

# CAPACITY CHARGE AL-era power deals costing \$1.5b a year

Finds probe committee for power, energy sector

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Inflated capacity charges in power sector deals have been costing Bangladesh up to \$1.5 billion a year, according to the national committee formed to review unsolicited power contracts signed during the Awami League regime.

The committee also warned that if contracts, with at least 41 power plants under its jurisdiction, are not renegotiated, the country could face about \$7.2 billion in excess payments over the remaining life of the deals.

The sector's potential for excess profits has created strong incentives for collusion,

corruption and political influence over contract allocation, said the report titled "Bangladesh's Power Generation: Trapped Costly Contracts: Governance Failures and the Mechanics of Rent Extraction".

The now repealed Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, enacted in 2010, made procurement processes more opaque and more open to corruption in designing the contracts, the report said.

The act was enacted in response to an acute electricity crisis and granted extraordinary powers to accelerate project approval and procurement.

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## ANOMALIES IN POWER SECTOR DURING AL RULE

### FROM FY15 TO FY25

PDB's annual loss increased to Tk **50,565** cr from Tk **5,468** cr

Annual subsidy increased to Tk **59,600** cr from Tk **8,978** cr

■ PDB's loss was largely due to overpriced contracts awarded without competition and due diligence, and without adhering to a consistent plan aligning energy availability to power generation, resulting in idle capacity and unjustified capacity charges.

### THE COST OF GOVERNANCE FAILURES

● Payments to power producers increased more than 11-fold between FY11 and FY24. But electricity generation only increased by four-fold over the same period.

● Capacity payments increased nearly 20-fold, becoming the dominant component of payments to producers.

● For the Adani Godda imported power contract, estimated overpricing was between 4-5 cents per kWh, means the price being paid is roughly 50% higher than what it should be.



**GG** The wrong decisions were not mistakes, rather a systematic collusion between businesses, politicians and bureaucrats.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Technical and legal capabilities with BPDB and the Power Division have to be improved.

More effective checks and balances are required, including strengthening the BERC and need to form a new Energy Oversight Commission.

PDB and govt should cancel contracts where direct evidence of corruption is found and there must be renegotiation of prices and terms with all private parties to reduce prices to market-competitive levels. This is essential to save the power sector.

PDB paying Adani 50% more than it should

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh has been paying around \$400-500 million a year to India's Adani Power, roughly 50 percent more than it should for electricity purchase, found the national committee to review power sector deals.

The prices for electricity from the plants increased over time, and the rise in costs was much higher than in similar contracts with other local coal-based power plants.

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# 'Won't allow graft to ruin BNP's plan'

Tarique says no party leader, activist will escape punishment for wrongdoings



BNP organises a rally at the port city's Railway Polo ground yesterday.

SAJJAD HOSSAIN, from Ctg

thronging the field by 10:00am and spilling onto surrounding roads.

Taking the stage around noon, he spoke of his emotional ties to the city, recalling that his father, late president Ziaur Rahman, declared independence from Chattogram in 1971, and that his mother, Khaleda Zia, was recognised there as a national leader.

Introducing BNP candidates, he sought votes for them and said, "If we cannot control law and order, none of our plans will succeed, no matter how many plans we take. To implement these plans, we must strictly focus on two issues -- corruption and security.

"An offender is an offender in the eyes of the law, whoever they are. Action will be taken under the country's laws."

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'We left as they strayed from Islamist principles'

Says IAB ameer about Jamaat

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Barishal

Charmonai  
Pir and Islami  
A n d o l a n  
Bangladesh  
( I A B )  
Ameer Syed  
Muhammad

Rezaul Karim yesterday said they had sought to build unity in favour of Islamist values with great hope, but were compelled to take a separate political path in the interest of Islam after observing that Jamaat-e-Islami was deviating from its commitment to Islamist principles and ideology.

"However, by the grace of Allah, we are not alone. People from all walks of life and the alem-ulemas are with us," he said at an election rally held in support of IAB candidates in Mymensingh-6 and Mymensingh-4 constituencies in Mymensingh city.

Rezaul added that BNP and Jamaat governed the country in the past but failed to meet the people's expectations. "Instead, the country became a champion in corruption."

"If, by the grace of Allah, the people entrust us with the responsibility

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# 'Fearing defeat, some may take crooked paths'

Jamaat ameer tells Dhaka rally, vows to secure win for 'yes' in referendum



Supporters attend Jamaat's rally at Dhupkhola field in Old Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said some quarters, fearing defeat [in the national election], may choose crooked paths. We are not naming any specific party or individual.

Shafiqur, addressing a series of rallies in the capital, said his party would "enter a battle" to secure a "yes" vote in the referendum.

He also urged young voters, long denied the right to vote, to take charge of the country and vowed to protect their ballots. The Jamaat chief pledged to ensure children's basic rights and the safety of working women. He also reiterated his commitment to curb corruption and extortion to build an inclusive Bangladesh.

The first rally, organised by the party's election

committees for Dhaka-4 and Dhaka-5, was held at Kajla Par in Jatrabari.

Addressing the gathering, Shafiqur said, "We are hearing that some people, fearing defeat [in the national election], may choose crooked paths. We are not naming any specific party or individual. We hope they will step back from such actions by realising the spirit of July. If they do not, remember -- July fighters are not asleep. They have completed their first task and are now ready for the second."

He further said, "A new profession is thriving in the country now -- extortion. Those involved should return to the right path. Arrangements will be made for their halal livelihood. If they do not abandon this path, Jamaat will show them the red card."

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# Ecneec clears Tk 45,191cr spending just before polls

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and  
TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Just 17 days before the national election, the interim administration yesterday cleared a massive wave of infrastructure and social spending, authorising 25 new and revised projects with a combined price tag of Tk 45,191 crore.

The decision was taken during a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) chaired by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus.

The timing of such commitments has raised questions over the necessity of major spending approvals by a transitional administration so close to a change in power. This move effectively locks in long-term financial obligations for the incoming elected administration.

However, the current leadership argues that administrative backlogs and the need to maintain economic momentum require these approvals.

A key driver of the spending surge is the first formal revision of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project. The Ecneec increased the project's cost by Tk 25,592 crore, bringing the total to Tk 138,685 crore. Alongside the cost hike, the

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As the February 12 national election approaches, this craftsman is seen spending busy time preparing campaign posters and festoons for MP candidates. The photo was taken in front of the Mohsin Hall on the Dhaka University campus yesterday.

Dhaka slams Delhi for allowing Hasina to deliver speech  
Accuses her of inciting terror to derail polls

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has expressed surprise and shock that deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who has been convicted by the International Crimes Tribunal in a case related to the July uprising, was allowed to make a statement at a public event in New Delhi on Friday.

During the event, she openly called for the removal of Bangladesh government and issued blatant incitements to her party loyalists and general public to carry out acts of terror in order to derail the upcoming general election in Bangladesh, said the foreign ministry in a statement yesterday.

"Bangladesh is deeply aggrieved that while India is yet to act on her obligations to hand Sheikh Hasina over to Bangladesh under the bilateral extradition agreement despite repeated requests by the Bangladesh government, she has instead been allowed to make such inciteful pronouncements from its own soil," the statement said.

"This clearly endangers Bangladesh's democratic transition and peace and security."

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## Police probing mechanic's death in garage fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Police have opened an investigation after recovering the charred body of a young mechanic from an automobile workshop in Narsingdi.

The victim, Chanchal Bhowmik, 25, hailing from Lakshmipur village under Cumilla's Barura upazila, had been working at the workshop at Dagaria of Narsingdi Sadar upazila for around six years.

On information, police went to the spot and recovered the body around 4:00am on Saturday, said Ishaq Miah, sub-inspector of Narsingdi Sadar Model Police Station.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the workshop's owner Rubel Miah said he had a brief discussion with Chanchal around 10:00pm on Friday.

"Then Chanchal closed the shop and I left the area. Like other days, Chanchal went to sleep inside the shop," said Rubel, adding that he heard about a fire from a person around 4:00am on Saturday.

Contacted, Shimul Rafiq, deputy director of Fire Service and Civil

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## Dhaka slams Delhi for allowing Hasina to deliver speech

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The ministry said allowing the event to take place in the Indian capital and letting "mass murderer" Hasina to openly deliver her hate speech are contrary to the norms of inter-state relations, including the principles of respect for sovereignty, non-interference and good neighbourliness.

This also constitutes a clear affront to the people and the Bangladesh government, it said.

"It sets a dangerous precedent vis-a-vis the future of Bangladesh-India relations and may seriously impair the ability of the future elected party in Bangladesh to engage, shape, and nurture mutually beneficial bilateral relations.

"The unabashed incitements by Awami League's leadership yet again demonstrated why the interim government had to ban its activities."

The foreign ministry said Bangladesh would hold the AL responsible for committing incidents of violence and terror in the run up to the elections and on the election day, and will take appropriate actions to foil its evil conspiracies.

In the earlier months, the interim government repeatedly requested India to prevent Hasina, who fled to India on August 5, 2024, amid uprising, from speaking and inciting violence in Bangladesh.

Dhaka sent official letter to New Delhi, seeking her extradition.

At an event in December last year, Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said Hasina would decide if she wants to return to Dhaka.

## 'We left as they strayed from Islamist principles'

FROM PAGE 1

of running the state, corruption will be uprooted, In sha Allah. We will build a Bangladesh that reflects the people's aspirations," he said.

Rezaul said many candidates make various promises of development, but no one speaks about the "development of principles".

"If members of the parliament formulate proper policies and hold the executive accountable for implementing those policies, development will naturally reach all citizens of the country," he said.

He said the nation has heard many claims of development over the past 54 years, but those so-called developments were followed by a "festival of corruption".

Killings, enforced disappearances, and money laundering have been pushing the country backwards. Therefore, emphasis must be placed on the structural development of the state and improvement of policies," he added.

He added that Islami Andolan Bangladesh is working not merely for a change of leaders, but for a change of policies.

Party's Central Training Secretary Nurul Karim Akram and Central Joint Vice-President Hossain Ahmed, among others, were present at the



BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman interacts with supporters at the Railway Polo Ground in Chattogram city yesterday.

## Ecneec clears Tk 45,191cr

FROM PAGE 1

project's deadline has been extended by two and a half years, pushing the expected completion to June 2028.

The project was initially approved in 2016, with around 90 percent of the funding coming as a soft Russian loan.

According to Planning Commission documents, the cost escalation is driven mainly by higher allocation for

parts of the project, inclusion of 10 new components, and the depreciation

of the taka against the US dollar.

Healthcare was also a major priority in the final hour approvals.

The committee approved a new "health and nutrition services" project with an estimated cost of Tk 8,735 crore,

supported by Tk 6,196 crore in World Bank loans. The project aims to

improve the nutrition of pregnant women and the health of newborn babies.

An official of the Directorate

General of Health Services said that a portion of the project funds will be

used for vaccination programmes and to upgrade the infrastructure of several upazila health complexes in the

Sylhet region.

Furthermore, the Ecneec approved the Bangladesh-China Friendship General Hospital, a 1,000-bed facility for the northern region. The government will build the hospital in Nilphamari at a cost of Tk 2,459 crore, with most of the funds expected from China.

Planning Adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud defended the heavy agenda during a post-meeting briefing. "Usually, political governments approve many projects in a single meeting at the last moment. But we are not doing this for that reason," he said.

"We were supposed to have two Ecneec meetings, but it seems there is no time for another," Wahiduddin said. "We had to consider whether it would be appropriate to hold another meeting right before the election," he added.

Addressing concerns about the legitimacy of approving projects after the announcement of the election schedule, he maintained that the state must remain functional.

Wahiduddin, who had also served as an adviser to the 1996 caretaker government, emphasised that the administration was careful to avoid projects that could unfairly benefit specific candidates or parties. "For the sake of the economy, many policy decisions must be taken," he said, citing his 1996 experience where regular Ecneec meetings were held to ensure economic stability.

Regarding the increased cost of the Rooppur project, Wahiduddin said that the project timeline had been extended due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other factors, which led to higher overall expenditure.

He said the project cost has not increased in dollar terms with the original figure remaining unchanged at \$11.38 billion. However, the cost has risen in taka terms due to taka's

## All parties seeking AL vote, only JP is taking blame

Say its Chairman GM Quader

S DILIP ROY

Jatiya Party is branded as criminals and collaborators if the party seeks the barred Awami League's votes but not the BNP, Jamaat or the National Citizen Party, said its Chairman GM Quader.

"This is nothing but extreme political discrimination," said Quader in a press briefing at the party office in Rangpur on Saturday evening.

Quader is contesting in the election from Rangpur 3.

"The Awami League has not yet been banned as a political party. Even if there are restrictions on its political activities, there is no example anywhere in the world of stripping its supporters of their voting rights as citizens. Yet, the Awami League supporters are being told, 'if you want to vote, you may do so, but you cannot vote for Jatiya Party'. So, what is the crime of Jatiya Party?"

After the July uprising, the head of the interim government himself said that the student coordinators of the quota reform movement are their appointing authority.



## 'Won't allow graft to ruin BNP's plan'

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At another rally at the Central Eidgah ground in Daudkandi upazila of Cumilla at 12:45am today, Tarique warned party leaders and activists to remain careful about wrongdoings.

"You have seen in the past that when the BNP was in power, some of our leaders and activists were involved in unethical acts that caused sufferings to people. We handed them over to the law. Do you remember? So BNP leaders and activists must remain careful.

"If anyone is found acting beyond the law, they will face legal action. There will be nothing you can do. I will also be unable to do anything," he said.

At the Chattogram rally, remembering the martyrs of the July uprising, he said democratic and economic rights had been eroded over the past 15 years. He warned of new conspiracies to take these rights away.

He said although many allegations and criticisms can be made against rival political parties, such things do not bring any real benefit to the people.

"If we criticise only for the sake of criticism, will it help ordinary people? It will not. If we only keep criticising, will it fill people's stomachs? It will not," he said.

**DEVELOPMENT PLEDGES**

Tarique said Khaleda Zia's earlier plan to turn Chattogram into a commercial capital would be completed if BNP forms the government, creating jobs through new Export Processing Zones.

He promised a nationwide canal-digging programme, which he said would help alleviate waterlogging in Chattogram.

