

## Chattogram Port at complete standstill

### Exporters fear missing deadlines as workers remain steadfast in their strike

DWAIPAYAN BARUA and REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Chattogram Port has ground to a halt in the last two days as workers and employees went on an indefinite work abstention over the government's move to lease the key New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) to Dubai-based DP World.

If the stalemate continues for long, commodity prices are likely to spike ahead of Ramadan and export deadlines will be missed, said insiders.

"This complete shutdown is absolutely unprecedented," said Fazley Ekram Chowdhury, president of the Berth Operators, Ship Handling Operators and Terminal Operators Owners Association.

The indefinite strike comes after the protesters observed an eight-hour strike

from Saturday to Monday.

The strike took a stricter turn yesterday, leaving the port's jetties and yards deserted, with no movement of people or vehicles and all sheds and offices remaining closed.

The usual long queues of cargo-carrying vehicles in and around all the port gates were absent. Both sides of the gates remained closed.

Container handling at the port's main jetties has remained completely stopped since Tuesday morning, leaving 11 vessels, including eight container ships, stranded.

No vessel could leave the port's main jetties or take berths in the last two days. Only four vessels could leave RSGT Chittagong, KAFCO jetty and two dolphin jetties under special arrangements.

Global leading shipping line Maersk



All operations at Chattogram Port remain suspended as workers continue an indefinite strike over the lease of a key terminal to UAE-based DP World. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## 7 DAYS TO VOTE

## 'Just, humane and safe Bangladesh'

### Jamaat pledges in its election manifesto, sets 26 priorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday outlined 26 priority areas for running the government in its election manifesto, presenting its vision for a "new Bangladesh".

The party's Ameer, Shafiqur Rahman, unveiled the "Manifesto of a Safe and Humane Bangladesh" at a city hotel.

The priorities include pursuing an uncompromising stance on national interest; building a humane state based on justice; empowering the youth; and creating a safe, dignified and participatory environment for women.

Other key goals include improving law and order, establishing a corruption-free state, ensuring merit-based recruitment, bringing perpetrators of extrajudicial killings to justice, and guaranteeing fundamental human rights.

To allow MPs to freely express their views, Jamaat said Article 70 of the



constitution would be amended. Party discipline, it added, would not be used to restrict MPs from acting independently in the interest of the nation and the people.

The party pledged to include a significant number of women in the cabinet if voted to power.

"The cabinet will reflect the diversity of the nation by ensuring representation of religious and ethnic communities

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## IAB pledges Islam-guided governance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) yesterday unveiled its election manifesto, reaffirming its commitment to implementing the fundamental principles of Islamic governance if it comes to power after the February 12 polls.

Islam offers not only a system of belief and worship but also comprehensive guidance for all aspects of human life, the party said at the unveiling of the manifesto at its office in the capital's Purana Paltan.

The core principles of Islamic governance include an independent judiciary, justice, accountability, sensitivity to citizens' interests, social security and the rule of law, IAB Ameer Multi Syed Rezaul Karim said.

The party also pledged to protect the rights and dignity of followers of all religions and ethnic minorities, stressing equal treatment for all citizens.

"No one will be regarded as a minority or majority based on religion or ethnicity. We are committed to

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## 'Those once hidden are now oppressors'

### Hinting at Jamaat activists, Tarique also alleges they are making fake seals, ballots

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pointing at Jamaat-e-Islami, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman said members of the gupto (covert group) have now emerged in Bangladesh as "new oppressors".

"Over the past few days, we have seen some newspaper reports. We have seen that those who have appeared as new oppressors, whom the people of Bangladesh know as gupto, have been printing fake seals in different places," he said while addressing an election rally in Barishal yesterday.

"We are also hearing in different ways that at printing presses known to them, they are printing ballot papers. Not only that, they are collecting NID numbers and bKash numbers," he said, calling on people to remain alert so that no one can "hijack people's votes" on February 12.

Around noon, he arrived at Barishal



Stadium by helicopter and then travelled by car to the rally venue at Bell's Park ground in Barishal city.

After over two decades, the Tarique's visit drew leaders and activists from different areas. They started gathering at the venue since early morning.

Hinting at Jamaat, Tarique said, "How can those who start the voting process with unethical acts establish the rule of honest people? They cannot."

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In the run-up to February 12 polls, Shakeel Anwar goes on the road for STAR to hear directly from voters about their hopes, demands and expectations.

