

DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 22, 2026

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXVI No. 9

MAGH 8, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

SHABAN 2, 1447 HIJRI

SECOND EDITION

56 PAGES PLUS CAMPUS : TK 15.00

NINTH NAT'L PAY COMMISSION

Up to 142% salary hike pitched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ninth National Pay Commission yesterday proposed a new salary structure for government employees, recommending increases ranging from 100 percent to 142 percent, alongside substantial rises in other benefits.

If implemented, the proposals will require an additional annual expenditure of more than Tk 1 lakh crore.

The 21-member commission, led by former finance secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, submitted its report to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the Jamuna in the evening.

The commission recommended 20 pay scales, with the minimum salary proposed to rise from Tk 8,250 to Tk 20,000 and the maximum from Tk 78,000 to Tk 160,000, according to a statement from the CA's Press Wing.

Zakir said implementing the proposals would require an additional Tk 1.06 lakh crore annually. Currently, the government spends Tk 1.31

- ② Minimum salary Tk 20,000, maximum Tk 160,000
- ② Pensions to increase by 55-100%
- ② Additional Tk 1 lakh crore will be needed
- ② Govt has about 14 lakh employees, 9 lakh pensioners

lakh crore a year for its 14 lakh employees and nine lakh pensioners, the press statement said.

Explaining the rationale, Zakir said the new pay structure was prepared after reviewing significant changes in "nearly all global and national economic indicators, particularly the sharp rise in the prices of essential commodities over the past decade."

"Without a timely and appropriate pay structure, it has become increasingly difficult for government employees to manage living

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

ICC rejects BCB's relocation request

Bangladesh given one day to decide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Cricket Council rejected Bangladesh Cricket Board's request to relocate the national cricket team's matches of the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup from India after an ICC board meeting yesterday.

ICC announced its decision through a media release after the meeting, held through a video conference. In it, the world cricket's governing body said it did not want to set a bad precedent through accepting Bangladesh's request "in the absence of any credible security threat".

"In the absence of any independent security findings that materially compromise the safety of the Bangladesh team, the ICC is unable to relocate fixtures," an unnamed ICC spokesperson was quoted in the media release, which is also the ICC's first formal response in any form since the BCB first requested relocation on January 4.

"Doing so would carry significant logistical and scheduling consequences for other teams and fans worldwide, and would also create far-reaching precedent-related challenges that risk undermining the neutrality, fairness, and integrity of ICC governance," the ICC spokesperson added.

The tournament, set to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, will now begin on February 7 with an unchanged schedule.

Meanwhile, according to an ESPNcricinfo report, the ICC has given the BCB one more day to confer with the government and decide whether it would send the team to India for the World Cup.

"I asked the ICC board for time to talk to my government for one last time," the cricket website quoted Aminul as saying. "They said it's a



SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

'This was going to be her last term'

Joy tells Al Jazeera about Hasina

STAR REPORT

Sajeel Wazed Joy, son of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, has said his mother had already planned to step away from politics, describing her removal from power as "in a sense the end of the Hasina era".

Speaking to Al Jazeera in Washington DC, Joy said Hasina, who is now living in India under government protection, is elderly and had intended that term of her government to be her final one.

"...This was going to be her last term anyway. She wanted to retire," he said, adding that the Awami League would continue to exist without her leadership. "It's the oldest party. It's been around for 70 years. It will continue with or without her. No one lives forever."

Hasina was ousted in August 2024 following

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Returning officers in 298 constituencies across the country allocated symbols to candidates yesterday. In this photo, Sanjida Islam Tulee, a BNP candidate for the 13th parliamentary polls, smiles as she displays her symbol allocation paper outside the Election Commission's Dhaka divisional office at Segunbagicha.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

CANDIDATES FOR FEB 12 POLLS

BNP	288
Jamaat-e-Islami	224
National Citizen Party (NCP)	32
CPB	65
Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis	34
Islami Andolan Bangladesh	253
GM Quader led JP	192

The 2026 polls should be such an election that will set a standard for future elections.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus

15,33,683
voters registered in
Postal Vote BD App

436
regained
candidacies

305
aspirants withdrew
candidacy

1,981
candidates
contesting

12.76cr
registered
voters

42,761
polling centres

2,44,739
polling booths

1,15,137
polling booths
for male

1,29,602
polling booths
for female

UNBOWED
The Daily Star
CELEBRATING
35
YEARS OF
JOURNALISM WITHOUT
FEAR OR FAVOUR

The fourth part
of The Daily
Star's 35th
anniversary
supplement
2026,

FACING ECONOMY'S LOOMING CHALLENGES

decodes the
pressures on our
economic growth
and sketches a
clear blueprint
for the road
ahead.

Collect your
copy from your
hawker today.



BNP expels 59 rebel candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday expelled 59 rebel candidates from the party for their involvement in activities that go against party policy, ideology and discipline.

Earlier, the party had expelled 11 rebel candidates.

Of the 59, three are from the Rangpur division, eight from the Rajshahi division, six from the Khulna division, two from the Barishal division, nine from the Dhaka division, seven from the Mymensingh division, seven from the Faridpur division, five from the Sylhet division, six from the Cumilla division and six from the Chattogram division.

From the Rangpur division, ANM Bazlur Rashid from Dinajpur-2, AZM Rezwanul Haque from Dinajpur-5 and Riyad Arafat Sarkar Rana from Nilphamari-4 were expelled.

The eight rebel candidates expelled in the Rajshahi division are

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

13TH NATIONAL POLLS Election campaigns officially underway

Parties plan rallies across country today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With election symbols allocated yesterday, MP candidates and their supporters are set to hit the campaign trail as electioneering for the 13th national polls formally kicks off today.

The nation is expected to be swept up by election fever, with streets, villages, and towns anticipating the familiar buzz of door-to-door canvassing, slogans, rallies, and a deluge of promises in the coming weeks.

The aspirants have until 7:30am on February 10 for electioneering. The election is slated for February 12, which is three weeks away.

For a large section of voters, this election offers the first genuine chance to exercise their franchise after three consecutive polls were marred by rigging and engineering.

An inquiry commission into the polls of 2014, 2018, and 2024 concluded those elections were orchestrated at

the highest levels of the state, with segments of the administration, police, Election Commission, and intelligence agencies mobilised to carry out the plans.

This time, 1,981 candidates -- including 288 from BNP, 224 from Jamaat-e-Islami, 32 from the National Citizens Party, and 249 as independents -- are vying for 300 parliamentary seats, according to the Election Commission.

Besides, 253 candidates from Islami Andolan Bangladesh, 192 from Jatiya Party, 90 from Gono Odhikar Parishad, 65 from the Communist Party of Bangladesh, 42 from Insaniya Biplobi Samajtantrik Dal, 39 from Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, 30 from Amar Bangladesh party, 34 from Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, 26 from Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, and 19 from Gono Forum are also competing in the race.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

EC greenlights 24 candidates following dual citizenship review

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following nomination appeal hearings, the Election Commission has given the green signal to 24 aspirants who had dual citizenship to contest the upcoming February 12 national election.

The EC held the hearings from January 10 to January 18. On the final day, the EC heard 24 appeals related to dual citizenship complications.

Earlier, the nomination papers of 15 candidates were declared valid by the Returning Officers (ROs), but separate appeals were later filed against them with the EC. During the hearings, those appeals were rejected, thereby upholding the ROs' decisions.

These are: Dhaka-1 Islami Andolan Bangladesh candidate Mohammad Nazrul Islam; Dinajpur-5 BNP candidate A K M Kamruzzaman; Shatkira-4 BNP candidate Md Moniruzzaman; Faridpur-2 BNP candidate Shama Obaid; Sunamganj-2 BNP candidate Tahir Raihan Choudhury; Sunamganj-3 independent candidate Md Anwar Hossain; Moulvibazar-2 BNP candidate Md Shawkatul Islam; Habiganj-1 independent candidate Sheikh Sujat Miah; Brahmanbaria-3 Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Md Junayed Hasan;

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

21
DAYS TO
VOTE

When electoral symbols were still up for grabs

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

There was a time when the boat was not confirmed for the Awami League, nor was the paddy sheaf for the BNP's permanent symbol.

Electoral symbol distribution was not always as straight forward as it seemed yesterday when the election office finalised 118 symbols for the candidates without any notable discontent.

In the case of the National Citizen Party's demand for the water lily, after months long dispute with the Election Commission, the party finally settled on the water lily bud in November 2025.

THE FIRST DISPUTES: 1973

The debate over symbols began even before the country's maiden parliamentary election. Both the Awami League (AL) and the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) demanded the boat.

On January 25, 1973, the EC met political parties to reserve the symbols. The commission adopted the principle that a party which had used a symbol in the previous election would have prior right in the next election. Based on this principle, the EC allocated the boat to the Awami League.

Barrister Aleem Al-Razi, representing the National Awami Party (Bhasani), opposed this decision. He argued that the terms "last

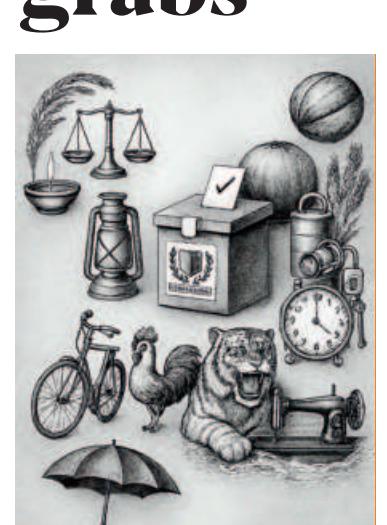


IMAGE: AI GENERATED

Hasina was ousted in August 2024 following

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Students threaten shutdown over Sucsu verdict

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust) yesterday warned of a complete shutdown of the campus if the Supreme Court verdict goes against their demand for immediate central students' union elections.

The warning came at a press briefing held in front of the Library Building in the afternoon, where agitated students announced that 28 departments would boycott classes and examinations starting today.

The Sust Central Students' Union (Sucsu) and hall union polls were scheduled for Tuesday. However, the High Court on Monday stayed the elections for four weeks, triggering protests across the campus.

Foyosul Hossain, a general secretary candidate, said, "As there are laws not to hold any elections within 21 days of the national polls, we understand the issue. However, we urge the Supreme Court to consider the fact that the schedule for the SUCsu polls was declared before the schedule for the national polls was announced."

Delwar Hossain Shishir, a vice-president candidate, alleged political interference. "A party influenced two candidates and a voter to file a writ petition that stopped the polling and snatched the voting rights of nine thousand voters," he said.

Election campaigns officially underway

FROM PAGE 1

In a break from the usual, along with the national election, voters will cast their ballots in a referendum to decide the fate of key constitutional reforms aimed at strengthening fragile democratic institutions and rebalancing state powers.

With the Awami League barred from contesting the polls, political analysts say this election is shaping up primarily as a contest between the BNP- and Jamaat-led alliances.

The BNP, Jamaat, NCP, and other political parties have planned rallies in divisional and district headquarters and roadside meetings to drum up public support for their candidates.

The BNP will start its election campaign from Sylhet. Party Chairman Tarique Rahman, accompanied by his wife, Zubaida Rahman, reached the city last night and visited the shrines of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) and Hazrat Shah Paran (RA).

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and several other senior party leaders are also travelling with him.

Tarique will address a public meeting at the Sylhet Government Alia Madrasa ground in the city's Chowhatta area around 11:00am today. This will be his first public rally outside Dhaka since assuming the role of the party chairman.

Later in the day, around 1:00pm, he will attend an election rally at the Sherpur-Ainpur playground in Moulvibazar Sadar upazila, followed by another rally at 2:30pm at the proposed new Upazila Parishad ground in Shyestaganj upazila of Habiganj.

At 4:00pm, Tarique is scheduled to join an election rally at the Kuttappa Football Ground in Sarail upazila of



Printing presses in the capital hum with activity, churning out leaflets and banners for the election campaign as formal electioneering begins today. The photo was taken at a press in Fakirapool yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Brahmanbaria and later another at Bhabrab Stadium in Kishoreganj around 5:00pm.

In the evening, around 7:00pm, party leaders will attend a rally near the municipal park area in Narsingdi. Around 8:30pm, they will join election rallies in the Gausia area of Araihazar and Rupganj in Narayanganj.

After attending day-long programmes, Tarique is expected to return to his Gulshan residence around 10:00pm.

Jamaat will also start its campaign today through a door-to-door canvassing in the Dhaka-15 constituency led by Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman and other central leaders, followed by a rally around 2:30pm.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The EC has finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panchagarh at 11:00am Friday. From there, he will travel to Dinajpur for a rally, then proceed to Thakurgaon. In the evening, he will address another rally in Rangpur and stay there overnight.

Large rallies will be held along the way, and Shafiqur will interact with people in constituencies on the route as well as in key markets and towns.

The Election Commission finalised preparations for 42,761 polling centres and 24,473 booths for around 12.76 crore voters.

Polling will run from 7:30am to 4:30pm, an hour longer, as voters will cast both election and referendum ballots.

The referendum ballot will be pink; the national election ballot will be black and white. Both will be dropped into a single ballot box.

Constituencies with only one candidate will include a "no vote" option.