A safe environment will also be created in Chattogram and other parts of Bangladesh so that people can do business easily and without fear, the BNP chief said.

He also promised to bring changes to different levels of education to help the youth get jobs.

Tarique said BNP wants to deliver

healthcare services to every doorstep, especially for women and children, by appointing 1 lakh healthcare workers.

To make women financially independent, Tarique said if the BNP

can form the government, the party will deliver "family cards" to women.

He said farmers will receive loan facilities and other benefits through the "farmers' cards" so that they can become financially self-reliant.

Seeking votes, he said only a BNP victory on February 12 would make these changes possible.

"If you stand by BNP and make BNP victorious with the Sheaf of Paddy in the election, only then will we be able to bring these changes. Are you with us?"

"Yes!" the crowd replied.

Later in the day, Tarique addressed a rally in Feni, where he pledged to establish a medical college and provide training and language education for youths seeking overseas employment.

Urging voters in greater Noakhali to ensure BNP's victory, he said restoring democracy through the ballot would bring back accountability and local solutions.

**GUARD POLLING STATIONS'**

At another rally on Choudhogram High School ground in Cumilla in the evening, Tarique instructed party leaders and activists to remain alert to prevent fraud until the end of voting.

"You must guard the ballot boxes and the polling stations so that no one can conspire with the voters."

He also advised senior party leaders and activists to offer Tahajjud prayers and then go to the polling stations and perform Fajr prayers in front of the centres.

He said some people were questioning the BNP's card-based aid plans because they have no experience of running the country. "Why would I deceive the people if I knew that it would cause me losses? Will the people trust me anymore if I deceive them?" he asked.

He also said the National Identity Card system should be fully digitised so citizens can obtain NIDs from home, which would reduce corruption and complications.

[FM Mizanur Rahaman and Dwaipayan Barua also contributed to the report.]

## Fearing defeat, some may take crooked paths'

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Shafiqur also pledged to introduce evening bus services for women in the capital and major cities. "No oppressor will dare to harass you anymore. You will no longer face harassment at your workplaces," he said.

Speaking on Old Dhaka, the Jamaat chief said, "We will turn Old Dhaka into gold, In Sha Allah (God willing). We will show that respect to Old Dhaka."

Calling on young people to prepare for future responsibilities, he said,

affairs. We would humbly but firmly request them -- please stop meddling in our internal matters."

Speaking on Old Dhaka, the Jamaat chief said, "We will turn Old Dhaka into gold, In Sha Allah (God willing). We will show that respect to Old Dhaka."

Calling on young people to prepare for future responsibilities, he said,

"We want to entrust Bangladesh to the youth... If any miscreant tries to interfere with the votes on the 12th, that hand must be crushed. They [youth] have come of age but have been denied their voting rights. They are eagerly waiting for the 12th. No one should be allowed to carry out any criminal activities," he said.

He said Jamaat does not want to "sit on the throne to plunder the country."

"We will not extort people and will not allow extortion. We will neither engage in corruption nor tolerate it," he said, adding that to build a corruption- and extortion-free country, people must exercise their rights in the two votes scheduled for the same day.

"From today, we will enter a battle to ensure every single 'yes' vote. We will explain to people that if 'yes' wins, Bangladesh will win; if 'yes' is defeated, Bangladesh will be defeated," he added.

Opposing unemployment allowances, he said such a move would create an "ocean of unemployed people."

Referring to recent developments, he said, "When the people of Bangladesh are about to make their decision in search of liberation, many are openly interfering in our internal

broad daylight."

"A party whose activists, driven by extortion, do not spare even their own brothers, friends or colleagues -- and take lives if extortion money is not paid -- demands serious reflection from us," he said.

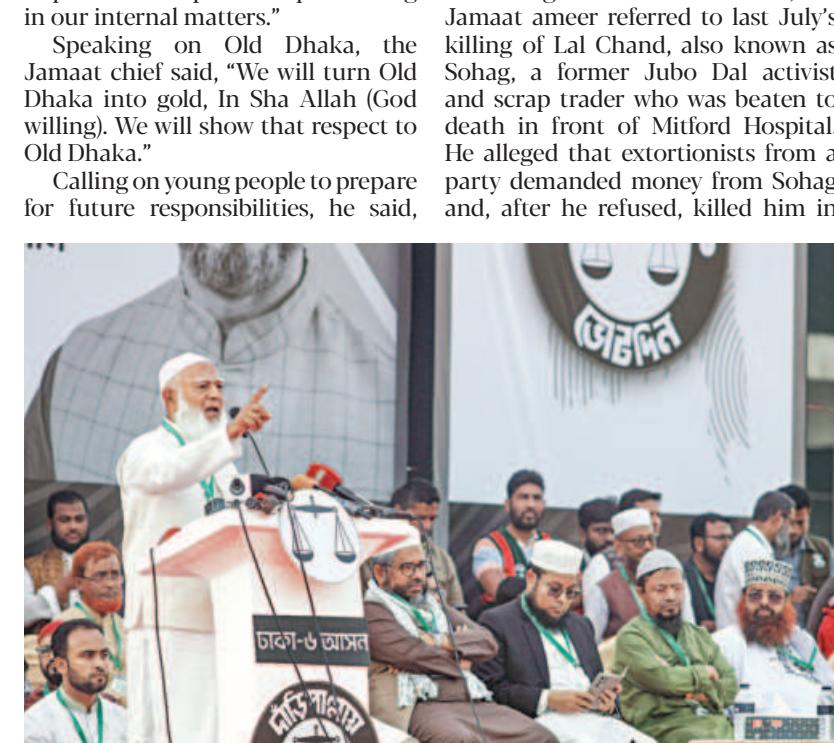
Liberal Democratic Party President

Colonel (retd) Oli Ahmed, whose

party is part of the II-party alliance,

was among the speakers at the Alia

Madrasa and Dhopkhola rallies.



Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman addresses a rally at Dhopkhola field in Old Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

At the final rally at the Alia Madrasa ground in Bakshibazar, the Jamaat ameer referred to last July's killing of Lal Chand, also known as Sohag, a former Jubo Dal activist and scrap trader who was beaten to death in front of Mitford Hospital. He alleged that extortionists from a party demanded money from Sohag and, after he refused, killed him in

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## ICT verdict in Chankharpul killings today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 is scheduled to deliver its verdict today in a case over the killing of six people in the capital's Chankharpul area during the 2024 mass uprising.

Eight former police officials stand accused in the case. They are former Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Habibur Rahman; joint commissioner Sudip Kumar Chakraborty; former additional deputy commissioner Shah Alam Mohammad Akhtarul Islam; former assistant commissioner of Ramna zone Mohammad Imrul; former Shahbagh Police Station inspector (operations) Arshad Hossain; and constables Sujon Hossain, Imaz Hossain and Nasirul Islam. Of the accused, Arshad, Sujon, Imaz and Nasirul are currently in custody.

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A worker carries five gas cylinders on his bicycle while providing door-to-door delivery for his store. Due to a gas shortage and supply disruptions following two major pipeline accidents, demand for cylinders has surged, prompting store owners to charge over Tk 2,000 instead of the fixed price of Tk 1,306. The photo was taken on the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

More and more misinformation and disinformation are flooding social media ahead of the election. To create voter awareness, we are running selective fact-check reports published by fact-checking organisations from today.

## FACT-CHECKED

### Old video, fake media card circulate with false claims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the national election approaches, social media platforms have been flooded with misleading content, including fake photocards and old videos circulated with false claims.

Two such pieces of election-related fact-check reports were published by fact-checking organisations Rumor Scanner Bangladesh and Dismislab yesterday.

According to the Rumor Scanner report, one widely circulated video has been shared under the title "President appeals to the nation over the election," claiming to show President Mohammed Shahabuddin delivering a message about the upcoming national election.

In the video, the president is heard saying, "I have an appeal to the people of the country.

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## FEB 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-11

### July frontman takes on local old guard

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

Along Pragati Sarani -- the lifeline of eastern Dhaka -- stands the International Buddhist Monastery. During a recent visit, its vice-principal, Buddhanna Mahathero, prayed for national peace.

He recalled offering similar prayers in July 2024, when police assaulted students from two nearby private universities. Many of them had taken shelter inside the monastery that day.

The monk now hopes that those entrusted with running the state will work toward an inclusive society, irrespective of religion or caste.

The monastery falls within the Dhaka-II constituency, which comprises Rampura, Badda, Bhataria, and parts of Hatirjheel police station.

The seat is witnessing a high-profile contest.

Nahid Islam, a prominent face of

the July uprising and convener of the National Citizen Party (NCP), is contesting from Dhaka-II. He hails from Fakirkhali village in Badda thana.

Expectations surrounding the youth-led party are high.

Mahmuda Begum, 40, a resident of Poshchimpara in Nurchorhala, said, "This time, I am for the youth. I hope not only youth-led parties, but young candidates from all parties win."

A shopkeeper by profession, Mahmuda pointed to long-standing problems such as gas and water shortages and waterlogging.

From the politicians of "New Bangladesh," she expects stability in commodity prices.

Nahid's main challenger is BNP candidate MA Quayum, a long-serving former commissioner of the Badda area.

As the country heads toward the February 12 elections, voters in Dhaka-II -- many casting ballots after a long gap -- appear politically energised.

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Nahid Islam

MA Quayum

'Torture and screams marked life at Aynagar' Ex-army officer recounts ordeal at ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Life inside a secret detention facility was filled with screams from adjoining rooms and constant threats of "crossfire", former Lt Col Hasinur Rahman, a survivor of enforced disappearance, told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday.

Testifying as the second prosecution witness, Hasinur said screams and cries could be heard from every room of the detention centre, known as "Aynagar."

Hasinur's testimony came in a case filed against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 12 others over the alleged illegal detention and torture of at least 24 individuals at a Joint Interrogation Cell operated by the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence between 2016 and August 2024.

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## 3,000 leprosy cases detected annually

### Stigma, funding gaps hinder elimination drive, say speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although Bangladesh achieved the elimination of leprosy as a public health concern around three decades ago, more than 3,000 new cases are still detected annually, highlighting the challenges in achieving zero prevalence of the disease.

Public health elimination of a disease means reducing its prevalence rate to less than one case per 10,000 population.

Health experts and officials have recommended an intensified drive, particularly in high-burden districts, to detect new cases and ensure patients receive treatment, aiming to achieve the zero-leprosy-prevalence target by 2030.

They also said leprosy patients are often surrounded by social stigma, making awareness campaigns involving all relevant stakeholders essential to make the country

leprosy-free.

The speakers made the remarks at a discussion organised to mark World Leprosy Day, observed yesterday.

The National Leprosy Programme of the Directorate General of Health Services hosted the discussion at the DGHS under the slogan, "Leprosy is Curable, the Real Challenge is Stigma."

In her keynote speech, Afsana Alamgir Khan, assistant director and programme manager (leprosy) at the DGHS, said the National Leprosy Programme started activities in 1985 in selected geographical areas and was expanded nationwide in 1996.

In 1998, the country achieved public health elimination, but 13 districts still bear a heavy burden of the disease, meaning the detection rate is as high as five per 1,000 population, she said.

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A flock of egrets searches for food in the drying Khayrat haor at Karimganj in Kishoreganj as the setting sun reflects on the water, creating a mesmerising scene. The photo was taken recently.

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## Land rights, legal recognition, for indigenous people

Demand speakers at nat'l seminar

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Constitutional recognition
- Land commission for plainland communities
- Indigenous representation in dev process
- Indigenous-friendly edn, healthcare
- Preserving indigenous languages, culture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Indigenous leaders, rights activists and policymakers yesterday demanded constitutional recognition of indigenous peoples, a separate land commission for plainland communities, and urgent reforms to protect their land, natural resources and cultural rights.

The demands were raised at a national seminar titled "Rights to land, territory and natural resources of plainland indigenous peoples and the role of the government," organised by Kapaeeng Foundation and Indigenous Peoples Development Services (IPDS) at the YWCA Conference Hall in the capital.

IPDS President Sanjeeb Drong chaired the seminar, while Kapaeeng Foundation's Advocacy and

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## 82 lakh use illicit drugs in country BMU survey finds youth most affected

Cannabis was identified as the most widely used drug, with around 61 lakh users. It was followed by yaba (approximately 22.92 lakh users) and alcohol (20.20 lakh).



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An estimated 82 lakh people in Bangladesh currently use one or more illicit drugs, accounting for about 4.88 percent of the total population, according to a nationwide survey conducted by Bangladesh Medical University (BMU).

The survey also found that an average drug user spends up to Tk 6,000 per month, while the majority of substance users are young.

About 33 percent of respondents reported first using drugs between the ages of eight and 17, while 59 percent said they began between 18 and 25, indicating early exposure and high vulnerability among adolescents and youth.

Unemployment, peer influence, financial insecurity, family instability, mental stress, and engagement in informal work have been identified as the main risk factors for drug use.

Alarmingly, nearly 90 percent of users reported that drugs are easily accessible.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

## Bangladesh among worst-hit by lead pollution

Says experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is among the countries worst affected by lead pollution, with millions of children exposed to hazardous levels, experts said at a workshop in a Dhaka hotel yesterday.

They said tests showed children living near such sites had blood lead levels as high as 47 micrograms per decilitre of blood, while the WHO recognises no safe level of lead in the blood.

They said lead levels in soil near disposal sites were as high as 70,000 ppm (parts per million), compared to the US EPA reference value of 200 ppm.

The remarks were made at a validation workshop on the Toxic Site Investigation Program (TSIP) Guideline and the Remediation and Risk Reduction Guideline for Lead-Contaminated Sites. The Department of Environment (DoE) organised the programme in collaboration with Pure Earth.

Mitali Das, country director of Pure Earth Bangladesh, emphasised prevention of improper disposal of used batteries.

Lara Crampe, programme director for Asia at Pure Earth USA, said Bangladesh has shown leadership in addressing lead pollution through high-level commitment.

Dr Fahmida Khanom, additional secretary of the environment ministry, and Dr Md Kamruzzaman, ndc, director general of the Department of Environment, also spoke.