## Shadow of refugee camps falls on ballot in Ukhia

SHAKEEL ANWAR, from Ukhia, Cox's Bazar

In Cox's Bazar's Ukhia, one issue overshadows all others: the Rohingya refugee crisis. With refugees now outnumbering locals nearly three to one, it has become the defining political concern, shaping daily life, security, livelihoods, and how residents approach the ballot as the country heads towards election day.

Nearly nine years after hundreds of thousands fled Myanmar, the initial sympathy of the host community in Ukhia and neighbouring Teknaf, home to



roughly 1.5 million Rohingyas, has now given way to anger, fear, and a growing sense of resignation.

These sentiments are most palpable in Lambashia village of Rajapalong union, adjacent to Kutupalong, the world's largest and most densely populated refugee camp. Part of the village - half a dozen households - lies within the camp's perimeter. Residents share

roads with refugees; children from the camp play in their courtyards. To outsiders, it is often unclear where the camp ends and the village begins.

Reaching Lambashia requires passing through part of the camp and a security check. On the way in, my vehicle was stopped and checked twice by members of the Armed Police Battalion (APBn), responsible for security inside the camps. The checks, I was told, are routine.

There, Mofiz, an electrician, described what he called the slow collapse of a once-idyllic village.

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She is survived by her family, relatives, many friends and well-wishers. Known for her warmth, integrity and lifelong commitment to social service, she leaves behind a legacy of kindness that will be remembered with gratitude.

We pray that Almighty Allah grants her peace, and offers comfort and strength to her family at this time of loss.

We offer our sincere condolences to the bereaved family.



BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman waves at the large crowd at Bell's Park in Barishal city yesterday while Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman addresses a campaign rally in Kurigram yesterday.



PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL/RAJIB RAIHAN

## 'No such thing as mob violence'

### Says home boss, dismisses concern over such violence during polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Home Adviser Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday dismissed concerns over "mob violence" during polls.



"There is no such thing as mob violence. There is no possibility of violence during the election. The election will be very peaceful."

He said police are not performing their duties under any fear ahead of the upcoming polls.

"Look at them—do they look afraid?" he said, pointing at the Rajshahi Range DIG and police commissioner.

The police are working without fear, he told reporters in front of the Rajshahi Jail Training Centre auditorium in the afternoon, following a views-exchange meeting on election preparedness.

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## Jamaat misusing religion to deceive voters: Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday accused Jamaat-e-Islami of deceiving people by exploiting religious sentiment for political gain.

"Many prominent Islamic scholars have clearly stated that Jamaat-e-Islami speaks in the name of Islam to mislead and deceive people," he said while addressing an election meeting at Kismat Daulatpur village in Sadar upazila of Thakurgaon-1 constituency.

Fakhrul alleged that Jamaat activists were misleading women voters by making false religious promises.

"They are telling our mothers and sisters that voting for the scale symbol will ensure entry into heaven..." he said.

"No Muslim can accept such claims. Whether someone attains heaven depends on one's deeds, and that decision rests solely with Allah," he added.

The BNP candidate for Thakurgaon-1 constituency said his party believes in action rather than rhetoric.

"I will not speak about their candidate, but I want to say something about this party. They were once with us. We worked together," he said.

"Now they are contesting the election, and that is their right. Anyone can do politics. But do politics honestly. Do not lie, do not engage in backbiting, and do not attack others in that manner," he said.

He further said Jamaat continued to invoke Islam for political purposes, although many Islamic scholars,



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## Jamaat leader among 2 sued after fake ballot seal bust

### BNP alleges wider conspiracy; Jamaat expels him

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A local Jamaat leader and a printing shop owner have been sued over making fake ballot seals in Lakshimpur.

Humayun Kabir, sub-inspector of Sadar Model Police Station, yesterday filed a case against Sohel Rana, 40, the shop owner, and Sourav Hossain Sharif, 35, secretary of Jamaat's ward-4 unit of Lakshimpur municipality, said police.

Jhalak Mohanta, inspector (investigation) of the station, told The Daily Star yesterday that an investigation found Sohel made the seals and kept them in his shop "under the instructions of Jamaat leader Sharif".

Sohel also made a confessional statement before a court under section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, admitting his role, said Jhalak.

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## 'By all means we'll ensure security for women'

### Says Jamaat chief Shafiqur

STAR REPORT

Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said that, if voted to power, ensuring security and dignity for women would be his party's top priority.

"We will ensure 100 percent security and dignity for you in your homes, on the roads, in workplaces, and everywhere, by all means," he told a campaign rally at Kurigram Government College as the chief guest.

"A country where mothers are not safe can never be my country. Rather, my country will be that one where the safety and dignity of my mothers, sisters, and daughters will be ensured."