For the first time, campaign posters are banned nationwide to reduce paper waste.

The party's candidates across the country will also begin campaigning and other election-related activities. The Jamaat Ameer will visit northern districts on Friday and Saturday, starting with Panchagarh.

He is scheduled to reach Panch

Pubali Bank PLC steps into a new era of Digital Banking

To unlock a faster, safer and smarter banking experience, please complete your

BIOMETRIC REGISTRATION



ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে "ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার" মূল্যালী ব্যাংকের সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়



Hadi's family to get Tk 1cr more from govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to provide an additional Tk 1 crore to the family of slain Inqilab Mancha spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi as livelihood support, Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed said yesterday.

Earlier, the government had allocated Tk 1 crore for purchasing a flat in Dhaka for Hadi's family.

The finance adviser disclosed the decision while speaking to journalists after chairing a meeting of the Advisers Council Committee on

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman offers prayers at the shrine of Hazrat Shah Paran (RA) in Sylhet yesterday, as he visits the city to formally launch the party's campaign for the 13th National Parliamentary Election.

PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL

Simeen Rahman, others exempted in one case, bailed in another

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transcom Group Chairman Shahnaz Rahman, Chief Executive Officer Simeen Rahman, and three other top officials were exempted yesterday from a case filed by the CEO's sister.

In a separate case, five individuals, including Shahnaz and Simeen, were granted bail by a Dhaka court.

In the first case, filed over allegations of fraud through forged signatures, Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Sefatullah relieved Shahnaz, Simeen and three others after accepting a final report, according to a sub-inspector working at the court.

The three others are Zaraif Ayaat Hossain, son of Simeen Rahman; and Transcom Group directors Md Kamrul Hassan and Fokhruzzaman Bhuiyan.

The case was filed on February 22, 2024, by Simeen's younger sister Shahzreh Huq at Gulshan Police Station against the five. Investigation officer Md Tariqul Islam, an inspector at the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), recently submitted the final report to the court.

The report said that Simeen is the complainant's sister and Shahnaz is her mother. The complainant had alleged that the signatures of herself, her father Latifur Rahman and her brother Arshad Waliur Rahman were forged on a deed of settlement arising from a family dispute.

During his lifetime, Latifur, founder chairman of Transcom Group, executed the deed of settlement concerning the distribution of his shares and matters related to company management.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Hefazat chief praises Islami Andolan for cutting ties with Jamaat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hefazat-e-Islam Amir Mohibullah Babunagari has congratulated Islami Andolan Bangladesh Ameer Mufti Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim for withdrawing from their political association with Jamaat-e-Islami ahead of the upcoming election.

In a statement sent to the media on Tuesday, Babunagari said Islami Andolan's decision to distance itself from Jamaat -- which he described as "Maududi-inspired ideology" -- was a timely and courageous move aimed at safeguarding "Sunni beliefs".

He said since the July uprising, Hefazat-e-Islam has been working for broader unity among Islamic forces under the

'Ensure justice, accountability, democratic rights'

Gonotrantik Odhikar Committee unveils 'Peoples' Manifesto' for next elected govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Gonotrantik Odhikar Committee yesterday presented a set of 25 recommendations for the next elected government, calling upon it to ensure justice, accountability, peace, security, and democratic rights of the people, and public ownership of the July uprising, the Liberation War, and all past uprisings.

The committee unveiled the recommendations at an event titled "Manifesto for Peoples' Peace, Comfort, Security, and Democratic Rights" at the National Press Club in Dhaka.

The manifesto was read by Akram Khan, Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, and Sushmita S Preetha.

The manifesto's demands to the next elected government include: publishing final lists of all those killed and injured during the July uprising, from both sides, within three months; ensuring compensation within six months to families of all the deceased and critically injured in the uprising; preventing harassment of affected families; state guarantee of safety to all July Uprising participants; banning the use of the uprising for personal gain, corruption, or political influence;

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) held its 26th convocation at the International Convention City Bashundhara in Dhaka yesterday. Education Adviser Prof CR Abrar conferred certificates on graduates, while acclaimed photographer, journalist and human rights activist Dr Shahidul Alam delivered the convocation speech. University Grants Commission Chairman Prof SMA Faiz attended as the guest of honour.

Open your Account from anywhere



PI Banking-
a Pubali Bank apps

China's influence, polls in focus as new US envoy sets out Bangladesh agenda

Brent Christensen says the US will not back any political side

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent Christensen has said he is concerned about the broader Chinese influence in South Asia and committed to clearly articulating the risks of involvement with China should Bangladesh choose to go down that path.



Speaking at his first media interaction at the EMK Centre in Dhaka since joining the US Embassy on January 12, Christensen also said that the US will not take sides in Bangladesh's elections but aims to work with the elected government on trade, economy, security and counter-terrorism.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Barrister Arman recounts 8-year confinement in Aynagar at ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An enforced disappearance victim yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal that a guard at his secret detention centre informed him his body weight had been measured days after his abduction so that a concrete slab of the same weight could be prepared to dump his body after killing him, ensuring it would never be recovered.

Testifying as the first prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case, Mir Ahmed

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Form law to make primary healthcare constitutional obligation: experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health experts and campaigners yesterday urged the immediate formulation of a law making primary healthcare (PHC) a constitutional obligation aimed at achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

They also called for refocusing and strengthening PHC as the foundation of the country's health system and for better coordination between rural and urban healthcare services, which currently operate in a fragmented manner.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

INTERNATIONAL

Trump seeks 'decisive' options for Iran

US military assets move into Middle East

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump is pressing aides for "decisive" military options against Iran after stepping back from potential strikes last week, according to a report Tuesday.

Trump's discussions come as the US deploys additional forces to the Middle East, including an aircraft carrier that was spotted by maritime traffic trackers sailing west from the South China Sea toward the Persian Gulf and F-15E fighter jets that landed Sunday in Jordan, said The Wall Street Journal.

The report, citing anonymous US officials, said Trump has repeatedly used the term "decisive" in internal discussions about what he would want any potential US action against Iran to achieve.

That language has prompted officials at the White House



People take part in the nationwide "Stop ICE Terror" rally in New York, US on Tuesday evening, protesting US President Donald Trump's immigration policies.

PHOTO: AFP

Israeli fire kills 11 Palestinians in Gaza

Two boys, three journos among the dead

REUTERS, Cairo

Israeli fire killed 11 Palestinians, including two boys and three journalists, in Gaza yesterday, local medics said, and the Israeli military said it had "eliminated a Palestinian man" who posed a threat to soldiers.

In the latest violence disrupting a brittle, three-month-old ceasefire, Palestinian health officials said an Israeli airstrike killed three Palestinian journalists travelling in a car in the central Gaza Strip.

The three were on an assignment sponsored by the Egyptian Committee, which supervises Egypt's relief work in Gaza, to film tent encampments built

by Egypt for displaced Palestinians, other local journalists told Reuters.

An Egyptian security source confirmed the vehicle belonged to the committee but gave no further details.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment.



Israel and Hamas have traded blame for multiple breaches of the October truce after two years of war that devastated Gaza and caused a humanitarian disaster.

Trump said on Tuesday "you got to let the UN continue" when asked about his plans for a so-called "Board of Peace" that has alarmed international experts.

and the Pentagon to prepare a range of military scenarios for the president, including options that could seek to remove Iran's leadership, reports Anadolu Ajansi online.

The officials were quoted as saying that Trump has not authorised strikes and that his final decision remains uncertain, but the ongoing discussions indicate he has not ruled out taking action against Tehran over the killing of protesters.

Iran has been rocked by nationwide protests since late December over economic hardship and the sharp depreciation of the rial, with demonstrations spreading from Tehran to several cities.

According to the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) on Monday, at least 4,029 people have been killed, more than 26,000 arrested and over 5,800 injured during the unrest. Iranian officials have accused the US and Israel of backing what they describe as "armed rioters."

Trump has repeatedly threatened to "hit hard" if protesters were killed but later commended Tehran for reportedly cancelling hundreds of scheduled executions.

Suspected jihadist attack kills 31 civilians in Niger

AFP, Abidjan

An armed attack has killed at least 31 civilians in western Niger near the borders with Burkina Faso and Mali in a region rife with jihadist groups, local sources said Tuesday.

The assailants struck on Sunday in a village lying in the Tillaberi region, located in the so-called tri border area — a flashpoint zone where the frontiers of Niger, Burkina Faso and Mali converge.

Jihadists linked to Al Qaeda and the Islamic State group have made the region a field of conflict, carrying out deadly attacks for nearly a decade.

Tillaberi became the "deadliest region across central Sahel" in 2025, with more than 1,200 deaths, most of them civilians, according to ACLED, an NGO that monitors conflicts.

Ex-adviser M Hafizuddin Khan

FROM PAGE 12

Hafizuddin Khan was rushed to Uttara Crescent Hospital in the morning after he complained of chest pain, his niece Mousumi Mostafa told The Daily Star. He was later put on life support and pronounced dead around 6:00pm, she said.

His namaz e janaza will be held at multiple locations today. His two daughters, who live abroad, are expected to arrive in Dhaka today.

He will be laid to rest tomorrow at his village home in Rahmatganj of Sirajganj Sadar upazila.

Born in Sirajganj in 1939, Hafizuddin Khan served as an adviser to the caretaker government in 2001.

He completed his graduation and master's degrees in political science from Dhaka University in 1960 and 1961 respectively, according to a brief biography published by Midas

Financing Limited, where he served as a director. He later obtained a diploma in development finance from the University of Birmingham in the UK.

Hafizuddin joined government service in the Audit and Accounts Cadre in 1964. After 35 years of service, he retired in 1999. In 2001, he served as an adviser to the caretaker government, overseeing the ministries of finance, planning, and textiles and jute.

Widely regarded as a reformer in administrative and financial management, he served as a director of BASIC Bank and Rupali Bank, and as chairman of Agrani Bank.

He also served as chairman of the Board of Trustees of Transparency International Bangladesh and as president of the central executive committee of Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Sujan).



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Principal
Sylhet Polytechnic Institute, Sylhet-3100
Website: <https://sylhet.polytech.gov.bd>
E-mail: principalsylhetpoly@gmail.com

Memo No: 57.03.9131.349.04.07.001.25-68

Date: 20/01/2026

e-Tender Notice

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

Tender ID No.	Package No	Package Description	Tender Publication Date and Time	Tender Closing & Opening Date and Time	Remarks
I212787	SPI-25-26-GD-06	Supply of Raw Materials and Spare Parts for Computer Science, Electrical and Electronics Technology (3256105)	21-Jan-2026 10:00:00	01-Feb-2026 15:45:00	Re-Tender
I212812	SPI-25-26-GD-07	Supply of Sports Materials (3256107)	21-Jan-2026 10:00:00	01-Feb-2026 15:45:00	Re-Tender
I212762	SPI-25-26-GD-10	Supply of Engineering & Equipment for Mechanical Technology (4112304)	21-Jan-2026 10:00:00	01-Feb-2026 15:45:00	Re-Tender
1176735	SPI-25-26-WD-14	Repair of Electrical Installations (3258119)	21-Jan-2026 10:00:00	01-Feb-2026 15:45:00	
I216198	SPI-25-26-WD-15	Repair of Others Building and Installation (3258108)	21-Jan-2026 10:00:00	01-Feb-2026 15:45:00	

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal; and offline or hard copies will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Sd/-
(Mohammed Rehan Uddin)
Principal (Additional Charge)
Phone : 02-9966-32529

GD-157

Fair, credible polls

FROM PAGE 12
senior government officials, and representatives from the Election Commission. Following the meeting, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam ruled reporters at the Foreign Service Academy.

"Additional time will be needed to count party symbol ballots, referendum ballots, and postal ballots. So, I will urge the media to act responsibly to prevent the spread of misinformation and rumours," he said.

Home Affairs Adviser Lieutenant General Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury (retd) said members of the armed forces will be considered law enforcement personnel during this election and, if necessary, will be able to enter polling centre premises.

Army Chief Waker Uz Zaman said 3,619 firearms and 456,418 rounds of ammunition were looted from police stations during the August 2024 mass uprising, with 2,259 firearms (62.4 percent) and 237,100 rounds (52 percent) recovered so far. He said coordinated measures are being taken to ensure public confidence and that, if continued, a peaceful election will be possible.

VDP Director General Major General Abdul Motaleb Sazzad Mahmud said armed Ansar members will remain inside polling centres, ensuring no one can force out a rival candidate's polling agent or conduct illegal activities inside the stations.

Advisers Muhammad Fawzul Kabir Khan; Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser Lieutenant General (retd) Abdul Hafiz; National Security Adviser Dr Khalilur Rahman; Faz Ahmed Taiyeb, special assistant to the chief adviser; Cabinet Secretary Sheikh Abdul Rashid; Navy Chief Rear Admiral Mohammad Nazmul Hasan; Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmud Khan; Chief Adviser's Chief Secretary M Siraj Uddin Mia; Home Secretary Nasimul Ghani; Police Inspector General Baharul Alam; Border Guard DG Major General Mohammad Ashrafulzaman Siddiqui; Coast Guard DG Rear Admiral Md Ziaul Haq; RAB DG AKM Shahidur Rahman; and heads of various intelligence agencies were among those present at the meeting.

