was continuing to engage "at all levels" with the US but said the use of its ACI was not off the table.

Next govt must tackle poverty

FROM PAGE 1
centre stage in political manifestos ahead of the February election.

Economists argue that without a roadmap for redistributive justice and job creation, the widening economic divide threatens to undermine social stability.

Since the 1980s, Bangladesh has been a model for poverty reduction, but post-pandemic economic shocks and high inflation have reversed these gains.

According to new estimates by the Power and Participation Research Centre, the poverty rate climbed to 27.93 percent in mid 2025 from 18.7 percent in 2022.

Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), described the trend as "very worrying".

While short-term financial support is necessary for vulnerable groups like Mahbubur's family, it is not a cure. Sustainable reduction, he argued, requires job creation in trade, exports, and small businesses rather than temporary stopgaps.

The crisis is not limited to job losses; it also plagues the employed, driving skilled workers out of the formal sector.

Harun Or Rashid, who completed higher secondary education, abandoned his job as a security guard at a commercial bank because the Tk 12,000 monthly salary could not sustain his family of six, including his mother and three children.

Harun now drives a battery-run rickshaw in Dhaka's Muzga and Motijheel areas, earning approximately Tk 30,000 per month. While the job switch has allowed him to survive, he lamented that he has no other option.

He added that he would be much happier if there were viable opportunities in the formal sector.

Harun's dilemma reinforces the argument made by Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, who emphasised that political parties must focus on the quality of employment.

Zahid Hussain warned that safety nets are not a sustainable long term solution and that the next elected government must focus on job creation and wages.

This requires a clear outline for export diversification, as the economy remains dangerously over-reliant on

the apparel sector.

While the garment industry generates over \$40 billion annually, data from the Export Promotion Bureau reveals that no other sector fetches more than \$1 billion. Concurrently, the investment climate has cooled, with central bank data showing private sector credit growth slowed to 6.58 percent in November from 7.66 percent a year earlier.

To address the immediate liquidity crisis facing families like Harun's and Mahbubur's, Towfiqul Islam Khan, additional research director of the CPD, has proposed a "universal minimum income" scheme.

Towfiqul proposed a monthly cash support initiative for families living below the poverty line, designed to be rolled out in phases.

The government should initially

this expenditure is necessary to prevent vulnerable groups from falling further behind due to job insecurity and limited access to credit.

Mustafizur Rahman of CPD advocated for higher direct taxation to fund increased allocations for health, education, and social safety nets.

He warned that simply promising to reduce poverty would not suffice without a concrete plan, adding that tackling corruption is an economic imperative as poor governance directly exacerbates inequality.

Despite the consensus on necessary reforms, there is widespread scepticism regarding political will. Anu Muhammed, an economist and former chair of Jahangirnagar University's economics department, observed that while manifestos often feature lofty rhetoric, implementation rarely follows.

EXPERT SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT GOVT

1 Prioritise job creation with decent wages

2 Introduce universal minimum income scheme

3 Improve access to affordable credit for youth, the poor

4 Reform labour market to protect informal workers

5 Diversify exports beyond garment sector

6 Strengthen governance, raise progressive taxation

7 Stabilise prices, control inflation

bring 28 lakh families in 11 poverty-prone districts under the scheme, followed by 80 lakh families in 36 districts, and eventually 1.47 crore families nationwide, according to his proposal.

Towfiqul also suggested a "credit card" for financially disadvantaged young people, offering interest free and collateral free loans of up to Tk 100,000 to foster self-employment, alongside medical benefits of the same value for families.

Implementing these comprehensive measures will cost approximately Tk 120,000 crore, equivalent to 2 percent of the country's GDP. He argues that

While manifestos may include commitments to poverty reduction and addressing inequality, the real issue is the extent to which these priorities are reflected in concrete action, he said.

"To truly give importance to these two issues, Bangladesh would need a fundamental shift across all policy areas. Whether it is education policy, energy policy or employment policy, such decisions must be made by the government itself -- not by the World Bank or the IMF," he said.

Without effective home-grown policies, the hopes of workers like Mahbubur and Harun may remain unfulfilled.

Vote 'yes' to build a new Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1
opportunity to establish democracy, justice, and human rights.

"Vote 'Yes' to build the state according to your expectations. By choosing 'Yes,' you open the door to creating a new Bangladesh. Cast your vote, encourage others to do the same, bring them to the polling stations, and help transform the country," he said.

Prof Yunus explained that the referendum, scheduled for February 12 alongside the national election, is intended to secure public consent for the July Charter, a reform framework formulated with consensus from all political parties.

"To this end, several reforms have already been undertaken. For more profound and far-reaching reforms, we have formulated the July Charter based on the consensus of all political parties in the country," Prof Yunus said.

He said a 'Yes' vote in the referendum means the government and the opposition will work together to form a caretaker government and an Election Commission.

A 'Yes' vote also means that the government won't be able to amend the constitution at will, he added.

He said a person will not be able to serve as prime minister for more than a maximum of 10 years, and the judiciary will function independently.

Bid to stage 2008-style polls will fail

FROM PAGE 12
loan defaulters without taking action against them.

Referring to show-cause notices issued to him and NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary, contesting from Dhaka-11 and Dhaka-9 respectively, over alleged violations of the electoral code of conduct.

He said that during his referendum campaign, he used only his image without party symbols. "Yet the EC served us show-cause notices, indicating it has taken a stand against the referendum and discouraged campaigning," he alleged.

Nahid further accused BNP leaders of exploiting the death of former prime minister and BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia

to campaign under the guise of mourning meetings and blanket distribution, while the EC "looked the other way".

"If there is a plan to make the election unfair, occupy polling stations, politicise the administration, or pressure the Election Commission, the people will not accept it. The youth of Bangladesh will not accept it," he warned.

Nahid said they expected the Election Commission not to bow to pressure from any party or force, warning that if it did, they would be compelled to take a stand against such actions.



BNP senior leaders lay a wreath on the grave of party founder and late president Ziaur Rahman at Zia Udyan in the capital yesterday, marking his 90th birth anniversary

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL



Dhaka candidates already on the move

Official campaigning yet to begin, but many conducting voter outreach through various means

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE and SADIQ MUHAMMAD ALOK

Although the official window for election campaigning begins on January 22, aspirants for the upcoming 13th national election are already active on the ground, engaging in various forms of "mass contact" to woo voters.

According to the election schedule, polling will take place on February 12. Formal campaigning -- including the use of posters and digital projections -- is prohibited until electoral symbols are allocated on January 21.

However, candidates across Dhaka constituencies have already started moving to increase their exposure, using social gatherings, religious venues, and digital platforms.

Candidates are frequently visiting local markets, attending social events, and offering prayers at local mosques. Courtyard meetings and charity activities have also become common outreach methods.



commemorative programme for late BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a school in Dhanmondi on January 14.

In Dhaka II, BNP's MA Quayum has been involved in charitable activities, distributing blankets among underprivileged people in Moddho Badda.

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Politics must prioritise the people, not blame game

Says Tarique

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday said politics must move beyond decades of blame and confrontation and instead focus on improving the lives of people and standing by them in times of need.

"Those of us who are in politics, who do we do it for? We do it for the people of this country. In short, in simple words, standing

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Star ITIHAS ADDA

Dreams of intellectual emancipation still unrealised: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The emancipation of the intellect -- a vision imagined by a group of Dhaka-based thinkers a century ago -- remains largely unfulfilled in present-day Bangladesh due to social elitism, intolerance, and a lack of moral integrity among the intellectual class.

Speakers made these remarks yesterday at the eighth episode of The Daily Star Itihas Adda, a history discussion series held at The Daily Star Centre.

The event marked the centenary of the Muslim Sahitya Samaj (Muslim Literary Society), founded in Dhaka on January 19, 1926.

Addressing the theme of the event, senior researcher Wakil Ahmed said the country has reached a point where people use their intellect to justify burning down the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.

"That intellect dictates: if opinions do not match, burn it down. This is indeed a 'great emancipation', which in

reality means we have achieved nothing," he said.

He said the nation has failed to uphold the values nurtured by the intellectuals of 1926. "We have walked our own path. While the Sahitya Samaj was a social and cultural movement, the movements that followed in Bangladesh were largely political," he added.

"We rise like mercury when heated, reaching the peak in just 36 days. But then suddenly, the mercury drops to the bottom," Wakil Ahmed said.

He noted that while the nation can mount large political uprisings, it struggles to sustain cultural values. "We fight for freedom, we achieve it, but we cannot hold on to it," he said.

Referring to the present situation, Wakil Ahmed described it as more "disturbing" than the period the movement originally confronted. "Demonic forces are flexing their muscles everywhere, while human forces are defeated," he said.

"That intellect dictates: if opinions do not match, burn it down. This is indeed a 'great emancipation', which in

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Speakers at the eighth edition of The Daily Star Itihas Adda, a history discussion series held at The Daily Star Centre.



A four-member delegation of the National Citizen Party, led by NCP Convener Nahid Islam, met Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus at the state guest house Jamuna yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Don't pay visa bond before interview

US embassy urges applicants

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US embassy yesterday urged visa applicants not to pay any bond in advance, warning that early payments neither guarantee visa approval nor ensure safety from fraud.

"Paying early does not guarantee you a visa, and third-party sites can be scams," the embassy said in a statement posted on its verified Facebook page.

It added that any payment made before a visa interview is non-refundable, while the bond will be returned only if the visa holder complies with its terms.

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Empower urban govt to tackle Dhaka's woes

Speakers tell dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lack of coordination among service-providing agencies and the limited authority of city mayors are among the key reasons behind the deteriorating condition of Dhaka and other cities across the country, urban experts and politicians said yesterday.

They stressed that forming a strong and empowered urban government is essential to effectively address city-level problems.

The speakers urged political parties to clearly outline plans for establishing an urban government and tackling urban challenges in their election manifestos.

They made the remarks at an urban dialogue titled "Manifesto to Save Dhaka," jointly organised by the Urban Development Journalists' Forum Bangladesh and Gulshan Society at a city hotel.

Speaking as the chief guest, Dhaka North City Corporation Administrator Mohammad Azad said the authority of city corporations is largely limited to waste management and installing streetlights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- >Create one city coordination body
- Expand city corporation powers
- Earmark share of traffic fines for city corporations
- Make agencies publish targets, quarterly progress

"Without a dedicated police force, eviction drives cannot be made sustainable," he said.

He said traffic law violation fines

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TK 32CR GRAFT CASE

Court frames charges against S Alam, PK Halder

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday framed charges against S Alam Group Chairman Mohammad Saiful Alam, former managing director of Reliance Finance Limited, PK Halder and II others in a Tk 32-crore graft case.

Judge Md Abdus Salam of the Special Judge's Court-9 of Dhaka passed the order, said a court staffer. The court also set February 8 to start recording the deposition of the witnesses, he added.

The other accused are S Alam Group Vice Chairman Abdus Samad, directors Mohammad Abdullah Hasan and Shahana Ferdous, former executive VP and head of risk management at Reliance Finance Rashedul Haque, former corporate

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UTTARA ABDUCTION

Bodyguard dies of his wounds

Suspect remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A 57-year-old retired army personnel working as a bodyguard died two days after being attacked during an abduction in Dhaka's Uttara on January 16.

Police on Sunday arrested suspect Bachchu Mia in Chattogram's Chawkbazar in connection with the murder, according to the police forwarding report.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Jasrita Islam yesterday placed Bachchu on a three-day remand in connection with the murder of Mahbub Alam. The attack took place on Road 12 in Sector 14 of Uttara. Mahbub was critically injured and died while undergoing treatment at the Combined Military Hospital two days later.

On January 17, Mahbub's son Abdullah Ismay Azam filed an attempted murder case with Uttara West Police Station against six unnamed people, which was later converted into a murder case.

Police have yet to trace the abducted man or his family members.

Kamrul Islam, sub-inspector of Uttara West Police Station and the investigating officer, said last night, "We will interrogate the arrestee and try to get more information from him."

Kushtia Jamaat ameer dies while addressing rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Kushtia district Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Abul Hashem died while addressing a protest rally yesterday.

He was rushed to Mannan Heart Foundation, a private hospital in the district town, around 4:30pm, where doctors pronounced him dead.

Confirming the matter, district Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary Suja Uddin Joardar said, "I was standing right beside him while he was speaking. He collapsed in my hands."

Dr Shamim Ara Begum of Mannan Heart Foundation said the Jamaat leader was already dead when he was brought to the hospital.

Suja Uddin said the deceased's first namaz-e-janaza will be held at 9:00am today at Chadagara Eidgah ground in the town. The second janaza will be held in Mirpur upazila.

The rally and gathering were organised yesterday to protest alleged death threats against the Jamaat-nominated candidate for the Kushtia-3 (Sadar) constituency, Amir Hamza.



Battery-run auto-rickshaw owners and drivers block Rampura Road in Uttar Badda around 10:00am yesterday, demanding unhindered operation in the capital. The blockade continued till afternoon, causing severe gridlocks in the surrounding areas, inset.

PHOTO: STAR

Chilli growers in Rangpur cash in on higher prices

S DILIP ROY

Favourable weather conditions for chilli farming and increased market demand have boosted earnings for farmers in the Rangpur region this season.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), chillies have been cultivated on a total of 4,320 hectares across five districts of the Rangpur region -- Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Gaibandha and Nilphamari -- during the current season.

Last year, chilli cultivation in the region covered 4,670 hectares. Although the cultivated area has decreased, farmers' incomes have risen due to higher yields and better market prices.

Farmers said the average cost of cultivating chillies per bigha ranges between Tk 35,000 and Tk 40,000. Each bigha produces around 60 to 70 maunds of chillies. At this time last



Gajerkuti village in Kurigram, said he cultivated chillies on one bigha of land, spending around Tk 38,000. He has already harvested and sold 20 maunds, earning Tk 60,000. He is currently harvesting and selling 40 to 50kgs of chillies from his field every day.

Anil Chandra Barman, 65, a farmer from Bhatibari village under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said he expects to make a profit of Tk 2.5 lakh by cultivating chillies on two bighas of land. He has already sold chillies worth Tk 1.5 lakh.

Majedul Islam, 50, from Chowdhurani village in Rangpur, said he earned Tk 1.5 lakh last year by cultivating chillies on five bighas of land. This year, he hopes to make a profit of Tk 70 to Tk 80 per kg.

In retail markets, chillies are selling at Tk 100 to Tk 110 per kg.

Anzal Hossain, 58, a chilli farmer from

4 lakh from the same area.