Addressing women, Shafiqur said, "Do not be afraid, you will keep fighting, and speak looking towards other's eyes. This Bangladesh will be a country for the people."

Emphasising the importance of an agriculture-based economy, he said, "We will turn Kurigram into the capital of agro-industry, where agriculture-based industries will flourish, and people will become self-reliant through employment."

The Jamaat chief also alleged that a political party, hinting at BNP, is carrying out a smear campaign against him after his X account was hacked. In the afternoon, he addressed another election rally in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha where he outlined development commitments for the northern region, including implementation of the Teesta Mega Project, ensuring fair prices for agricultural produce, and upgrading Burimari Land Port into a modern international gateway for regional trade.

The Jamaat ameer also said people will show "red card" to 54 years of dishonesty, deception, and misuse on February 12.

"Politics is not a business, nor a tool for extortion," he said, adding that leaders who leave the country in times of crisis should not expect public trust.

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## EC cancels polls to Sherpur-3 after Jamaat pick dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday cancelled the election in Sherpur-3 (Jhenaigati Sreebordi) constituency following the death of Jamaat-e-Islami's nominated candidate Mohammad Nuruzzaman Badal.

"The election in Sherpur-3 will be cancelled or terminated for now. This is clearly stated in Article 17 of the Representation of the People Order [RPO]," said Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmani Masud while confirming the development to The Daily Star last afternoon.

According to Article 17(1) of the RPO, 1972, if a duly nominated candidate dies after the deadline for withdrawal of nomination papers but before polling, all election-related activities in the concerned



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## Chattogram Port at complete standstill

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issued a customer advisory yesterday, updating on the evolving situation at the port.

"As the strike continues, it is creating significant operational uncertainty and may lead to delays in vessel schedules, cargo handling, inland movements, and related services," it said.

No import, export, or empty containers could be transported between the port and the 19 private inland container depots since Tuesday morning, said Md Ruhul Amin Sikder, secretary general of the Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association.

The deadlock has left exporters fretting if they would be able to maintain the schedule for the peak shipment season.

"We need an immediate solution..." said Mohammad Hatem, president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and

Exporters Association. Faruque Hassan, the former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, echoed the same.

His company, Giant Group, has a consignment of 100 tonnes of yarn imported from China and India stuck at the port. The delay means he might miss his production and shipment deadlines.

"Such a situation will have a negative impact on overall export earnings," said Shovon Islam, managing director of Sparrow Group, another garment exporter.

Asked what the government is doing to solve the stalemate, Shipping Adviser M Sakhawat Hossain said he is planning to visit the port today to talk to the protesters.

He said he would ask them why they are continuing with the movement by keeping the people hostage before

any deal is signed. If they do not listen, the government will take other actions.

He said that he gave his opinion that the port's interest should be ensured based on its average current income and not a single person would lose their job.

"I also said that instead of replacing workers, they should recruit more people, and that recruitment must be from within the country. No foreign workers should be brought in. They [DP World] know this and have agreed."

Asked why the government is rushing to seal the deal with the election just a week away, he said, "It is not being done in a hasty manner as they are claiming. This is an old project. It started back in 2022. This did not suddenly come up now. Negotiations have been ongoing for the last three months. It was interrupted in the middle stage due to a case in the High Court."

Otherwise, the deal would have been signed by now, he said, adding that the negotiations have not reached a final stage.

Asked about the protesters' claim that the process cannot move forward until the new appeal is settled, he said, "Our state lawyer has said that the court did not make such an observation. He said the hearing will be held on Sunday and that is what I have been informed."

The court's directive during Sunday's hearing will become effective, he said.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court chamber judge has sent the petition that sought an order of status quo to the entire process of leasing out the NCT to DP World to the full bench for hearing on February 9.

On February 1, Bangladesh Jubo Arthanitibid Forum, a philanthropic organisation, filed the petition.

## 'Just, humane and safe Bangladesh'

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and other historically underrepresented sections of society," the manifesto said.

It also promised a safe working environment for women while upholding their dignity. During maternity, working hours would be reduced to five per day with the mother's consent.

On governance reform, Jamaat said it would implement necessary changes to the system of governance and administration to shape a new Bangladesh.

"We are committed to establishing a discrimination-free state and ensuring equal rights for all citizens. Laws and policies containing discriminatory provisions will be promptly reformed or repealed," the manifesto said.

Governance, it added, would be entrusted to honest, competent and qualified individuals, with transparency, accountability and the rule of law ensured at all levels.

"The youth will be prioritised in state leadership. Qualified and promising young men and women will be appointed to key cabinet positions," the manifesto said.