"We must be prepared for everything. Given the current situation and the preparations in place, a fair and credible election is possible," the chief adviser said.

EC Secretary Akhtar Ahmed told the meeting that 51 of the 59 registered political parties are participating in the election, and representatives from 26 countries have been invited as observers.

The European Union is expected to send an observer team of around 300 members. Already, 56 EU representatives are in Bangladesh, and two have observed the appeal process related to nomination papers.

Candidates will be allowed to campaign from midnight to



BERGER
Trusted Worldwide

Architecta
by Aupee Karim

Heritage Weave
by Sarah Karim



illusions
by Arnob

Soundscape
by Arnob



16804
CALL US NOW

An efficient energy sector needs political commitment

A just transition to renewables must be in the plan

Political parties, especially those hoping to win in the upcoming election, must clearly commit to ensuring good governance in the power and energy sector. This must be included in their election manifestos. At a recent dialogue attended by representatives of political parties, civil society members and energy experts, the most-talked-about subject was the corruption and waste in this sector. The Bangladesh Working Group on Ecology and Development (BWGED), one of the organisers, presented a 13-point citizen manifesto for a "just transition in the energy sector." A transition to renewable energy has clearly become essential given the increasing environmental pollution (especially carbon emissions) caused by fossil fuel plants, which contribute 28 percent to the country's air pollution.

The huge financial burden of our overdependence on fossil fuels and their imports is another compelling factor that demands such a transition. We spend around \$18.5 billion in capacity charges and an additional \$27.23 billion in losses sustained by the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB), according to BWGED. Meanwhile, the annual expenditure on fossil fuel imports is around \$11.72 billion, which is a huge strain on the country's foreign exchange reserves. It is therefore reassuring that representatives of the political parties spoke about the need for transparency and accountability in the sector; this is in the backdrop of the rampant corruption and abuse of power plants during the Awami League regime. We expect that removing corruption from this sector will be a priority in party manifestos.

At the same time, subsidies for coal, gas, and fuel need to be phased out to encourage industries, businesses, and households to shift rapidly to cost-effective renewable energy. No new coal, gas, or oil-based plants should be approved, and workers of retired plants must receive guaranteed alternative livelihood opportunities. No new LNG terminals should be approved, with strict measures to prevent gas leakage and illegal connections.

A clear roadmap is needed for this transition, with time-bound targets integrated into all national and sectoral plans. There must be significant budget allocations for renewable energy, VAT and import duties on solar panels and related equipment have to be removed. The transport sector is one of the biggest polluters, which must be addressed. The BWGED's citizen manifesto also demands significant reductions in import duties and taxes on electric vehicles and zero duties on advanced batteries. This includes public buses and other modes of transport. A "just transition" includes everyone—in particular women, indigenous communities, farmers, fishers, workers, and the poor. Thus, new green jobs must be created by providing short-term training and easy loan access, especially for the unemployed youth, women, and other marginalised groups. Land acquisition for energy projects must be prohibited to protect agricultural livelihoods. Special incentives must be given to farmers for using renewable energy.

The citizen manifesto has given a clear direction for the next government for the country's smooth transition to renewable energy that will eventually reduce our financial burden and carbon footprint. Political parties must realise that committing to these demands and living up to them, if they form part of the next government, is imperative for Bangladesh's economic and environmental resilience.

Migrant welfare must be a priority

Parties must commit to addressing migration governance failures

As political parties prepare to unveil their election manifestos, with the curtain on official campaigning set to rise today, experts have been sharing their thoughts on the priorities that should be reflected in political commitments. Migration experts have also joined the conversation, stressing the inclusion of clear and credible commitments to reform Bangladesh's labour migration sector. This is only logical. Labour migration remains a major economic driver—with remittance inflows hitting a record \$32.8 billion in 2025—yet the sector remains poorly governed. While talking to this daily, experts have laid out a case for why and where serious policy action is needed.

The numbers alone justify the urgency. Despite bringing in hefty remittances and shoring up forex reserves, the sector receives just 0.08 percent of the national budget, as one expert revealed. This mismatch exposes a long-standing policy contradiction where the state celebrates migrant workers as its economic lifelines but casts their welfare and protection as peripheral concerns. Calls for allocating at least one percent of the budget to migration, alongside the formulation of a 10-year national migration vision, therefore deserve serious consideration. Without a long-term framework, migration governance will continue to be reactive, fragmented, and ineffective.

Equally important is the emphasis on what another expert called "quality migration." Sending unskilled workers through opaque recruitment systems not only limits remittance potential but also exposes the workers to abuse, debt, and exploitation. This must be addressed. To ensure quality migration, proposals such as reducing the role of middlemen, promoting digital registration for migrants, embedding skills development from school to university, upgrading Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training to a full directorate, and strengthening support services at embassies and upon return are well justified. Here, we must stress the importance of proper reintegration for returnee migrants. Returnees often find themselves deprived of state support and facing shrinking opportunities. A serious migration policy must see return as an integral phase of the migration cycle and plan accordingly.

Broader labour issues also demand political attention. Frequent calls from labour organisations for fair wages, democratic labour laws, and worker protections suggest that workers, whether at home or abroad, remain undervalued despite their central role in our economy. Any economic growth cannot be sustained without protecting those who produce it. The question is, can the parties move beyond rhetoric and signal seriousness through concrete, time-bound commitments? They do not have to come up with novel ideas; the proposals made by the Labour Reform Commission already provide much of the background on which they can build. What's needed is strong political will. If parties are serious about inclusive growth and economic resilience, they must place workers, including migrant workers, at the centre of their future visions.

EDITORIAL

Why the next government must put power sector reform first



Shafiqul Alam is lead energy analyst for Bangladesh at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA).

SHAFIQUL ALAM

The power sector's high reserve margin, capacity payment obligations, and reliance on imported fossil fuels have weakened the Bangladesh Power Development Board's (BPDB) financial strength. In a bid to urgently address its distress, the interim government, after assuming office in August 2024, undertook some measures to reduce costs. Yet, the power sector registered a record revenue shortfall in FY2024-25, calling for long-term efforts to deliver results. With the general election scheduled for February 12, 2026, the next government will be well placed to design and implement long-term reforms to steer the power sector towards sustainability, while ensuring that the country's economic growth trajectory remains intact.

These reforms must include a rational power demand projection to avoid future overcapacity and associated capacity payments, greater reliance on grid power, reduced use of costly oil-fired power plants, increased renewable energy, and reduced transmission and distribution (T&D) losses.

It is worth recalling that Bangladesh's power demand projection—relying on optimistic GDP growth rates—has created several challenges. The power sector faces a high reserve margin, resulting in capacity payments for idle plants and a greater annual subsidy burden.

In FY2024-25, the power system's reserve margin hovered around 61.3 percent, based on the maximum peak demand of 17,000MW against an installed capacity of 27,414MW. While reserve margins typically rise with an increasing share of variable renewable energy (VRE), the country's on-grid VRE share remains low. The power system's reserve margin, excluding the VRE capacity of 762MW registered on June 30, 2025, stood at 56.8 percent in FY2024-25, substantiating its high surplus capacity. With power plants of a combined capacity of 6,756MW—excluding renewable energy—expected to come online before 2030, concerns remain about the persistently high reserve margin (installed capacity as of January 14, 2026 is 28,909MW; derated capacity is 28,484MW). Accordingly, the next government should project a more rational power demand and refrain from adding new fossil fuel-based capacity to prudently manage the reserve margin, thereby reducing obligations for exorbitant capacity payments for fossil-fuel

plants.

Enhancing electrification and modernising the grid

Industries in Bangladesh use gas for both boilers and captive power generation, avoiding significant dependence on grid power. It is a double whammy for the power sector: the surplus power capacity adds to capacity payments and BPDB's revenue shortfall mounts.

On the other hand, with the deepening piped gas supply crisis, industries are turning to alternative fuels like compressed natural gas (CNG) and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). This increases their operational costs, raising



business concerns. As CNG stations also face gas supply shortages, CNG is unlikely to fix the problem. Similarly, the recent LPG supply shortage poses a serious challenge to industries.

The next government should consider a two-pronged strategy for electrification to address these concerns. It can encourage industries operating captive generators without waste heat recovery systems to shift to grid power. The cost of electricity produced in a captive power plant with 40 percent efficiency is about Tk 10.75 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), which is comparable to grid electricity tariffs (this cost is calculated based on a gas price of Tk 40 per cubic metre and operational expenses equal to five percent of fuel costs). Likewise,

the government can push industries with inefficient gas boilers to switch to electric boilers, thereby driving demand for grid power. The additional electricity sales to high-paying industrial consumers will partially relieve the fiscal burden on the power sector. Higher power demand will also help the government increase the share of on-grid renewable energy.

The success of this electrification will hinge on transforming the national power grid to meet evolving demand and provide reliable electricity, requiring investment to make the grid flexible and modern.

Reducing losses

Despite the current government's efforts, rising costs continue to dent the power sector's sustainability. BPDB's FY2024-25 annual report shows that the power sector's year-on-year (YoY) expenses swelled by 13.94 percent as opposed to a nine percent rise in sales revenue. The sector's overall revenue shortfall soared to Tk 55,660 crore (\$4.55 billion), marking an 18.3 percent YoY increase.

The new government should take stock of these challenges and devise concrete strategies to operate economical plants, based on merit order dispatch, and limit T&D losses. In addition to raising the share of BPDB's economic plants in total power generation, the government should aim to initially bring down the use of oil-fired plants to five percent, supported by renewable energy. With the integration of battery energy storage systems, it should try to limit the use of oil-fired plants. Likewise, the government should first contain T&D losses to the global average level (less than eight percent) and then strive to bring it further down to the average of the advanced economies (just over six percent).

Such interventions are financially compelling. For instance, reducing oil-fired power generation to five percent can help Bangladesh save Tk 8,990 crore (\$0.73 billion), slashing the subsidy of Tk 38,640 crore (\$3.2 billion) by 23.3 percent. This estimate is based on total power generation of 101,187

VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

gigawatt hours (GWh) in FY2024-25, an average oil-fired generation cost of around Tk 25/kWh (\$0.2/kWh) and a weighted average solar tariff of Tk 9.5/kWh (\$0.078/kWh) from recently approved projects totalling 918MW. In addition, a two percent reduction in T&D losses could save the country Tk 2,450 crore (\$0.2 billion), thus reducing the subsidy burden by 6.34 percent (average power generation cost of the grid: Tk 12.1/kWh [\$0.1/kWh]).

The next government needs to strategically reboot Bangladesh's power sector to address its persistent vulnerability, which would help contain fiscal pressures. Its efforts must focus on long-term reforms rather than quick fixes to gradually improve the sector's sustainability.

How AI can revolutionise healthcare in Global South



Benzir Ahammed Shawon is a graduate student in applied mathematics and computational science at North South University. He can be reached at write.benzir@gmail.com

BENZIR AHAMMED SHAWN

For decades, the global pharmaceutical industry has been impacted by a frustrating trend known as Eroom's law. While computers become twice as powerful every two years, the cost of developing a new drug has doubled roughly every nine years. In the 1960s, \$1 billion yielded 10 new drugs. Today, that same amount cannot produce even one. This trajectory has led to a crisis in developing nations, rendering life-saving innovations financially inaccessible to billions of people. However, artificial intelligence is disrupting this pattern and revolutionising healthcare, specifically in the Global South.

What AI offers in transforming healthcare lies primarily in its ability to accelerate the process and reduce the cost of drug discovery. Currently, it takes an average of 10 years and over \$2 billion to bring a drug to market, with a failure rate higher than 90 percent. For a developing economy, these barriers are often insurmountable. AI changes this by streamlining the "pre-clinical stage," the phase where researchers screen up to a million compounds to identify one or two

candidates, which typically accounts for approximately one-third of all development costs. By using models like AlphaFold 3, which can predict the structure of nearly every molecule in a living organism, researchers can reduce months of trial and error to mere hours of computation.

We are already seeing the results of this. Recently, one AI startup identified a new drug target and designed a molecule for human trials in just 18 months, costing \$2.7 million, which is a tiny fraction of the usual time and expense. For nations like Bangladesh, which boasts a robust domestic pharmaceutical sector, this represents a massive opportunity to move from generic manufacturing to genuine innovation. If AI can indeed double the productivity of research and development (R&D), the cost of medicine could eventually decrease, allowing overstretched budgets in Africa and Asia to cover a larger part of their populations.

Beyond traditional pills, AI is a pivotal moment for cancer vaccines. In 2025, the world witnessed breakthroughs in mRNA-based

personalised vaccines. These personalised treatments leverage AI to predict the most effective molecular markers for stimulating the immune system, which adapt to the unique tumour mutations of each patient. While the current manufacturing process is complex and costly, parallel efforts are underway to develop off-the-shelf vaccines that target common markers across wider populations. For developing nations, these off-the-shelf versions could be the key to managing a growing non-communicable disease burden without the need for the hyper-expensive infrastructure required by personalised medicine.