Shah Jamal, a vegetable wholesaler at Rangpur municipal market, said last year, chillies had to be brought in from other regions. But this year, due to lower production in other parts of the country, chillies are being sent from the Rangpur region. As a result, local farmers are receiving double the price.

Sirajul Islam, additional director of the DAE (Rangpur), said chilli cultivation has been particularly high in the char areas along the Teesta, Dharla, Brahmaputra and Dudhkumar rivers.

Due to higher demand in local markets, farmers are receiving better prices compared to last year, he said.

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY CASE Charges pressed against Shamim Osman, 11 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Awami League lawmaker AKM Shamim Osman phoned then bridges minister Obaidul Quader, saying he had taken up firearms after police sought his help, and asked Quader to inform the deposed prime minister not to be angered if photographs of him carrying weapons were published, the prosecution told International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday.

Prosecutor Gazi Monawar Hossain Tamim referred to and read out a transcript of part of the conversation while pressing formal charges in a crimes against humanity case against Shamim and 11 others, including his family members and relatives, over the alleged killing of 10 people and causing injuries to dozens of others during the 2024 mass uprising in Narayanganj.

Those include Shamim's son Imtiaz Osman Ayan, also known as Ayan Osman; his nephew Azmeri Osman; Ayan's brother-in-law Minhaj Uddin Ahmed Diki; and Shamim's brother-in-law Tanvir Ahmed Titu.

The names of six others were not disclosed to the media. All the accused are

absconding.

The tribunal took cognisance of the charges after hearing the prosecution and issued arrest warrants against the accused, asking police to produce them before the court by January 26.

The prosecution brought three charges against the 12 accused.

According to Charge 1, on July 19, 2024, in several areas of Narayanganj, Shamim, in person and on his instructions, along with Ayan, Azmeri, Minhaj, Titu and others under his control, allegedly carried out attacks on unarmed protesters using firearms and sharp weapons. Six people, including six-year-old Riya Gope, were killed,

and many others were critically injured.

Charge 2 says on July 21 in Fatullah, Shamim and his associates allegedly opened fire on unarmed protesters, killing two people and injuring many others.

Charge 3 says on August 5, the same accused allegedly carried out another armed attack in Chashara, killing two protesters and attempting to murder many others, offences punishable under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

INVITATION FOR TENDER of Outsourcing Cleaning Services

1	Name Ministry/Division	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare						
2	Procuring Entity	icddr,b						
3	Invitation for Tender	Services						
4	Invitation Ref No	icddr,b/SCM/GoB/OTM/Pkg#PS-04/2025-26						
5	Date	20-01-2026						
KEY INFORMATION								
6	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (National)						
FUNDING INFORMATION								
7	Budget and Source of Funds	Government of Bangladesh and other sources						
8	Development Partners (if applicable)	N/A						
PARTICULAR INFORMATION								
9	Tender Package No.	PS-04/2025-26						
10	Tender Package Name	Outsourcing Cleaning Services						
	Date	Time						
11	Tender Publication Date	20-01-2026						
12	Last Date of Selling Tender Document	09-02-2026						
13	Tender Closing Date and Time	10-02-2026						
14	Tender Opening Date and Time	10-02-2026						
15	Name & Address of the office(s) - Selling Tender Document	Address: Finance Department, Main Building, Level-4, icddr,b, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212. Interested bidder is requested to deposit the price of each set Tender Document i.e. BDT 5,000/- to the Account Name: "icddr,b", Account No. 0200002442981, Agrani Bank Ltd, icddr,b Branch and submit original Customer Copy to Finance Department while collecting the Tender Document within the stipulated time. Please bring NIL while collecting tender documents and participating in the pre-bid meeting and use north (IPH) gate.						
NO CONDITIONS APPLY FOR SALE, PURCHASE OR DISTRIBUTION OF TENDER DOCUMENTS								
	- Receiving Tender Document	Supply Chain Management, Chiller Building (Ground Floor), icddr,b, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.						
	- Opening Tender Document	Supply Chain Management, Chiller Building (1st Floor), icddr,b, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.						
16	Place / Date / Time of Pre-Tender Meeting	FMS Meeting Room, Chiller Building (3rd Floor), icddr,b, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212 on January 27, 2026 from 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM.						
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER								
17	Brief Eligibility and Qualification of Tenderer (Details eligibility criteria are described in the tender schedule)	General Experience	Specific Experience	Annual Turn Over	Liquidity			
		7 years	5 years	10 Crore	2 Crore			
18	Brief Description of Services	Outsourcing Cleaning Services						
19	Brief Description of Related Services	Cleaning and Related Services						
20	Price of Tender Document (Tk)	BDT=5,000/- per schedule (non-refundable)						
21	Pkg No	Identification of Schedule	Location	Tender Security (BDT)	Completion Time in Months			
	Pkg-04: Outsourcing Cleaning Services	icddr,b 68 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sharani, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212	66,00,000/-	Service Contract for 2 (two) years				
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS								
22	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Mirza Muhammad Masud Rana						
23	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Senior Manager, Supply Chain Management						
24	Address of Official Inviting Tender	68, Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sharani, icddr,b, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212						
25	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	02-2227001-10, 16340 Ext # 4405/4400						
26	This Tender Notice is available in icddr,b Website: www.icddr.org	e-mail: tenderquery@icddr.org						
27	The Procuring entity reserves the right to reject all the Tenders or annul the Tender proceedings.							

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e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার টেক্সেল জিএমডি, ঢাকা (দক্ষিণ) দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টেলে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Package	Title of Works	Closing & Opening Date and Time
1194154	GMDD: 2025-2026/09	Civil Maintenance Work of Ansar Barrack Building at Hasnabad 230/132kV Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka-South.	03 Feb 2026 at 12:30
1195031	GMDD: 2025-2026/10	Grass & Jungle Cutting, GIS Room, Underground Cable Room, Drain Cleaning, Septic Tank & Overhead Water Reservoir Cleaning, Inspection Pit Cleaning & Glass Cleaning of GIS Room on Annual Basis at Shyampur 230/132kV Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka-South, Power Grid.	
1195210	GMDD: 2025-2026/11	33kV Renovation Work at Munshiganj 132/33kV Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka-South, Power Grid.	08 Feb 2026 at 12:30
1195305	GMDD: 2025-2026/12	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of IP Based camera Surveillance System at Munshiganj 132/33 kV Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka South, Power Grid.	
1199937	GMDD: 2025-2026/13	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of IP Based camera Surveillance System at Sreenagar 132/33 kV Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka South, Power Grid.	

আগ্রহী টিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোঃ মোতাফিজুর রহমান
নির্বাচী প্রকৌশলী (অংশদা) জিএমডি, ঢাকা (দক্ষিণ)

AM Trading proprietor Md Abdullah Al Mamun. During yesterday's hearing, Rashedul and Nahida Runai, who were brought to the courtroom from jail custody, pleaded not guilty after the judge read out the charges against them, said the prosecution.

Court frames charges

FROM PAGE 3

finance manager Nahida Runai, former SVP and credit committee member Kazi Ahmed Jamal, former deputy manager of corporate finance Jumaratul Banna, former managing director of Marine Vegetable Oils Ltd Zahir Ahmed, directors Tipu Sultan and Md Ishaq, and

Teesta Mega Plan work to begin after scrutiny Says Rizwana

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Latmonirhat*

Despite a commitment to start implementing the Teesta Mega Plan this January, the work has not begun yet but will commence soon, Water Resources Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan said yesterday.

However, she did not specify when the work would begin.

Saying there was no reason for disappointment, Rizwana said both the Bangladesh and Chinese governments remain committed to the Teesta Mega Plan, which will be implemented after proper verification and scrutiny to avoid future mistakes and meet long-standing public expectations.

She spoke to the media after visiting erosion-affected areas along the Teesta shoal near the Teesta Bridge in Kaunia upazila of Rangpur.

Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen was also present.

"China is providing technical and financial support for the Teesta River management and large-scale development project. China is fully committed to implementing the Teesta Mega Plan. Today's visit is an important part of that process," Rizwana said. She said protecting the lives and livelihoods of people living along the Teesta was a priority, noting that climate change has been severely affecting the region every year.

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INTERNATIONAL

DHAKA TUESDAY JANUARY 20, 2026

MAGH 6, 1432 BS

The Daily Star

5

Iran executions seemingly 'tool of state intimidation'

Says UN rights chief; Tehran to consider lifting internet ban; state TV hacked

AGENCIES

Iran appears to be using executions "as a tool of state intimidation", the United Nations said yesterday, as it denounced a jump in capital punishment globally in 2025.

The Islamic republic reportedly executed 1,500 people last year, UN rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement.

"The scale and pace of executions suggest a systematic use of capital punishment as a tool of state intimidation, with disproportionate impact on ethnic minorities and migrants," he warned.

The spike in executions in Iran -- which according to rights groups is the world's most prolific executioner after China -- had contributed to "an alarming increase" in the use of capital punishment worldwide last year, Turk said.

Meanwhile, Iran may lift its internet blackout in a few days, a senior parliament member said yesterday, after authorities shut communications while they used massive force to crush protests in the worst domestic unrest since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.



In the latest sign of weakness in the authorities' control, state television appeared to be hacked late on Sunday, briefly showing speeches by US President Donald Trump and the exiled son of Iran's last shah calling on the public to revolt, reports Reuters.

Iran's streets have largely been quiet for a week since anti-government protests that began in late December were put down in three days of mass violence.

An Iranian official told Reuters on condition of anonymity that the confirmed death toll was more than 5,000, including 500 members of the security forces, with some of the worst unrest taking place in ethnic Kurdish areas in the northwest. Western-based Iranian rights groups also say thousands were killed.

Sust students

FROM PAGE 12

noon, locking its entrance. After the emergency syndicate meeting, the university administration around 10:00pm initiated a meeting with a section of the protesting students at the administrative building's conference hall.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Mohammad Belayet Hossain, a senior lawyer for the university, said the Sust authorities have sought a stay on the HC order so that the elections could proceed, and that a chamber judge of the Appellate Division may hold a hearing today in this regard.

"The writ petition that led to the High Court staying the elections was not acceptable, as there was no nexus between the Sustu election and the national parliamentary polls."

On Sunday, independent vice-president candidate Mominur Rashid Shuvo filed the petition, saying the Election Commission had earlier issued directives to halt all elections ahead of the national parliamentary polls, arguing that holding the Sustu election under those directives was not legally valid.

Citing security concerns, the EC on January 12 circulated a notification ordering that no polls, including those of student unions, can be held



Members of the Spanish Civil Guard and other emergency personnel work beside one of the trains involved in a deadly derailment of two high-speed trains near Adamuz in Córdoba, Spain, yesterday. At least 39 people were killed in the collision.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Russia hits energy system in 5 regions of Ukraine

Kyiv air defence units shoot down 126 drones

REUTERS

Russia launched a barrage of drone strikes on Ukraine's energy infrastructure overnight yesterday, cutting off power in five regions across the country amid freezing temperatures and high demand, Ukrainian officials said.

The Ukrainian air force said that Russian troops had launched 145 drones. Air defence units shot down 126 of them, it said.

"As of this morning, consumers in Sumy, Odesa, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Chernihiv regions are without power," the energy ministry said in a statement. "Emergency repair work is underway if the



security situation allows."

In the southern Odesa region, energy and gas infrastructure was damaged, the regional governor said, adding that one person was hurt in the attack.

DTEK, Ukraine's largest private energy company, said its energy facility in Odesa was "substantially" damaged, knocking out power for 30,800 households.

A local power grid company in northern Chernihiv region said that five important energy facilities were damaged, leaving tens of thousands of consumers without power.

Russia also hit Ukraine's second-largest city of Kharkiv with missiles yesterday morning, significantly damaging a critical infrastructure facility, Mayor Ihor Terekhov said.

Moscow has stepped up a winter campaign of strikes on the Ukrainian energy system, including generation, electricity transmission and gas production facilities, amid freezing temperatures that complicate repair works.

91 BNP rebels still

FROM PAGE 12

Some have questioned whether the BNP can effectively enforce its own decisions at the grassroots level -- a concern that senior party leaders acknowledge but say is difficult to resolve overnight.

Sed Ehsanul Huda, chief of Bangladesh Jatiya Dal, dissolved his own party and joined the BNP. Nominated as a Kishoreganj 5 candidate, he said, "I am facing an extremely uncomfortable situation.... Many committees are not working with me. These issues should have been resolved much earlier by the BNP high command."

Fariduzzaman Farhad, chairman of the National People's Party also dissolved his party and joined the BNP. Contesting from Narail 2 now, he said a rebel candidate remains in the race in his constituency, which he described as deeply unfortunate. "Just allowing the use of the sheaf of paddy symbol is not enough. The central leadership should have arranged an understanding between me and the rebel candidate. The party should have been stricter."

Despite meetings with BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, who urged rebel candidates to withdraw, some are still contesting from seats given to allied candidates.

Expelled leader Saiful Alam Nirab is still contesting Dhaka 12, where the BNP has not fielded any candidate as allied Biplobi Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque is vying for the seat.

In Munshiganj 3, the BNP nominated central leader Kamruzzaman Ratan, while district BNP Member-secretary Mohammad Mohiuddin is contesting as an independent candidate.

In Munshiganj 1, local leader Sheikh Md Abdullah received the party nomination, while two

rebel candidates -- district convener committee member Momin Ali and central Sweekhasebak Dal leader Mir Sharafat Ali -- are contesting the seat.

In Patuakhali 3, the BNP did not field any candidate, as Gono Adhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque is contesting under the seat-sharing arrangement. However, a BNP rebel candidate remains in the race there.

Other constituencies where rebels are in the race include: Chattogram 14 and 16; Sylhet 5; Natore 1; Brahmanbaria 1 and 2; Mymensingh 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11; Joypurhat 2; Madaripur 1; Habiganj 1; Narayanganj 2, 3 and 4; Gopalganj 2; Bagerhat 2; Jhalakathi 1; Chandpur 2; Tangail 1 and 2.

EXPULSIONS
The party has expelled at least 10 leaders for contesting against party nominees or working against officially backed candidates. Most of them remain in the race.

The central leadership has issued fresh instructions to district and upazila units to throw their weight behind nominated candidates and avoid engagement with campaigns of rebels.

As grassroots leaders were found supporting the rebel candidate in Patuakhali 3, two committees there were dissolved on Saturday.

ANOTHER SETBACK
Three BNP candidates have had their nominations rejected, leaving the party with no alternatives to those seats.