State authority would be regarded as an amanah (sacred trust) delegated by the people through the electoral process.

Dhaka would be transformed into a smart capital and Chattogram would be developed as a modern, well-planned metropolitan city, while the main towns in the rest of the 64 districts, and around 500 upazilas and small towns would be developed as planned cities.

Alongside existing accountability mechanisms for the prime minister and cabinet, Jamaat said it would establish an independent

Accountability Council, where office-holders would submit monthly progress reports and explain their decisions.

On political reform, Jamaat said it aimed to foster a tolerant and consensus-based political culture by promoting service-oriented politics and creating a constructive political environment.

It pledged legal reforms, including amendments to the Representation of the People Order (RPO), to restore democratic practices within political parties.

The ongoing judicial processes against "fascist parties and leaders" would be completed in line with due process.

Jamaat also promised to introduce state funding for political parties contesting parliamentary elections, with annual allocations from the national treasury proportional to seats and votes secured.

"Strict enforcement of the law, along with collective social initiatives, will eliminate extortion and coercion carried out in the name of politics," the party said, adding that incidents of political vengeance would be addressed through engagement with other parties.

To strengthen parliament, Jamaat said executive power would no longer be concentrated solely in the prime minister's office and authority would be restored to parliament as the supreme representative institution. MPs' primary responsibility would be law-making, policy formulation and strategic oversight.

Open parliamentary debates would be held on major treaties, agreements and official state visits.

On electoral reform, Jamaat said it would undertake legal and regulatory changes to

strengthen and make the caretaker government system fully effective. Measures would also be taken to reduce election costs, with enforceable expenditure limits.

The party pledged to establish an accountable public administration, introducing an online grievance redress system in all government offices, allowing citizens to track complaint resolution.

To deliver services at citizens' doorsteps, Jamaat said it would use digital and artificial intelligence-based technologies, introduce a one-stop service system, and develop a centralised e-governance portal similar to "MyGov".

It reiterated a zero-tolerance stance on corruption, saying CCTV cameras would be installed in government offices, documents and services digitised, and recruitment, promotion and posting strictly based on merit. No application fees would be charged for public sector jobs.

All development activities would be implemented under local government institutions, with ministries limited to oversight and coordination. City corporations and municipalities would manage most civic services.

Jamaat also said it would establish a professional, modern and citizen-friendly police force through transparent recruitment, continuous training and advanced technologies.

Urban security would be enhanced through smart CCTV systems, facial recognition, traffic management, robotic surveillance and rapid response units.

On media freedom, Jamaat said it would formulate a National Media Policy to ensure independent,

responsible media, in line with the Constitution and internationally recognised human rights standards.

The Jamaat ameer described the manifesto as "a roadmap for Bangladesh over the next five years," built on five "yeses"—honesty, unity, justice, efficiency and employment—and five "nos"—corruption, fascism, hegemony, unemployment and extortion.

About the foreign policy based on mutual respect, justice, and equal dignity, Jamaat said, they will work for enhancing the global standing of Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi passport.

"Peaceful, friendly, and cooperative relations will be built with neighboring and nearby countries—including India, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Thailand—based on mutual respect and fairness."

It said the expatriates' welfare ministry will be re-designated as the Ministry of Manpower Industry, and comprehensive regulations will be formulated to govern investment and management in this sector.

By 2030, Bangladesh will pursue the "Three Zeros Vision"—zero environmental degradation, zero waste, and zero flood risk—to advance the goal of a green and resilient Bangladesh, the party pledged.

If elected, Jamaat said it will form a permanent Education Commission under the leadership of nationally respected teachers, eminent educationists, researchers, and education administrators to lead comprehensive education reform.

Jamaat said a National Women's Protection Taskforce will be formed to ensure swift action against violence.

## 'Those once hidden are now oppressors'

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Referring to the alleged controversial comments on working women by Jamaat ameer, he said any person or any party that has not even a little respect for mothers and sisters of the country, that has no respect, cannot bring progress to Bangladesh. "From them, the people can never expect dignity or respectful behaviour."

Citing a statement by a leader of the "covert group, whose home is in Cumilla," Tarique said the leader recently remarked at a rally that, until February 12, they would beg at the people's feet, but after that, for the next five years, it would be the people begging at their leaders' feet.

"Who can say such things? Does it mean that after the polls, the people will follow them everywhere and beg at their feet? What

kind of people are they? Who can speak about the people in such a degrading way?"

"If such people are elected... it is already clear to us how miserable the fate of the people will be. What is in their minds is already coming out in their actions."