Two rickshaws being towed for illegally plying a main road in Dhaka's Shahbagh yesterday. Riding one of the seized vehicles, a police officer is taking them to the dump yard near Shahbagh Police Station.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Ensure water justice in coastal region

Speakers tell Khulna convention

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Speakers at an event in Khulna yesterday stressed the urgent need for an integrated water management approach to address the myriad water-related crises affecting the coastal belt in Bangladesh's south-western region. They said ensuring water justice as a fundamental human right must be a state responsibility.

Amid rising salinity levels, communities are facing numerous water-related challenges, including an acute shortage of safe drinking water. In the absence of alternatives, people are forced to consume saline water, leading to various physical and mental health complications.

The speakers made the remarks on the second day of the 3rd Coastal Water Convention, held at Aava Centre in Khulna city.

Shamim Arfeen, member secretary of the convention and executive director of An Organization for Socio-Economic Development, gave the welcome speech.

Professor Emeritus Dr Ainun Nishat of BRAC University, who presented the keynote paper, warned that within the next 50 years, water in Khulna city would become as saline as seawater.

Significant changes in biodiversity would occur in the Sundarbans, with

Goran trees thriving instead of Sundari and an increase in the population of salt-tolerant insects. Traditional crop production would decline by half, he said, stressing the need to increase the use of surface water.

"To save the people of this region, embankments must be repaired, and water sources must be protected from destruction," he said. Referring to a recent storm surge in Florida that reached a height of 17 feet, he warned, "If a similar storm surge hits Bangladesh, the water could reach as far as Faridpur."

He said while Wasa addresses water issues in metropolitan areas and DPHE in municipalities, there is no dedicated authority to resolve drinking water crises faced by marginalised communities. He stressed the need to maintain good relations with neighbouring countries to address transboundary water-related challenges.

Prof Dr Kazi Maruf Islam of Dhaka University, Prof Anwarul Kadir of Sundarbans Academy, Mohammad Zobair Hasan of DORP, and Abul Kalam Azad of ActionAid Bangladesh supplemented the keynote discussion.

The event was attended by representatives of various national and international development organisations and experts.

## July frontman takes

FROM PAGE 3

Nahid is carrying out mass outreach at mosques and markets, holding courtyard meetings, and running an active social media campaign.

Quayum, meanwhile, is organising street rallies and exchanging meetings while distributing his manifesto.

Although the two rivals have not faced each other directly on the campaign trail, they have both been long known as local figures.

Dhaka-II reflects mixed demographics. Areas such as Badda, Aftabnagar, Shahzadpur, and Rampura are home to educated middle and upper-middle-class professionals and businesspeople.

In contrast, North Badda, Satarkul, and Beraid are largely populated by lower-middle class residents and small traders, alongside a sizeable labour community.

Road development work has recently begun from Satarkul Bridge to Badda. However, the poor condition of this key route to central Dhaka has caused widespread suffering.

Traffic congestion, drug abuse, law-and-order issues, and waterlogging also remain major concerns.

In Bhataria's Hindu Para, home to around 400 families, gas and water shortages top the list of grievances.

Amrit Chandra Das, 40, who left a corporate job to start a business eight years ago, stressed the importance of peaceful coexistence.

Nahid told The Daily Star, "The response has been phenomenal, especially from youth and women."

"People couldn't vote for 16 years. Now the political equation has changed, and people are approaching us with their expectations. The election seems to have rekindled hope."

Representing the NCP under the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11 party alliance, Nahid said the organisational experience of Jamaat has been helpful. "We are campaigning in a coordinated way," he added.

If elected, he plans to bring youth into leadership roles and prioritise job creation, good governance, and public safety. He also promised infrastructure projects to address traffic

## Missing CIMMYT researcher found dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of a research and development coordinator at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) was found three days after he went missing.

Shahidul Islam, 42, of Patuakhali, went missing on January 21 after visiting a bank on Gulshan Avenue, Dhaka. His cellphone was found switched off from noon that day.

His father-in-law, Abu Saleh Uddin Ahmed, filed a GD with Gulshan Police Station the same day.

On Saturday evening, police recovered an unidentified body from bushes near an underpass on the expressway adjacent to Suryanagar Bazar in Madaripur, said Shibchar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Shafiqul Islam.

Family members identified the body as Shahidul's yesterday.

"The exact cause of death cannot be determined without the post mortem and viscera," said SI Ijrat Hossain of Dattapara Police Investigation Centre.

Gulshan Police Station OC Rakibul Hasan said CCTV footage showed Shahidul boarding a Turag Paribahan bus from Badda and travelling towards Ekuria in Keraniganj, after which no further trace of his movements was found.

Shahidul's wife, Shammi Akter, said, "He would never consume food offered by strangers. The post-mortem report will help us understand the reason behind his death." Shahidul lived in Barishal with his wife and two sons.

waste management, healthcare, and education.

"I'm not saying everything will be solved in five years, but the reconstruction of this area will begin," he said.

Quayum is equally confident. "Although formal campaigning started recently, we've been working at the grassroots for over a month. I served as commissioner here for nearly two decades and ensured gas and water supply while establishing schools and colleges. People trust me," he said.

Citing crime, drugs, and extortion as key challenges, Quayum called on young people to stay engaged.

While Nahid said he has not faced direct obstruction, he expressed concern over the possible use of muscle power on election day. "We are briefing the administration and will be prepared to resist any interference," he said.

Quayum struck a conciliatory tone. "The environment is cordial. I have instructed my supporters to avoid past political hostility. Let the people decide."

Both candidates are confident of victory. Nahid believes the "youth wave" will favour the NCP alliance and its Shapla Koli (Water Lily Bud) symbol, and urged voters to cast a "Yes" vote in the referendum.

Quayum, meanwhile, appealed to voters to choose a "tested representative" with a proven service record.

Dhaka-II has 4,39,078 voters -- 2,22,877 men, 2,16,198 women, and three hijra voters.

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His family members have requested all to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

## 40 hurt in pre-polls violence

FROM PAGE 12

Additional law enforcers were deployed to prevent further violence.

Both candidates could not be reached for comment.

In Lalmonirhat, at least 11 people were injured as supporters of BNP and Jamaat clashed in Kasatari village in Hatibandha upazila in the afternoon.

According to police and locals, Jamaat female activists were conducting door-to-door campaigns for the Lalmonirhat-1 candidate when locals questioned their identity, triggering an altercation that led to a clash.

In another incident, at least nine people were injured in a clash between BNP and Jamaat supporters in Alamdanga upazila of Chuadanga in the afternoon.

Doctor Afrina Islam of Chuadanga Sadar Hospital said the injured were brought to the hospital after 5:00pm.

police brought the situation under control. Afrin Haque, assistant returning officer and

calm, with additional police and army personnel deployed.

UNO Panna Akter said Jamaat alleged that their female activists were obstructed and assaulted by BNP supporters during campaigning in Jugirhuda village. At the same time, BNP claimed Jamaat supporters were asking people to take oaths to vote for the party by touching the holy Quran.

Doctor Afrina Islam of Chuadanga Sadar Hospital said the injured were brought to the hospital after 5:00pm.

[Our correspondents from Mymensingh, Lalmonirhat, and Kushtha contributed to this report.]

## Noab did not provide journos

FROM PAGE 12

The programme was chaired by Dr Susan Vize, UNESCO representative to Bangladesh, and moderated by Riaz Ahmed, editor of the Dhaka Tribune.

Speaking at the event, Dr Vize said the Journalist Support Desk is a timely and important initiative that will help journalists carry out their duties safely and professionally.

DRU President Abu Saleh Akon emphasised

unity among journalists, saying they must stand against any form of oppression or harassment targeting them and rise above narrow divisions to support colleagues in need.

GMDF representative Lena Fox said journalists around the world are facing growing legal harassment and security risks, and journalist support desks have emerged as an effective model to address such challenges.



পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলজি  
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স্মারক নং- ২১.২১.০০০০.৬৮৪.০১.০০১, ২৬.৬৫

তারিখঃ ২১/০১/২০২৪ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ

## e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের জিএমডি, টেক্টগ্রাম (সেন্ট্রাল) দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিয়ন্ত্রিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টেলে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Reference	Title of Works	Closing Date and Time
1217099	27.21.0000.684.07 .001.26.54; Date: 20/01/2026	Tower Painting work at 132kV Halishahar - Khulshi single Circuit Transmission Line under GMD Chatogram-Central, Power Grid.	12 Feb 2026 at 14:00

আগুন্তী ক্ষেত্রে প্রতিটানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোঃ মাহমুদুর রহমান

নির্বাচী প্রক্রিয়ালয়, জিএমডি, টেক্টগ্রাম (সেন্ট্রাল)

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh	
"Construction of Rail-cum-Road Bridge Across the River Karnaphuli at Kalurghat Point" Project	
Reference No. PD/Kalurghat Rail-cum-Road Bridge/Outsourcing/13 Date: 22/01/2026	

## 1st Amendment/Corrigendum e-Tender Notice (e-GP)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of physical service mentioned in the table below:

Sl	Tender ID No.	Package No. & description	Previous tender last selling date & time	Previous tender closing date & time	Revised tender last selling date & time	Revised tender closing date & time
01	1204307	NCS Outsourcing of Manpower	29 Jan-2026 10.00	29 Jan-2026 12.00	05 Feb-2026 10.00	05 Feb-2026 12.00

1. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.  
2. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.  
3. The fees for the downloading the e-Tender documents form the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank.  
4. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).  
5. "Construction of Rail-cum-Road Bridge Across the River Karnaphuli at Kalurghat Point" Project authority reserve the right to accept any tender or reject any or all tenders

## MINNEAPOLIS SHOOTING Reactions to the second killing by US federal agents

AFP, Minneapolis

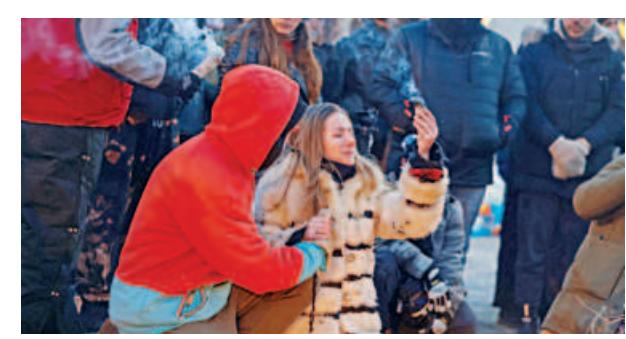
The killing of a US citizen by federal immigration agents in Minneapolis on Saturday triggered a wave of criticism, from family members and local leaders to Hollywood stars.

Federal agents shot Alex Petti, a 37-year old intensive care nurse, less than three weeks after an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officer shot and killed Renee Good, also 37, in her car.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said Petti was found to be carrying a pistol and ammunition, but cell phone footage of the incident has raised serious questions about the federal government's description of the incident.

### LOCAL LEADERS

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz called the shooting "horrible" and demanded state authorities lead the investigation. "The federal government cannot be trusted



to lead this investigation. The state will handle it, period," Walz told a news conference.

Senator Bill Cassidy, a Louisiana Republican, wrote on X: "The events in Minneapolis are incredibly disturbing. The credibility of ICE and DHS are at stake."

"There must be a full joint federal and state investigation. We can trust the American people with the truth."

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey urged President Donald Trump to end the immigration operation, which has sparked sometimes violent demonstrations.

### FAMILY AND COLLEAGUES

Petti's parents said in a statement he was a "kindhearted soul who cared deeply for his family and friends."

"The sickening lies told about our son by the administration are reprehensible and disgusting," they said. "Alex is clearly not holding a gun when attacked by Trump's murdering and cowardly ICE thugs."

Dimitri Drekonja, chief of the Infectious Diseases Section at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs hospital and a colleague of Petti, called him "a good kind person who lived to help."

## AL-era power deals costing \$1.5b a year

FROM PAGE 1  
These powers included exemptions from the Public Procurement Act, limitations on judicial review and broad legal protections for decisions taken under the special provision act.

Although framed as a temporary emergency measure, the act remained in force – through repeated extensions – for more than 14 years and became the dominant legal framework governing power-sector contracting, the report said.

By design, the act created a parallel procurement regime operating outside the normal disciplines of competition, regulatory scrutiny and judicial review.

"Over time, this exceptional regime became normalised. The removal of competitive tension weakened the primary mechanism through which costs are disciplined in infrastructure markets," the report read.

Provisions such as guaranteed capacity payments, take-or-pay clauses, fuel cost pass-through, foreign currency indexation and sovereign guarantees protected power producers from commercial risk while locking in high costs.

Individually, some of these provisions are not uncommon in power-sector contracts, particularly in early stage or high-risk markets. However, under the 2010 act, they were applied cumulatively, without competitive discipline, and often without adequate benchmarking."

Though the interim government has repealed the act, the true remedy is in surgically dismantling the financial legacy left behind in the form of 20-year contracts.

Solar power purchase agreements (PPAs) failed to adjust to rapidly declining global photovoltaic costs and, in several cases, PDB's revenues became

exceeded reasonable benchmarks by roughly 70-80 percent.

Heavy fuel oil plants exhibited margins of approximately 40-50 percent above benchmark generation costs.

Unsolicited combined-cycle gas projects were consistently above benchmark tariff bands, suggesting standardised negotiated premiums rather than cost-based pricing.

"Excess pricing was therefore not incidental or temporary; it was structural," the report said.

As the single buyer of electricity, Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) absorbed the full impact of excess pricing at the generation level.

"These costs were then transmitted mechanically into PDB's financial position and, ultimately, into the national budget."

Between fiscal 2010-11 and fiscal 2023-24, total payments to independent power producers increased more than elevenfold, while electricity generation increased only about fourfold, indicating that financial obligations rose far faster than physical output.

Capacity payments are the primary driver of this divergence, the report said.

The fixed capacity charges have grown disproportionately relative to electricity produced, especially for underutilised plants. In many cases, the payments increase even as generation stagnates or declines.

"This confirms that excess capacity, combined with rigid contract design, converts underutilisation directly into excess payments, independent of fuel costs or operational efficiency."

As fixed capacity obligations expanded, PDB's revenues became

increasingly insufficient to cover contracted costs, leading to losses exceeding Tk 50,000 crore annually and arrears surpassing Tk 55,000 crore by fiscal 2024-25.

Over the last decade, retail electricity tariffs in Bangladesh have risen significantly across all major consumer categories, reflecting the transmission of generation cost pressures into end-user prices.