However, this AI-led future is not guaranteed; it faces a significant infrastructure bottleneck. AI is not a weightless tool; it requires AI factories, which are massive data centres with outstanding energy requirements. The International Energy Agency (IEA) predicts that data centre power consumption is on track to double by the end of 2026. Consumption is reaching levels equivalent to the total electricity use of Japan. Many developing nations, already struggling with grid constraints and high public debt, may find it difficult to power the very technology intended to save them.

Furthermore, the Sino-American tech war poses a risk to global health equity. The backbone of the AI era is the high-powered semiconductor, like Nvidia's Blackwell chip. Yet, the US is increasingly impeding the flow of Western technology to adversaries like China to maintain an upper

hand in AI tech. If these restrictions expand, developing nations might find themselves caught in the crossfire, unable to access the hardware needed to run the latest medical models.

Still, there is a silver lining. Emerging markets are expected to see faster growth in the coming years, even as the rich world faces a "lost decade" of sluggish productivity. Some nations are already innovating around constraints; Chinese engineers, for example, have become adept at doing more with less due to export controls. Similarly, India is positioning itself as a hub for "global capability centres," taking over high-end legal and HR work for multinationals. There is no reason why similar centres could not be established for AI-driven diagnostic services or drug screening.

To truly benefit, governments in the developing world must move beyond being mere consumers of Western tech. They should prioritise selective openness, wooing high-achieving talent, and investing in the green energy infrastructure, such as grid-scale battery storage, needed to power tomorrow's data centres.

The year 2026 is expected to be a crunch year, during which the disparity between AI hype and reality will be put to the test. If we can navigate the geopolitical and infrastructural limitations, AI could be the tool that allows the Global South to bypass the high-cost barriers of the last century's medicine. It is time to ensure that the "AI factory" produces not just wealth for Silicon Valley, but health for the world.



Dr Manzoor Ahmed
is professor emeritus at BRAC University, chair of
Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), and adviser to the
Campaign for Popular Education (CAPE).

MANZOOR AHMED

Arguably, the most consequential failure of political leadership in independent Bangladesh has been in the field of education. The result is today's disarray across all sub-sectors of education, which holds the future of our nation hostage. The burning question is whether a newly elected government will recognise the seriousness of the situation and embark on a path of educational renewal.

Education has been a priority only rhetorically for elected and non-elected governments of Bangladesh since its birth. The major contenders in the upcoming parliamentary election—the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and Jamaat-e-Islami—have included education in their election promises—a sundry list of targets yet to add up to a vision of a much-needed educational transformation. More critically, given the history of promises and plans unfulfilled, questions loom as to whether and how the targets will be realised.

At present, we do not have an education sector plan. What we have are partial sub-sector projects. An example is the Primary Education Development Program (PEDP), the fourth phase of which is ongoing. Though described as a sector-wide approach, it covers only government primary schools, leaving behind various non-state institutions and madrasas, which together serve, mostly very poorly, about 40 percent of the primary school age children.

Of the primary school children, around 80 percent reportedly complete the level. However, an assessment has shown that more than half of them do not acquire a functional level of literacy and numeracy even after completing five years of primary education.

Nevertheless, there has been a compulsory primary education law since 1990, and the government also pledged to provide primary education to all for free.

On the other hand, the state has no plan for universal secondary education. At present, about two-thirds of appropriate-age children enrol in secondary schools of all types up to grade ten and roughly half of them complete the level. The numbers of enrolment and completion say nothing about students' actual learning, which is widely recognised as seriously deficient.

A rapid expansion of madrasa education—both Alia madrasa, supported by the government, and the Qawmi madrasa, which is outside the purview of state supervision—has happened since the 1980s. Driven by poor performance and higher costs, many children moved to both of these types of madrasas from mainstream schools during the Covid and post-Covid periods. However, the quality of teaching, learning environment, and, critically, the relevance of what is taught in madrasas to prepare young people for life and work remain questionable.

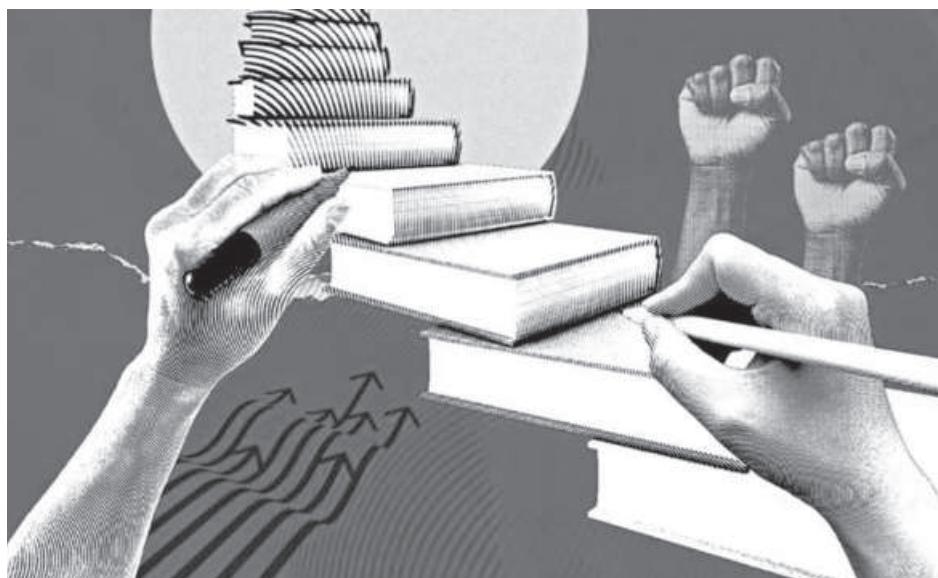
There has been growth in the number of institutions and students in vocational and technical education, general higher education and professional education. In each of these subsectors, the major criterion for justifying the investment and judging the outcome is the employability of the graduates. However, there is no systematic approach to assessing these sub-sectors by this criterion, such as periodic tracer studies of graduate employment in respective fields.

Available evidence indicates that the majority of vocational-technical graduates

are not employed in their respective areas of training at an adequate salary, presumably because of the poor quality and low market-relevance of the training. The National University, the affiliating body for about 2,500 colleges enrolling three-quarters of general higher education students, produces graduates who face an uncertain future in the job market. At least a third of them wait for years before being hired, and many end

regimes from 1975 to 1990—such as the rapid growth of the two types of madrasas as a parallel education system and acceptance of the multiple streams of schooling with different objectives, learning content and learning experience.

The 2010 policy mentioned some key reform issues, such as the critical role of teachers in the education system and the need to enhance skills, capabilities,



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

up in jobs not requiring a tertiary education qualification. About 30 percent of youth aged 18-25 are not in education, employment or training (NEET). They are in a socio-economic limbo and vulnerable to emotional distress, criminality and extremist behaviour.

The Education Policy 2010 (NEP 2010) adopted during Sheikh Hasina's regime is still in effect. It is replete with compromises and contradictions. For instance, the 2010 policy departed from the 1974 recommendation of Bangla as the medium at all levels of education. The policy accorded legitimacy to educational developments that emerged during the military and military-backed

incentives and status of teachers. It noted the perils of over-centralised education management. It recommended larger public investment to fulfil the state's obligation for children's education. The policy, however, did not indicate specific strategies that would redirect a trajectory of reform and acquiesced to the continuation of the existing pattern. In any case, there was no systematic effort and a mechanism was never set to follow up.

The legacy of rhetoric without action towards real change has continued during the tenure of the interim government. A firefighting mode dealing with myriad demands and complaints of many

stakeholders in the various sub-sectors of education has kept the two ministries dealing with the education sector preoccupied. Will there be a change now in the way education is prioritised, how educational decisions are made, and how these are followed through when a new government takes over?

The long accumulated morass in education calls for bold steps, away from the trodden path. The policy discourse among education academics and activists suggests a few early actions capable of paving the way for transformative change required at least in school education, the foundation of the education system: (i) Bring all school education from pre-primary to pre-university under one ministry to facilitate a holistic approach to building an equitable and inclusive foundation of basic education of acceptable quality for all children. (ii) Prepare a time-bound plan to ensure that a primary and a secondary school of acceptable quality are within easy reach and affordable for every child. (iii) Examine education resources and financing to ensure that no child is deprived of schooling of acceptable quality because of poverty, at least up to the secondary level. (iv) Begin a pilot project to establish district education authorities for school education, leading to decentralised and responsive governance and management. (v) Rethink the management of teachers and the education workforce, including their professional preparation, remuneration, status and career path to attract "the best and the brightest" to the education profession.

A school education reform plan, as well as other education sub-sector reform plans, can be components of the overall education decade plan. Should we not have a decade-long plan guided and overseen by an education reform council comprising education experts respected for their integrity and judgment? The education reform council can be turned into a statutory and permanent education commission as envisaged by the NEP 2010. A new post-election government must be ready to respond to citizens' expectations regarding a new beginning for the country. A plan for the education sector must be more than rhetorical.

US twin deficits, Trump's economic gambit, and the risk of global disorder

Dr Mizanur Rahman
is professor of accountancy and public policy at
the University of Dhaka. He can be reached at
mizan@du.ac.bd.

MIZANUR RAHMAN

The United States has grappled with an unsustainable economic imbalance for over two decades, characterised by persistent twin deficits in its fiscal and current account balances. This has propelled its international indebtedness to unprecedented levels, with the net international investment position reaching approximately -\$26 trillion by mid-2025. A more relevant metric is that the US public indebtedness exceeded \$38 trillion by the end of 2025. Compounding this vulnerability, President Donald Trump's second term, secured in the 2024 election, promised a radical overhaul: reversing de-industrialisation through reshoring manufacturing, attracting over \$20 trillion in foreign investment, and imposing reciprocal tariffs on nations like China with chronic trade surpluses against the US. However, these tariffs have backfired, unsettling financial markets and exacerbating economic volatility.

In a bold escalation, the Trump administration orchestrated a military invasion of Venezuela earlier this month, capturing President Nicolás Maduro and installing a compliant regime to exploit the country's vast natural resources. This action aligns with the National Security Strategy (NSS) released in November 2025, which explicitly asserts US dominance in the Western Hemisphere and signals measures against

Iran to safeguard Middle Eastern oil and gas supplies. These interventions risk igniting protracted military confrontations—"forever wars"—with unforeseen ramifications. Ultimately, Trump's envisioned international economic adjustment will falter, potentially precipitating the collapse of the dollar-centric global monetary order.

The roots of the US's economic predicament lie in its twin deficits, a phenomenon that has persisted since the early 2000s. The fiscal deficit, driven by government spending outpacing revenues, has ballooned due to factors like tax cuts, military expenditures, and pandemic-era stimulus. For instance, the federal deficit stood at \$1.8 trillion in FY2025, even as revenues grew by six percent. Projections indicate it could rise to \$2.6 trillion by 2034, representing over six percent of GDP. Paralleling this is the current account deficit, which measures the shortfall in trade and investment income with the rest of the world. Over the past two decades, this has averaged around three to five percent of GDP, fuelled by Americans' consumption exceeding domestic production and leading to reliance on foreign capital inflows.

These deficits are interconnected: fiscal profligacy stimulates demand for imports, widening the current account gap. The cumulative effect has been a surge in US

international indebtedness, which exposes the country to external shocks such as rising interest rates or shifts in investor confidence, which could trigger capital flight and economic instability.

Entering his second term, President Trump campaigned on a platform to rectify these imbalances through aggressive economic nationalism. He pledged to bring factories back from overseas, particularly from China, by leveraging incentives and penalties. Additionally, Trump promised to attract massive foreign investment—over \$20 trillion—to revitalise US industry. A cornerstone of this strategy was "reciprocal tariffs," such as a proposed 60 percent tariff on Chinese goods and a 10-30 percent levy on others. These measures were framed as tools to level the playing field, protect domestic workers, and fund infrastructure without raising taxes. Trump's vision echoed mercantilist principles, prioritising trade surpluses and industrial self-sufficiency to restore US's economic primacy. In practice, however, implementation began with broad tariff hikes, including on European goods, under the guise of national security.

Despite these ambitions, the tariffs have backfired, destabilising US financial markets rather than fostering stability. Initial announcements triggered sharp stock market declines, with indices dropping significantly in the days following "Liberation Day"—Trump's term for the tariff rollout. The reasons are multifaceted: tariffs raised input costs for US manufacturers, squeezing profits and prompting retaliatory measures from trading partners. Studies indicate that such policies reduce GDP by about 0.5 percent and increase unemployment, while generating revenue that falls short of expectations—already declining in early 2026. Moreover, they heightened

uncertainty, deterring the very foreign investment Trump had sought. Instead of accelerating reshoring, the combination of tariffs, immigration restrictions, and spending cuts has complicated supply chains, making domestic production more expensive and less attractive. The US dollar weakened amid these disruptions, and even the Treasury market experienced volatility, eroding investor confidence. Far from correcting the twin deficits, these policies have amplified economic pressures, pushing the US towards greater isolation.

Escalating beyond economics, the Trump administration's foreign policy has veered into militarism, as exemplified by the invasion of Venezuela. Trump declared the US "in charge" of Venezuela until a transition, framing it as a law enforcement action rather than war, despite widespread criticism for lacking congressional authorisation. This move aims to secure cheap energy resources, reducing dependence on Middle Eastern oil and bolstering domestic industry. However, it risks entangling the US in prolonged occupation, with no clear endgame amid local resistance and international condemnation.