The BNP chief said, "Just as the leader of the covert group said they would beg at the people's feet until February 12, we say the opposite. I tell my leaders and activists that from February 13, and for the next five years, you must remain at the feet of the people."

He said the nation already saw what happens to those who do not have the strength and support of the people behind them.

The BNP chief urged voters to deliver a fitting response to anyone who seeks to control or disrespect

the people after the February 12 polls.

"If we look at history, in 1971 and 1986, we see that they [Jamaat] were always with those who fled the country. So, the people of the country cannot expect anything good from them."

At the Barishal rally, Tarique also pledged to construct the Barishal-Bhola bridge, develop Sher-e-Bangla Medical College to improve healthcare services, establish a medical college in Bhola, take effective measures to prevent river erosion, and construct cold storage facilities for farmers.

Later at a rally at Faridpur's Rajendra College ground, Tarique said conspiracies are being hatched again against people's freedom, voting rights, and the right to speak.

"Who is carrying out this conspiracy? The people call

those behind it by one name. Do you know what name the people have given them? Gupto."

"Because the people have seen that at one time they take one form, and at another time they take another form. They change their appearance depending on the situation."

Explaining why he believes they have no trust or faith in the people, Tarique cited two reasons, including that the main leader of the covert group had made offensive comments about women.

"Those who think in such a dirty way about mothers and sisters, we cannot expect anything good from them."

"Because of their controversial role in 1971, millions of women and mothers and sisters in Bangladesh lost their honour."

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## BNP to set up wage commission and ensure safe housing if it wins

Zubaida underscores people-first approach

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP will build a state founded on equality, knowledge and respect for labour, prioritising the people above power and merit over privilege, said Dr Zubaida Rahman yesterday.



"We say 'we' before 'me', 'the country' before 'us', 'the people' before 'power', and Bangladesh on top of everything and equality over division," said the wife of party Chairman Tarique Rahman at a views exchange meeting organised by the BNP Election Steering Committee at the Hatirjheel Amphitheatre in Dhaka.

"Equal opportunities for all, respect for labour, and valuing merit through merit-based jobs -- this is how we want to present a society and a state where the people come first," she added.

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Army personnel stand guard as part of being deployed to heighten security measures around the capital ahead of the 13th parliamentary election, scheduled for February 12. The photo was taken on Ring Road in the Mohammadpur area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY ICT-1 accepts charges against Menon, Qamrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution on Tuesday filed formal charges at International Crimes Tribunal 1 against former ministers Rashed Khan Menon and Qamrul Islam over alleged crimes against humanity linked to killings during the July 2024 uprising.

The tribunal, led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, accepted the charges after the prosecutor urged the court to take cognisance and scheduled the next hearing for February 9.

Both Menon, Workers Party of Bangladesh president and former civil aviation minister, and Qamrul, Awami League leader and former food minister, are currently in custody.

Prosecutor Gazi Monwar Hossain Tamim, reading the charges before the three-member tribunal, stated that the accused attended a 14-party alliance meeting chaired by then prime minister Sheikh Hasina on July 19, 2024.

The meeting decided to impose a nationwide curfew and authorise the use of lethal force against student-led protesters, Tamim told the tribunal. Following the meeting, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader told the media the decision had been taken to "shoot on sight", he added.

The first charge relates to killings across the country during the uprising following the Gono Bhaban meeting. The second alleges that the decision to use lethal force caused the deaths of 23 people on July 20 in Badda and surrounding areas.

The prosecution also accused Menon and Qamrul of abetment, incitement, and conspiracy to commit crimes against humanity.



## 'Bhabi' Elen Bhutto takes campaign door to door



KM HABIBUR RAHMAN

From early morning until late at night, Esrat Sultana Elen Bhutto moves from one village to another, campaigning tirelessly.

Whenever she meets women along the way, she embraces them warmly, without regard for social status or position.

She greets male voters with the same cordiality.

Elen Bhutto is the lone female candidate among eight contestants in the Jhalakathi-2 constituency, which comprises Jhalakathi Sadar and Nalchity upazilas.

She was previously elected from the same seat following the death of her husband, Zulfiker Ali Bhutto.

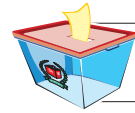
Widely known as "Bhabi" among locals, Elen represents a constituency where her late husband was elected three times.

She first entered the parliament through a by-election in 2000 after her husband's death and was later re-elected.

After securing the BNP nomination for the 13th National Parliament election scheduled for February 12, Elen has intensified her campaign, which gained further momentum after the official start of electioneering.