Once translated into retail terms, cost-recovery electricity tariffs in Bangladesh would likely exceed industrial tariffs in Vietnam, China and Pakistan, and approach or surpass those in India.

Besides, a number of large baseload plants are infrastructure-constrained – unable to operate reliably even when demand exists – due to binding fuel supply limitations and evacuation constraints.

Weak accountability and institutional capture prevented corrective action, the report said.

Legal protections, weakened regulatory oversight, market concentration and the constrained role of the PDB allowed inefficiencies to persist despite growing evidence of financial strain.

The committee warned that delays in reform carry measurable and compounding costs, diverting public funds from transmission upgrades, renewable energy integration, energy efficiency initiatives and social spending.

"These opportunity costs are not abstract. They represent forgone improvements in service quality, affordability and economic competitiveness."

The committee flagged six power plants as having "egregious anomalies" with potential corruption risks: Adani Power, SS Power, Summit Meghnaghat,

Reliance-JERA, Payra Coal Power Plant and Rupsha Power Plant.

It recommended cancelling the Adani Power deal and renegotiating tariffs for several others, citing what it described as "substantial proof" of corruption in the Adani agreement.

Regarding SS Power, the report said two large plants were awarded under a single contract, weakening price discovery and concentrating financial exposure.

Multiple large plants were clustered at one site, including the Summit Meghnaghat facility, approved despite tightening gas supply – creating vulnerability to underutilisation.

In the case of Reliance-JERA, the committee said capacity that was underutilised in India was transferred to Bangladesh under a long-term contract, shifting utilisation risk to the PDB amid domestic fuel constraints.

The Payra Coal Power Plant was built alongside major public investment in port infrastructure that lacks the characteristics of a viable deep-sea coal hub, embedding logistics risk into generation planning.

Rupsha Power Plant was constructed without assured fuel supply or surplus LNG capacity, leaving technically capable assets structurally underutilised.

"These anomalies did not arise by accident. They were the result of collusion designed to generate massive excess profits (rents) shared between parties. Most power purchase agreements guarantee fixed capacity payments regardless of plant utilisation – turning stranded capacity into a recurring fiscal burden rather than a one-time loss."

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Rupsha

## Cricket loses as politics takes the field

Bangladesh excluded from T20 World Cup in a controversial decision

We fully share the frustration expressed by the World Cricketers' Association over Bangladesh's exclusion from the 2026 Men's T20 World Cup. The cricketers' body has rightly described it as "a sad moment" for cricket, and its call on stakeholders to work towards uniting the sport rather than dividing it deserves serious consideration.

Cricket's governing body, the International Cricket Council (ICC), last week rejected Bangladesh's request to relocate its matches scheduled in India to tournament co-host Sri Lanka, citing the impracticality of altering the fixture so close to the tournament's February 7 start. Earlier, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) sought the change after the Indian Premier League (IPL) barred Bangladesh's lone participant, Mustafizur Rahman, from joining the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), a franchise owned by Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan. Both Khan and his team reportedly received threats from several right-wing groups and the West Bengal unit of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Given the nature and gravity of these threats from Hindutva groups, the BCB declined to travel to India and requested a rearrangement of its World Cup fixtures.

Bangladesh felt further aggrieved by the ICC's decision to replace it by inviting Scotland, particularly in light of past precedents where similar requests by India and Pakistan were accommodated. India's refusal to travel to Pakistan for the 2025 Champions Trophy on security grounds set such a precedent, and later the whole 2025 Men's T20 Asia Cup was relocated to the United Arab Emirates due to geopolitical tensions between Pakistan and India. This time, however, the ICC not only rejected Bangladesh's request—based on a third-party assessment of security conditions in India—but also invited a new team to take its place. The argument of logistical infeasibility is unconvincing, to say the least, as Scotland's last-minute inclusion also entails logistical preparations including arranging visas, travel, and accommodation. Add to that the very short window for the team's preparation, Scotland's entry also offers little prospect of offsetting commercial losses.

It is worth recalling that Indian diplomat turned politician Shashi Tharoor, chairman of its parliamentary standing committee on external affairs, recently wrote in *The Times of India* that "as citizens and sports lovers, we must stand up for the principle that the playing field should remain a sanctuary for merit, not a theatre for performative nationalism." Regrettably, performative nationalism appears to have prevailed, and the ICC has failed to shield the game from politicisation.

Cricket fans worldwide, including prominent voices within India, have expressed indignation at what they see as the global regulator's double standards. The controversy now threatens to spill further into geopolitics, with the Pakistan Cricket Board apparently threatening to withdraw from the tournament and the ICC responding with warnings of harsh penalties. The world now waits to see whether the parties involved will step back from the brink and find an amicable resolution to this deepening crisis.

## A blatant lack of empathy

Bureaucratic failures over parole to Saddam raise concerns

We are shocked and disturbed by the deaths of 22-year-old Kaniz Suborna Swarnali and her nine-month-old child in Bagerhat, the mother allegedly killed her infant before taking her own life. According to news reports, she was driven by prolonged mental distress while her husband, Jewel Hasan (also known as Saddam), president of the banned Chhatra League's Bagerhat Sadar unit, remained in jail and was not granted parole. Despite family claims that they had applied for his parole, he was denied the chance to attend their janaza and could only see their bodies at the prison gate. This tragic incident exposes a serious failure of the state to show basic human compassion for prison inmates and demands proper investigation.

Reportedly, Saddam was arrested in Gopalganj following the fall of the Awami League regime and has been charged in several cases, and Swarnali had been mentally broken by despair during her husband's prolonged imprisonment. Left without meaningful support, she struggled with emotional distress, social pressure and uncertainty. According to the family members, this despair drove her to take her own life after killing her infant. While proper investigations must determine the facts, the larger question remains: who will bear responsibility for these tragic deaths?

The incident also raises broader concerns about Bangladesh's parole system and its implementation. Although existing rules allow emergency parole in the event of a close relative's death, rigid procedures and a lack of compassion often undermine their purpose, as this case painfully illustrates. While the Jashore District Commissioner's Office has stated that they did not receive any parole application, a copy circulated on social media suggests that the family did apply to the Bagerhat district authorities. It later emerged that, since Saddam had been transferred to Jashore jail last December, the application should have been submitted to the Jashore district authorities instead. Because parole was denied, Saddam was forced to bid farewell to his deceased wife and son at a prison gate. The incident demonstrates bureaucratic failure and the glaring lack of empathy on the state's part.

We must also confront the wider political reality that this case demonstrates. Under successive governments, including the authoritarian Awami League regime, political cases kept individuals in jail for prolonged periods without following due process, often with catastrophic consequences for their families. The persistence of this practice, even under the interim government, seriously questions our collective commitment to justice.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

### World's largest diamond discovered

On this day in 1905, a diamond that weighed over a pound was found in the Premier Mine in South Africa.

# EDITORIAL

## Are we getting stuck in the routine of reform?

### A CLOSER LOOK



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TASNEEM TAYEB

At first glance, the interim administration appears to be doing what transitional governments are expected to do. The ground has been steadied. An election date has been announced and is nearing. Charters and ordinances have been drafted. The language of restoration circulates freely, carrying the reassurance that the rupture of July is being responsibly managed.

However, beneath this surface calm, something feels unresolved. Not because politics is loud—if anything, it has grown quieter compared to past election cycles—but the space in which politics is meant to unfold feels narrower than the promise of reform would suggest.

Power does not always govern through force or repression. Often, it governs through mundane procedure—timelines, expert bodies, administrative sequencing, the framing of choices as technical necessities rather than political decisions. And this is experienced not as coercion but as delay, deferral, and the gradual closing of options: through notices, legal ambiguity, and the repeated assurance that reform will follow. The talk of reforms becomes a way of managing uncertainty.

Following the 2024 uprising, reform was presented as both a moral obligation and a political promise. The near-dozen reform commissions and their recommendations, the consensus-building exercises, and finally the adoption of a national charter all pointed towards a reimagining of the state and its power structure. The language was ambitious, suggesting not merely a transition between governments but also a recalibration of how power will be exercised and contested.

But ambition alone does not transform institutions. What matters is where reform is placed in the political timeline and how it is sequenced, controlled, and insulated from political contestation. In Bangladesh's case, many of the major reform measures proposed have been procedurally deferred, their fate and likely impact all but suspended in a future that may or may not arrive.

Since August 2024, the interim government has announced reforms across nearly every major institution of the state. Constitutional amendments were promised through the July National Charter. Electoral,

judicial, anti-corruption, police, and public administration reforms were placed under review. Yet few of the reforms have crossed the threshold from proposal to enactment. The constitutional changes remain tied to future decisions, while many of the police and anti-corruption reforms remain at nascent stages. Meanwhile, electoral reform has focused largely on administration rather than political inclusion.

This pattern has a measurable outcome: reform largely as architecture, not action.

In fact, Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency

International Bangladesh, remarked not long ago that the interim government effectively "surrendered" to bureaucratic power, with many reform targets largely missed. His critique was not that reform ideas were not substantive, but that resistance within the administrative machinery was never meaningfully confronted while pursuing them.

Powerful interests embedded in the bureaucracy diluted or excluded key provisions, including those aimed at strengthening the Anti-Corruption Commission. Despite early expectations, proposals to meaningfully reinforce ACC's independence, particularly its appointment and oversight mechanisms, have yet to materialise. Reform, when it arrived, lost its momentum; authority continued to circulate through familiar, entrenched channels.

This pattern—reform on paper, power elsewhere—is not incidental.

It mirrors a familiar failure in change management: systems are redesigned on paper, processes are updated, but the underlying power structures and practices that sustain the old order are left undisturbed.

Nowhere is this perhaps more visible than in the design of the election itself. The interim government has delivered many of the administrative components expected of it. Timelines are in place. Preparations are underway. From a logistical standpoint, order prevails. Campaigning remains cautious, alliances tentative, and political speech unusually restrained for a moment meant to invite contestation.

But elections are not merely administrative events. They are reconstitutive moments, occasions when political space is reopened, legitimacy renegotiated, and participation meaningfully expanded.

It is here that the reform promise has thinned most visibly. Take, for instance, the nomination of women candidates contesting in the

previous regime have eased, systemic reforms to protect civil liberties and human rights remain incomplete. Arbitrary detention, politically motivated prosecutions, and threats to journalists and vulnerable groups have persisted.

Economist Debapriya Bhattacharya has made a similar point recently, but from another angle, arguing that reforms remain superficial when they rely on institutional blueprints without strengthening the social forces that sustain democratic norms. His observation matters because it exposes a deeper contradiction at the heart of our reform project. Reform was expected to be inclusive, to draw legitimacy from public participation. Instead, it has largely remained insulated: managed at a distance from the society it claims to renew. In this disconnect, the purpose of reform risks defeating itself.

For many citizens, the question is no longer whether reform will be completed, but whether it will ever touch daily political life at all. If reform is to mean more than reassurance, the logic must shift.

Electoral credibility must be treated as a matter of political architecture, not merely administrative efficiency. Transitional moments require mechanisms that widen participation, protect contestation, and prevent dissent from being neutralised as a technical inconvenience. Reform cannot be deferred to post-election promises alone. Within their limited window of authority, interim governments must establish irreversible guardrails—on administrative neutrality, prosecutorial restraint, freedom of expression, and bureaucratic accountability—that shape the way forward.

Resistance to reform must also be confronted. Bureaucratic inertia does not dissolve on its own, and reform fails mostly when power is allowed to hide behind complexity. Institutional change must be socially anchored. Minority representation must be mandated when reforms are being planned. None of this requires dramatic confrontation. But it does require a willingness to treat reform not as a sequence to be managed, but as a political space to be protected.

True, the interim government has restored a degree of calm. The harder task now is to ensure that calm does not harden into closure.

Power does not always close doors outright. Sometimes it keeps people waiting at the threshold, through the routine of procedures, reviews, and assurances. The measure of reform will not be found in the calm of election day, but in whether politics is eventually allowed to cross that threshold, long after the moment of transition has passed.



FILE VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

election—a mere four percent.

In the reform project, legitimacy was meant to be restored by opening up political space; instead, procedures have closed off participation, constrained whose voices matter, and regulated how political competition is allowed. Simply prosecuting the past regime's political actors or barring them from returning to politics, on its own, does not amount to political reform.

By treating the election as a procedural exercise rather than a reconstitutive moment, the interim government has narrowed reform precisely when political possibility was meant to expand. The result is an election that may function smoothly but yet struggle to carry the burden of expectations placed upon it.

Other areas of reform reveal similar tensions between promise and practice. As the Human Rights Watch noted in late July 2025, while some of the most visible abuses associated with the

## How to fix digital public service delivery in Bangladesh



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GM SAIFUL ISLAM

Digital Public Services (DPS) are now an everyday element in citizens' lives. From land records and health appointments to general diaries and transport services, digital platforms increasingly shape how people interact with the government. Yet, the success of these digital services is not guaranteed by their existence alone; it is defined by how they perform when citizens actually try to access them at home, upazila, and district levels.

Across sectors, one challenge emerges repeatedly: fragmentation.

Multiple digital systems often operate in parallel without sufficient integration. As a result, citizens are asked to submit the same information multiple times, and service providers struggle with verification and delays. In land administration, for example, gaps between historical records, mutation registers, and digital ledgers complicate verification and slow down service delivery. These issues are not always apparent at the national level, but they are acutely felt by citizens who must return repeatedly to government

offices to complete a single application.

Infrastructure constraints further complicate service delivery. Unstable servers, slow internet connections, and limited ICT equipment disrupt services at union and upazila offices. When systems go offline, local officials have little control over resolution, but must also be on the receiving end of citizens' frustration. For citizens, infrastructure constraints result in additional travel, lost time, and increased reliance on unofficial intermediaries.

The effectiveness of digital systems largely depends on the people who operate them. Shortages of skilled staff, limited training opportunities, and frequent transfers weaken institutional memory and confidence. Even well-designed platforms lose effectiveness when frontline officials lack the support or authority to use them efficiently. On the citizens' side, limited digital literacy and lack of awareness about procedures and the correct official fees discourage direct use of digital services. Fear of making

mistakes pushes many people towards informal intermediaries, undermining equity and transparency.