The NSS of November 2025 provides the doctrinal backbone for such actions, openly proclaiming US enforcement of hemispheric control and readiness to act against Iran to protect Middle Eastern energy flows. Emphasising "strength as the best deterrent," it integrates economic vitality with military leverage, criticising allies and prioritising unilateralism. Tensions with Iran have intensified, with Trump previously warning of strikes on its nuclear programme and potential closure of the Strait of Hormuz, threatening global oil supplies. A full-scale confrontation could involve US assistance to Israel, escalating into a broader regional

war. These military adventures, while avoiding direct US boots on the ground where possible, contradict Trump's aversion to endless conflicts, potentially drawing the country into quagmires reminiscent of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The consequences of this trajectory are dire. Regime changes in Venezuela and potentially Iran will likely spawn "forever" wars, draining resources and further inflating the fiscal deficit. Insurgencies, proxy battles, and humanitarian crises could persist indefinitely, diverting funds from domestic priorities and accelerating indebtedness. Trump's international adjustment—rebalancing trade and investment—will not materialise amid retaliatory tariffs and geopolitical instability, perpetuating the twin deficits.

Most alarmingly, these strains threaten the US dollar's hegemony. As the world's reserve currency, the dollar underpins global finance, but mounting debt, policy unpredictability, and de-dollarisation efforts by adversaries like China and Russia could erode its dominance. Central banks are diversifying reserves, and US actions in Venezuela have heightened perceptions of American unreliability, risking a plunge in the dollar's value and a financial tsunami. If unchecked, this could dismantle the post-World War II monetary order, ushering in multipolar chaos.

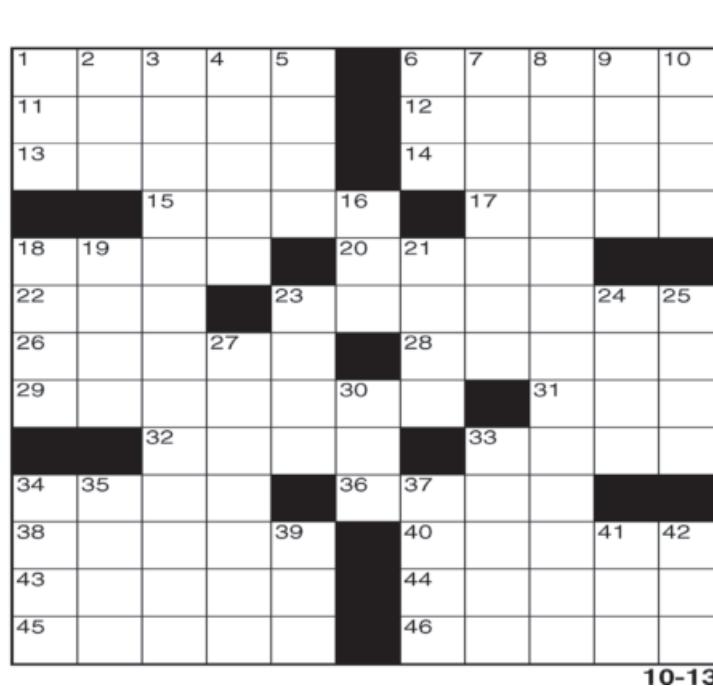
The US's twin deficits and surging indebtedness set the stage for Trump's bold but flawed interventions. While tariffs and military actions promise quick fixes, they instead foster volatility and conflict. The risk of forever wars will thwart economic recovery, ensuring that the international adjustment remains elusive. As the dollar's foundation crumbles, the world may witness the end of an era, with profound implications for global stability and American prosperity.

ACROSS

- Met offering
- Striped grazer
- Repaired
- Distant
- Had a banquet for
- In itself
- Otherwise
- Ship's staff
- Soup buys
- Visitor to Oz
- High trains
- Famous racehorse
- River through Nantes
- Minotaur's home
- Rat
- Singer Henley
- "Doggone!"
- Pinnacle
- Accord
- Use a pestle
- Steer clear of
- Small porch
- "—Doe"
- Caesar's land
- Cut off
- Pick from the menu

DOWN

- Switch setting
- Diner dessert
- Power aid
- Film units
- Says further
- Ray gun sound
- One with a ballot
- Musician's mode mixture
- Token of love
- Three or four
- Seventh letter
- Animation frames
- Heaps
- In the past
- Goey sandwich
- Physics bit
- Painter Magritte
- Run-of-the-mill
- Belief, in brief
- Fall flower
- Washed out
- Stratford's river
- Regarding
- Pop
- Vein contents
- Hole number



MONDAY'S ANSWERS

A	C	A	D		S	P	L	I	C	E
C	O	M	E		L	O	O	K	A	T
M	A	S	S		O	W	N	E	R	S
E	X	T	O	R	T	E				D
A	R	R	O	W		E	T	A	R	B
C	O	D								R
R	O	A	S	T		F	A	C	E	T
E	M	M	Y	S		D	R	E		
B	R	O	N	T	E					
T	E	R	E	S	A		I	N	I	T
S	P	A	Y	E	D		E	A	T	S

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO
dsopinion@gmail.com.

Bangladeshi film 'Saatao' wins Best Int'l Feature in Nepal

Bangladeshi film 'Saatao', directed by Khandaker Sumon, has won the Best International Feature Film award at the 14th Nepal Africa International Film Festival (NAIFF), held in Kathmandu from January 16 to 19.

Among 43 films from 20 countries, other Bangladeshi winners included

Jhara Patar Chithi (Best International Female Film) and **No Dice** (Special Mention, International Short Film).

Set in northern Bangladesh, **Saatao** depicts a poor rural community's resilience through the story of a couple whose lives change after their cow dies, leaving behind a calf they raise like a child.

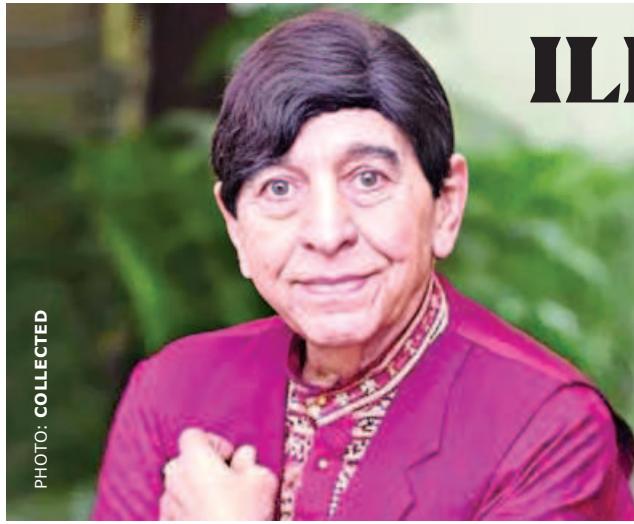


PHOTO: COLLECTED

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Veteran Bangladeshi film actor Ilias Javed, one of the most recognisable leading men of Dhallywood's golden era and a revered dance director, passed away on January 21, 2026, at around 12:00pm at his residence in Uttara, Dhaka. He was 81. He had been battling cancer for a prolonged period. His death was confirmed to The Daily Star by Apurba Rana, joint secretary general of the Bangladesh Film Directors' Association.

Javed occupied a singular place in the history of Bangladeshi cinema. Debuting as a hero with the 1964 Urdu-language film *Nai Zindagi*, he rose to wide popularity after *Payel* (1966), opposite Shabana. Over a career spanning nearly three decades, he acted in close to 200 films, remaining a bankable star through the 1990s and leaving an imprint defined by screen presence, discipline and range.

Among his notable films are *Maleka Banu, Nishan, Papi Shatru, Rokto Shopoth, Saheb Bibi Golam, Kajol Rekha, Onek Din Agye, Ajio Bhulini, Kothor, Ma Baba Shontan, Rakhal Raja, Rosher Baidani, Jibon Shongi, and Abdulla*. His portrayal of Kalu in *Nishan* remains one of his most enduring performances.

Beyond acting, Javed was a renowned dance director, trained under legendary subcontinental maestro Birju Maharaj; a lineage that earned him the affectionate honorific "Ustad" among peers. His choreography shaped several iconic songs, including *Malika*

Banur Deshere, Moner Ei Chotto Ghor Agun Legechhe Hayre, and Chakbhom Chakbhom Chandni Rate.

The legendary actor settled in Bangladesh in the early 1960s and remained here throughout his life. His connection with the country extended beyond cinema and was reflected in a rare, community-driven recognition in Old Dhaka's Siddiqbazar, where a neighbourhood came to be known as "Javed Mohalla" through popular usage. The name reflected the affection and respect he earned among local residents with whom

Bangladesh as his home.

Actor Sohel Rana, a lifelong friend and contemporary, remembered him as both an artiste and a companion. "Most of my contemporaries are no longer alive... After losing Javed, I feel terribly lonely," he told The Daily Star, adding that Javed's work as a dance director brought "something exceptional" to films and would keep him alive for generations. Rana also noted Javed's deep love for Bangladesh and the Bangla language, recalling that he rarely spoke Urdu.

Javed is survived by his wife, Dolly Chowdhury.



Industry veterans at the janaza of Ilias Javed

PHOTO: STAR

he shared longstanding personal ties. In a 2020 interview with The Daily Star, he said he visited the area whenever his health allowed. In later years, he lived in Sector 14 of Uttara.

Born in 1944 in Peshawar, Javed's family later moved to Punjab. In

1963, he relocated to what was then East Pakistan, choosing to build his life and career in Bangladesh. Though Pakistani by birth, he remained steadfastly rooted here-speaking Bangla with ease and conviction, and identifying

According to family sources, his first janaza was held at BFDC at 4:30pm yesterday, January 21. A second janaza will be held later in the night, after which he will be laid to rest at the Sector 12 graveyard in Uttara.

Ilias Javed leaves behind a body of work that shaped Dhallywood's golden era, spanning nearly 200 films and a parallel legacy as a pioneering dance director whose influence continues to inform Bangladeshi cinema.

NEWS

Political use of police must end

FROM PAGE 12
transparent recruitment, and establishing an independent police commission to oversee appointments, promotions, training, and benefits.

For years, political influence has plagued policing in Bangladesh, with almost all parties accused of using law enforcement for partisan ends.

During the 15-year Awami League rule, police were often described as acting like a "party force." Law enforcement agencies were involved in enforced disappearances and so-called gunfights, according to a government commission and some rights groups. The 2024 mass uprising saw a brutal crackdown by law enforcement, with nearly 1,400 people killed, according to UN estimates.

The law and-order situation remained unsatisfactory during the interim government's one and a half-year tenure, with frequent incidents of murder, robbery, mugging, abduction, and rising public safety concerns.

Mob violence remains a major concern.

In 2025, at least 197 people were killed in mob attacks, up from 128 in 2024, according to AIN's Salish Kendra. During the interim government's tenure, the total reached 293 deaths.

Corruption within law enforcement agencies is also a longstanding issue; a Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics survey in June 2025 found that 61.94 percent of respondents reported bribery and corruption, making police the second most corrupt public service in 2024.

The interim government pledged

police reform and issued a gazette in December 2025 to establish a police commission. Experts, however, criticised the ordinance as flawed, undermining the goal of an independent body.

Amid this situation, the major political parties are going to unveil their election pledges soon.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, said, "If the influence of political parties over the police cannot be controlled, it will not be possible to establish a people-centric force. This cannot be achieved by just writing it on paper; there must be clear plans on how to implement it."

He described the police commission ordinance as "completely unsuitable" and urged the next elected government to form an independent, neutral, and effective commission. Its main role, he said, should be to probe complaints against police personnel independently and impartially, both from the public and within the force.

He emphasised two key points -- keeping police free from political influence and ensuring professionalism through stronger institutional capacity.

Odhikar Director ASM Nasiruddin Elan said the public's high expectations stem from serious rights violations over the past 15 years. "Political parties must clearly promise to stop using law enforcement agencies for political purposes. This is the first and most important commitment," he said.

He added that the next government must also prevent enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and other abuses, ensuring prompt investigations and accountability.

Addressing existing law-and-order problems is also crucial to ensure public safety and a peaceful environment, he said.

Rights activist Nur Khan stressed that political parties must refrain from interfering in police work, recruitment, promotions, training, or operations. "In the past, police were often used for political interests and treated like a party force," he said.

Former IGP Ashraf Huda highlighted the need to increase police manpower, noting that the police-population ratio is among the lowest worldwide.

"The idea of an independent police commission has been discussed but remains unresolved," he said, adding that such a commission could oversee recruitment, training, promotions, and benefits.

Huda also called for better logistical support, stronger training, and improved pay and housing conditions to boost morale. "Many officers live away from their families for long periods, which affects their performances," he said.

While not excusing wrongdoing, he added, police officers struggle to support their families with current salaries. "If they have a minimum standard of living, corruption might decrease."

He downplayed the issue as a "small ask" over a "piece of ice" and that an acquisition would be no threat to the Nato alliance that includes Denmark and the United States.