Affected candidates have already moved the courts, seeking restoration of their candidacies through appeals and writ petitions.

Legal teams are closely monitoring court proceedings, aware that unfavourable rulings could significantly weaken the party's electoral presence in certain regions.

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'Serial killer' held in Savar

FROM PAGE 12

and produced before a court with a prayer for 10 days' remand.

Dhaka Senior Judicial Magistrate Tajul Islam Sohag sent Samrat to jail after recording his confessional statement, said an assistant sub-inspector working at the court.

Details of the statement could not be known immediately till filing the report last night around 8:30pm.

Police said Samrat lived in Savar's Bank Colony area, but his permanent address is unknown.

Although Samrat is widely known as "mentally unwell" by locals, police said no such symptoms were found during

interrogation. "As he roams around like a vagabond, people assume he is mentally unwell. However, during interrogation, we did not find any signs or symptoms of that," the police official said.

Following earlier recoveries of bodies from the abandoned community centre, police intensified surveillance in the area, Arafatul said.

With assistance from the municipality authorities, the building was cleaned, lighting improved, and CCTV cameras installed. Police also deployed regular patrols.

After the latest discovery of bodies, CCTV footage was reviewed, leading to the identification of a suspicious individual. A subsequent raid resulted in Samrat's detention, he added.

According to police, a body was recovered on August 29 last year from the second floor

of the community centre. The unidentified victim, believed to be around 30, was found in a decomposed state with his hands tied.

On October 11, the body of an unidentified woman, also aged around 30, was recovered from a second-floor bathroom with her throat slit. On December 19, another unidentified man, aged about 35, was found dead in the building.

On Sunday night, police recovered two more burnt bodies from the same building. "We believe one of the victims is a 13-year-old girl, while the other is estimated to be around 25. However, the gender of the latter could not be confirmed immediately," Arafatul said.

A recipe for more migration fraud?

Migrants need accountability from existing recruiting agencies, not more of them

Migrant workers remitted a record \$33 billion last year, a vital cushion for a nation navigating political turbulence. Yet the machinery that sends them abroad remains largely broken, with prohibitive costs and middlemen who treat human beings as commodities. Against this backdrop, the interim government's decision to approve 252 new overseas recruiting agencies is baffling. This expansion pushes the total number of licensed recruiters to 2,646—the highest in South Asia—dwarfing India's 1,988 and Pakistan's 2,537. Clearly, it flies in the face of economic logic and expert advice as, just months ago, a government-commissioned white paper explicitly recommended a "reasonable" reduction in agencies to curb endemic fraud. To our surprise, the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry has done the opposite.

A senior secretary has reportedly argued that more agencies will break the stranglehold of powerful syndicates, and that even if each new firm sends just one worker, numbers will rise. This is based on a rosy assumption that more competition automatically leads to better behaviour. In reality, it merely fuels a race to the bottom: illicit costs permeate every layer of the labour market and ultimately trickle down to aspiring migrants, forcing them to pay a higher price than anyone else in the region.

The white paper's findings were quite damning. Over the past decade, it revealed, nearly one in five workers who paid advances failed to migrate at all, resulting in annual losses of roughly Tk 31,660 crore. That is why we stress that the system needs cleaning, not cluttering. The priority should be a rigorous audit to weed out unfit agencies, not the issuance of fresh licences that will stretch an already overstretched regulator to breaking point. The Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) is drowning in complaints, with over 2,200 last year alone. Having to police more agencies would be almost impossible.

This decision comes as the global market for Bangladeshi labour is shrinking. Malaysia halted recruitment amid corruption allegations during the tenure of the Awami League government. The UAE has suspended visas, and traditional markets like Oman and Bahrain are largely closed. Even Saudi Arabia, the destination for 70 percent of migrants, is becoming less hospitable, with rising costs and fewer jobs. When legal routes narrow, the temptation for irregular migration grows. Already, Bangladeshi topped the list of irregular sea crossings to Europe last year.

The interim government has a mandate to dismantle prevailing syndicates, yet it appears to be replicating the mistakes of the past. Issuing licences is easy; ensuring that a village labourer is not bankrupted by a predatory broker is hard. The government seems to have chosen the easy part. But our migrant workers deserve better.

Going forward, we urge the authorities to enforce strict legal and ethical standards and negotiate bilateral agreements that eliminate middlemen altogether. Agencies with proven records of fraud must be stripped of their licences, and this clean-up must be paired with strengthening the BMET. Establishing a centralised, digital payment gateway for migration fees would also be a critical step in eliminating opaque cash transactions that fuel the syndicate system and drive up costs for the poorest workers.

Regulate battery-run rickshaws

Safeguard the interests of both drivers and passengers

Rickshaws—both pedal-driven and battery powered—remain an indispensable part of Dhaka's urban mobility, especially for short trips. They provide livelihoods to hundreds of thousands and fill gaps left by inadequate public transport. A new study, however, shows that the largely unregulated nature of these rickshaws is creating serious problems for road safety, drivers' welfare, and the environment. According to the study, 97 percent of battery-powered rickshaws and nearly 86 percent of pedal rickshaws operate without registration, which is alarming.

The study shows that around 30 percent of passengers using battery-powered rickshaws have experienced accidents, compared to 18 percent for pedal rickshaws, with injuries being more severe in the former. Faster speeds, inexperienced drivers, and poorly built vehicles together make rickshaws risky on Dhaka's already crowded roads. The study has also found that battery-powered rickshaws are attracting younger and mostly new drivers, many of whom have no prior experience driving pedal rickshaws. While the battery-powered vehicles generate higher gross daily income, high rental fees and dependence on microfinance loans leave most drivers financially vulnerable. In fact, drivers who rent battery rickshaws often earn less than pedal rickshaw drivers, increasing the risk of debt and exploitation in this informal system.

However, from the passenger perspective, the appeal of battery-run rickshaws is understandable. Most trips in Dhaka are under two kilometres, and more than 80 percent of users prefer these rickshaws for their speed and lower cost. Although these vehicles are often blamed for traffic congestion, experts point out that congestion is mainly caused by poor traffic management, roadside encroachments, and a lack of proper investment, which have reduced average traffic speeds to near walking pace. Still, allowing millions of unregistered rickshaws to operate freely adds to the disorder on the roads and makes coordinated planning difficult. More importantly, convenience cannot come at the cost of safety and environmental health. Improper disposal and recycling of rickshaw batteries threaten soil, water, and even the food chain, a serious issue that demands attention.

The government must urgently act to regulate the battery-powered rickshaw sector. What is needed is a comprehensive framework that ensures mandatory registration, vehicle fitness standards, driver training, and strict enforcement of traffic and environmental rules. At the same time, regulation must be accompanied by broader employment strategies so that battery rickshaws are not treated as a default solution for unemployment. Rickshaws will continue to play a big role in Dhaka's transport ecosystem for the foreseeable future. Only through proper regulation can the interests of both drivers and the public be safeguarded.

EDITORIAL

What voters expect when parties speak of a 'New Bangladesh'



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ABU AFSARUL HAIDER

As the 13th national election approaches, calls for building a "New Bangladesh" have once again taken centre stage in political campaigning. The phrase appears regularly in speeches and rallies, accompanied by promises of good governance, an end to corruption, the restoration of democratic norms, equal rights for citizens, etc. Such commitments, however, are familiar to voters. Similar assurances have featured in election after election over the decades, only to fade once power changed hands. This long history of unfulfilled commitments has left many voters deeply sceptical.

Against this backdrop, it is important to focus on some key issues that ordinary Bangladeshis really expect the winning party or coalition to address if the promise of a "New Bangladesh" is to move beyond slogans and take on real meaning.

One of the most pressing expectations is decisive action against *chandabazi*, or extortion, and bribery. These practices affect almost every sector of society and have become a daily burden for citizens. Businesses of all kinds, from street hawkers to factory owners, from transport operators to developers and landowners, and from schools to public service offices, suffer badly from this system and are desperate for relief. Street vendors, for instance, face constant harassment and are forced to pay police, corporation officials, and political musclemen simply to keep their spot and avoid eviction or seizure of their goods. Those who resist often face threats, false cases, or unlawful detention. The Bangladesh Hawkers Federation claims that vendors on Dhaka's footpaths are extorted for around Tk 3,000 crore annually, which amounts to more than Tk 8 crore every day.

In the transport sector, almost every commercial vehicle, including trucks, buses, and microbuses, is routinely forced to pay extortion money to local political cadres. Markets, transport stands, and launch terminals operate under a so-called "token" system, which in reality is nothing more than organised extortion controlled by powerful syndicates. A report by Transparency International Bangladesh, published on March 5, 2024, revealed that private buses and minibuses alone pay nearly Tk 1,059 crore every year in extortion money.

Moreover, there is hardly any public or private project that can move forward without paying bribes or extortion money. According to the committee that prepared the "White Paper on the State of Bangladesh Economy," during the 15 years of the Sheikh Hasina regime, of the Tk 7.20 lakh crore invested in development projects through the Annual Development Programme, an estimated Tk 1.61 lakh crore to Tk 2.80 lakh crore was lost to corruption, including political extortion, bribery, and inflated project costs. The report further estimates that between Tk

and 500,000 crore is lost annually to corruption.

Reports from national and independent media indicate that mobs no longer target only individuals.

They now attack homes, properties, political party offices, cultural institutions,

religious minority communities, and places of worship. Many of these incidents appear to be organised efforts to intimidate communities, exploit religious or ethnic tensions, and destabilise social and political groups. On the night of December 18, 2025, a group of people vandalised, looted, and set alight the offices of the country's two most widely circulated newspapers, *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo*. On the same night, the cultural organisation Chhayanaut was also vandalised and torched.

Several recent incidents further

women who speak up for their rights increasingly face severe online and offline abuse. This includes character assassination, being labelled immoral or promiscuous, body shaming, and threats of violence against them and their families. Such attacks are often coordinated efforts to silence women and discourage their participation in public life. Police data show that 21,936 cases related to violence against women and children were filed in 2025.

Together, these developments show how mob violence and aggression, both online and offline, is eroding Bangladesh's social fabric, fuelled by rumours, unaddressed anger, and the rapid spread of misinformation through social media, while weak law enforcement has fostered a culture of impunity. This breakdown of the rule of law has also become a major obstacle to doing business in Bangladesh, disrupting supply chains, increasing operating costs, keeping prices high, fuelling inflation, and discouraging both local and foreign investment.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

As insecurity and uncertainty grow, citizens and businesses alike are left to bear their cumulative costs.

Therefore, restoring the rule of law and dismantling the entrenched systems of bribery and extortion must be central to any claim to build a "New Bangladesh." Political parties must understand that without a credible commitment to curb mob violence, protect citizens from arbitrary intimidation, and enforce the law impartially, their slogans will remain hollow and public trust will continue to erode. The party or coalition that wins the upcoming election will be judged not by what it says about change, but by whether it finally demonstrates the political will to deliver it.



Ashish Barua
is climate activist and
fundraising professional.

ASHISH BARUA

Bangladesh is once again featured prominently in the latest Climate Risk Index (CRI), a report widely cited by global media, policymakers, and international funders to assess countries' exposure to climate impacts. Over the years, Bangladesh's position in this index has shifted, improving in relation to other highly exposed countries. For many, this is read as a sign of progress: better preparedness, fewer deaths, stronger resilience.

But the more important question is not where Bangladesh ranks, but how that ranking is interpreted at a time when climate impacts are only deepening, not receding. The CRI, produced annually, measures climate-related losses based largely on extreme weather events, including fatalities and economic damage. By these indicators, Bangladesh has indeed made notable strides. Early warning systems, cyclone shelters, and disaster preparedness have significantly reduced mortality from sudden-onset events like cyclones and floods. This is a success story worth acknowledging. However, climate risk today is no longer defined only by sudden disasters. The CRI captures what can be

counted easily: deaths, damages, and disasters that occur within a defined timeframe. What it does not capture fully are the slow-onset, compounding, and deeply structural impacts that define climate vulnerability.

Salinity intrusion is rendering farmlands unproductive in coastal districts. River erosion is displacing thousands every year, often permanently. Heat stress is undermining labour productivity and public health. Climate-induced migration is reshaping cities and social systems.

Cultural loss, psychosocial stress, and the erosion of livelihoods rarely appear in global indices, but they are very real for affected communities. Global indices like the CRI are increasingly used as proxies for need, readiness, or resilience. Countries that show "improvement" may be perceived as less urgent priorities for climate finance, even as adaptive limits are being reached and loss and damage accelerate. In other words, progress in disaster response can paradoxically mask growing vulnerability.

The situation is critical because climate finance is becoming increasingly scarce. Adaptation

funding remains inadequate, and most available support is offered as loans rather than grants, worsening the debt burden on vulnerable nations. While the landmark Loss and Damage Fund has finally opened for applications, its current resources are a mere fraction of the actual global need and its implementation remains a subject of intense political debate.

In this context, global assessments influence how decisions are made. Policymakers and funders look for signals: Which countries are "most at risk"? Which has "capacity"? Which are seen as "success stories"?

Bangladesh risks falling into a dangerous grey zone: no longer framed as an emergency, but not yet supported for the long-term structural losses it is facing.

This is particularly concerning because many of the impacts Bangladesh faces today are not easily reversible through adaptation alone.

Global indices do not exist in a vacuum. They rely heavily on national data systems, reporting mechanisms, and official statistics. What countries track, report, and prioritise inevitably shapes what becomes visible internationally.

In Bangladesh, while disaster losses are relatively well documented, slow-onset impacts, non-economic losses, and displacement-related costs remain undercounted. Informal economies, unpaid care work, and cultural losses rarely appear in national accounts—let alone global indices. This creates a feedback loop: what is not counted is not prioritised; what is not prioritised is not funded. As a result, global

assessments may reflect not only climate realities, but also institutional blind spots.

If indices like the CRI continue to dominate narratives of vulnerability without adequately capturing loss and damage, there is a real risk that funding gaps will widen precisely when needs are intensifying. Bangladesh may appear more "resilient" on paper, while communities face irreversible losses on the ground.

This is not an argument against the CRI. It is an argument for using it more carefully and complementing it with deeper, context-sensitive analysis. The Government of Bangladesh can play a critical role through strengthening national systems to track slow-onset loss, displacement, and non-economic impacts; integrating these into climate reporting; and ensuring that international narratives reflect lived realities. Civil society organisations, researchers, and local institutions are equally vital. They document what statistics overlook, amplify community voices, and challenge simplified narratives of success or failure.