Lack of inclusion also remains a central concern. Persons with disabilities, elderly citizens, and residents of remote areas face additional barriers related to accessibility, connectivity, and communication. Digital platforms that do not account for these realities risk widening, rather than narrowing, existing gaps. Inclusion is not achieved by technology alone; it requires deliberate attention to how services are communicated, supported, and delivered at the local level.

Furthermore, delays, unclear processes, and lack of feedback weaken confidence, while timely responses and transparent communication bolster it. Citizens perceive services not only by the outcomes they receive, but by how they are treated during the process. Timely responsiveness (listening, explaining, and acting) is a big part of efficiency.

Meanwhile, informal intermediaries take advantage of complex systems, unclear procedures, and weak capacity. Reducing dependency on such intermediaries requires simplifying processes, improving communication, and strengthening local support mechanisms. When citizens understand procedures and feel confident navigating services, the space for undue influence reduces. One promising approach lies in

practical, light-touch improvements rather than large-scale system overhauls. Union Digital Centres, municipal offices, land offices, and health facilities can become more citizen friendly through simple measures: clear display of service steps and fees, basic help desks during peak hours, and improved coordination among local offices. Such changes may appear modest, but they directly improve citizen experience.

Temporary or mobile service delivery at union or ward levels via service camps can reduce travel burdens and reach populations that struggle to access fixed offices. These initiatives are particularly valuable for elderly citizens, persons with disabilities, and those living in remote areas.

Many citizens are unaware of available services, required documents, or official fees. Campaigns using multiple channels like courtyard meetings, Union Parishad offices, video displays, social media, and mobile messaging can help bridge this gap. Clear, simple information empowers citizens and reduces misinformation.

Citizen centric digital transformation is not a one-time effort, but should be an ongoing process of adjustment, learning, and trust-building. Systems must be supported by capable institutions, informed citizens, and responsive leadership. Ultimately, digital public services succeed when they align with local realities.

## POLITICAL SATIRE

# Men to the rescue: A modest proposal for women's political relief

## THE SOUND AND THE FURY

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SUSHMITA S PREETHA

In a generous act of national service, men across the political spectrum have stepped forward to rescue women from the exhausting burden of political participation. Panels have been formed. Microphones secured. At last, women's rights are being discussed safely, sensibly, and above all, without women.

This is a relief to everyone involved.

Women, after all, are busy. They have revolutions to survive, harassment to endure, families to manage, jobs to show up to (frequently at unequal pay), reputations to defend, and public humiliation to absorb with grace. Why add the chaos of elections to the list? Standing for office is stressful. It requires money, stamina, exposure, and the willingness to be misrepresented daily. Men, ever thoughtful, have decided to spare women this ordeal by simply doing politics on their behalf.

It is an elegant solution.

Out of 1,981 parliamentary candidates nationwide, about 76 are women, a figure so modest it can be presented without blushing, while 30 registered political parties have achieved the remarkable feat of submitting nomination lists without a single woman among them. This, you see, is what happens when concern is properly organised.

First and forevermore, applause must go to the National Consensus Commission, that shrine to male consensus building, which gathered the nation's finest defenders of the status quo to confront the truly destabilising prospect of women in politics. After much hand-wringing and heroic restraint, it delivered a proposal of breathtaking bravado: five percent female candidates. Five percent asked for almost nothing—and still proved too much. That most parties couldn't even bring themselves to nominate a single woman was really just an honest admission that even symbolic inclusion requires effort. Tokenism,

it turns out, is hard work.

Credit must also be given to the Election Commission, which looked on serenely as parties violated this laughably low bar agreed upon in the July Charter (accountability is such an aggressive word). And how can one forget the interim government, many of whose members built lifelong careers peddling women's empowerment and now oversee its quiet disappearance with the steady professionalism of people who know exactly what they are doing?

If you think about it (and women, really, should not bother to do that), women are being protected from the indignity of candidacy itself. No need to tire themselves with fundraising, smear campaigns, threats, abuse, or character assassination. True, women are receiving most of this anyway—just without the inconvenience of a seat, or any authority. But let's not get distracted by details.

Women already do most of the unpaid work that keeps the economy from collapsing on its own. This includes care work, emotional labour, crisis management, ensuring food security, and the small matter of reproducing the labour force. None of this appears in GDP calculations, which is how we know it is essential.

In the fields, women are bent over rice seedlings at dawn and still working when the light fades, saving seed for the next season, feeding animals, processing harvests, and running households, as if these were not already several full-time jobs. Along the water, they dry fish, mend nets, process shrimp, manage ponds, and quietly keep the entire post-harvest economy afloat. Naturally, none of this qualifies them as farmers or fisherfolk. Recognition, after all, is reserved for people who own boats, land titles, or microphones loud enough to drown reality.

In garments, women earn the foreign exchange that props up national pride, exports, and press releases. In return, they are offered long hours, low wages, and inspirational speeches about resilience. Political representation would only spoil the symmetry.

Women are also, inconveniently, busy managing violence, which is a full time occupation in itself. Not just the cinematic

Men can debate land rights while women cultivate land they do not own. You get the gist. It is a beautiful division of labour.

Unencumbered by the unrealistic expectations of capitalist fascist patriarchy, men can, thankfully, continue their public service with the grace of people who never had to apologise for their existence. They gather in rooms designed to keep out women, reach consensus, issue statements, and nod

nominate a single woman to parliament, and manage to organise all-male panels under the banner of its women's wing, where men gather to discuss women's lives so women don't have to.

The farce continues with the National Citizen Party, which arrived bearing the promise of a "new arrangement," only to reveal that the arrangement was new mainly in branding. Like Jamaat, the NCP is keenly concerned about women, particularly about when they should step aside for the greater good. The women who stayed with the party through its many contradictions over the past year, defending it and absorbing criticism on its behalf, were eventually unceremoniously discarded when alliances had to be secured and seats redistributed. This, too, was done for women's own good. Surely, nothing spares women the burden of politics quite like being cut loose at the moment power is negotiated.

And then there is the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), now burnished into a symbol of liberal respectability and rhetorical commitment to women's empowerment. When it came time to translate principle into practice, the party managed an impressive 3.5 percent of women candidates. Not nothing, you understand. Just very nearly. This was achieved, in part, by discarding figures like Rumin Farhana, who spent years defending the party with near-ornithological ferocity at a time when senior BNP leaders were so absent from public view that one could have searched for them with a microscope. Her reward was dismissal. Why? For the unforgivable offence of failing to heed the party line, apparently. And in a party that treats corruption and opportunism as survivable flaws, it was almost moving to see discipline enforced with such speed—once again, and unmistakably, on a woman.

It is all very caring, let me reassure you.

We should all really just heave a sigh of relief that women are being spared the chaos of elections, the mess of ambition, and the danger of visibility. They are being protected from power itself, which, frankly, can be bad for one's skin. Instead, they can continue doing what they do best: holding everything together while being politely excluded from the decisions that affect them.

The men, generously, will take it from here. At least until the next uprising, when women will once again be urgently required.



ILLUSTRATION: BIPLOB CHAKRABORTY

kind that earns headlines and hashtags, but the ordinary, bureaucratic sort: deciding which streets feel safe today, how much to say, when to shut up, which message to delete, which threat to ignore, which warning to take seriously. A constant, low-level calculation that stretches from home to office to street to screen. By the time all that is accounted for, the idea that women should also sit around pondering their political futures, drafting demands, or contesting power begins to feel wildly unrealistic. Luckily, men—freed from these minor inconveniences—have stepped in to do the thinking. It's efficient. It keeps things moving. No one has to ask awkward questions about why women are always exhausted.

Politics is where we need men to handle the heavy intellectual lifting. Men can decide budgets while women stretch them. Men can design policies while women survive them.

gravely. They mansplain to women why now is not the time, why patience is strategic, and why they need to "trust the process." They warn women not to fracture unity—meaning the unity of men who already agree.

This posture of benevolent supervision is perfected by Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, which insists every chance it gets that it is deeply invested in women's wellbeing. Jamaat does not exclude women from power; it protects them from it. Consider the generosity of promising to reduce women's working hours to five a day, a touching gesture of concern that somehow never extends to equal pay, job security, or the question of who will make up the lost wages. Women, apparently, need rest—but not remuneration. Authority, meanwhile, remains far too strenuous to risk. This is the same party that speaks endlessly about women's dignity while failing to

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CLEAN ENERGY

# Can we afford to not pursue clean energy?

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RAIDA A. K. REZA

Conversations around energy transitions are typically focused on swift transitions, with solar panels appearing overnight on rooftops, wind farms sprouting across landscapes like mushrooms after rain. The reality, particularly for developing nations navigating complex economic pressures, tells a different story.

And for Bangladesh, a country that simultaneously grapples with climate vulnerability and economic transition, clean energy isn't just an environmental aspiration, but a necessity that could redefine the industrial future.

Picture this: nearly 666 million people globally still live without reliable electricity, with over 85 percent concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa. And while the entire population in Bangladesh is said to have access to the grid, "access" is not the same as reliability. Frequent power cuts and a heavy reliance on expensive, imported fuels make the system fragile.

While the lights are mostly on, heating energy is where the real crisis resides. Less than 30 percent of Bangladeshi households have access to clean cooking fuels like gas or electricity. Most still rely on wood or crop waste, creating indoor smoke that is a leading cause of early death in the country. This "energy poverty" isn't just an inconvenience, but a significant health hazard to a substantial portion of the population.

However, Bangladesh suffers not only from a lack of energy access, but is also one of the world's most climate-vulnerable nations. According to the World Bank, tropical cyclones already cost the country about \$1 billion every year. If sea levels rise by just 27 cm by 2050 (which is a very real possibility), the southern coast could lose nearly 18

percent of its farmland, plunging the country into a severe food crisis.

Every new coal or gas plant built today adds to this risk of exacerbating climate change. The irony is that Bangladesh produces very little of the world's pollution, yet it pays one of the highest prices.

Transitioning to clean energy isn't just about "being green," but also about stopping the cycle of damage that drains billions from the economy. Bangladesh's economy relies heavily on exports, with around 85 percent of its export earnings coming from the readymade garment industry. To

grow further into leather, jute, and food processing, the country needs massive amounts of energy. Modern manufacturing is energy-intensive. The RMG sector requires reliable, affordable electricity for every stage of production, from spinning yarn to running sewing machines to powering climate-controlled warehouses. Leather processing demands substantial energy for tanning and finishing. Food processing and cold chain logistics are energy voracious. If Bangladesh hopes to expand and diversify its industrial base, it must solve the energy equation.

Currently, the country is stuck in an "import trap." About 65 percent of the country's power depends on imported fossil fuels like liquefied natural gas (LNG) and coal. In 2025 alone, the cost of importing LNG jumped to nearly \$3.9 billion.

So, when global fuel prices spike because of wars or supply chains, Bangladeshi factories suffer.

Clean energy offers an alternative pathway. By using sunlight and renewable resources, Bangladesh can harness energy domestically, reducing import dependence and price volatility.

Renewable energy projects create construction and operations jobs. Reduced fuel imports improve trade balances. Lower energy costs enhance industrial competitiveness. Energy access in rural areas unlocks economic opportunities previously constrained by darkness.

Renewable sources are abundant, emit minimal greenhouse gases,

and offer energy sovereignty. To stay stable, Bangladesh must move away from fossil fuels. Bangladesh has a goal: to have 40 percent renewable energy in its energy mix by 2041.

The International Day of Clean Energy, observed on January 26, is also the founding date of the International Renewable Energy Agency, and it serves as more than ceremonial recognition. It's a call to action for just and inclusive energy transitions that benefit both people and planet.

For Bangladesh, this day should prompt reflection on uncomfortable truths. Economic stability cannot be built on unstable energy foundations. Industrial diversification cannot succeed without reliable, affordable power. Climate adaptation cannot happen while simultaneously expanding the fossil fuel infrastructure that accelerates

climate catastrophe.

Progress is taking place. Renewable energy capacity in developing countries has grown from 155 watts per capita in 2015 to 341 watts less than a decade later. But Bangladesh, along with the global community, remains off track in terms of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7, which calls for universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy by 2030.

Of course, change takes time. The export diversification Bangladesh is seeking won't be achieved overnight. The clean energy transition requires patient, sustained policy interventions and investments. But the foundation must be laid now, even amid fiscal constraints and global uncertainties.

The incoming government faces a momentous choice: continue down

a path of energy vulnerability and climate risk or embrace clean energy as the cornerstone of economic stability, industrial competitiveness, and climate resilience. The former threatens continued instability. The latter offers a fighting chance at a sustainable future.

For a nation that has survived cyclones, floods, and countless other challenges through resilience and ingenuity, the clean energy transition represents not a burden but an opportunity. An opportunity to power industries with the sun, to build stability on renewable foundations, and to demonstrate that climate vulnerability can catalyse climate leadership.

The question isn't whether Bangladesh can afford this transition, but whether it can afford not to pursue it.

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer  
Education Engineering Department  
KushtiaWebsite: [ced.kushtia.gov.bd](http://ced.kushtia.gov.bd)

Date: 25/01/2026

## e-Tender Notice No. 37/2025-26

## Limited Tendering Method

This is to notify all concerned that e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of following works. Details are given below:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of work	Document last selling (date & time)	Tender closing (date & time)
1	1219095	EED/Kush/5974/TMED/2024-25/WR-04	Construction of internal roads, main gate and boundary wall at Jugia Dakhil Madrasa, Sadar, Kushtia.	09-Feb-2026 16:00	10-Feb-2026 13:00
2	1219096	EED/Kush/5974/TMED/2024-25/WR-05	Construction of semi-Paka hall room including Repair and renovation work of EED Building at Daulatpur Dakhil Madrasa, Daulatpur, Kushtia.	09-Feb-2026 16:00	10-Feb-2026 13:00
3	1219097	EED/Kush/5974/TMED/2024-25/WR-06	Overall repair and renovation work of existing buildings including construction of main gate at Khoksha Darul Uloom Dakhil Madrasa, Khoksha, Kushtia.	09-Feb-2026 16:00	10-Feb-2026 13:00
4	1219098	EED/Kush/5974/TMED/2024-25/WR-07	Construction work of Boundary wall at Bahir Char Sol Dagh Dakhil Madrasa, Bheramara, Kushtia.	09-Feb-2026 16:00	10-Feb-2026 13:00

The interested persons/firms may visit website (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) to get the details of the tender. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information & guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

  
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# AGAINST FORGETTING

## Chobi Mela XI bears witness to worldwide injustices

PHOTOS:  
ABRAR FAIYAZ NILOY

**It is imperative to understand what it means to live within a wound because what follows is tracing the architecture of violence and in doing so, discover the possibilities within the cracks.**

FAIZA RAMIM

As Chobi Mela XI unfolds in the country's capital, cruelty around the world continues without interruption. In the United States, a two-year-old child was detained by ICE. ICU nurse Alex Preti was killed by the same system, his hands trained to mend bodies recast as a threat. Gaza remains under occupation. Across the world, immigrants are detained, ecologies are bulldozed, communities are uprooted from ancestral homes so land can be repackaged for profit. Some of these crises dominate headlines. Others dissolve into silence, not because they lack irony, but because fatigue has settled into the throat, and pleading begins to feel indistinguishable from being ignored.