"The fact is, no nation or group of nations is in any position to be able to secure Greenland other than the United States. We're a great power, much greater than people even understand," Trump said, adding: "I'm seeking immediate negotiations to once again to discuss the acquisition of Greenland by the United States."

The United States detained Salvadoran journalist Mario Guevara in June after he covered a protest against President Donald Trump, but he was deported over his immigration status before the December 1 CPJ census was taken.

escalating numbers of armed conflicts worldwide," the CPJ said in its report.

The New York-based NGO said that almost half of the imprisoned journalists had not been convicted of a crime. Of those who had been, more than a third were serving prison sentences of over five years.

Nearly a third of the detained journalists had experienced "mistrreatment," the CPJ said, including 20 percent with claims of torture or beatings. Since 1992, Iran has had the greatest incidence of torture and beatings, followed by Israel and Egypt.

The United States detained Salvadoran journalist Mario Guevara in June after he covered a protest against President Donald Trump, but he was deported over his immigration status before the December 1 CPJ census was taken.

"These record-setting numbers reflect growing authoritarianism and

ICT-2 orders to provide Azad documents

FROM PAGE 12
Tribunal (ICT) yesterday after more than a decade as a fugitive.

The three-member ICT-2, led by Justice Md Nozrul Islam Chowdhury, ordered that Azad shall be "at liberty to remain as he is" until the appellate forum passes an appropriate order.

It also directed the authorities to provide him with certified copies of all case documents to enable him to file an appeal against his death sentence.

After the hearing, Azad left the tribunal premises in a car.

Azad was convicted in absentia in a case filed in 2012. The tribunal found him guilty of abduction, torture, rape, and mass killing of unarmed civilians, particularly members of the Hindu community, during the Liberation War, as well as of collaborating with the Pakistani occupation forces and local auxiliary forces.

Before proceedings resumed in a separate case linked to the July uprising against former minister Hasanol Haq Inu, Prosecutor Gazi Monawar Hossain Tamim sought permission to place Azad's petition before the tribunal. The chairman said the matter would be

taken up later.

When the hearing began around 3:30pm, Azad appeared before the tribunal and sat in the dock.

His lawyer, Md Mosiul Alam, said the home ministry had suspended Azad's death sentence for one year in October last year, prompting the tribunal chairman to question whether the government had the authority to issue such an order.

The defence cited section 401(l) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), but the tribunal noted that the CrPC does not apply to proceedings under the International Crimes Tribunal Act, 1973, as per section 23 of the act.

Prosecutor Tamim said the government may not be bound to execute a tribunal order.

The tribunal then stated categorically that the government does not have the authority to suspend a sentence passed by the tribunal, noting that such powers rest with the president and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Seeking clarity, the tribunal chairman asked what relief the defence was seeking.

The chairman said the matter would be

reinstated UAP teachers immediately

FROM PAGE 12
to mob pressure.

The demand was made separately through a press conference organised by the teachers' platform at the Jatiya Press Club and a press statement issued by Naripokkho.

At the press conference, speakers protested the termination of Layeqa Bashir, an assistant professor in the Department of Basic Sciences and Humanities, and ASM Mohsin, an associate professor and former director of the Directorate of Student Welfare.

The platform placed a four-point demand, calling for the immediate reinstatement of the two teachers, an end to the harassment of those protesting the decision, punishment of those involved in intimidation, and enforcement of policies to ensure job security. Speakers also criticised the silence of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the education ministry.

Addressing the press conference, economist Prof Anu Muhammad described the situation in universities as a "new kind of fascist aggression".

"Fascism means everyone must think, speak, and understand the truth exactly the way I do..." he said, attributing the rise of reactionary forces to a prolonged period of autocratic rule and the previous government's policy of compromising with them to remain in power.

He

also

criticised

university

administrations

for

lacking

a "backbone"

and

accused

them

of

compromising

with

those

"engaging

in

bullying

and

terrorist

activities

to

protect

their

positions.

Warning that such an environment undermines the purpose of education, he said, "If there is no space for critical thinking or questioning in history, sociology, or philosophy, then the purpose of education ceases to exist. If we must only follow a scripted narrative, there remains no difference between a human and a robot."

According to the teachers' network, the UAP administration pressured Bashir to resign over a Facebook post without verifying the complaints against her. An inquiry committee was formed only after she filed a General Diary with Tejgaon Police Station, citing the silence of the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the education ministry.

Speakers criticised the inquiry process, noting that the committee sought complaints through a Google Form and received around 34 anonymous submissions, making verification impossible. They also said Bashir was given until January 22 to respond but was terminated before the deadline.

Regarding Dr Mohsin, the network said he was dismissed without any investigation, reportedly after being labelled a supporter of the previous regime, despite his active role in standing with students during the July

uprising.

The speakers suggested the terminations were influenced by internal politics, noting that Bashir had recently convened a sexual harassment complaint committee involving influential officials and that Mohsin had supported her stance.

Prominent academics, including Prof Samina Luthfi, Prof Mirza Taslima Sultan, and Prof Kajalie Shehreen Islam, were present at the press conference.

The UAP, which announced an indefinite closure on Monday, remained shut amid ongoing student protests over a controversial Facebook post, the subsequent termination of two faculty members on Sunday, and demands for the vice chancellor's removal.

In a notice issued yesterday, the university announced the academic activities are likely to begin from January 25.

NARIPOKKHO CONDEMN'S MOB TERROR'

In a separate statement, Naripokkho strongly condemned Bashir's dismissal, describing allegations of "hurting religious sentiments" as a tool of harassment.

Asserting a teacher's right to present

objectives

historical

data

and

express

personal

opinions,

the organisation said

dismissing

a teacher

without

NEWS

China's influence

FROM PAGE 3

"The US does not take any side. It is the sovereign decision of the people of Bangladesh who they want," he said. "I am optimistic about the future of both our countries and look forward to Bangladesh's historic elections next month."

Christensen described the February 12 election as the most consequential in nearly two decades and expressed hope that the incoming government will build on existing cooperation with the interim administration. He also highlighted the US policy of prioritising citizens' interests: "Elected governments should always put their people first. That said, America First does not mean America alone."

Security cooperation is another priority. The

ambassador said the US aims to deepen military-to-military ties, support modernisation, expand peacekeeping capabilities, and help meet Bangladesh's domestic security needs. "If the United States doesn't have the appropriate system, we work with partners and allies to meet those needs," he said.

Regarding the Myanmar-Rohingya crisis, Christensen commended Bangladesh for hosting over a million refugees and noted the US's ongoing support. In December, the US and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs signed a \$2 billion funding framework, which includes Bangladesh, to ensure aid reaches vulnerable communities effectively.

US Embassy Dhaka Spokesperson Poornima Rai also spoke at the event.

Ensure justice

FROM PAGE 3

completion of trials within three years against all those responsible for massacre during the uprising, including Sheikh Hasina, Awami League leaders and activists, and members of the security forces; launching a judicial investigation to determine how over 600 accused fled to India and taking legal action against those who assisted them; investigating and punishing killings, mob violence, and attacks by state forces during the interim government's tenure, including killings of Osman Hadi, Dipu Chandra Das, Ayesha, indigenous people, and workers; state recognition and compensation to families of victims from the 1990 and Fulbari uprisings; cancellation of false cases against Fulbari participants; preparing an independent, non-partisan state account of the Liberation War and the July uprising; ensuring security for freedom fighters; removing fake names

from official FF lists; providing compensation to seriously injured veterans; preparing a nationwide list of war collaborators (razakars) of 1971 Liberation War; making Awami League apologise publicly for its role in the July uprising; making Jamaat-e-Islami apologise publicly for anti-Liberation War acts; continuing legal proceedings independently; implementing reforms to ensure police and judges work free from political influence; implementing a rule requiring the home minister if three consecutive extrajudicial killings or enforced disappearances occur; ending impunity; ensuring fair elections; ensuring economic security, protection, and healthcare for farmers, workers, students, teachers.

Professor Anu Muhammad presided over the event, while Dhaka University Professor Samina Luthfa was also present.

Shared trauma

FROM PAGE 3

We want our representatives to restore peace," she said.

Jamaat candidate Barrister Arman said he has been active in the area for the past eight months. "The response from women and young voters has been overwhelming," he told The Daily Star. "The August 5, 2024 revolution was just the beginning. In Dhaka-14, you will see a new trend in politics."

Referring to Tulee as his "sister," Arman said, "We are not enemies. If I win, I will work with her. If I lose, I will be the first to congratulate her."

BNP candidate Sanjida Tulee said voters are seeking change beyond conventional politics, particularly young people. "We need a new kind of politics that ensures safety and improves education and healthcare," she said, adding that she is taking BNP's 31-point nationalist agenda to the people.

Highlighting local problems, she said the lack of streetlights poses security risks for both men and women, while drugs, teen gangs, corruption, and illegal encroachment remain widespread. "These are issues I want to address," she said.

Speaking about Arman, Tulee said, "Despite being from another party, he is like a brother to me. When we stood before the torture cell at the July Museum, there was no rivalry -- only humanity."

Me an h w h i l e , independent candidate Shaju said his long-standing ties to the area give him an edge. "I am a son of this neighbourhood. My family's legacy and my 17 years of involvement

Symbol

FROM PAGE 4

Pointing finger at Jamaat-e-Islami, BNP's candidate Shafiqul Islam Khan Milton (Dhaka-15) alleged that one party sent women door-to-door asking for NID and bKash numbers.

Jamaat's assistant general secretary Ehsanul Mahbub Jubayer, who represented the party's ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman, rejected BNP's allegations, terming those "completely false".

At the District Commissioner's Office, symbols were distributed to 32 candidates from five constituencies.

The candidates called for a free, fair, credible and impartial election.

Rezaul Karim, district commissioner and RO, urged all candidates and supporters to strictly follow the election code of conduct.

Form law to make

FROM PAGE 3

The calls came at a policy dialogue titled "Review of Draft Primary Healthcare (PHC) Legislation" at the CIRDAP Auditorium in Dhaka.

The event was jointly organised by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and the Universal Health Coverage Forum, with support from Unicef.

Primary healthcare is the first point of contact for people with the health system and focuses on providing essential health services close to where people live and work. In May last year, the Health Sector Reform Commission recommended that the government make PHC a constitutional obligation and provide it free of cost to ensure universal access. The commission also suggested enacting a specific law to that end. Subsequently, members of the UHC Forum, with technical support from BRAC and PPRC, prepared a draft of the Primary Healthcare Ordinance 2025 and handed it over to the relevant advisers.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of PPRC and convener of the UHC Forum, said achieving UHC would require a special focus on primary healthcare.

He noted that while health is currently a government responsibility, it is not a constitutional obligation, making a dedicated PHC law essential.

He also stressed the need to continue dialogue on health sector reform, along

ICC rejects BCB's relocation request

FROM PAGE 1

valid point, and gave me 24 or 48 hours to get back to them. I don't want to put pressure on the government. We know that India is not secure for us. We remain in the stance that we want to play in Sri Lanka. I know the ICC denied us but we will talk to the government one more time. I will inform the ICC about the government's feedback."

The report further added that if the BCB stays firm on its position, Scotland would replace the Tigers in the 20-team tournament.

BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul represented the board in the ICC meeting. In the evening, he held an emergency meeting with

BCB directors, however, the board did not brief the media or issue any statement afterwards.

After the meeting, a BCB director, requesting anonymity, corroborated ESPNCricket's report to The Daily Star and said the BCB president will convey the ICC's message to the government, and the board would follow the government's directive.

The Daily Star phoned the Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Nazrul several times and also sent him text messages, but he did not respond.

According to online reports, ICC chairman Jay Shah, deputy chairman Imran Khawaja, general manager Gaurav Saxena, Anti-Corruption Unit

in Kolkata before facing Nepal in their group-stage match on February 17 in Mumbai.

Previously, the row began when Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman was released by Indian Premier League (IPL) franchise Kolkata Knight Riders following instructions from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), reportedly amid pressure from right-wing political and religious groups.

ICC also referred to this incident in its media release.

Bangladesh are part of Group C and are scheduled to face West Indies, Italy and England on February 7, 9 and 14 respectively

unrelated development concerning one of its player's involvement in a domestic league. This linkage has no bearing on the tournament's security framework or the conditions governing participation in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup."

On January 4, the BCB wrote a letter to the ICC saying that it would not be sending the national team to India for the T20 World Cup due to security reasons.

Since then, BCB and ICC have had several communications, where the world cricket's governing body tried to persuade the BCB to change its stance, but the board held firm on its position.

Hefazat chief

FROM PAGE 3

guidance of scholars who adhere to what he termed "aqidah" (correct Islamic belief), while repeatedly urging political groups to avoid alliances with Jamaat

alignment with Jamaat could have caused significant harm to Islamic political movements in Bangladesh, and expressed hope that Islami Andolan's decision would prevent that risk.

Reiterating Hefazat's position, he said the organisation would not support any political party in the upcoming election. However, he expressed optimism that voters would support parties that represent what he described as "pure Islamic values".

He also urged voters to reject groups that, in his words, promote "Maududism and deviant belief" under the banner of Islam.