At a global level, funders and policymakers must resist the temptation to treat rankings as shortcuts. Climate vulnerability is not a league table. It is dynamic, uneven, and deeply human. Bangladesh's shifting position in global indices should prompt deeper questions, not complacency. The real measure of progress will not be where the country ranks, but whether climate-vulnerable communities receive the support, justice, and resources they need as climate impacts continue to unfold.

Iran's struggles under repression and foreign intervention

THE OVERTON WINDOW

Eresh Omar Jamal
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ERESH OMAR JAMAL



country from international scrutiny."

Yet verified videos and credible eyewitness accounts from Iran point to mass killings committed on an unprecedented scale, according to Amnesty International. Its secretary general, Agnes Callamard, stated, "The international community must take urgent diplomatic action to protect protesters from further massacres and confront the impunity driving the state's campaign of bloodshed."

Western leaders have strongly condemned the actions of the Iranian regime. US President Donald Trump has issued varying degrees of threats and has recently stated, "It's time to look for new leadership in Iran." But Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in a speech on Thursday, blamed the US for the death toll and repeatedly claimed that US and Israeli agents were responsible for the unrest.

While the Iranian regime has a long history of crushing dissent independent of foreign interference, these claims may not be entirely unwarranted. For example, according to *The Jerusalem Post*, towards the end of December last year, the Mossad used its Farsi-language Twitter account to encourage Iranians to protest against the regime, stating that it would join them during demonstrations. The post read: "We are with you. Not only from a distance and verbally. We are with you in the field."

Given Mossad's deep infiltration of Iran, as demonstrated by the shocking killings of senior Iranian generals in 2025, it is not implausible that such operations continue to this day. Former CIA Director Mike Pompeo, known for his hawkish stance against Iran in particular, tweeted: "Happy New Year to every

Iranian in the streets. Also, to every Mossad agent walking beside them..."

Meanwhile, Western media coverage has largely overlooked the massive rallies supporting the Iranian government, which in some cases appear to dwarf anti-regime demonstrations. This is not to suggest that the Iranian government's violent response is justified, nor should it diminish the profound

(particularly US) intervention persists, the dire economic conditions that first ignited unrest in the closing days of 2025 have only worsened.

Even so, it is widely understood that US sanctions and Western economic manoeuvring have slowly strangled Iran's economy, one of many ways in which confrontation with Iran has advanced over

The Iranian regime's fears mean that human rights abuses within the country, which unquestionably deserve condemnation and investigation, stand little chance of resolution so long as the leadership remains convinced that invasion or total annihilation is imminent. That fear, regardless of political bias, is not without justification.

Where there are great powers at work, not just shadowy conspiracies and intelligence agencies, but enormous cultural, industrial, and corporate networks that interact, the push forcing governments towards a particular direction is enormous. This dynamic was most starkly illustrated during recent events in Venezuela, including the bombing of its capital and the abduction of its former president and his wife.

Following those events, the US president openly claimed that his country now controlled 55 percent of the world's oil, with analysts noting that the move significantly strengthened Washington's strategic advantage over China.

The same logic applies to Iran. Should the US succeed in achieving regime change in Iran, a goal it has pursued for decades, it would deal a significant blow to both Russia and China. It would halt China's access to Iranian oil and, at the very least, derail China's Belt and Road Initiative, of which Iran is one of the most important pieces. It would also help Israel achieve one of its most vehemently pursued strategic objectives.

While recent troop movements and betting market signals suggested that the US might strike Iran by the end of January, Trump's focus on Greenland has arguably pushed Iran down the priority list. However, some analysts argue that another push against Iran is not a matter of "if" but "when."

In any case, for the people of Iran, the most likely outlook seems to remain "lose-lose." Whether they can achieve freedom, economic stability, and safety without the intervention of foreign "saviours," or without being caught up in "underhanded geopolitical machinations," remains uncertain. For now, however, it appears unlikely.



Iranian demonstrators gather in a street during a protest over the collapse of the currency's value, in Tehran, Iran, on January 8, 2026.

PHOTO: REUTERS

hardships and sufferings faced by the Iranian people—conditions that are widely believed to have sparked the protests on December 28.

The collapse of the Iranian rial and soaring prices initially prompted protests by shopkeepers in Tehran, before demonstrations against Iran's clerical rulers spread nationwide. While protesters may have been mostly silenced by now, their grievances remain unresolved. And as the risk of foreign

Iran is surrounded by at least 45 hostile military bases on all sides. That produces an atmosphere of intense fear in which the country's leadership perceives itself to be in a state of constant war. Historically, such conditions have often led regimes to adopt illogical methods of suppressing dissent, as seen, for example, in Britain's imprisonment of Bertrand Russell during World War I.

As protests in Iran show signs of waning under the weight of an increasingly brutal crackdown, Iranian officials have claimed that at least 5,000 people, including around 500 security personnel, have been killed nationwide. Yet both casualty figures and arrest totals vary widely across sources, underscoring the opacity surrounding the unrest. The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), the monitoring group most widely cited by news organisations worldwide, estimates that more than 24,000 people have been arrested.

However, independent verification of these claims has become even more difficult following a near-total nationwide internet shutdown imposed on January 8, which has deepened the information blackout surrounding the protests.

In the days leading up to the shutdown, journalists and media workers inside Iran reported increasing pressure from authorities, including warnings, intimidation, and summonses, to refrain from covering events. Independent journalists faced restrictions on internet access and disruptions to mobile data—measures that had already constrained their ability to contact sources, verify developments, and publish for domestic and international audiences. Once internet access was cut entirely, even the restricted flow of information stopped.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) condemned the move as "a blatant assault on press freedom." Its regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, Sara Qudah, remarked, "By cutting connectivity, authorities are preventing journalists from documenting events and isolating the

How patriarchy continues to limit women's political role



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SHAHADAT SHADHIN

Women were at the forefront of the July 2024 uprising, but in the subsequently formed political structures, insecurity and social backlash gradually pushed them aside. Female students from universities across the country, including Dhaka University, were not only leading participants in the uprising, but they also became victims of attacks and lawsuits by law enforcement agencies. However, the number of female candidates in the post-uprising Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU) election remained limited, and those who did contest faced extensive cyberbullying.

There were only 62 female candidates in the DUCSU election, accounting for merely 13 percent of the total candidates, even though 48 percent of DUCSU's voters are female students.

Women's participation in the Liberation War of 1971 was similarly undervalued in the post-war era. The title *Birangana*, rather than honouring their contributions, foregrounded the trauma and humiliation they had endured, while obscuring the critical roles they had played on the frontlines. This reflects a long-standing social failure to recognise women's agency, a problem that persists to this day.

Although women participants of the uprising were subjected to humiliation by members of Chhatra League during July-August 2024, in the post-uprising political climate, they faced widespread cyberbullying. In fact, nearly all female DUCSU candidates reported experiencing online harassment during their campaigns. One woman who filed a petition challenging the candidacy of a Shibir-backed GS nominee received threats of "gang rape." When the issue of women's harassment arises, political parties across ideological divides often appear united in their silence. The cyberbullying faced by female leaders and candidates during and

after the uprising was not merely personal abuse; it was a direct form of gender policing.

Khadijatul Kubra, who was arrested and imprisoned under the controversial Digital Security Act during the previous regime, recently contested in the Jagannath University Central Students' Union election. Following the announcement of her candidacy, she publicly expressed deep frustration over the scale of cyberbullying she had encountered. In a Facebook post, she wrote, "Even after spending 15 months in prison under the Digital Security Act, I have not been as mentally disturbed as I have been in the past few days."

Most of the abuse directed at female candidates was vulgar, gender-based, and overtly sexist. The absence of accountability on social media, combined with the ease of operating through fake identities, has made perpetrators increasingly reckless. The dominant psychology driving these online attacks can be summed up in a familiar refrain: "Why enter politics as a woman? Stay at home." This narrative is a clear manifestation of gender policing, whereby society seeks to confine women to a prescribed role and behaviour. It is rooted in the perception of women as sexual objects rather than as political actors, reflecting an effort to deny women agency, legitimacy, and visibility in public spaces.

Last year, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman announced that if his party came to power, it would introduce a new work policy for women, allowing them to work five hours a day while being paid for eight. Although the proposal may appear women-friendly at first glance, if implemented, it has the potential to curtail women's careers. If men continue to work eight hours while women work five, men will inevitably accumulate more output, experience, and institutional capital, ultimately dominating

leadership and decision-making positions. Realistically, why would any institution reserve senior roles for individuals producing only a fraction of the required labour?

Such proposals are detached from socio-economic realities. Bangladesh's garment sector, driven primarily by women, continues to struggle with low wages and unsafe working conditions. In this context, providing eight hours' pay for five hours' work for millions of women is economically unsustainable.

This proposal—a structural restriction disguised as welfare—could very well confine women to the domestic sphere. This stands in contrast to feminist thinkers John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor's argument that economic participation outside the home is essential for women's emancipation.

But subconsciously, society has normalised the idea that women can be insulted and subjected to sexually suggestive remarks. Women in positions of power are systematically targeted in efforts to "clip their wings." As a result, even women in the upper echelons of society are not immune to humiliation. Former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's personal grooming and private life were once criticised on the floor of parliament, in an unmistakable example of political misogyny. Although women's participation in government, political parties, and public administration has increased over the years, patriarchal impulses to undermine their authority persist.

The persistent salary disparity faced by the national women's football team is another manifestation of this structure. In this way, patriarchal systems create conditions in which women are routinely humiliated across cyberspace, workplaces, and social settings. Gender-based differentiation is also embedded in culture and language. Sufia Kamal, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, and Kamini Roy are routinely described as "female poets," while no male poet is ever labelled a "male poet."

Such linguistic practices reinforce the notion that active women are exceptions rather than equals. While some progress has been made in empowering women at higher levels, empowerment at the grassroots remains elusive. Even when women legally inherit property, social structures often

obstruct the realisation of that right. This gender-based structural disempowerment continues to limit women's freedom and security.

A number of steps must be taken to change the discrimination women face. First, the state must adopt effective policies to prevent violence and discrimination against women.

Second, schools and colleges should provide training on digital safety, responsible use of cyberspace, and gender studies for students of all genders. Establishing a dedicated cybersecurity agency and a cyber police helpdesk is also essential. Third, institutional protection of women's leadership in public administration

must be ensured for women to exercise independent decision-making.

Policy reform alone is insufficient; societal attitudes must also change. The role of the younger generation is crucial. By raising awareness in cyberspace and beyond, a strong social foundation for women's safety, freedom, and leadership must be built.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জাতীয় উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (স্রেডা)

বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ

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তারিখ: ১৯ জানুয়ারি ২০২৬

গবেষণা প্রত্নাব আহ্বান

বিদ্যুৎ, জাতীয় ও স্থানীয় সম্পদ মন্ত্রালয়ের বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগের আওতাধীন টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জাতীয় উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (স্রেডা)-এর বাজেটের গবেষণা অনুদান থাকে ব্যান্দকৃত অর্থের মাধ্যমে বাংলাদেশ টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জাতীয় উন্নয়ন ও সম্প্রসারণ প্রযোগিক গবেষণা প্রত্নাব আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

গবেষণার ক্ষেত্র

নবায়নযোগ্য জাতীয়, বিকল্প জাতীয়, জাতীয় সংরক্ষণ ও দক্ষ ব্যবহার, Net Zero Carbon এবং Waste to Energy।

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বাংলাদেশের আর্থ-সামাজিক প্রেক্ষাপটে টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জাতীয় উন্নয়ন ও সম্প্রসারণে অবদান রাখা।

শর্তাবলী

- ১। গবেষক/গবেষণা দলের সদস্যদের বাংলাদেশের স্থানীয় নাগরিক হতে হবে;
- ২। গবেষণাটি একক/প্রযোজনীয় কর্তৃপক্ষের স্থানীয় নাগরিক হতে হবে (পুরুষ জন সদস্য রাখা যাবে);
- ৩। গবেষণা প্রত্নাবের সাথে গবেষণাগ্রহের পূর্ণাঙ্গ জীবন বৃক্ষাত এবং অভিজ্ঞতা (যদি থাকে) দাখিল করতে হবে;
- ৪। গবেষণা প্রত্নাবের সাথে গবেষণাগ্রহের পূর্ণাঙ্গ জীবন বৃক্ষাত এবং অভিজ্ঞতা (যদি থাকে) দাখিল করতে হবে;
- ৫। গবেষণা প্রত্নাবের সাথে গবেষণাগ্রহের পূর্ণাঙ্গ জীবন বৃক্ষাত এবং অভিজ্ঞতা (যদি থাকে) দাখিল করতে হবে;
- ৬। চূড়ান্ত গবেষণা প্রতিবেদনসমূহ পর্যালোচনার উদ্দেশ্যে গবেষক/গবেষণক দলসমূহ তার/তারের অনুদানের অর্থ হতে স্বীকৃত করার প্রয়োজন করে যাবে;
- ৭। চূড়ান্তভাবে মনোনীত প্রতিবেদন গবেষণাগ্রহের ক্ষেত্রে সর্বোচ্চ অনুদানের পরিমাণ ৫০,০০০/- (পাঁচ লক্ষ) টাকা।
- ৮। চূড়ান্তভাবে মনোনীত গবেষণাগ্রহের ক্ষেত্রে সর্বোচ্চ অনুদানের পরিমাণ ৫,০০,০০০/- (পাঁচ লক্ষ) টাকা।
- ৯। চূড়ান্তভাবে মনোনীত গবেষণাগ্রহের ক্ষেত্রে সর্বোচ্চ অনুদানের পরিমাণ ১,০০,০০০/- (পাঁচ লক্ষ) টাকা।
- ১০। গবেষণা প্রত্নাবের সাথে নির্ধারিত প্রযোজনীয় কর্তৃপক্ষের স্থানীয় নাগরিক হতে হবে;
- ১১। আগ্রহী গবেষণাগ্রহক করতে হবে। গত ২০২৪-২৫ অর্থবর্ষের মধ্যে নিয়ন্ত্রান্তরকারী বারান গবেষণা প্রত্নাব দাখিল করেছেন, তারের গবেষণা প্রত্নাব করতে হবে;
- ১২। একই বিষয়ে কোন প্রত্নাব দাখিল করা যাবে না অর্থাৎ বৈতান পরিহার করতে হবে;
- ১৩। গবেষণা কার্যক্রম, মনোনীত স্থানীয় নাগরিকের বারান গবেষণাগ্রহে উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষের স্থানীয় নাগরিক হতে পরিবর্তিত হতে পারে;
- ১৪। গবেষণা কার্যক্রমে আগ্রহী গবেষণাগ্রহক করতে হবে না অর্থাৎ বৈতান পরিহার করতে হবে;

২০২৪ জেনুয়ারি ২০২৬
মুসলিমচি ও সদস্য (মৌলিক ও গবেষণা), স্রেডা

Minus temperatures, challenging set, CHANCHAL PERSEVERES

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

National Film Award-winning actor Chanchal Chowdhury is currently working on three new films — *Domm*, directed by Redoan Rony; *Bonolota Express*, directed by Tanim Noor; and *Shasti*, to be directed by Leesa Gazi.