In an interview, poet Richard Siken says, "Art doesn't come from trauma, art comes from curiosity." And we are most

curious when the emotions we feel are so intense that even more than tending to them or managing to live through them, understanding them feels as crucial as breathing. Living with grief is painful, but living through meaningless grief is impossible. It is easy to mistake this exhibition as portrayals of trauma, of grieving, but such can't be said when that is the reality people exist within. But it is just an exhibition of resistance, resilience and endurance than of torture and exploitation, sometimes more former than the latter.

It is imperative to understand what it means to live within a wound because what follows is tracing the architecture of violence and in doing so, discover the possibilities within the cracks.

Chobi Mela, in its eleventh year, gathers artists and activists from across the world to chart an atlas of violence and the survival that insists beneath it. Samar Abu Elouf's *Out of Gaza*, the face of the festival, documents survivors evacuated to Qatar for medical treatment. Samia Emad's *Genocide Kitchen* speaks to the ingenuity of human beings who find ways to sustain



one another within systematic starvation.

The exhibition refuses to locate violence in one geography or one type of body. Karachi LaJamia documents the filling of rivers and canals to produce hegemonic infrastructures, displacing native communities to serve a privileged fraction. Through a Guided Meditation in Urdu, the artist asks the listener to return the body to itself, to sit with the tremor beneath the surface, imagine themselves as one with nature, and of the sea's tides towards the Mazar as someone attempting to reconnect with their lover.

Since the dawn of the world, the atlas has shifted many times. The cartographer has erased and made up demarcations. Through colonial extraction and militarisation, rivers are rerouted. Dams are built for human advantage. But water finds its path.

Returning to its course cannot be called destruction when the land is reclaiming what was taken from it.

Toni Morrison describes flood as a way of remembering. The flood that we know now used to hold a different meaning. It was regarded as a blessing, a force that replenished soil and promised harvest. People in their rightful land, who knew how to respect and love the soil that sustains them, stood on mountains and offered gratitude for what the waters carried.



Thao Nguyen Phan's *Becoming Alluvium* tells of two brothers who died in flood and return as an Irrawaddy dolphin and a water hyacinth, speaking of past lives and altered forms. There is tenderness in the idea that their new existence holds less power to harm, as opposed to being humans. Vietnam's rapid commercialisation, driven by tourism and the desire to avoid obsolescence, frames renewal as progress. But the actions of capitalism speak more of what it discards than what it creates: histories of violence, of destruction and injustice. The infrastructure is a front attempting to hide and erase its recurring impurity, unforgivable sins towards humans, towards nature.

Nature does not forget. Nature does not negotiate. But unfairness exists here too. The burden falls unevenly. The people least responsible remain the most exposed.

The World Bank notes that the seventy-four lowest-income countries contribute only a small share of global emissions, yet they face a dramatic rise in climate-related disasters, nearly eight times more in the past decade than in the 1980s. By 2050, unchecked climate change could drive more than 200 million people into internal displacement and push up to 130 million into poverty.

The exhibition continues to widen its lens throughout multiple

geographies. Myriam Boulos documents the Lebanese revolution of 2019, the economic collapse that followed, and the Beirut port explosion in *What's Ours*. Felipe Romero Beltrán traces the suspended lives of nine young men in detention centres, waiting for a verdict while trying to cross a border. Daniel Chatard records infrastructural destruction in Germany. Mosfiqur Rahman Johar holds memories of enforced disappearance. Jannatul Mawa draws attention to the erased contributions of women. Sumi Anjuman documents violence in domestic spaces endured by women who work simply to survive.

The art extends beyond photography across multiple mediums. Short films, bioscopes, interactive pixel games, flipbooks, television screens, guided meditations. The exhibition does not allow distance. It pulls the viewer into the grain of other lives until engagement becomes unavoidable. It demands introspection, to open your eyes and unbrand liberation. The outrage that you inevitably feel is its own form of clarity.

Chobi Mela is taking place across multiple locations: DrikPath Bhabon, Shilpakala Academy, the National Museum, Alliance Française Dhanmondi, and the Joyeeta Foundation. Artist talks are scheduled at the Joyeeta Foundation, while workshops and portfolio reviews take place at the Pathshala South Asian Media Institute in DrikPath Bhabon. Shilpakala Academy is also arranging art and education programmes for school children from 25 to 29 January. The opening rally was held on 16 January, and the festival is scheduled to continue until 30 January.

# NEWS

## EC ready to deliver free, fair polls

FROM PAGE 12  
constitutional responsibility, Nasir Uddin said the government was providing all necessary support to the EC, with security, law and order, and election-related matters receiving the highest priority.

"Law enforcement agencies and relevant government institutions are working to ensure a peaceful, orderly, and secure voting environment," he said.

The CEC expressed hope for continued cooperation from diplomats in advancing the electoral process.

He said the upcoming referendum and parliamentary election were key milestones for strengthening democratic solidarity and restoring public confidence in state institutions, as the country stood at a democratic crossroads.

About 800,000 expatriate voters have registered under this system. Postal voting has also been introduced domestically, allowing government officials, election staff working outside their constituencies, and registered voters in legal custody to cast their ballots.

## Bagerhat BCL leader's wife, child laid to rest

FROM PAGE 12  
jail gate instead.

Speaking to this newspaper, Bagerhat Deputy Commissioner Golam Md Baten said Saddam's family had applied for his release on parole and added that as Saddam was at Jashore jail, the authority to grant parole rested with the Jashore deputy commissioner.

"I could not act on the application directly, but I advised the family to approach the Jashore DC. I also contacted the Jashore jail superintendent to ensure they received assistance."

Contacted, Jashore Deputy Commissioner Ashok Hasan said he had not received any parole application from Saddam's family seeking his release.

Earlier on Saturday, police recovered the bodies of Swarnali and her child from their residence in Sabekdanga village. After post-mortem examinations at Bagerhat 250-bed District Hospital, the bodies were handed over to the family.

Speaking to reporters, Swarnali's brother Shubho said his sister had married Saddam around five years ago. She had been under severe

mental distress since her husband's arrest following the fall of the Awami League regime on August 5, 2024, and his subsequent implication in several cases.

"My sister had been mentally distressed since her husband's imprisonment. She tried in many ways to secure his release. This caused severe mental stress and depression," he claimed.

Subarna's father, local Jatiya Party leader Ruhul Amin Howlader, said, "My daughter died by suicide. We do not want to blame anyone. We applied to receive the bodies of my daughter and grandson without delay. Now we will follow whatever decision the administration takes."

Officer-in-Charge of Bagerhat Sadar Police Station Mohammad Masum Khan said a murder case had been filed over the death of the child.

"At this stage, whether the death of Subarna was a murder or a suicide will be determined after the official autopsy report is received," he said yesterday, adding that further legal steps would depend on the findings.

**A RIGHTS VIOLATION: ASK**  
Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) yesterday said that denying parole to Saddam

was a violation of the constitution and international human rights law.

"Despite an application from the family amid the extreme humanitarian circumstances arising from the deaths of his wife and child, denying parole release and refusing him the opportunity to participate in the janaza and burial has, in effect, subjected him to inhuman and degrading treatment."

"This constitutes a direct violation of article 35(5) of the constitution," said a statement signed by ASK Chairperson and Supreme Court lawyer ZI Khan Panna.

Citing international law, ASK said Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) prohibits cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, while Article 10(1) requires that all persons deprived of liberty be treated with humanity and with respect for their inherent dignity.

Allowing a grieving prisoner to see the faces of his deceased wife and child for five minutes at the jail gate and depriving him of the opportunity to attend the janaza and burial are wholly inconsistent with these provisions of the ICCPR, the statement said.

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## Three candidates omit UK assets

FROM PAGE 12  
However, UK corporate filings show that the net assets of the chamber are worth Tk 3.5 crore, and that he owns 95 percent of its shares.

Quamruzzaman said he forfeited his British citizenship on December 22, 2025.

His case was among those deliberated by the EC, which ultimately declared his candidacy valid on January 21.

Quamruzzaman told this newspaper that he does not earn anything from Coombe Hill Development and therefore did not mention it in his affidavit.

"Lawyers are often appointed as directors in companies. I was similarly made a director there," he said.

The nationality of Mohammed Koysoor Ahmed, BNP's candidate for

Sunamganj-3, is listed as "British" in UK corporate filings.

However, in his affidavit, Koysoor stated that he neither holds dual citizenship nor has held any foreign citizenship in the past.

British corporate records show that Koysoor was the director of a company called Sonargaon Indian Cuisine Limited for 14 years until it was dissolved in October 2022.

When the company was incorporated in 2008, Koysoor was a Bangladeshi national.

From 2009 onwards, however, corporate documents list him as British. The records were duly authenticated.

The company went bankrupt and was liquidated in 2014.

At the time of liquidation, it owed £303,132 to its creditors, most of

which was owed to the UK's income tax authority.

This is further reflected in the corporate filings of another company he registered in 2016, where his nationality is again listed as British.

In his affidavit, Koysoor stated that he earns around Tk 15 lakh annually from the UK.

However, he did not disclose any overseas income of his wife, Taslima Akhter Lima.

Lima, British national, owns four active companies in the UK, according to the affidavit. The annual returns of these companies show that all are currently loss-making ventures.

This newspaper made multiple attempts over several days to reach Koysoor by phone, but he did not respond.

## Police probing

FROM PAGE 2  
Defence in Narisingdi, said, "We got information about the fire from highway police around 3:20am. We went to the spot and brought the fire under control within 15 minutes."

Although he claimed that primary investigation suggested the fire had originated from an electric short circuit, a CCTV camera footage that went viral on social media showed a man was loitering in front of the workshop before it caught fire.

SI Ishq said an analysis of the footage showed that the man stayed for around one hour and 20 minutes near the workshop that night.

"He had bread, sitting near the workshop. We saw the man collecting dry waste and setting them on fire to warm himself."

"We suspect that the waste in front of the workshop was mixed with flammable substances like petrol or kerosene. When the fire spread quickly, the man left the scene," he said.

"It appears to us that he was a vagabond. We are trying to identify and arrest him," said the police officer.

Asked about the fire service official's claim that the fire originated from an electric short circuit, Ishq said, "I don't know how he [fire official] said this."

Rubel on Sunday evening filed a case over Chanchal's death, accusing unnamed persons. The body was handed over to family members after autopsy, he said.

"We want the police to find out the truth... We want justice," said Rubel.

Contacted, the police station's Officer-in-Charge ARM Al Mamun said, "We are investigating the reason behind the incident."

(UNOs) from performing their duties properly, he said, hoping that the next government will ensure an environment where UNOs can work independently.

Commitments must be made that government employees will not be used for political gains. "When politicians allow this, some bureaucrats become reckless," he added.

A grade-10 officer at the Cabinet Division said cadre officers often receive promotions in greater numbers and earlier than expected, while many capable non-cadre officers are not promoted beyond the post of deputy secretary despite their outstanding performance.

"The system should be reformed to end this discrimination," he told The Daily Star.

If the next government takes appropriate steps in this regard, capable non-cadre officers will be duly recognised, he added.

Talking to this newspaper, several lower-grade employees said they hope the next government will bring an end to the practice of providing benefits to officials who flatter those in power.

The manifesto of political parties should outline a fair, justice-based pay structure and a clear framework for promotions and postings, they said.

Giving an example of disparities in the pay structure, a grade-16 officer at the home ministry said an officer of Grade-5 and above (admin cadre) draws a high salary and also gets an interest-free car loan of Tk 30 lakh and Tk 50,000 a month as car allowance. In contrast, a peon working in the same office receives Tk 8,000-10,000 in monthly salary and allowances.

"This inequality must end," the officer said.

# NEWS

## Torture and screams 82 lakh use illicit drugs in country

FROM PAGE 3

He told the tribunal that interrogators questioned him about his social media posts, threatened to kill him, and said he had been detained on government orders.

Hasinur said he was first picked up on July 9, 2011, while serving as a lieutenant colonel at his office inside Mymensingh Cantonment.

He said senior officers summoned him late at night, forcibly detained him and took him to Dhaka, where he was held for 43 days inside an interrogation cell, blindfolded and handcuffed.

He was later court-martialed on what he described as a "false and fabricated" charge of involvement with the banned militant outfit Harkat-ul Jihad and sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

His appeal against the verdict was never disposed of. He said he was released in 2014 on the order of then army chief Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan.

## Old video, fake media

FROM PAGE 3

The national election is ahead. You must exercise your voting rights yourselves and form a government of your choice."

At the time the fact-check report was published, the most viral version of the clip on TikTok garnered 26,000 views, 900 reactions and 100 shares.

However, Rumor Scanner's fact-check found that the video is neither recent nor linked to the upcoming 13th national parliamentary election. The footage dates back to 2023 and shows remarks made by the president in the context of the 12th national parliamentary election.

During verification, fact-checkers found a video titled "Let the upcoming election be fair: Mohammed Shahabuddin" published on February 13, 2023, on the YouTube channel of ATN News. The circulated clip matches this original video.

In the original footage, the president was speaking ahead of the 12th national

Hasinur said he was again abducted and forcibly disappeared on August 8, 2018. He said he was taken to a secret facility where he was beaten, kept in filthy and damp rooms under glaring lights, and subjected to electric shocks. Masked interrogators threatened to kill him and dump his body, warning that he was being held on "government orders".