Every day, she spends long hours reaching voters through door-to-door campaigning. At public gatherings,

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FEBRUARY 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-20

## High hopes, fresh pledges shape a calm contest

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE and SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK

Rina Hijra has lived in the Commissioner Mor area, beside Dhamrai Thana Road, since birth. Over the decades, she has watched the rural landscape change -- mud roads paved, markets expand, and living standards improve.

But for Rina and the Hijra community, little has changed.

Now in her sixties, she looks to the upcoming national election with cautious hope.

"I will vote. I have voted before," Rina told The Daily Star. "But we have never received any government assistance. We still survive by begging from door to door."

The Hijra community lives within Dhamrai municipality, part of the Dhaka-20 parliamentary constituency.

Located on the northwestern edge of the Dhaka district, the seat includes the municipality and 16 unions of Dhamrai upazila. It borders Mirzapur in Tangail to the north, Nawabganj to the south, Savar to the east, and Saturia and Manikganj Sadar to the west.

The Dhaka-Aricha Highway cuts through the largely rural constituency.

As election day approaches, candidates and activists are canvassing across the upazila. Campaign talk fills local markets.

"There is interest in the election, but the festive mood of the past is missing," said Sujon Moni Das, a blacksmith from Nannar union.

"Candidates are coming to us. We tell them roads need repairs, and the impoverished need support. Above all, we want an environment free from violence."

Though agriculture remains central, Dhamrai is also known for its ancient market, industrial factories, and rich cultural heritage. The Yashomadhav Rath Yatra is a 400-year-old tradition of the area.

Meanwhile, pottery made by artisans on the banks of the Bangshi river is an inseparable part of Dhamrai's culture.

Additionally, the reputation of its bell-metal and brassware utensils and artwork is worldwide.

Sukanta Banik, whose family has traded in the Dhamrai market for nearly two centuries, said Dhamrai is naturally a peaceful place.

"Campaigns are ongoing. Candidates and their

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Nabila Tasnid  
NCP



Md Tamiz Uddin  
BNP

## Healing through shared experiences

Workshop empowers trafficking survivors to become caregivers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ferdousi Akter, a survivor of human trafficking, said it took her years of struggle to move from being rescued to rebuilding her life and supporting others with similar experiences.

Speaking at a workshop, Ferdousi described what she called a long and difficult journey.

"First a victim, then a survivor, then a champion survivor, then taking responsibility as a caregiver," she said.

The dissemination workshop titled "A Survivor Care Model Led by Individuals with Lived Experience: From Experience to Expertise," was organised by Justice and Care at a city hotel on Tuesday.

Practitioners, officials and development partners attended the event to discuss how lived experience can be professionalised to strengthen

survivor care.

Ferdousi said she had endured "countless shocks", but those experiences now help her connect with survivors in ways outsiders often cannot.

She said survivor care begins from the earliest stages and continues as survivors try to restart their lives. This includes rescue, repatriation, peer mentoring, family counselling, physical follow-up, rehabilitation support and development-oriented training.

"When a survivor plans to start life anew, we are not only caregivers. We become companions on the journey," she said, adding that families often accept support workers more easily when they recognise shared experience and trust.

Her focus, she said, is safety and dignity, while planning support around survivors' situations, mental states and hopes.

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Customers look at a wide variety of pigeons at the popular 'Kobutorer Haat', held in the Hasnabad area of Dhaka every Wednesday and Saturday. Depending on the type of pigeon, each is sold at around Tk 250 to Tk 5,000. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

## Rushed media ordinances threaten press freedom

Says Article 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Article 19 yesterday expressed concern over the interim government's abrupt release of draft ordinances to establish a National Media Commission and a Broadcasting Commission, allowing only three days for public feedback.

The last-minute move, taken at the closing stage of the interim government's tenure, lacks transparency and due process and risks undermining freedom of expression in Bangladesh, the UK-based international human rights organisation said in a statement.

According to the rights body, the draft National Media Commission Ordinance proposes a commission whose structure, status, responsibilities of

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

## Dr AR Mallick's death anniversary observed

CITY DESK

The 29th death anniversary of Dr AR Mallick, an educationist and the country's first technocrat finance minister, was observed yesterday, said a press release.

On the occasion, food was distributed at orphanages.

Dr Mallick was a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, USA, in the early 1960s and the founding vice-chancellor of Chittagong University.

He was president of the Liberation Council of Intelligentsia in 1971, the first education secretary, and the first high commissioner to India.



## Woman 'gang-raped' in Barguna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A woman was allegedly gang-raped in Barguna's Taltali upazila on Tuesday night after being lured with a promise of marriage, police said.

She was later found near a mosque in Barpara early yesterday, where she had taken shelter after escaping, said Taltali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Asadur Rahman.