Among the three, shooting for *Shasti*, which is based on Rabindranath Tagore's short story of the same name, is set to begin soon. While the actor has already completed most of the shooting for the other two projects.

Shasti, the recently announced film will cast Pori Moni, opposite Chanchal, marking the first collaboration between the two actors. Speaking about his co-star, he said, "Pori Moni is a good actress. She gave wonderful performances in *Swapnajal* and *Gunin*, both directed by Giasuddin Selim. At the same time, she looks beautiful on screen, and we all know that audiences have always adored her."

He added that Pori Moni needs more meaningful roles and strong directors to truly showcase her potential. "If she gets good projects with good filmmakers, I believe that she can do exceptionally well."

This will be my first film with her. I truly hope it turns out to be something special," he said.

Adding to this the *Monpura* actor suggested, "We need more literature-based films."

While the shooting for *Domm* took place abroad, and recalling his shooting experience in Kazakhstan, Chowdhury said, "I had never shot in minus two or minus three degrees before. The hardship was incredible — everyone in the team suffered. At night, the cold became unbearable. And we



PHOTO:COLLECTED

couldn't always wear winter clothes in every scene. After finishing each shot, we would rush back to the car to sit near the heater. We went through all this hardship for *Domm*."

Talking further about the film, the actor described the film as a story rooted in intense struggle. "Afran Nisho has delivered an outstanding performance. Everyone has done their best in their own space."

He further noted that *Domm* was made by a highly professional team. "Both Bangladeshi and Kazakh technicians worked together. The cinematographer was from Kazakhstan. Acting in such a story gave me immense satisfaction and a sense of fulfilment."

As the conversation moves to *Bonolota Express*, Chanchal informs that the film adapted from Humayun Ahmed's novel *Kichukhon* was filmed largely inside a train, adding a unique visual and narrative texture to the project.

"Besides the train we also had to use a helicopter. Essentially, it's a journey-based story, and it's going to be quite interesting to watch!"

On working with Humayun Ahmed's stories, he said, "His work pulls you in like a magnet. He was a true magician of storytelling. A wonderful screenplay has been developed from his novel. We shot with a large team, and actors like Mosharraf Karim and Badhan are also part of the film."

In addition to these projects, Chowdhury completed shooting for Raihan Rafi's *Andhar* quite some time ago, and the film is now awaiting release. "I believe it's going to be another strong piece of work," he said.

Nidra Neha wraps up shooting for upcoming period film 'Kalo Biral'

Actress Nidra Neha has wrapped up shooting for her new film *Kalo Biral*, marking her latest screen appearance after a turbulent period in her career. Earlier, she was dropped from Raihan Rafi's *Taandob* after sharing the project news ahead of an official announcement, an episode that led her to publicly express frustration over industry practices before clarifying that she would continue acting selectively.

Directed and written by Sohrab Hossain Ullash, *Kalo Biral* is set against the backdrop of the 1980s and centres on a story of love, romance and emotion.

The cast also includes Arifin Jilani, Magfurul Islam Bidyut and Rahim, among others. Neha plays a character named Debi. The film is currently in the editing stage and is expected to be released in theatres later this year.



'Minoti' showcases energetic chemistry between Dola and Muza

Singer Dola Rahman has teamed up with musician Muza for the new song *Minoti*, released on January 18, which is already drawing attention from music lovers. Rooted in Bangladeshi folk sensibilities and inspired by the depth of Raag Darbari, the song blends tradition with a contemporary soundscape. Dola's emotive and soulful vocals convey the yearning of a lover with sensitivity, while Muza's modern arrangement keeps the track accessible and engaging.

Minoti is written by Badhon, Muza and Dola Rahman, composed by Muza and Dola, mixed and mastered by R Cha, with sarangi by Shounak Debnath Wreck.

NEWS

645 incidents against minorities

FROM PAGE 12

committed to confronting crimes with transparency, accuracy, and resolve.

A yearlong review of official police records for January to December 2025 documented 645 incidents involving members of minority communities, compiled from verified first information reports, general diaries, charge sheets, and investigation updates nationwide.

"While every incident is a matter of concern, the data presents a clear and evidence-based picture: the overwhelming majority of cases were criminal in nature rather than communal, underscoring the complexity of law and order challenges and the importance of grounding public discussion in facts rather than fear or misinformation."

The further mentioned communal incidents primarily involved vandalism or desecration of religious sites and idols, along with a small number of other offences. In contrast, the majority of incidents affecting minority individuals or properties arose from criminal activity unrelated to religion, including neighbourhood disputes, land conflicts, political rivalries, theft, sexual violence, and

cases linked to prior personal enmity.

"This distinction is important. While all crimes are serious and demand accountability, the data demonstrates that most incidents involving minority victims were not driven by communal hostility but by broader criminal and social factors that affect citizens across religious and ethnic lines."

"Accurate classification helps prevent misinformation and supports more effective law-enforcement responses," it added.

The report also documents significant police engagement. Hundreds of cases were formally registered, arrests were made in many incidents, and investigations are ongoing in others.

This reflects an institutional commitment to addressing crime and maintaining public order, particularly in sensitive cases involving religious sites or communal concerns, it added.

At the national level, Bangladesh continues to face serious law-and-order challenges. Each year, an estimated 3,000-3,500 people lose their lives to violent crime nationwide.

"This is not a number to be proud of. Every life lost is a tragedy, and

ICT verdict

FROM PAGE 2

Police commissioner Habibur Rahman; joint commissioner Sudip Kumar Chakraborty; former additional deputy commissioner Sha Alam Mohammad Akhtarul Islam; and former assistant commissioner of Ramna zone Mohammad Imrul; former Shahbagh Police Station inspector (operations) Arshad Hossain; and constables Sujon Hossain, Imaz Hossain and Nasirul Islam. Of them, Arshad, Sujon, Imaz and Nasirul are in custody, while the rest are absconding.

According to the prosecution, Habibur, along with Sudip, Akhtarul, Imrul and Arshad, bore command responsibility and they were involved in a joint criminal enterprise, accused of incitement, abetment, and complicity.

Constables Sujon, Imaz, and Nasirul allegedly used rifles to shoot protesters in Chankharpul and adjacent areas, causing deaths to the six people on August 5, 2024. The victims were Shahriar Khan Anas, Sheikh Mahdi Hasan Junayed, Mohammad Yakub, Rakib Hawlader, Ismamul Haque, and Manik Mia.

On December 24 last year, the ICT set January 20 for delivering the judgment in the Chankharpul murder case.

The investigation agency submitted its probe report to the Chief Prosecutor's Office on April 20 last year, and the tribunal took cognisance of the charges on May 25. On July 14, charges were framed, and the trial began on August 10 with the prosecution's opening statements.

Rab member killed

FROM PAGE 1

spread across the area following the attack. Debunking the rumour, Chattogram Range Deputy Inspector General Ahsan Habib Palash said, "We don't know anything about shooting. As far as we know, the Rab team was beaten by local thugs."

A Facebook video showed people attacking two microbuses, with the vehicles attempting to flee the scene.

Due to its remote, hilly terrain, Jungle Salimpur has become a safe haven for criminals.

The area spans about 3,100 acres on the northern side of the Link Road, opposite Asian University for Women, around two kilometres west of Bayezid Bostami in Chattogram city. Although administratively under Sitakunda, it lies largely within the city limits, bordered by Hathazari upazila to the east and Bayezid thana to the south.

In metropolitan areas, general stations will have three armed police

8,780 polling centres

FROM PAGE 12

members and three Ansar personnel, while important stations will have four armed police members and three Ansar personnel, including one armed section commander.

In the Chittagong Hill Tracts and other remote areas, each general station will have two armed police members and three Ansar personnel, while important stations will have three armed police members and three Ansar personnel, including one armed section commander.

"We are working in an integrated manner to prioritise maximum security to hold the election in a free, fair, neutral, peaceful, acceptable and festive manner," said the adviser.

Addressing the media, he said CCTV cameras would be installed at every polling centre and necessary preparations are underway.

Drones will also be deployed, with a total of 418 drones to be used by different agencies: 200 by the army, 16 by the navy, 100 by the Border Guard Bangladesh, 50 by the Bangladesh Police, 20 by the Coast Guard, 16 by Rab and 16 by the Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Force.

Dog squads will be used by various forces to support security and protection measures, he added.

An election law and order coordination cell will be formed with representatives from police, Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP), the armed forces, BGB, Coast Guard and Rab.

A special team under the emergency service number 999 will also be formed and linked to the coordination cell.

The team will forward election-related complaints and information directly to the home ministry and area-based coordination cells for swift action.

Home ministry officials described the "Election Security App-2026", developed by the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre as a key tool for maintaining law and order during the polls.

For hard-to-reach polling centres, the Bangladesh Air Force will provide helicopters to transport ballots, election materials, and officials and staff assigned to election duty.

Separate security arrangements will be ensured for polling centres in metropolitan, non-metropolitan and remote areas, including the Chittagong Hill Tracts, according to a home ministry circular.

Outside metropolitan areas, each general polling station will have two armed police members and three Ansar personnel, including one armed section commander.

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In metropolitan areas, general stations will have three armed police

Chinmoy, 38 others indicted

FROM PAGE 12

based lawyer Apurba Bhattacharya.

The prosecution and defence placed their arguments before the indictment, he added.

Ahead of Chinmoy's appearance, security was beefed up in the court area to prevent any untoward incident.

Police checked ID cards of lawyers and staff and restricted access through two entry points to the court premises.

Chinmoy and the other accused were taken to the courtroom around 9:45am under tight security.

During the hearing, the judge asked the accused about legal representation. As Chinmoy's lawyer was still on the way, Chinmoy placed his arguments and sought further investigation, claiming that he had no involvement in the Alif murder.

Chinmoy further added that he did not know the other accused and he never met them before. He also sought punishment for those

involved in the murder.

Lawyer Apurba told the court that his client is the spokesperson for Sammilita Sanatani Jagaran Jote. The lawyer claimed that Chinmoy's name was mentioned in the murder case with intention to stop the Sanatani movement.

After Chinmoy was sent to jail, his supporters blocked a prison van and staged protests demanding his release. Police action to disperse the crowd led to clashes involving Chinmoy's supporters, police, and a group of lawyers.

Police lodged three cases over vandalism, attacks on police, and obstruction of official duties, naming 79 individuals and around 1,400 unidentified persons.

On November 26, 2024, Alif, a Chattogram court lawyer, was killed during clashes outside the Chattogram court premises following the rejection of Chinmoy's bail in a sedition case.

In the charge sheet, police said the killing occurred following instigation and provocation by Chinmoy.

Don't pay visa

FROM PAGE 3
Starting January 21, Bangladeshi citizens approved for a B1/B2 (business or tourist) US visa will be required to pay a bond of up to \$15,000. The requirement will not apply to those holding a valid B1/B2 visa issued before that date. Earlier this month, the administration of US President Donald Trump added 25 more countries, including Bangladesh, to a list of nations whose citizens may be required to post bonds of up to \$15,000 to enter the United States, Reuters reported on January 6, citing the US State Department website.

According to the website, citizens or nationals travelling on passports issued by any of the listed countries, if otherwise eligible for a B1/B2 visa, must post a bond of \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000. The amount will be determined at the time of the visa interview. Applicants must agree to the bond terms and make payments through the US Treasury Department's official online platform, Pay.gov, the state department said.

The bond requirement is intended to deter visitors from overstaying visas issued for tourism or business purposes.

2018 NAT'L POLLS

ACC to sue Ranga over 'Tk 1.7cr bribe'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has found evidence that former state minister and Jatiya Party's former secretary general Mashur Rahman Ranga accepted a bribe of Tk 1.7 crore in exchange for facilitating a candidacy in the 2018 national election.

The anti-graft watchdog has decided to file a case against Ranga and former Kurigram 2 MP Panir Uddin Ahmed over the bribery allegation. The money was allegedly received from Panir to create an opportunity for him to contest the election.

ACC Director General Md Akhtar Hossain yesterday said the decision to file the case was taken at the commission's headquarters.

According to sources familiar with the investigation report, Ranga accepted Tk 1.7 crore as a bribe from Panir despite having no business relationship with him.

The investigation further revealed that Panir is the proprietor of M/s Jalil Biri Factory and Haque Special, a transport business. On October 30, 2018, Tk 20 lakh was transferred from his special account at Islami Bank Bangladesh's Kurigram branch to Ranga's account at the bank's Rangpur branch.



Leaders and activists of Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal continued their sit-in outside the Election Commission headquarters in Argaoon yesterday, protesting the EC's "biased and controversial" role ahead of the national election slated for February 12. They eventually postponed the agitation in the evening after meeting the EC, which assured them it would look into their demands.

PHOTO: STAR

Dreams of intellectual

FROM PAGE 3
He pointed to growing intolerance, citing attacks on Bauls, Ahmadiyas, and shrines, as well as the persecution of minorities.

"We are in a civilisational crisis. There is no one to show us the path," he said, calling for fearless figures like Begum Rokeya and Abul Hussain to rise again and stand against injustice.

Journalist and researcher Kazal Rashid Shahin identified "social elitism" as a major obstacle to the movement's success.

He criticised contemporary intellectuals for practising culture in "ivory towers" rather than engaging with the masses.

"You cannot free the intellect from a high tower," he said.

He, however, described the movement as a distinct "Bangladesh Renaissance" that shaped Bengali Muslim identity and eventually led to the Liberation War.

Researcher Morshed Shafiu Hasan highlighted the moral integrity of the movement's leaders, which he said is largely absent today.

He cited Abul Hussain, a guiding figure of the movement, who once resigned from Dhaka University in protest against a "Muslim quota" in recruitment, despite

Empower urban govt to tackle

FROM PAGE 3
collected in the DNCC area amount to around Tk 19 to 22 crore every month.

"Not a single taka of this fine goes to the city corporation; the entire amount goes directly to the central treasury. Yet, the city corporation has to spend hundreds of crores of taka on traffic signals and infrastructure development," he said.