He alleged that interrogators demanded access to his Facebook account and questioned him about his writings against then army chief Gen Aziz Ahmed, the 2014 election, and what they described as "negative" writings about the Awami League and India.

Hasinur claimed the facility was inside the DGFI Headquarters complex near Dhaka Cantonment and was referred to as Aynagar by guards themselves.

He said he was finally released on February 22, 2020, after nearly 18 months in secret detention.

FROM PAGE 3

BMU and Research and Management Consultants Limited jointly conducted the study between February and June last year. The findings were disseminated at a programme at BMU yesterday.

According to a BMU press release, data were collected using the Network Scale-Up Method (NSUM) from 13 districts and 26 upazilas across all eight divisions.

The research was supervised by the Department of Narcotics Control. The findings were presented by Chief Investigator Prof Saif Ullah Munshi, also dean of the Faculty of Basic Science and Para-Clinical Sciences.

The total estimated number of people using any type of substance nationwide stands at 81,94,605, the survey said.

Cannabis was identified as the most widely used drug, with around 61 lakh users. It was followed by yaba or methamphetamine (approximately 22.92 lakh users) and alcohol (20.20

lakh).

The survey estimated that around 39,000 people inject drugs, placing them at high risk of HIV, hepatitis and other infectious diseases.

Other substances used include cocaine phosphate (3.39 lakh users), heroin (3.22 lakh), and sleeping pills (3.05 lakh). Smaller numbers were reported for crystal meth or ice (11,888 users), LSD (5,095), and other substances (1,35,864).

The prevalence rate of substance use varied significantly across divisions. Mymensingh recorded the highest rate at 6.02 percent, followed by Rangpur at 6.00 percent and Chattogram at 5.50 percent.

Lower prevalence rates were observed in Rajshahi (2.72 percent) and Khulna (4.08 percent).

Division wise estimated numbers of substance users are: Barishal 4,04,118; Chattogram 18,79,503; Dhaka 22,87,970; Khulna 7,26,210; Mymensingh 7,60,812; Rajshahi 5,66,509; Rangpur 10,80,588; and Sylhet 4,88,141.

## 3,000 leprosy cases detected

FROM PAGE 3

She said 2,640 new cases were detected in the first nine months of last year, while the figures were 3,519 in 2024 and 3,639 in the previous year.

The National Leprosy Programme, in collaboration with NGOs, has been identifying new patients and providing treatment, she said.

There is a national strategic plan for 2023 to 2030 and an updated national guideline for treatment, she added, but said several barriers were holding back their efforts.

She said the national programme currently has no funds to continue essential activities such as training, capacity building, assessment and surveillance, while many posts remain vacant.

Talking to this correspondent after the programme, she said that following the expiry of the

sectoral programme last year, operations have been continuing with funding provided by the World Health Organization.

She said a massive drive is needed in high-burden districts to detect new cases and ensure patients receive treatment.

Shishir Moral, a special correspondent at Prothom Alo, said leprosy has long been neglected and receives very little media coverage.

Rajesh Narwal, deputy representative of WHO Bangladesh, said media and communities need to come forward to create awareness about leprosy.

Sheikh Momena Moni, an additional secretary of the health ministry, said many with leprosy are afraid to disclose their condition due to superstition. She also emphasised the need to address manpower and infrastructure challenges in leprosy treatment.

Prof Abu Jafor, director

In Bangladesh, treatment and rehabilitation services for drug users remain very limited.

The study found that only 13 percent of drug users have ever accessed treatment or rehabilitation services. Although more than half have attempted to quit, most were unsuccessful due to the lack of proper treatment for drug dependence, counselling, and social and financial support.

Drug users identified treatment and rehabilitation services (69 percent), counselling (62 percent), and employment support (41.2 percent) as their most urgent needs.

About 68 percent also reported facing stigma and discrimination within their families and communities.

BMU Vice Chancellor Prof Shahinul Alam stressed the need for political commitment and continued research to combat drug abuse. DNC Director General Hasan Maruf called for sustained social movements and collective campaigns to counter the threat.

## ICT verdict in Chankharpul

FROM PAGE 3

The prosecution alleges that during the uprising, the eight accused committed crimes against humanity by murdering six unarmed civilian protesters as part of a widespread and systematic attack.

Former DMP commissioner Habibur, joint commissioner Sudip, additional deputy commissioner Akhtarul, assistant commissioner Imrul and inspector Arshad are accused of issuing, supervising or enforcing orders to open fire.

On November 17 last year, the tribunal delivered its first verdict related to the uprising, sentencing deposited prime minister Sheikh Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal to death in absentia.

mark the second judgment delivered by the tribunal in cases concerning crimes against humanity linked to the July uprising.

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## Land rights, legal recognition

FROM PAGE 3

Communication Officer Hrasraching Chowdhury Rony moderated the session.

In his opening remarks, Kapeeng Foundation Executive Director Pallab Chakma said concern for indigenous issues remained limited.

Presenting the keynote paper, Kapeeng Foundation Programme Manager Ujjal Azim said plainland indigenous communities had lived in the region for centuries with distinct languages, cultures and nature-based livelihoods, yet remained marginalised within the state structure.

He placed five demands, including constitutional recognition of indigenous peoples, formation of a separate land commission for plainland communities, ensuring indigenous representation in development processes, creating indigenous-friendly education and healthcare systems, and institutional support to preserve indigenous languages and culture through textbooks and the media.

Highlighting ground realities, Serila Lamin, a representative from the indigenous community, said

"Without changing this mentality and ensuring indigenous inclusion in lawmaking, these problems will persist," he said, supporting demands for a land commission and a separate directorate for plainland indigenous peoples.

Association for Land Reform and Development Executive Director Shamsul Huda said unresolved indigenous issues remained in several ordinances yet to be enacted into law.

"A forest commission with indigenous representation is essential for protecting both forests and indigenous rights," he said.

National Human Rights Commission Secretary Sebastian Rema said, "Without coordination within the state structure and unity among indigenous communities, these problems cannot be resolved."

## PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 26

Faz	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-35	12-45	4-15	5-46	7-15
JAMAAT 6-10	1-15	4-30	5-50	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

রেজিস্টার দপ্তর  
যশোর বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়  
যশোর-৭৪০৮, বাংলাদেশ

Memo No. 37.01.4101.000.103.61.0002.26.35

Office of the Registrar  
Jashore University of Science and Technology  
Jashore-7408, Bangladesh

Date: 25 Jan 2026

### Admission Circular

#### (Full-time/ Part-time M.Phil and Ph.D Program)

Applications are invited for admission in full-time/part-time PhD programs for the following departments:

- Computer Science and Engineering (CSE),
- Environmental Science and Technology (EST),
- Microbiology (MB),
- Fisheries and Marine Bioscience (FMB),
- Chemical Engineering (ChE),
- Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (GEBT),
- Industrial and Production Engineering (IPE),
- Petroleum and Mining Engineering (PME),
- Nutrition and Food Technology (NFT),
- Pharmacy (PHARM),
- Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE),
- Physical Education and Sports Science (PESS),
- Physics (PHY),
- Chemistry (CHEM),
- Mathematics (MATH),
- English (ENG),
- Food Engineering (FE),
- Accounting and Information Systems (AIS),
- Biomedical Engineering (BME),
- Finance and Banking (FB),
- Management (MGT),
- Textile Engineering (TE),
- Marketing (MKT),
- Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation (PTR),
- Nursing and Health Science (NHS),
- Climate and Disaster Management (CDM),
- Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (FVM),
- Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (BMB) and
- Applied Statistics and Data Science (ASDS)

This invitation for admission is applicable for January-2026 semester of 2025-2026 academic year.

- General qualifications, conditions and the process of admission form collection and submission of the PhD program are available in the university website (<https://just.edu.bd/notices>) or in the respective departments.
- The application form has to be filled-up properly and submitted to the respective department by 01/02/2026 (excluding holidays).

GD-178

Engr. Md. Ahsan Habib  
Registrar

## Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Project Director  
Accelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) Project  
Directorate of Technical Education

F-4/B, Agargaon A/A, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Memo No. 57.03.0000.051.07.881.25-357

Date: 25/01/2026

### Amendment 1

#### Package No: CP-GD-34

**Package Name:** Supply, installation and commissioning of Full Mission Engine Room Simulator, Liquid Cargo Handling Simulator & High Voltage Simulator for Ship Building and Marine Technology of Institute of Marine Technologies

**Document Originally Issued on:** 28-October-2025

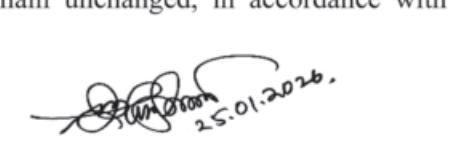
**Amendment Issued on:** 25-January-2026

The tender document was originally issued on 28 October 2025. As per the original tender document, the deadline for submission of requests for clarification was 20 November 2025. During this period, several queries were received from potential bidders.

The Procuring Entity (PE) conducted multiple meetings with the end users and other relevant stakeholders to address the issues raised. In the meantime, the tender submission deadline was extended twice. As per Corrigendum-2, the final date of tender submission is 15 February 2026.

Based on discussions addressing the queries received from the suppliers and the requirements of the end users, necessary amendments have been incorporated into the Tender Document. The amended tender document will be provided to all bidders who have already purchased the tender document and will also be made available at the project office to allow further participation of potential bidders.

The tender submission and opening date and time shall remain unchanged, in accordance with Corrigendum-2.

  
Mir Zahid Hasan  
Project Director (Additional Secretary)  
ASSET Project  
Directorate of Technical Education  
E-mail: pd@asset-dte.gov.bd

**ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন**  
**Dhaka South City Corporation**  
নগর ভবন, ঢাকা

ফোনঃ ৯৮৫৭১৮০-৮১, ৯৮৫৭১৮১, ৯৮৫৭১৮২, ৯৮৫৭১৮৩-৮৯, ৯৮৫৮২৫৫-৫৯, ৯৮৫৮৩৫৭-৬০, [www.dscc.gov.bd](http://www.dscc.gov.bd)

স্মারকঃ ৮৬.২০৭.০০০.১২.০০.১৭০.২০২৬

**পুনঃ দরপত্র নোটিশ**

বর্জ্য ব্যবস্থাপনা কাজের গতিশীলতা ও মানোবিক স্বাস্থ্য প্রাথমিক বর্জ্য সংস্থার সেবা প্রাপ্তির লক্ষ্যে নতুন নিবন্ধন কার্যক্রম গ্রহণ করা হচ্ছে। ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের নগর ভবন ও আধারশিক্ষণ যথের স্বাস্থ্য প্রাথমিক বর্জ্য সংস্থার সেবা এবং প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে নিম্নলিখিত শর্ত অনুসরণপূর্বক আবেদনপত্র ত্রুট্য ও জমা প্রদানের জন্য অনুরোধ করা হচ্ছে।

ক) প্রযোজ্য শর্তাবলীঃ

- আবেদনপত্র ত্রুট্য ও জমা প্রদান কার্যক্রম অনলাইনে সম্পন্ন করতে হবে। ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের নগর ভবন ও আধারশিক্ষণ যথের স্বাস্থ্য প্রাথমিক বর্জ্য সংস্থার কাজের মাঝে প্রদান করা যাবে না।
- আবেদনপত্র ত্রুট্য ও জমা প্রদান করে ব্যাক্ত রশিদ সংস্থা নির্দেশ সংস্থার কাজের মাঝে প্রদান করে ব্যাক্ত রশিদ সংস্থা করতে হবে।
- ওয়



## Please save cricket'

SPORTS REPORTER

"Please save cricket, that's all there is to say."

The comment, made on condition of anonymity by a leading Bangladesh cricketer, reflects growing frustration among players after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) reinstated director M Najmul Islam to his previous role as finance committee chairman, highlighting the sense of helplessness felt by cricketers under a board perceived to be failing to honour its commitments.

"We had given our observation to the board, and the board made the call," BCB disciplinary committee chairman Faiazur Rahman informed The Daily Star yesterday.

Najmul had earlier been relieved of his duties as finance committee chairman following a wave of protests by cricketers. The protests stemmed from remarks Najmul made on January 14, when he said the board did not owe players any compensation if Bangladesh missed out on the upcoming ICC T20 World Cup, arguing that the board does not seek refunds from players for poor performances at global events.

"This is good news," one player remarked sarcastically after Najmul's reappointment. "You can understand how things are happening here," he added, underscoring the prevailing sense of discontent.

Najmul's comments prompted cricketers to boycott all forms of cricket, leading to the recently concluded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) being halted for a day. Players eventually returned to the field "for the greater interest of cricket," scaling back their initial demand for Najmul's complete removal from the board. Instead, they sought a public apology and the continuation of the process regarding his directorship, as promised by the board.

However, no apology was issued. Najmul also responded to a show-cause letter from the BCB a day after the stipulated deadline.

In fact, it was learned that during a board meeting on Saturday, Najmul enjoyed the support of board directors when the decision to reinstate him was taken. A BCB source further claimed that the disciplinary committee had submitted its observations to the board and that "by the president's direction, he [Najmul] was reappointed."

Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) president Mohammad Mithun, visibly unhappy with the development, was reluctant to dwell on the matter but made clear where cricketers stand in the board's list of priorities.

"We made our demands known openly and they made commitments openly. So who is not keeping the commitments should be clear. The responsibility also lies with those who are not keeping commitments," Mithun told The Daily Star on Sunday.

The BCB media committee could not be reached for comment regarding Najmul's reinstatement at the time of filing this report.

## Pakistan name T20 WC squad amid uncertainty

STAR SPORTS DESK

Just a day after raising doubts over Pakistan's participation in the upcoming T20 World Cup in support of Bangladesh, the Pakistani Cricket Board (PCB) yesterday announced a 15-member squad for the marquee event, scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka and India from February 7 to March 8.

"We are selectors, and our job is to pick the team," said PCB chief selector Aaqib Javed, adding that Pakistan's participation will still depend on a decision from the government. "We've announced the team very close to the deadline. The government will decide on our participation, so I can say nothing on that front. That's what the chairman has said too, so we'll wait for their decision."