The victim, who works at a fish processing facility in Mahipur of Kalapara upazila, became acquainted about 20-25 days ago with one Hirun, son of Manik Hawladar of Pachakoralia union.

Police said Hirun proposed marriage and assured her it would be formalised after consulting his family. Trusting him, she travelled with him from Mahipur to Barpara on Tuesday afternoon.

Hirun first took her to his house, claiming he would introduce her to relatives. Later that night, Hirun and three others allegedly threatened and raped her multiple times, said the OC.

She escaped when they left the spot. Police rescued her and said legal proceedings are underway following her complaint.



A farmer harvests cauliflower as winter draws to a close across the country. Benefiting from favourable weather, the season's good yield is being harvested, sorted, and sold to local depots and wholesalers at Tk 20-22 per kg. The photo was taken from Boratia village in Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

# One-third of Ctg polling centres flagged as 'high-risk'

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

About one-third of the 1,965 polling centres in Chattogram have been identified as highly risky ahead of the national election scheduled for February 12, according to security forces and intelligence assessments.

Police have classified 655 polling centres – both in city and district areas – as highly important after assessing previous records and overall security risks.

Additional police forces and enhanced security measures will be deployed at these centres to ensure a free and fair election, officials said. Polling centres have been categorised into three groups – general, important, and highly important. Police officials said the term "highly important" is used instead of "high-risk" for technical reasons.

According to a list prepared by the Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP), there are 607

polling centres under four city constituencies and parts of Hathazari, spread across 16 police stations. Of these, 310 centres have been marked as "highly important".

The list shows that Khulshi has the highest number of high-risk centres in the port city, with 44 of its 47 polling centres classified as highly important.

No centres under the Port Police Station have been marked high-risk. All 23 centres under Akbar Shah Police Station fall into the highly important category. Other areas with high-risk centres include Kotwali (38 of 52), Sadarghat (15 of 23), Chawkbazar (4 of 16), Bakalia (13 of 39), Changgaon (27 of 56), Panchlaish (19 of 32), Bayezid Bostami (18 of 56), Double Mooring (18 of 48), Halishahar (32 of 42), Pahartali

(20 of 28), EPZ (13 of 31), Patenga (7 of 25), and Karnaphuli (19 of 47).

Meanwhile, under Chattogram district police, 345 of the 1,358 polling centres have been marked as high-risk.

These include three centres in Bhujpur, 24 in Sandwip, 48 in Sitakunda, 30 in Hathazari, 21 in Raozan, six in South Rangunia, 25 in Boalkhali, 24 in Patiya, 13 in Anwara, 42 in Chandanai, 68 in Satkania-Lohagara, and 41 in Banshkhalia.

A circular issued by the home ministry on January 6 stated that each highly important polling centre will be guarded by four armed police personnel and one armed Ansar member under an armed section commander.

Additionally, one armed Ansar member will be assigned to protect the presiding officer, along with

one armed assistant section commander, four female Ansar members with batons, and six male Ansar members with batons.

Members of the Armed Forces, BGB, Coast Guard (in coastal areas), Rab, police, Armed Police Battalion, and Ansar Battalion will also be deployed to maintain law and order.

The circular said the police commissioner, in consultation with the returning officer, may adjust the number of deployed personnel depending on the situation.

Law enforcement agencies will remain deployed from February 8 to February 14, while the Armed Forces will also stay in the field for six days.

Contacted, Chattogram Range Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Ahsan Habib Palash said special security measures, including the use of body cameras, have already been arranged at highly important polling centres to prevent any untoward incidents on election day.



## BNP to set up wage

FROM PAGE 3

Zubaida arrived at the venue around 3:30pm and, before the programme began, listened to grievances from residents of different slums under the Dhaka-17 constituency. Addressing them, she said the country's problems could be resolved through proper planning and collective effort.

"You and I, all of us, face many problems. These can be solved through planning. Our politics is the politics

of planning. A new sunrise of pride now lies before us," she said, calling for coordinated initiatives to translate public demands into action.

Speaking as a special guest, party Standing Committee member Nazrul Islam Khan said under a BNP government, safe housing and secure transport for women would be ensured. He also said a wage commission would be formed to review and revise workers' pay every two years.

## Bangabhaban staffer

FROM PAGE 3

However, when asked, Shafiqul could not specify whether they have any proof of Sorware's direct involvement in the alleged hacking.

Besides Shafiqul, DMP Deputy Commissioner (media) Talebur Rahman came before journalists, took a few questions and left the briefing hurriedly, saying Hatirjheel police would provide the rest of the information.