"Alhamdulillah, I extend special congratulations to Islami Andolan Bangladesh for breaking free from the grip of Maududi-oriented Jamaat and choosing to adopt an independent political path. In Islamic politics, an independent path for those who stand for the truth was greatly needed. Insha Allah, this course will help create a more positive future for Islamic politics."

Babunagari further claimed that continued

Other candidates running for this constituency include Abu Yusuf (Islami Andolan), Riaz Uddin (CPB), Jashim Uddin (Gono Forum), Sohel Rana (LDP), Moniruzzaman (AB Party), and nominees from other parties.

Highlighting local problems, she said the lack of streetlights poses security risks for both men and women, while drugs, teen gangs, corruption, and illegal encroachment remain widespread. "These are issues I want to address," she said.

Speaking about Arman, Tulee said, "Despite being from another party, he is like a brother to me. When we stood before the torture cell at the July Museum, there was no rivalry -- only humanity."

Me an h w h i l e , independent candidate Shaju said his long-standing ties to the area give him an edge. "I am a son of this neighbourhood. My family's legacy and my 17 years of involvement

Hadi's family to get

FROM PAGE 3

Government Purchase at the Cabinet Division Conference Room in the Bangladesh Secretariat.

Responding to a question, Salehuddin Ahmed said two separate allocations have been made for Hadi's family.

"Tk 1 crore will be given from the Ministry of Finance for purchasing a flat or house. The full amount may not be required," he said.

Another Tk 1 crore will

be provided separately from the Chief Adviser's Office to support Hadi's family's livelihood," he added.

Previously, Hadi's brother was appointed as a second secretary at the Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Birmingham, the United Kingdom.

Sources said the money has been allocated to buy a flat at the government officers' residential building, Doel Tower, in Lalmaia, Dhaka.

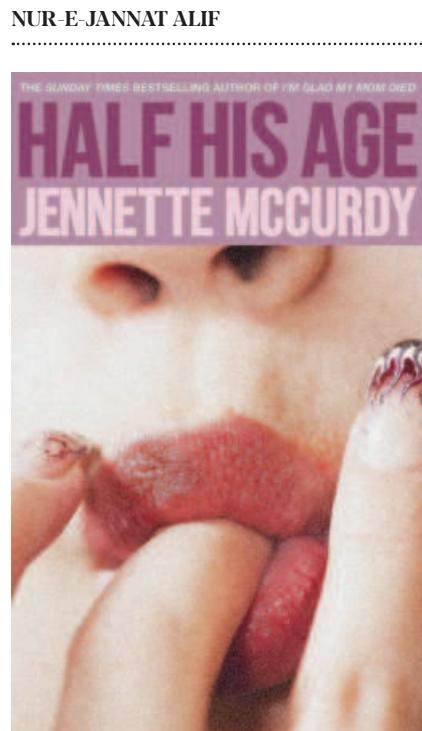
Speaking about Arman, Tulee said, "Despite being from another party, he is like a brother to me. When we stood before the torture cell at the July Museum, there was no rivalry -- only humanity."

Me an h w h i l e , independent candidate Shaju said his long-standing ties to the area give him an edge. "I am a son of this neighbourhood. My family's legacy and my 17 years of involvement

THE SHELF

7 new books to look out for in 2026

We truly believe that one of the highlights of starting a new year is the anticipation of newer titles slated for publication—freshly made out of the press and ready to grace our already-waiting shelves. With a plethora of options mushrooming on the internet, here are seven books to put on your radar in 2026.

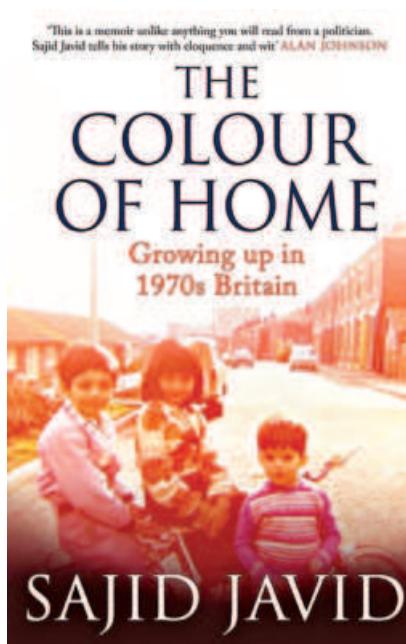


Half His Age
Jennette McCurdy
Ballantine Books, 2026

First on our list, we have the fiction debut of Jennette McCurdy, author of the widely fascinating and heartbreakingly hilarious memoir *I'm Glad My Mom Died* (Simon & Schuster, 2022). A 17-year-old is the protagonist of this story, a girl with too much hunger and not enough steadiness, who walks into a creative writing classroom and latches onto the one adult who seems to notice her. Waldo wants Mr. Korgy, her teacher, with a fixation that's messy and urgent, less 'romance' than a desperate attempt to be seen and chosen. McCurdy frames that desire as both thrilling and frightening, tracing how power can hide inside attention, how loneliness can make risk feel like relief. What makes the premise hit harder is how it keeps widening the lens: class and consumerism, the internet's ability to amplify longing, and the strange ways a young person can confuse intensity for safety. It is haunting and funny, deeply morbid and full of longing, a coming-of-age story told like a warning and a confession at the same time.

The Colour of Home: Growing up in 1970s Britain
Sajid Javid
Abacus, 2026

A five-year-old Sajid Javid walks to primary school through a Rochdale underpass, where a racist taunt, 'Run, Paki, Run', bounces off the walls and teaches him, early, what it means to be seen as an outsider in 1970s Britain. His family has arrived from Punjab in the wake of Partition, holding on to Indo-Pakistani traditions that offer comfort at home, but often bring rejection outside it. In this memoir, Javid recounts a childhood marked by poverty, racism, and the tension of trying to navigate two cultures simultaneously. Those pressures spill into trouble at school, run-ins with police, and later a rupture at home, when he risks estrangement by defying



an arranged marriage in favour of the woman he loves. Told with honesty, heart, and humour, *The Colour of Home* is both a tribute to the family who carried him and an invitation to every outsider to keep going.

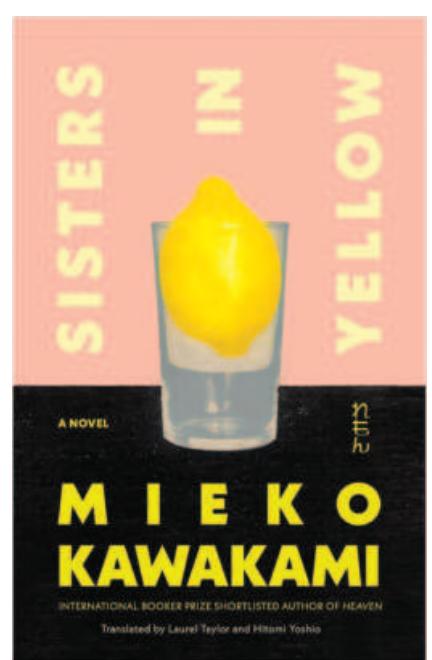
Tomar, Shongkho
Prodip De Chowdhury
Lekhachitro Prokashoni, 2026



Tomar, Shongkho was written in just four days, but it does not read as something rushed; it reads like a personal diary, crafted at times of covetous yearning. For those four days, Shongkho, the protagonist of the novel, stayed inside the narrator's mind—his pain, sorrow, love, and childhood replaying like scenes that the author just could not look away from. The book unfolds as a monologic epistolary, intimate and unguarded, moving letter by letter toward an ending that feels inevitable. It is, first, written for Shongkho, with love, and then handed gently to the reader, as if saying, this is for you too.

Sisters in Yellow
Meiko Kawakami, Laurel Taylor

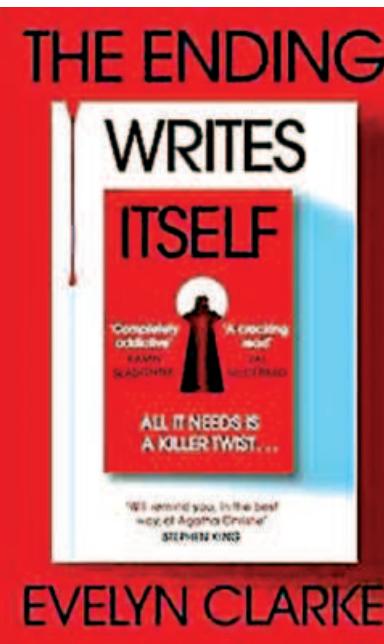
(Translator),
Hitomi Yoshi (Translator)
Knopf, 2026



Set in a 1990s Tokyo splitting fast into haves and have-nots, *Sisters in Yellow* moves with the swagger of noir and the urgency of a thriller. Hana, growing up without a father and exhausted by the pity she attracts at school, is drawn to Kimiko, an older woman who feels strangely young, talking easily about boys and possibilities, offering Hana a different kind of 'mother' and a glimpse of a better life. Soon, fate gathers two more young women into their orbit, each running from something, each bruised but unbroken. The four decide to remake their lives the only way they can—together. They open a bar called Lemon and fight to keep it afloat, navigating predatory lenders, organised criminals, and the plain bad luck that seems to follow people with no safety net. What begins as a business soon becomes a pact, taking care of Lemon means taking care of one another. Narrated by Hana in Kawakami's vivid, poetic voice, the novel is packed with reversals and sharp portraits of Tokyo nightlife, from bar owners and ageing hostesses to street touts coaxing strangers indoors.

The Ending Writes Itself
Evelyn Clarke
Harper, 2026

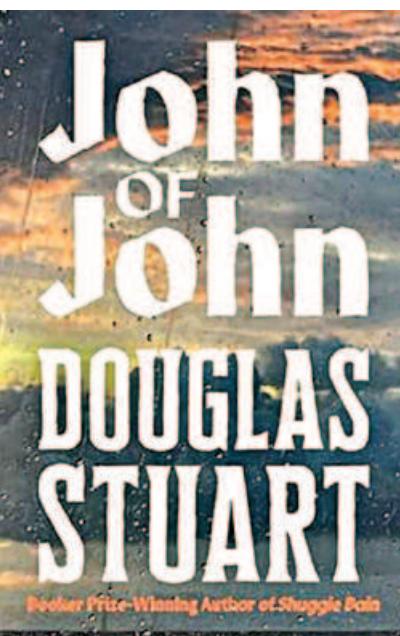
Evelyn Clarke is actually two authors. No, seriously, they are—Victoria E Schwab and Cat Clarke, two lifelong friends joining forces to present the world with a cutting-edge mystery thriller. Six struggling authors accept what sounds like a dream weekend on a private Scottish island, invited by Arthur Fletch, a reclusive literary superstar famous for his twisted plots and iconic characters. When they arrive, the dream curdles fast: Fletch is dead, and his final manuscript is unfinished. His agent and editor, desperate to publish the book, turn grief into a deadline. The writers are given 72 hours to produce a worthy ending, and the prize is a huge payout for ghost-writing the last chapter, plus a promised career resurrection for the winner, complete



EVELYN CLARKE

with future bestsellers. Suddenly, with the clock ticking, the island becomes a pressure cooker of ego, ambition, and suspicion. Starting is hard. Finishing may be dangerous. *The Ending Writes Itself* is a locked room thriller with a sharp publishing-world hook, and if you happen to love books about books, April 7, 2026, might be the time to hop on it.

John of John
Douglas Stuart
Grove Press, 2026



Another promising creation from the Booker Prize-winning author Douglas Stuart, *John of John* is about John-Calum Macleod, who comes back to the Isle of Harris with an art school education and not much else. Out of money, short on prospects, he takes the ferry home and steps into a life that feels unchanged in every way that matters, except that he no longer fits inside it. There, Cal finds himself pulled between two forces that have always shaped him. There is his father, John, a sheep farmer and tweed weaver, steady in his work and firm in his faith, a pillar of the local Presbyterian church who looks at his son's long hair and sees a soul drifting

from salvation. And there is Cal's grandmother Ella, a profanity-loving Glaswegian with a soft spot for him and a sharp tongue for everyone else, who has spent decades keeping an uneasy peace inside a fraying household. As the seasons move from lambing to shearing, the island's tight community begins to feel less like a shelter and more like a net, the kind that holds you, and tightens. Cal wonders what kind of life is possible for him here, what kind of love, what kind of truth.

The Sleeping Sisters
Jennifer Givhan
Mulholland Books, 2026



Fortuna Miércoles moves her family across the Rio Grande to a better neighbourhood, hoping distance can outrun a curse that has stalked her bloodline since her great-great-grandmother crossed the desert with a cactus thorn splitting her throat. But a family's violent legacy does not stay buried for long. Twenty years earlier, girls and women vanished into the Albuquerque night, their bones later found on the mesa. The killer, the so-called Reaper, was never caught. Now, beneath the dormant volcanoes called the Sleeping Sisters, the killings have begun again. Detective Jeanette Palacio, haunted by the murders of her own cousins, is pulled back in when a new body turns up in Fortuna's backyard. As mother and detective collide, the novel tightens into an investigation that feels both earthly and ancient: are the Sleeping Sisters awakening, or has someone in Fortuna's family set the trap? Inspired by true events and shot through with a Chicana Indigenous reimagining of the headless woman legend, *The Sleeping Sisters* is a fierce literary horror novel about motherhood and the monstrous bargains we make to protect the ones we love.