BNP Chairperson's Adviser Abdus Salam said there is currently no effective coordination among Rajuk, city corporations and other

service-providing agencies.

"Over the past 17 years, state institutions have been destroyed. To recover from this situation, a strong and elected government is necessary," Abdus said.

Jamaat-e-Islami candidate for Dhaka-17, Dr SM Khaleduzzaman, said Dhaka has become nearly unliveable due to mismanagement and wrong political decisions.

"We will give the highest priority to restoring Dhaka's environment and seek the support of city dwellers," he said.

Senior Joint Convener of the National Citizen Party, Ariful Islam Adib, said multiple agencies including city corporations, Rajuk, Wasa and Desco operate in the city, but there is a severe lack of coordination among them.

An integrated government system is necessary to address this matter," Ariful said.

The keynote paper was presented by Sadat Omar, president of Gulshan Society.

Dhaka candidates already on

FROM PAGE 3
His supporters have also been carrying out organisational activities to maintain a presence in the area.

"Since formal campaigning has not started, we are organising party programmes without violating the code of conduct," Abdul Kader Babu, convener of Badda Thana BNP, told The Daily Star.

He added that the candidate is maintaining personal contact with locals through social events.

Jamaat-e-Islami candidates are also maintaining a busy schedule through religious, organisational, and social

outreach. Saiful Alam Khan Milon, contesting from Dhaka-12, addressed a student-youth rally in Moghbazar on January 17.

Meanwhile, Jamaat candidate for Dhaka-10, Advocate Jasim Uddin Sarkar, has been focusing on mosque-based outreach in Dhanmondi, Kalabagan, and Green Road areas.

National Citizen Party (NCP) candidate for Dhaka-8, Nasiruddin Patwary, has adopted a "dawn-to-dusk" approach, starting his day with Fajr prayers at different mosques in Shahjahanpur, Arambagh, and Malibagh to meet local residents.

"I am currently focusing on introducing myself to voters and discussing issues like anti-corruption and resisting foreign (Indian) hegemony," Nasiruddin told The Daily Star.

He said he is also campaigning for the "Yes" vote in the referendum, which will be held alongside the election.

For some candidates, this period is more focused on planning than physical campaigning.

Meghna Alam, Gono Odhikar Parishad candidate for Dhaka-8, said she is concentrating on field strategies. "I grew up in this area, so I do not feel the need for any introduction. I will begin effective campaigning from January 22," she said.

Independent candidate Tasnim Jara, who recently resigned from the NCP, has been visiting different areas of Dhaka-9 to exchange greetings with voters.

Similarly, Taslima Akther of Ganoshamhati Andolon is engaging with voters in Dhaka-12 to collect input for the party's manifesto.

Abdus Sattar Sumon, assistant publicity secretary of Dhaka South Jamaat-e-Islami, said, "Even though official campaigning has yet to begin, candidates in Dhaka are having a busy time. They are conducting door-to-door visits and

participating in various social programmes as part of their preparation for the polls."

Meanwhile, the Election Commission remains strict regarding the code of conduct. Several candidates have already been served show-cause notices for alleged violations.

On Sunday, the EC issued show cause notices to NCP Convener Nahid Islam (Dhaka-II) and Nasiruddin Patwary.

In response, the NCP claimed that they did not promote their electoral symbol -- "Shapla Koli" (water lily bud) -- but were campaigning only for the "Yes" vote in the referendum, which they argue does not violate election rules.

Regarding the issue, Omar Faruq, coordinator of Nahid Islam's election management committee, told The Daily Star, "That was a campaign for 'Yes' in the referendum."

He said since Nahid is contesting as part of a 10-party alliance, coordination with other parties is currently underway.

"We are holding coordination meetings with Jamaat leaders at the ward and thana levels. A joint committee will be formed soon, and it will decide the roadmap for the campaign," he said.

According to the EC, formal campaigning will run from January 22 until 7:30am on February 10. Candidates are prohibited from using wall posters and must follow specific guidelines for leaflets and banners, which may only include photos of the candidate and their party's manifesto.

Abdus Sattar Sumon, assistant publicity secretary of Dhaka South Jamaat-e-Islami, said, "Even though official campaigning has yet to begin, candidates in Dhaka are having a busy time. They are conducting door-to-door visits and

Teesta Mega Plan

FROM PAGE 4

Rizwana said two key studies are currently underway, one technical to assess whether the feasibility study is fully accurate and effective, and the other financial to determine whether the large investment will be sustainable for the Chinese government.

Rizwana and the Chinese ambassador inspected erosion-affected areas adjacent to the Kaunia Bridge. Senior officials of the Bangladesh Water Development Board and the local administration were

also present.

During the visit, they toured both banks of the Teesta River by boat and spoke with erosion-affected residents along the riverbanks.

Yao Wen said the visit would help shape future plans and expressed hope that implementation of the Teesta Mega Plan would begin very soon. He also said there was no geopolitical pressure regarding the project and reaffirmed China's commitment to completing the ongoing technical evaluation quickly.

Sonali Bank PLC

Establishment and Engineering Division
Engineering Department
Head Office, Dhaka
Phone: +8802-223351050
Email: dgmeed@sonalibank.com.bd

e-GP Tender Notice (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Additional Chief Engineer, Establishment & Engineering Division, Sonali Bank PLC, Head Office, Dhaka for the procurement of following works:

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Name of works	Tender publication date & time	Last selling/ download date & time	Tender closing/ opening date & time
1.	1214426	Electrical remodeling works, Air-Cooler supply & Installation works at (1) Credit Administration Division, (2) Estate Management Division, (3) Loan Recovery Cell of Head Office at 3rd Floor, Sonali Bank PLC, Wage Earners Corporate Branch Building, Dilkusha, Dhaka (Re-Tender).	21 Jan, 2026 12:00	05 Feb, 2026 12:00	05 Feb, 2026 15:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in 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. Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd/HelpDesk.jsp>).

Sd/-

Md. Abul Bashar
Additional Chief Engineer

GD-134

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক

(সেন্ট্রাল ব্যাংক অব বাংলাদেশ)

প্রধান কার্যালয়

মতিবাল, ঢাকা-১০০০

বাংলাদেশ সিলেকশন কমিটি সচিবালয়
ইমেইল: info.bscs@bb.org.bd

তারিখ: ০১ মার্চ, ১৪৩২

১৫ জানুয়ারি, ২০২৬

ব্যাংকার্স সিলেকশন কমিটি (BSC)-এর সদস্যস্তুত ০৩টি ব্যাংক/আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানে ২০২২

সালভিক্টিক 'এসিস্ট্যান্ট ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (আইটি)/সহকারী ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (আইটি)/এসিস্ট্যান্ট মেইনটেনেন্স ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (৯ম প্রেড) (Job ID-10207) এর ৬৫টি শূন্য পদে নিয়োগের লক্ষ্য MCQ ও

লিখিত পরীক্ষার সময়সূচি, content, প্রবেশপত্র ভাট্টালোড সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ব্যাংকার্স সিলেকশন কমিটি সচিবালয়ের ত্বরাবানে ০৩টি ব্যাংক/আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানে সময়সূচিরে 'এসিস্ট্যান্ট ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (আইটি)/সহকারী ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (আইটি)/এসিস্ট্যান্ট মেইনটেনেন্স ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (৯ম প্রেড) (Job ID- 10207) পদে যোগ্য বিবেচিত প্রার্থীদের এক মেশনে প্রিলিমিনারি (MCQ) ও লিখিত পরীক্ষার আগামী ২৪/০১/২০২৬ তারিখ, শনিবার (দুপুর ০২.০০টা-০৫.০০টা; ও ঘণ্টা ব্যাপী) অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। প্রিলিমিনারি (MCQ Test) ও লিখিত পরীক্ষার প্রশ্নপত্রের Content ও নথর বিভাজন এবং কেন্দ্র সংক্রান্ত বিভাগের নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত ওয়েবসাইট (<https://erecruitment.bb.org.bd>) এ আপলোড করা হয়েছে।

ডিসপ্লাই ৪৮/২০২৬-২০২৮
তারিখ: ১৮/০১/২০২৬

জিডি-১৩০

স্বাক্ষরিত/-

মিনানুর রহমান আকম

পরিচালক (বিএসিএস) ও

সদস্য-সচিব, বিএসিএস

The hidden potential of Bangladesh's "attention" market

The cross-currency vehicle in digital media

NOMROTA SARKER

Bangladesh is often discussed in terms of labour, manufacturing, and remittances. Yet an equally powerful economic resource remains largely invisible in policy discussions and investment theses: attention.

Every day, tens of millions of Bangladeshis spend hours on YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, mobile games, and messaging platforms. Measured in time, engagement, and cultural influence, this attention is already being bought and sold. The issue is not whether Bangladesh has an attention market - it is that we have failed to recognise it as one.

Attention as an economic asset

In modern digital economies, attention functions like a raw commodity. Platforms monetise it through advertising. Creators convert it into income. Brands transform it into demand. Unlike physical exports, attention requires no ports, no shipping containers, and no inventory. It scales instantly and travels frictionlessly across borders.

Bangladesh holds three structural advantages in this market: a large, young population, high mobile internet penetration, and cultural fluency with short-form, social-first content. Yet, attention generated in Bangladesh is rarely captured at its full value locally. Instead, it is exported, often unintentionally, through global platforms that settle earnings in foreign currencies.

The undervalued attention economy

On a per-user basis, Bangladeshi attention is among the cheapest in the world. CPMs are low, brand budgets are constrained, and local advertising sophistication remains limited. From a global perspective, this makes Bangladesh a high-volume, low-cost attention pool. This mispricing creates arbitrage.

A Bangladeshi creator earning views locally may be paid in USD by YouTube. A D2C brand can acquire domestic attention cheaply and convert it into sales from diaspora customers abroad. A freelancer builds an audience on LinkedIn or X and translates credibility into foreign contracts. The attention originates locally. The value is realised globally.

Digital media as a cross-currency vehicle

Digital media platforms function as currency exchangers. They convert Bangladeshi time into foreign ad revenue, local cultural relevance into global reach,

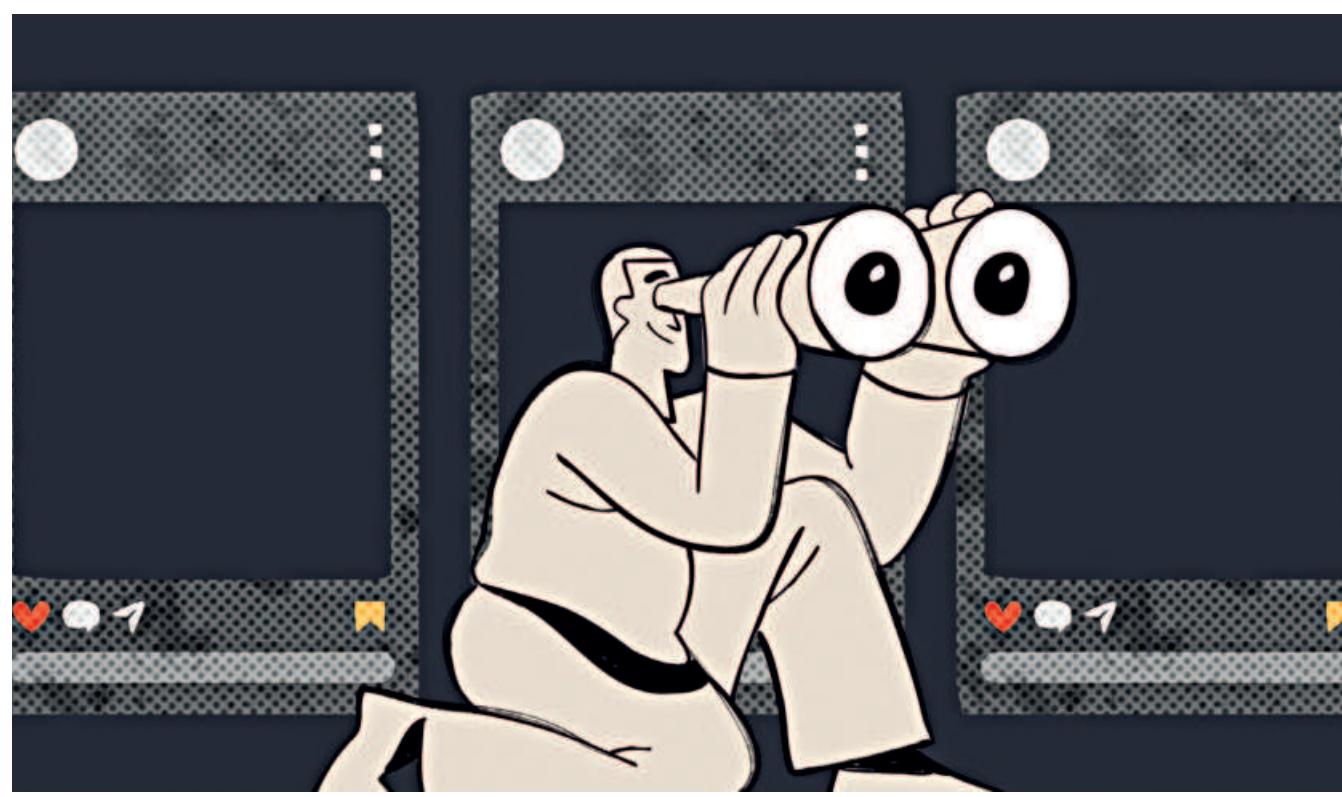


ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

and low-cost attention into high-value outcomes.

This explains why many digital-native businesses - from content studios to niche D2C brands - are more export-oriented than traditional SMEs, even when they appear domestic. Some of Bangladesh's most successful "fashion" or "lifestyle" brands are, in practice, content companies first. Brands such as Gorur Ghash and Get The Juice have demonstrated how sustained storytelling builds both audience and demand.

In effect, Bangladesh is exporting attention much like it exports labour, except this export requires no visas, factories, or intermediaries. Waiting for only large manufacturers to go global is a strategic blind spot.

Creators, brands, and the silent export economy

Thousands of Bangladeshis already operate within this system. There are creators monetising global platforms with foreign payouts, agencies running campaigns for overseas clients, brands using social media to reach diaspora markets, and founders building English-language audiences before local scale. Yet, none of this activity is formally

classified as an export sector. There are no dashboards tracking attention flows, no incentives linked to monetised reach, and no policy language that treats attention as an economic input.