Earlier on Saturday, PCB Chairman and Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said Bangladesh were "being treated unfairly" by the International Cricket Council (ICC) and should be allowed to participate in the T20 World Cup. Regarding a potential boycott of the tournament



## Bangladesh cricket in DISARRAY

EKUSH TAPADER

"A sad moment for the game" – that was the phrase used by the World Cricketers' Association (WCA) while reacting to Bangladesh's exclusion from the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup.

Few descriptions could better capture the turbulence currently engulfing Bangladesh cricket – turbulence that continues to wound genuine lovers of the game across the country.

Under the leadership of former national captain Aminul Islam Bulbul, the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) appears to be struggling both internally and externally. Many now fear that if this trajectory continues, the game itself could become the biggest casualty in this cricket-crazy nation.

Missing out on the World Cup is only part of the damage. Domestic cricket remains largely paralysed. Although the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) managed to conclude, controversy followed it to the finish line. As the tournament ended, a match-fixing scandal surfaced, adding yet another chapter to a growing list of irregularities.

Following allegations of involvement in match-fixing in the BPL, BCB director Muhammad Mukhlesur Rahman was forced to step down from his role as audit committee chairman. Another franchise adviser publicly raised fixing allegations via a Facebook Live session, further eroding public trust.

Following Saturday's board meeting, influential director Ishtiaque Sadeque resigned, with rumours suggesting that more may follow. Disagreements with the board president and unresolved personal conflicts among directors have now become open secrets rather than internal matters.

Meanwhile, controversial figures continue to resurface. M Najmul Islam, removed from his role as finance



**"The withdrawal of Bangladesh from the T20 World Cup, and resulting absence of a valued cricketing nation from cricket's pinnacle international T20 event, is a sad moment for our sport, the Bangladesh players and fans, and one that requires deep reflection. Rather than allowing division or exclusion to take hold, we call on the game's leaders to work with all stakeholders, including Governing Bodies, leagues and players, to unite the sport, not divide it ..."**

WCA chief executive TOM MOFFAT said in a statement.

committee chairman after making derogatory remarks about cricketers during protests, was reinstated following the BPL, making the growing disconnect between the board and the players unmistakable.

The long-standing stagnation and disputes in Dhaka club cricket have reached a breaking point. With Bangladesh out of the T20 World Cup – set to be played in Sri Lanka and India

from February 7 – there is no clarity on the next domestic schedule. Even Rajshahi Warriors captain and Test skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto publicly voiced his frustration, saying he had no idea when they would next take the field.

With cricket disrupted both at home and abroad, organisers appear directionless, unable to chart a clear path forward.

In what many see as an attempt to mask failure, the BCB has floated the sensational idea of bringing back the country's most successful cricketer, Shakib Al Hasan, who is currently in exile. For many, the move lacks logic and appears to be a desperate and misguided effort to divert attention from the ongoing turmoil surrounding the World Cup exclusion.

This is not merely the pain of missing a global tournament – Bangladesh cricket is passing through what may be its most fragile phase in history. In such moments, resilience is only meaningful when guided by a clear mission and vision, something that currently appears to be missing.

BCB president Bulbul said on Thursday, following a meeting with players and Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Nazrul, that the board "will keep on fighting" to ensure Bangladesh's participation in the T20 World Cup. But when the ICC replaced Bangladesh with Scotland on Saturday, the BCB confirmed it had accepted the decision and would not pursue further action.

"We are not going into any separate arbitration or any other process," the board stated – a declaration that underlines the absence of a clear roadmap.

Bangladesh cricket is, quite literally, struggling to stay afloat in a sea of sorrow, not only because of exclusion, but because a fight without purpose, clarity, and vision rarely leads to recovery.



French superstar Kylian Mbappe struck a brace to hand Real Madrid a 2-0 LaLiga win away at Villarreal yesterday. Despite an underwhelming start to the season and the departure of coach Xabi Alonso, Real have found timely momentum, registering three consecutive victories across all competitions as Los Blancos look to revive their campaign and cut the gap on LaLiga leaders Barcelona. Much of that push hinges on Mbappe's sizzling form. The 27-year-old tops the LaLiga scoring charts with 21 goals and also leads the Champions League standings with 11 strikes. Overall, he has now racked up 34 goals and five assists in all competitions – the joint-highest tally among players in Europe's top five leagues, alongside Bayern Munich striker Harry Kane.

PHOTO: REAL MADRID

## What to WATCH

Sony Sports 2, 5  
Australian Open  
Fourth round  
Live from 6:30 am  
Star Sports Select HD2  
ICC U19 World Cup

Bangladesh vs England  
Live from 1:30 pm  
Star Sports Select HD1  
Premier League  
Everton vs Leeds  
Live from 2:00 am (Tuesday)

## Sabina and Co add another laurel for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh wrote another chapter in the country's women's football history as Sabina Khatun and Co emerged unbeaten champions of the inaugural SAFF Women's Futsal Championship with a resounding 14-2 victory over Maldives in their last match in Bangkok yesterday.

The women in red and green finished the seven-team round-robin tournament with 16 points from six matches, ending four points clear of runners-up India and six ahead of third placed Bhutan.

The maiden futsal triumph extends Bangladesh's recent dominance in women's football. It follows their back-to-back SAFF Women's Championship titles and historic qualification for 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup, alongside success at age-group levels on the regional and continental stage.

Captain Sabina, who led Bangladesh to SAFF Women's Championship titles in 2022 and 2024, once again underlined her importance by guiding the team to glory in the new futsal format. The



32-year-old returned to the national colours after a 15-month absence and proved her worth emphatically, scoring a tournament-high 14 goals. She was ably supported by experienced campaigners Krishna Rani Sarkar and Matsushima Sumaya, who contributed seven and four goals respectively.

This title was a story of redemption, tactical evolution and the unyielding spirit of players who refused to be defined by past exclusion.

Ahead of the tournament, expectations were low. Bangladesh were widely considered outsiders in the fast-paced futsal format, with India and Nepal tipped as favourites. Played on a hard surface with five players per side and a low-bounce ball, futsal demands relentless stamina, rapid transitions and technical precision in tight spaces.

Yet Saeid Khodarhami's charges quickly defied those assumptions. They announced their credentials with a commanding 3-1 win over India in the opening match and followed it up with consistent, increasingly assured performances.

Khodarhami implemented a high-pressing system built around swift transitions, effectively utilising Sabina's clinical finishing to dismantle regional powerhouses. Rather than treating his players as discarded figures, he moulded them into seasoned professionals with a point to prove.

Bangladesh's technical flair, one-touch passing and intelligent movement stood out even in Thailand's humid conditions, establishing their supremacy in the new format.

## U-19 WORLD CUP Bangladesh face England today

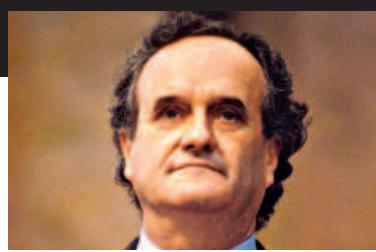
SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take on England in their opening match of the Super Sixes stage of the ICC Men's Under-19 World Cup in Bulawayo today, with the match scheduled to start at 1:30pm Bangladesh time.

Bangladesh have carried one point from the group stage and currently sit behind India and England, both on four points, and Pakistan, who have two points, in the six-team Group A of the Super Sixes. The Junior Tigers will need victories against England today and Zimbabwe on January 31 to keep their hopes of reaching the semifinals alive. Bangladesh won only one of their three group-stage matches, losing one and seeing another washed out, while England progressed to the Super Sixes with a perfect record, winning all three of their matches. The top two teams from each Super Sixes group will advance to the semifinals of the tournament, which Bangladesh have won once, in 2020.



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



Sir Mark Tully  
(1935-2026)

## A truth teller of 1971

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Veteran British journalist Sir Mark Tully, widely recognised in Bangladesh for his truthful depiction of atrocities during the Liberation War of 1971, passed away at a hospital in India yesterday. He was 90.

Tully, known to millions as the broadcaster's "voice of India", covered defining moments across the subcontinent.

"Sir Mark opened India to the world through his reporting, bringing the vibrancy and diversity of the country to audiences in the UK and around the world," BBC News interim chief Jonathan Munro said in a statement.

In 2012, Bangladesh named him a Foreign Friend of Bangladesh for his role in exposing the true face of the Liberation

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A screengrab from a video obtained by Reuters shows a law enforcement officer pinning down a man identified as Alex Pretti, before he was fatally shot when federal agents were trying to detain him in Minneapolis, Minnesota, US, on Saturday. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Three candidates omit UK assets, citizenship in affidavits

ZYMA ISLAM

Several candidates in the upcoming parliamentary election have withheld information about significant overseas assets and, in some cases, foreign citizenship from their mandatory affidavits, official filings and UK corporate records show.

The discrepancies involve BNP and Gono Odhikar Parishad nominees, who are listed as British nationals or directors of UK-based companies in British corporate records, despite declaring otherwise to the Election Commission.

The EC has cleared their candidacies.

A total of 21 candidates disclosed in their affidavits that they had acquired and later renounced foreign citizenship.

Zahidur Rahman, a Gono Odhikar Parishad candidate for Sylhet-6, made no mention in his affidavit of 11 companies in the United Kingdom with which he is associated. Two of these are trusts -- Bangladesh Probashi Odhikar Parishad UK Ltd and Haji Aftab Ali Foundation Trust Ltd.

Zahidur holds shares ranging from 12.5 percent to 100 percent in seven of the companies.

In his affidavit, he declared earning Tk 29.7 lakh annually in rent from overseas properties and Tk 1.32 crore from his profession.

He stated that he filed for forfeiture of his British citizenship on December 28, 2025.

"I have absolutely nothing to hide. I did not mention these companies because I have not taken out any dividends from these companies," Rahman told The Daily Star. "Until the money is taken out or paid as dividends, it belongs to the companies."

AKM Quamruzzaman, BNP's candidate for Dinajpur-5, did not disclose a UK-based company where he serves as a director.

The real estate firm, Coombe Hill Development Ltd, appointed

Quamruzzaman as a director on February 12, 2021.

The company has total assets worth £1.41 million, and Quamruzzaman is its sole director. It is wholly owned by Avox Ltd, an offshore entity based in the United Arab Emirates.

In his affidavit, Quamruzzaman mentioned only his law chamber in London, valuing it at Tk 50 lakh.

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## Bagerhat BCL leader's wife, child laid to rest ASK says denying him parole a rights violation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The wife of Bangladesh Chhatra League leader and their nine-month-old child were laid to rest in Bagerhat early yesterday.

Following their namaz-e-janaza, the burials took place at her family graveyard in Sabekdanga village of Sadar upazila around 12:00am.

Kaniz Suborna Swarnali, 22, was the wife of Jewel Hasan, alias Saddam, president of the banned student organisation Chhatra League's Bagerhat Sadar upazila unit. Saddam is currently imprisoned at Jashore Central Jail.

Earlier yesterday, Saddam was allowed to see his wife and infant for the last time under police supervision at the jail gate as their bodies were brought there in an ambulance.

According to jail authorities, six family members were permitted to be present at the jail gate area during the brief farewell, which took place around 7:30pm.

Family members said they had applied for his release on parole but then had to arrange for the bodies to be taken to the

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Captain Sabina Khatun holds the trophy aloft as Bangladesh players and officials celebrate their title triumph in the inaugural SAFF Women's Futsal Championship in Bangkok yesterday, following a resounding 14-2 victory over Maldives in their final match. Sabina and Co dominated the competition, registering five wins and a draw to finish as unbeaten champions. Story on Page 11.

PHOTO: SAFF

## EC ready to deliver free, fair polls CEC tells diplomats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin yesterday assured Dhaka-based foreign diplomats that transparency would be ensured at all stages of the February 12 general election and referendum.

To that end, the Election Commission (EC) has undertaken comprehensive preparations, he said at a briefing arranged by the commission at a city hotel to apprise diplomats of the overall election readiness.

Heads of 41 diplomatic missions, representatives of 11 UN agencies in Bangladesh, and senior government officials attended the closed-door briefing in the morning.

According to an EC statement, the CEC said all election materials were ready and ballot paper printing was underway. Legal and administrative measures have been put in place to resolve election-related complaints and disputes.

He added that nationwide awareness campaigns were being conducted to boost voter turnout, alongside ongoing training programmes for election officials and staff.

Highlighting the government's

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## JULY UPRISING Noab did not provide journos with protective gear: Shafiqul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) did not provide protective gear to journalists during the July uprising, claimed Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday.

"Six journalists lost their lives during the 2024 mass uprising. They were brutally killed. This happened because not a single journalist was provided with protective equipment," he said at a programme at the Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) in the capital.

He claimed that those reporting from the frontlines had no helmets, vests or goggles and were left exposed to heavy tear gas.

"Noab often makes big statements but does not provide [protective] equipment for even a single journalist. A few days ago, they organised a big convention, yet no one spoke about protective equipment for journalists."

He urged journalists to hold their employers accountable, saying those who assign reporters to cover hostile events bear significant responsibility.

"The government fails in many areas, and the media rightly reports that. But employers also have responsibilities, and journalists should speak out about how much those responsibilities are being fulfilled."

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## 40 hurt in pre-polls violence Supporters of BNP, rebel, Jamaat candidates involved

STAR REPORT

At least 40 people were injured yesterday in clashes involving activists of BNP, its rebel candidates, and Jamaat-e-Islami over election campaigning in Mymensingh, Lalmonirhat, and Chuadanga.

In Mymensingh, around 20 people were injured as supporters of BNP and rebel candidates clashed in Bhaluka (Mymensingh-II).

According to police, tensions escalated in the evening when Mohammad Morshed Alam, an expelled BNP joint convener and independent candidate, went door-to-door campaigning in the Batajhbor area. At one point, his supporters clashed with those of BNP nominee Fakhar Uddin Ahmed.

Quoting locals, Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun, additional superintendent of Mymensingh police (admin), said chases and counter-chases quickly turned into violent clashes. Several offices belonging to both groups were vandalised.

Later, the BNP upazila office in the bus stand area of Bhaluka municipality was attacked, and several motorcycles were damaged. The office of Adi Khan (Shakil), member secretary of the municipal unit Chhatra Dal, and a Jubo Dal office were attacked and set on fire. Morshed Alam's office was also torched, locals said.

At least seven injured people were hospitalised.

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