Nur-E-Jannat Alif is a gender studies major and part-time writer, who dreams of authoring a book someday. Find her at [@literatureinsolitude](https://www.instagram.com/literatureinsolitude) on Instagram or send her your book/movie/television recommendations at nurejannatalif@gmail.com.

EDITORIAL

Why read?



There is a curious bite to the air now. Notwithstanding the terrifying levels of AQI that threaten to permanently damage our lungs, heart, and brain, the air feels promising—of new beginnings, of renewed potential, of reevaluating the old and embracing the new. It is not only the first month of a new calendar year that makes one want to rethink the past, it is also the way the January sun hits one just right, the way the dust-grown leaves sway as one wraps the shawl around them a little tight, the way one cracks the spine of a new book open, curling up with a piping hot cup of dudh cha.

Elsewhere, the world remains as terrifying and frustrating as ever. Battles long fought before—for equality, for access to public space, for participation in politics, for living a dignified, human life—are being waged again. As the world increasingly turns inwards, where borders tighten and laws preventing movement become stricter, we turn, as we must, to books. To fiction's ability to transcend borders. To poetry's ability to see through the pain of others. To the world of make believe and storytelling, of kinder voices and

softer ideas, with the hope that we will recall, and indeed, reembrace the very essentiality of our human existence.

When I think about reading, and I do think about reading quite a lot as this is what I do at work and at leisure, I think about reading's ability to affect and its ability to enact change. Against the harsh

Exactly a year ago, after having read a poem titled "Egg Drop Soup" on our Literature page, a regular reader reached out to share that she simply had to make herself the same soup that day.

realities of the world we must inhabit, reading has allowed me to hold a sort of tenderness that has often cushioned the brutal blows the world throws at us. When I read through submissions—creative submissions as well as student work—I cannot help but marvel at the sheer privilege of bearing witness to someone else's voice

and vulnerability, courage and conviction, all expressed through written words.

I recently read a submission where Joseph Stalin's reading habits were discussed. The point was that being a great reader did little to deter him from his dictatorial proclivities. Is it a rather sobering counterpoint to the case in hand here? Perhaps. Here at Star Books and Literature though, nothing is going to stop us from hoping that you will pick up our pages on Thursdays and Saturdays. That maybe you will find a poignant piece here, a remarkable one there, and maybe, just maybe, pick up your own pen and write a line or four.

Exactly a year ago, after having read a poem titled "Egg Drop Soup" on our Literature page, a regular reader reached out to share that she simply had to make herself the same soup that day.

I hope our pages help you find your soup.

Dr. Nazia Manzoor teaches English at North South University. She is also Editor, Star Books and Literature. Reach her at nazia.manzoor@gmail.com.

Star SPORT

DHAKA THURSDAY JANUARY 22, 2026, MAGH 8, 1432 BS



Arsenal perfect, City upset

AGENCIES

Manchester City suffered a major shock, losing 3-1 to Bodo/Glimt in freezing Norway. PSG also slipped on Tuesday, losing 2-1 to Sporting Lisbon despite a late equaliser. Arsenal stayed perfect, defeating Sassuolo, with Gabriel Jesus scoring twice, while Real Madrid rose to second after beating Levante 6-1, thanks to Kylian Mbappe's double and Vinicius Junior's goal. Tottenham beat Borussia Dortmund 2-0, Copenhagen drew 1-1 with Napoli, Olympiacos defeated Bayer Leverkusen 2-0, Ajax beat Villarreal 2-1, and Club Brugge thrashed Kairat Almaty 4-1.



Rajshahi Warriors all-rounder Jimmy Neesham celebrates after running out in-form Sylhet Titans opener Parvez Emon during the second qualifier of the Bangladesh Premier League at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The run-out midway through the 10th over proved to be the turning point of the match, swinging the momentum firmly in Rajshahi's favour. Emon, who was batting fluently, was dismissed for a 34-ball 48, taking the momentum out of Sylhet's run chase and handing Rajshahi a 12-run victory and a place in the BPL final.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

From chaos to the final

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Chattogram Royals will play the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) final in Mirpur tomorrow, capping a campaign shaped by upheaval both on and off the field.

From last-minute ownership changes to instability, Chattogram's route to becoming the first team this season to qualify for the final was far from smooth.

The turmoil began just a day before the tournament when the franchise's original owners withdrew due to financial complications, prompting the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to take over. Habibul Bashar was appointed team director as part of swift changes that also saw Mizanur Rahman Babul named head coach

and Nafees Iqbal become team manager.

Players were uncertain about payments, local cricketers had lost confidence, the coaching structure kept changing, and overseas signings were initially hard to secure.

"We wanted to ensure our players didn't have to worry about their basic payments," Bashar said.

Stability soon translated into results. Chattogram finished second in the league stage with six wins

from 10 matches before defeating table-toppers Rajshahi Warriors in Qualifier 1 to seal a spot in the final.

They also had to cope with losing their most in-form batter, Adam Rossington, midway due to a finger injury. But the team responded through collective performances.

Now one win away from their maiden BPL title, Chattogram will hope a campaign that began in chaos ends in historic triumph.

**Read full story on The Daily Star website



Mirpur cricket 'completely different'

Despite being a highly productive cricketer, England wicketkeeper-batter Sam Billings could not enjoy a prolonged international career, largely due to the presence of two superstars -- Jonny Bairstow and Jos Buttler -- competing for the same role. Rather than chasing an uncertain place in England's playing eleven, Billings chose a different path, building a career across franchise leagues around the world. Now 34, he is representing Sylhet Titans in the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) T20.



"Anytime you play in the subcontinent, the passion for the game is phenomenal," Billings told The Daily Star's Samsul Arefin Khan in an interview.

"The support and love we get in Bangladesh is amazing -- you feel it as soon as you get off the plane and again at the stadium. I was saying to Moeen [Ali] and Woakesy [Chris Woakes] last night that when you come here, you realise how tough the conditions are.

"Yesterday's [Tuesday's] wicket was very difficult to bat on, and it's a completely different style of cricket compared to anywhere else."

"Even at 34, I'm still developing and learning, and I'm very grateful for the experience."

**Read full interview on The Daily Star website

Coach-cum-archer outshines regulars

On the opening day of the Teer 16th National Archery Championship yesterday, Aishwarzo Rahman equalled the national qualification record in the individual compound event, topping the field with a score of 708. What made the feat more remarkable was the context. Apart from competing, Aishwarzo was also overseeing his students, juggling dual responsibilities with quiet authority.

**Read full story on The Daily Star website

What to WATCH

STAR SPORTS
SELECT HD2
ICC U19 World Cup
Zimbabwe vs
Pakistan
Live from 1:30 pm

SONY SPORTS 1, 2, 5
Australian Open
Second round
Live from 6:30 am
Europa League
Live from 11:45 pm

SONY SPORTS 5
Sri Lanka vs
England
1st ODI
Live from
3:00 pm



BSRM
THE ONLY STEEL FACTORY IN BANGLADESH TO RECEIVE THE
GREEN FACTORY AWARD 2025

**HIGHEST
SELLING
CEMENT** **20**
for more than
YEARS



Fair, credible polls possible

Says Prof Yunus, urges all to adhere to EC directives

UNB, Dhaka



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said a fair and credible election is possible under the current circumstances, expressing confidence in preparations for the upcoming 13th parliamentary polls.

He said political parties and candidates are maintaining a positive attitude and mutual harmony, but urged all stakeholders to remain prepared for any possible scenario.

"I hope that none of them will deviate from this approach," Yunus said at a high-level meeting on the overall law-and-order situation ahead of the election and the referendum on the implementation of the July National Charter.

The meeting, chaired by Yunus, was held at the Chief Adviser's Office and attended by advisers, force chiefs,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

Reinstate UAP teachers immediately
Demands university teachers' platform, Naripokkho

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Teachers' Network and rights organisation Naripokkho yesterday demanded the immediate reinstatement of two University of Asia Pacific (UAP) faculty members, accusing the authorities of succumbing

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

MUNTAKIM SAAD and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

As major political parties prepare their election manifestos, law enforcement experts and rights activists urge them to make law and order a top priority, keep police free from political interference, and end the partisan use of the force.

They also called for an independent body to investigate allegations of rights violations by law enforcement personnel and submit regular reports to the government.

Experts recommended increasing police strength in line with the population, ensuring neutral and

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

MANIFESTO EXPECTATIONS

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

Political use of police must end

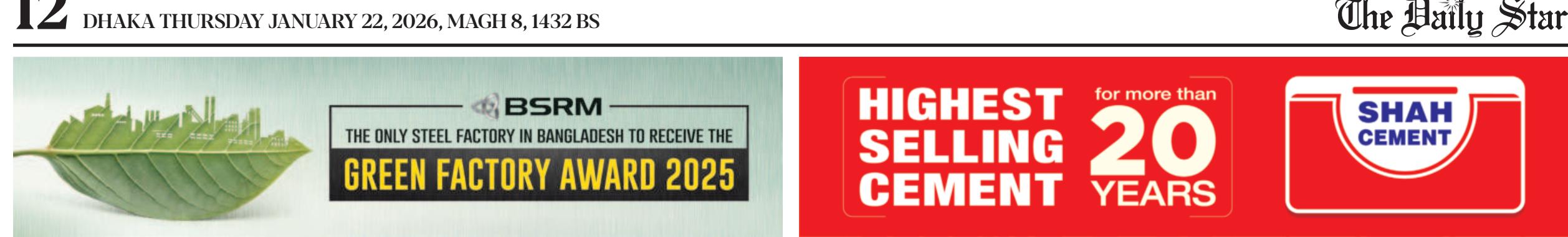
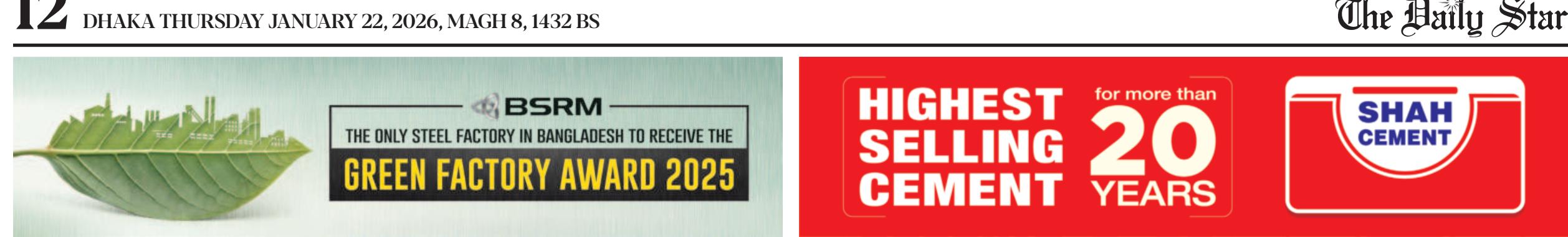


PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Under a clear blue sky, a woman scavenges for metal and plastic scraps to sell to recyclers at the Paroir Chak landfill of Sylhet City Corporation in Dakshin Surma, as smoke from small fires rises and birds circle overhead. The photo was taken recently.



Ex-Adviser M Hafizuddin Khan no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

M Hafizuddin Khan, a former adviser to the caretaker government and ex-comptroller and auditor general (CAG) of Bangladesh, passed away yesterday at a private hospital in the capital's Uttara due to age-related complications. He was 87.

He is survived by his wife, two daughters, and a host of relatives and admirers.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

330 journos
behind bars
for 5yrs: CPJ

AFP, New York

The number of journalists imprisoned worldwide for their work was 330 in the final month of 2025, the Committee to Protect Journalists said yesterday, the fifth consecutive year the count has exceeded 300.

China held 50 prisoners as of December 1, followed by Myanmar with 30 and

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

US 'won't use force'
to take Greenland
Says Trump, demands
'immediate negotiations'

REUTERS, Davos

US President Donald Trump ruled out the use of force in his bid to control Greenland yesterday, but said in a speech in Davos that no other country can secure the Danish territory.

"People thought I would use force, but I don't have to use force," Trump said at the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Switzerland. "I don't want

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3



ICT-2 orders to provide Azad documents for his appeal

Condemned convict to remain 'as he is'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abul Kalam Azad alias Bachchu, who was sentenced to death in 2013 for crimes against humanity committed during the 1971 Liberation War, surrendered before the International Crimes

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

MITSUBISHI FUSO TRUCKS AND BUSES



COVERED VAN

MITSUBISHI FUSO
CANTER

OIL & WATER TANKER

WORLD'S NO.1
TRUCK

FREEZER VAN

POWERFUL
ENGINE

WORLD'S BEST
RUGGED CHASSIS

HYDRAULIC BRAKES WITH
VACUUM SERVO ASSISTANCE

MITSUBISHI FUSO
ROSA

AC WITH DUAL
COMPRESSORS

ADVANCED HYDRAULIC
BRAKING SYSTEM

COUNTRY'S ONLY
30/34-SEATER JAPANESE BUS

DOUBLE ACTING
SHOCK ABSORBER

FUSO

09617704705

RANCON
TRUCKS & BUSES