As a result, this economy grows quietly, despite being one of the most capital-efficient growth engines available to the country. Ghorerbazar's emergence as a trusted food brand for Bangladeshi expatriates in the US, UK, Canada, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE illustrates this clearly: a Bangladeshi-global brand built through attention before logistics.

Why investors and policymakers miss it

Traditional economic frameworks struggle to price attention. It does not appear cleanly in trade balances. It does not always move through banks in predictable ways. It is fragmented across platforms and individuals rather than concentrated in large firms. But ignoring it has consequences.

Countries that recognise attention early invest in creators, media infrastructure, and digital storytelling capacity. Countries that do not become raw attention suppliers exporting value without capturing the upside. Bangladesh

risk falling into the latter category unless the narrative shifts.

A strategic reframe

If attention were treated as an exportable resource, several changes would follow. Creators would be recognised as micro-exporters, and digital media businesses would qualify for export incentives. Furthermore, reach, engagement, and audience data would be tracked alongside revenue. Capital would also flow earlier into audience-first ventures. Most importantly, young Bangladeshis would learn that attention is not merely consumption. It is production.

The opportunity in plain sight

Bangladesh does not lack opportunity. It lacks recognition of where value is already being created. The attention market is not speculative. It is operational, global, and expanding. Digital media is its cross-currency vehicle, converting local engagement into foreign value every day.

The question is no longer whether Bangladesh has an attention economy. The question is whether we will continue exporting it unconsciously - or choose to build, own, and scale it deliberately.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

iDE Bangladesh

- Officer, Program Quality



Deadline: January 21

Eligibility:

② Master's degree in any subject from a reputed university. Economics/ Statistics/ Public health/ Anthropology/ Development Studies will get preference.

Minimum experience: 3-4 years

SAJIDA Foundation

- City Manager

Deadline: January 24

Eligibility:

② Advanced university degree in: public health/ nutrition, social sciences, health policy and/ or management, environmental health sciences, socio-medical studies, or another relevant technical field.

Minimum experience: 5 years

Healthcare Pharmaceuticals Ltd.



- Officer/ Sr. Officer, Production

Deadline: January 25

Eligibility:

② B. Pharm/ M. Pharm in Pharmacy from any reputed university, with experience of serving in the pharmaceutical industry.

Minimum experience: 4 years

FOR MORE DETAILS AND THE APPLICATION LINKS, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.



It is hard to fail, but it is worse never to have tried to succeed.

-- Theodore Roosevelt

The Gen-Z guide to managing your manager

communication

Transparency is often misconstrued as oversharing, but its real significance lies in maintaining a steady flow of information that enables smoother operations. Managers function more effectively when they are not caught off guard and when their teams communicate progress or barriers in a timely, structured manner. Practising upward transparency means translating one's workflow into clear, coherent updates that focus on progress, constraints, and dependencies without unnecessary narrative. This style of communication builds trust, reduces micromanagement, and positions the employee as someone who approaches work with consistency and accountability.



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

In an increasingly fast-paced professional environment, such clarity becomes the cornerstone of a high-functioning partnership.

Protecting your time, capacity, and mental sanity

One of the greatest challenges for Gen Z employees is balancing ambition with bandwidth. Managing a manager effectively often requires articulating the reality of available capacity while still demonstrating commitment to collective goals. Protecting one's time does not signify resistance but rather a disciplined approach to prioritisation. Communicating competing tasks, renegotiating timelines when new responsibilities emerge, and ensuring that workloads are aligned with feasible expectations cultivates a healthier workflow. This practice not only prevents burnout but also signals to the manager that decisions are being made thoughtfully and responsibly. Time, when

treated as a finite resource, becomes an essential component of managerial management.

Recognising and responding to managerial stress patterns

Stress alters behaviour, and our managers are not exempt from this fundamental truth. A manager's stress responses, whether manifested through heightened urgency, decreased communication, or increased scrutiny, can unintentionally shape the working environment. Understanding these behavioural shifts allows young employees to adapt with precision rather than frustration. Responding appropriately, through clearer summaries, more structured updates, or steadier communication rhythms, stabilises the workflow and prevents escalation. This is not emotional labour in the personal sense; it is strategic regulation of a professional relationship. When a manager's stress patterns are acknowledged and addressed thoughtfully, the team environment becomes sturdier and more resilient.

Delivering feedback with professional diplomacy

Offering upward feedback requires delicacy, especially in environments where hierarchies are strongly felt. The goal is not confrontation but refinement by framing observations in a way that foregrounds alignment rather than criticism. This involves discussing inconsistencies or recurring challenges through descriptive language, focusing on consequences rather than intentions, and positioning feedback as part of a shared attempt to improve collaboration. When feedback is delivered in a measured, non-reactive tone, managers often respond with greater openness. Over time, this contributes to a culture of mutual respect, where adjustments are seen as collaborative rather than adversarial.

Ultimately, managing your manager is less about control and more about coherence. It is about aligning intentions, information, and expectations so that work can move forward without unnecessary friction. For Gen Z professionals, this skill marks a shift from passive compliance to active participation in shaping healthy workplace systems. When practised thoughtfully, managing up becomes an act of professional maturity, one that protects clarity, preserves capacity, and reinforces mutual respect. In a world where hierarchies are flatter but pressures are heavier, those who can stabilise the flow between themselves and their managers are actually the ones thriving at work.

ChatGPT plans to test ads on its platform

NEXT STEP DESK

OpenAI has announced plans to begin testing advertising in ChatGPT, limited to adult users. In an official blog post, the company said ads would be tested in the US in the coming weeks for logged-in adult users on its free tier and its low-cost subscription, ChatGPT Go. Higher-priced plans, including Pro, Business, and Enterprise subscriptions, will remain free of advertising.

According to OpenAI, the move comes as the company rolls out ChatGPT Go more widely. The US\$8 a month plan, which launched in 171 countries, is now being made available in the US and other remaining markets. The company said the tier offers expanded access to features such as messaging, image generation,

file uploads, and memory, while ads are intended to reduce usage limits for free users and lower the barrier to entry for those unwilling or unable to pay.

OpenAI also mentioned that advertising would not influence the responses ChatGPT provides. Ads will be displayed separately from answers, clearly labelled, and shown only when there is a relevant sponsored product or service linked to the user's current conversation. The initial tests are expected to place ads at the bottom of responses. Furthermore, user conversations would not be shared with advertisers and that personal data would not be sold. Users will be able to turn off ad personalisation and clear the data used for advertising at any time. The first ad formats are expected to be tested over the coming months.

Musk demands \$134 billion from OpenAI and Microsoft

NEXT STEP DESK

Elon Musk is seeking up to \$134 billion in damages from OpenAI and Microsoft, claiming he is owed the "wrongful gains" they earned from his early involvement with the AI company.

In a federal court filing on Friday, Musk stated OpenAI gained between \$65.5 billion and \$109.4 billion from his contributions as a co-founder, while Microsoft gained between \$13.3 billion and \$25.1 billion. His lawyer, Steven Molo, said, "Without Elon Musk, there'd be no OpenAI," citing his seed funding and guidance, as per a recent report by Reuters.



IMAGE: REUTERS



OpenAI dismissed the demand as "unserious" and part of a "harassment campaign" by Musk, who left the company in 2018 and now runs a competitor, xAI, states the Reuters report, adding that Microsoft did not immediately comment. Both companies challenged the damages claim in a separate filing, calling the financial analysis "made up" and "implausible".

Musk's lawsuit alleges OpenAI violated its original non-profit mission. A judge has ruled the case will go to a jury trial, expected to begin in April, further adds the report.

Star power influx as BPL enters business end

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20 is set for a glamorous surge as it enters its knockout phase today, with franchises racing to strengthen their squads through high profile international signings as the title race intensifies.

Sylhet Titans, who finished fourth in the league stage with 10 points from 10 matches, received a major boost ahead of their eliminator against Rangpur Riders in Mirpur after securing the services of English wicketkeeper-batter Sam Billings, who joined the squad yesterday.

His availability, Sylhet said in a press release, adds "experience and tactical depth" at a time when "clarity, composure and execution matter most".

Billings, who recently represented Sydney Thunder in the Big Bash League, follows the signing of English pacer Chris Woakes for the knockout stages, further strengthening Sylhet's overseas contingent already boasting the likes of Moeen Ali, Ethan Brooks and Salman Irfash.

"We've got a great team, a lot of bases covered," Brooks told reporters, adding that confidence is high as the side looks to get the job done.

Meanwhile, league leaders Rajshahi Warriors, up against Chattogram Royals in the first qualifier today, are eyeing what could be the biggest signing of the tournament, with New Zealand batter Kane



Williamson a potential late addition.

Williamson, currently with Durban's Super Giants in the SA20, may join depending on Durban's elimination and Rajshahi's progress in the BPL.

"We're looking for a middle-order batter, and Williamson fits perfectly," a Rajshahi official told The Daily Star, adding that they hope to have him for at least one match.

New Zealand all-rounder James Neesham, who has extended his contract with Rajshahi for the full season, also sounded optimistic.

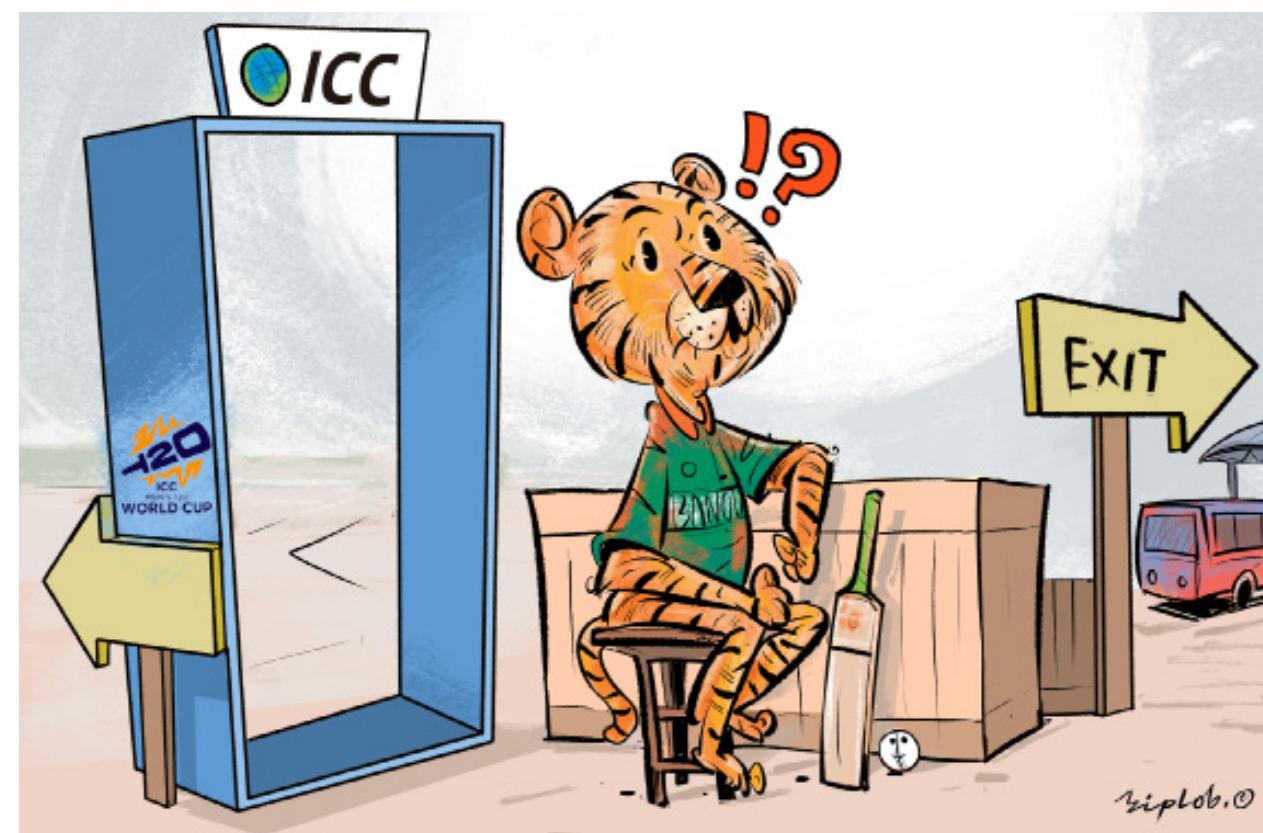
"We speak pretty regularly and have spoken in the last few days about him coming over for the back end of the competition," Neesham said.

"He is still involved with the SA20 currently, so a couple of results have to eventuate for that to happen, but fingers crossed we can get him into Bangladesh."

Apart from Neesham, Rajshahi's squad currently includes Sahibzada Farhan, Ryan Burl, Binura Fernando, Hussain Talat, Sandeep Lamichhane and Jahandad Khan.

Meanwhile, officials from Rangpur and Chattogram confirmed they are not planning to bring in any new foreign players for the playoffs and will rely on their existing squads for today's matches.

As the BPL enters its most decisive stretch, the stakes are rising. With international names flying in and finals dreams on the line, the business end of the tournament promises drama, flair and high-octane cricket -- exactly what the competition was meant to offer.



Three weeks, many narratives

Which truth will finally be revealed?

ASHFAQ UL ALAM

A little over three weeks into the talks between the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and the International Cricket Council (ICC) regarding the former's request to relocate Bangladesh's T20 World Cup matches from India, where do both parties stand?

The answer to this question depends on whom you're asking.

Yesterday, the BCB refuted reports from Monday, which claimed the ICC has set a deadline of January 21 for the board to decide whether it would send the team to India for the marquee event, also co-hosted by Sri Lanka.

"They [ICC delegation] told us that they will inform the ICC about the issues and will let us know about the decision later on. In regard to these talks, they haven't mentioned a specific date or when they will let us know," BCB media committee chairman Amzad Hossain told the media in a press briefing yesterday.

Earlier, after the meeting between BCB officials and an ICC delegation, the board had claimed in its official statement that the idea of swapping Bangladesh from Group C to B, in place of Ireland -- scheduled to play their group matches in Sri Lanka -- was floated in the meeting.

However, that very day, a Cricket Ireland official was quoted on media that it has received reassurance from ICC that they would not be swapped from their group.

This butting of differing narratives has been a constant ever since the BCB

sent a letter to the ICC, requesting relocation on January 4.

Soon after Bangladesh's request, some Indian media outlets claimed that the ICC was redrafting the tournament schedule. Later, the same outlets reported that the ICC had taken a hardline stance, setting a deadline for the BCB and preparing to announce Scotland as a replacement.

Throughout this period, the ICC has remained tight-lipped, offering no formal response, while the BCB has issued multiple press releases and briefed the media to clarify its position -- staying firm on its initial decision of not sending the team to India due to security reasons.

Beyond the noise of claims and counter-claims, the broader issue is how the ICC has historically dealt with such impasses.

The BCB requesting reallocation with a little over a month before the tournament, beginning February 7, put the ICC in a tough spot, but not an unfamiliar one.

Just like Bangladesh, Australia and India have also refused to send their teams for an ICC event, and the situations were handled very differently by the ICC.

When Cricket Australia announced it won't compete in the 2016 U-19 World Cup in Bangladesh due to security threat and government directive just three weeks before the tournament began, the ICC named Ireland as replacement that very day.

Whereas when Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced it

would not send its team to Pakistan for the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy in November 2024, demanding to play its matches in a neutral venue, the ICC proceeded by arranging multiple meetings with both parties, trying to broker a deal.

Eventually, it introduced a hybrid model for all ICC events hosted in either India or Pakistan till 2028. Under this arrangement, neither team would play matches in the other country for a total of four ICC events.

There are two key differences between Bangladesh and India's refusals. The BCCI had pulled out months ahead of the tournament, while Bangladesh did it after the tournament schedule was announced.

However, in India's case, the ICC brought in another country as hosts and also agreed to carry on with this cumbersome arrangement for future ICC events.

Courtesy of that arrangement, Sri Lanka emerged as a co-host for the upcoming T20 World Cup, where Bangladesh want to play their matches.

Switching Bangladesh to a different group would undoubtedly disrupt the preparations of other teams, but those same teams had no qualms in bearing the brunt of extra travel in ICC events to meet India's demands.

With time running out, how ICC eventually handles this situation would either go down as another avenue for case study when measuring the imbalance that exists in the cricketing world or set a new example in this regard.

SONY SPORTS 1, 2, 5	
BPL	(Wednesday): Inter vs Arsenal
Eliminator	Real Madrid vs Monaco
Rangpur vs Sylhet	STAR SPORTS SELECT HD2
Live from 1:00 pm	ICC U19 WC
Qualifier 1	Bangladesh vs New Zealand
Rajshahi vs Chattogram	Live from 11:45 pm
City	Live from 2:00 pm
	Live from 1:30 pm



U-19s look to bounce back

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh under-19s will face New Zealand in their second Group B match of the ICC U-19 World Cup on Tuesday at the Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo, hoping to recover from their opening defeat to India and learn from a tactical error.

Bangladesh were well placed in their chase of India's 238 before rain intervened. Set a revised target of 165 in 29 overs, they were 90 for 2 in 17.2 overs but collapsed after the rain break, losing eight wickets for 40 runs to suffer an 18-run defeat under the DLS method.

"We have worked out how we lost the last match and we have talked to the players. However demoralised they were, I feel they are energised now. They will fight and we have hope," team manager Ehsanul Haque told The Daily Star.

Ehsanul further admitted that Bangladesh misjudged the DLS situation after play resumed, playing slowly and allowing the required run rate to rise.

Rain has disrupted training sessions and is also forecast to affect Tuesday's match, which is scheduled to begin at 1:30pm Bangladeshi time. Despite the uncertainty, the team management remains confident in the squad's ability and hopes the players will apply the lessons learned to avoid repeating mistakes as the tournament progresses.

Djokovic hits Melbourne ton

AGENCIES



Novak Djokovic began his hunt for a record 25th Grand Slam title with his 100th victory at the Australian Open by taming Spain's 71st-ranked Pedro Martinez 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena on Monday.

Doubts had been raised about Djokovic's preparedness for the major he has won a record 10 times after the 38-year-old skipped the Adelaide tune-up event and cut short practice on Sunday, but he had no trouble sealing a flawless straight sets victory against Pedro.

The win also means Djokovic has reached a century of match wins in three of the four Grand Slams, with 95 at the US Open.

"What can I say? I like the sound of it -- centurion is pretty nice, it's a nice feeling to be a centurion," Djokovic said as a montage of his greatest Melbourne moments on Rod Laver Arena played out on the big screen.

"I'm blessed to be playing at this level and another win here tonight is a dream come true."

While the spotlight has largely swung toward reigning Melbourne champion Jannik Sinner and world number one Carlos Alcaraz, Djokovic reminded the duo of his threat with some sublime tennis yesterday.

"It's definitely my favourite court, a court that has given me so much," added Djokovic, who will next take on Italian qualifier Francesco Masetti.



AGONY, ECSTASY AND A CHAOTIC FINAL

Senegal clinched their second AFCON title in three editions, but a 1-0 victory over hosts Morocco came only after unpreceded chaos in Rabat on Sunday. The final exploded into drama when Senegal players staged a walk-off protest after a controversial injury-time penalty was awarded to Morocco following a VAR check. FIFA President Gianni Infantino slammed the "unacceptable" scenes, while CAF promised "appropriate action" against those responsible for the 20-minute delay and fan violence. Order was only restored when Sadio Mane, playing his final AFCON game, persuaded his teammates to return. Edouard Mendy subsequently saved tournament top-scorer Brahim Diaz's weak Panenka attempt from the spot, sending the game to extra time. Pape Gueye eventually struck the winner as the Lions celebrated. It was heartbreak for Morocco, who saw their 50-year wait for a second continental crown continue despite playing on home soil.

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS

What to WATCH

TSPORTS

BPL	Live from 6:30 am
Eliminator	Champions League
Rangpur vs Sylhet	Bodo/Glimt vs Man City
Live from 1:00 pm	Live from 6:00 pm
Qualifier 1	Live from 11:45 pm
Rajshahi vs Chattogram	Live from 2:00 pm
City	Live from 1:30 pm

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World Class Specialists



ব্যাংকক, সেরা ডাক্তার
বিশ্বমানের বিশেষজ্ঞ



Orthopedics and Prosthetics

অর্থোপেডিক্য এবং প্রয়োটিসিস

Oncology and Immunology

অ্যান্কোলজি এবং ইমিউনোলজি

Plastic and Aesthetic Surgery

প্লাস্টিক এবং এক্সেটিক সার্জেরি



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Sust students free VC, others after 14 hours Demo for Sucsu polls may resume today

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology have postponed their protests against the High Court order that suspended the Sucsu and hall union polls slated for today.

They announced the postponement of their sit-in in front of the administrative building around 1:15am.

The students also unlocked the administrative building where the vice chancellor, pro vice chancellor, treasurer, and other high officials had been confined since noon.

However, they asked the VC not to leave Sylhet until the Sucsu election is held and to complete all the necessary processes to hold the polls as soon as possible.

The students said they will resume their demonstrations in Golchattar area on the campus from this

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



Students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology block the Sylhet-Sunamganj highway yesterday afternoon as part of their demonstrations against a High Court order that suspended the Sucsu and hall union polls slated for today.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

91 BNP rebels still in race across 45 seats Expulsions fail to clear field; allies worried

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

With rebel BNP candidates refusing to bow out in more than four dozen constituencies, the party finds itself in an increasingly tricky spot.

Sources say BNP high-ups are still negotiating with those contesting the polls in defiance of central directives and expulsion warnings.

Today is the deadline for candidacy withdrawal.

According to party insiders, 91 rebels remain active across more than 45 constituencies.

Many former or current local leaders who have been denied party tickets are running as independents, splitting local units and also weakening campaign coordination in several key constituencies.

BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said, "We tried to persuade the rebels and those holding party posts to withdraw from the race. Most of them have, while many were expelled for disobeying party instructions. We will certainly honor the commitments we have made to our allied parties."

Withdrawals were announced in Brahmanbaria-1 and 6, Sunamganj-5, Barishal-3, Bhola-1, and Rajshahi-6.

Meanwhile, at least six BNP rebels are contesting in constituencies allocated to alliance partners under a seat sharing agreement.

The entry of BNP leaders into constituencies already allotted for alliance partners has sparked tensions and raised fears of vote splits and potential losses.

After resigning from Gono Odhikar Parishad, Rashed Khan joined the BNP and is contesting the Jhenaidah-4 seat as the party's nominee.

He said, "A rebel candidate is contesting in the same constituency. The candidate was asked to come to the Gulshan office but he did not respond. This is highly inappropriate."

Rashed expressed hope that the BNP would address the issue with a firm hand.

Alliance leaders have also privately conveyed their frustrations to the BNP, warning that failure to rein in rebels could be seen as a breach of trust.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

'Serial killer' held in Savar Suspect tells cops he killed 6 people in 7 months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A man has been arrested in connection with six murders committed over the past seven months in Savar, including five killings inside an abandoned community centre, police said.



Samrat

The suspect, Mashru Rahman Samrat, 40, was detained from Muktir Mor area on Sunday after police analysed CCTV footage following the recovery of two burnt bodies from the Savar Municipal Community Centre, said Arafatul Islam, additional superintendent of police (crime, operations and traffic-north) of Dhaka.

During preliminary interrogation, Samrat confessed to involvement in all six murders, including the latest double killing, Arafatul said, adding that the motive could not be known immediately.

Samrat was later shown arrested in the double murder case filed by police

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

ALIF MURDER Chinmoy, 38 others indicted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chattogram court yesterday framed charges against 39 accused, including former Iskcon leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari, in a case filed over the killing of lawyer Saiful Islam Alif outside the court premises in November 2024.

All 23 arrestees, including Chinmoy, were present at the courtroom.

Judge Md. Jahidul Haque of the Chattogram Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal also set February 2 for recording the complainant's statement.

Assistant Public Prosecutor Rajibul Wazed Chowdhury, also the complainant's lawyer, told The Daily Star, "The court framed charges against Chinmoy under sections 302 and 109 of the Penal Code and brought charges against 22 others under sections 147, 148, 149, 302/34."

Abdus Sattar, president of Chattogram District Bar Association, said Chinmoy was represented by Dhaka-



Former Iskcon leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari being taken to the courtroom from the prison van under tight security, as a Chattogram court yesterday framed charges against Chinmoy and 38 other accused in the lawyer Saiful Islam Alif murder case.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE Humam recalls torture before tribunal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Humam Quader Chowdhury, a victim of enforced disappearance, yesterday testified as the first prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case involving enforced disappearances, recounting his seven-month ordeal in secret detention at the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC), popularly known as "Aynaghar."

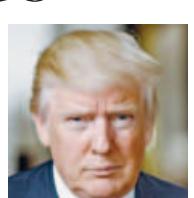
LOG ON TO WWW.THEDAILYSTAR.NET FOR THE FULL STORY.

REUTERS, Oslo

US President Donald Trump linked his drive to take control of Greenland to his failure to win the Nobel Peace Prize, saying he no longer thought "purely of Peace" as the row over the island yesterday threatened to reignite a trade war with Europe.

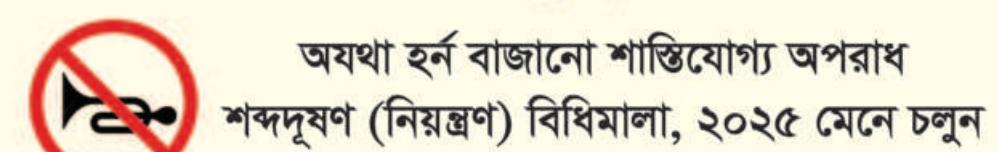
In a written message to Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre that was seen by Reuters, Trump said: "Considering your Country decided not to give me the Nobel Peace Prize for having stopped '8 Wars PLUS, I no longer feel an obligation to think purely of Peace, although it will always be predominant, but can now think about what is good and proper for the United States of America."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



অভ্যাস পরিবর্তন করুন, হ্রন্স বাজানো বন্ধ করুন

অযথা হ্রন্স বাজানো শাস্তিযোগ্য অপরাধ



শব্দবন্ধন (নিয়ন্ত্রণ) বিধিমালা, ২০২৫ মেনে চলুন

দেশজুড়ে জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন ও পরিবেশ দূষণ বিষয়ক সচেতনতামূলক প্রচারাভিযান প্রকল্প

পরিবেশ, বন ও জলবায়ু পরিবর্তন মন্ত্রণালয়

645 incidents against minorities, 71 communal Govt says about 2025

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government yesterday said 645 incidents involving members of minority communities occurred between January and December last year, and that only 71 of those were communal in nature.

The 71 incidents include 38 instances of temple vandalism, one temple theft, eight temple arsons, one murder, and 23 other types of incidents like threats to break idols, inflammatory Facebook posts, and damage to worship pavilions.

In connection with these 71 incidents, 50 cases have been filed so far, and at least 50 persons have been arrested, the Chief Adviser's Office said in a Facebook post, citing official police records.

The 54 other incidents deemed non-communal in the post include 51 neighbourhood disputes, 23 land-related disputes, 106 thefts, 26 prior enmities, 172 unnatural deaths, 58 rapes, and 138 other incidents like abduction, extortion and intimidation.

At least 544 cases, including 154 related to unnatural deaths, were filed, and 498 persons were arrested in the incidents, it added.

According to the statement, Bangladesh remains

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

8,780 polling centres 'most vulnerable'

Identifies govt, rolls out election security plan involving drones, dogs, bodycams

LAW ENFORCERS TO BE DEPLOYED

Army	100,000
Navy	5,000
Air Force	3,730
Police	149,443
Ansar	576,314
BGB	37,453
Coast Guard	3,585
Rab	7,700
Fire Service	13,390

SOURCE: HOME MINISTRY

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

PHOTO ON PAGE 3

Bid to stage 2008-style polls will fail: Nahid NCP meets CA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party Convenor Nahid Islam has cautioned that any bid to stage a national election resembling the 2008 polls would fail, insisting that the upcoming election must be conducted in line with the 1991 model.

Speaking at a press conference after meeting the chief adviser at Jamuna yesterday, Nahid said his party would not allow an "engineered" election.

"There is no doubt about the election if a fair environment is ensured. But if there is a plan to engineer it, such a plan will fail and be resisted."

"We want to contest the election in the field, but the Election Commission should not force us onto the streets."

Nahid alleged that under pressure from the BNP, the EC has legitimised dual citizenship holders and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

PHOTO ON PAGE 3

CONTROL OF GREENLAND Trump links threat to Nobel snub

REUTERS, Oslo

US President Donald Trump linked his drive to take control of Greenland to his failure to win the Nobel Peace Prize, saying he no longer thought "purely of Peace" as the row over the island yesterday threatened to reignite a trade war with Europe.

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SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