He said all devices used by Sorware were seized and will be sent for forensic examinations.

Speaking at a press conference in the evening, Jamaat Assistant Secretary

General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair alleged repeated cyberattacks targeting top leaders were being carried out in a planned way. He claimed Secretary General Mia Golum Porwar's social media account was also hacked on Tuesday night.

"Malware from India is being used in what appears to be a planned and large-scale conspiracy to discredit us," he said.

The controversy began on Saturday night when a post on Shafiqur's verified X handle claimed that women should not be in leadership positions and suggested that women working outside the home is "another form of prostitution".

## High hopes, fresh

FROM PAGE 3

representatives are talking to us," he said. "Business is a bit slow now, but we hope things will improve once a new government is formed."

Key contenders in Dhaka-20 include BNP's Md Tamiz Uddin and National Citizen Party (NCP) candidate Nabila Tasnid, who's supported by the Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliance.

Other candidates are Md Ashraf Ali of Khelafat Majlis, Ahsan Khan of Jatya Party, Helal Uddin Ahammed of AB Party, and Md Arju Mia of Bangladesh Jasad.

NCP candidate Nabila Tasnid, a young engineer, is campaigning on foot, walking through villages, fields, and narrow rural paths with her supporters. She listens to residents' concerns and outlines her plans. She said local Jamaat activists are fully cooperating with her campaign and have positively accepted her leadership.

"I am getting a very positive response," she told The Daily Star. "People want to see youth and ordinary citizens represented in parliament, moving beyond traditional politics."

She added that her campaign is not limited to the youth; she is receiving widespread support from the elderly, the educated class, workers, and farming families.

If elected, Tasnid pledged to form a women's cell in every union to provide legal and financial support to victims of violence, reduce school and college dropout rates among girls, introduce modern vocational training, and establish specialised hospitals for mothers and children.

She also promised to ensure the presence of

government doctors at their workplaces. "I have my plans for Dhamrai. Even if I am not elected, I will continue working for this place on a personal level," she said.

BNP candidate Md Tamiz Uddin, president of Dhamrai upazila BNP, is also running a busy and active campaign, with BNP, Chhatra Dal, and Swachhasebak Dal activists reaching out across the constituency.

Campaigners are highlighting proposals including, "Family Cards" and "Farmer Cards".

Shamsul Islam, senior joint general secretary of Dhaka district BNP and general secretary of Dhamrai upazila BNP, said, "Our workers are visiting every household, and the response is unprecedented." "People have not been able to vote freely for a long time. They are eager to cast their ballots now."

He described Tamiz Uddin as a popular and widely accepted figure, noting his three terms as upazila chairman and his current role on the BNP's National Executive Committee. "There are no allegations of corruption or irregularities against him."

He expressed confidence in the victory of the "Sheaf of Paddy" symbol in the constituency.

He further remarked, "The electoral environment has been excellent so far. There are no obstacles to campaigning; we are maintaining a very tolerant and respectful attitude toward all opponents."

"We have struggled for 17 long years to restore people's voting rights, so we will gladly accept whoever the people choose."

Dhaka-20 has 3,76,639 voters – 1,87,835 men, 1,88,802 women, and two hijra voters.

## Request for Quotation: Web Application & Advanced API Protection (WAAP)

BRAC Bank PLC. delivers a full array of banking services to individuals and businesses through a network of 194 Branches, 116 Sub-branches, 330 ATMs, 446 SME Unit Offices and 1,120 Agent Banking Outlets across the country. The bank is currently seeking potential vendor(s) to provide Web Application & Advanced API Protection (WAAP).

A Technical Request for Quotation (RFQ) is hereby issued for this purpose. The RFQ, along with details of the bidding process, can be found on the bank's website: <https://www.bracbank.com/en/page/e-tender>

Interested eligible bidders are requested to submit their technical offers as per Instruction to Bidder (ITB) outlined in the bidding process.

**BRAC BANK**  
আমরা আছি

## 'Bhabi' Elen Bhutto takes

FROM PAGE 3

she particularly reaches out to women voters and seeks their support.

Many female voters said they feel comfortable approaching her as she is a woman candidate.

"We are happy to have a female candidate, as we can easily reach her and share our demands," said Eliza Begum, a voter from Premahar village in Nalchity upazila.

Another voter, Tasmin Akter, said that when Elen Bhutto previously served as their lawmaker, access to her was easy. "She mixes with women without any social barriers," she added.

During the campaign, Elen made various promises, including assurances of security for minority communities.

"We want nothing more than the freedom to move safely," said Babita Gharami, a voter from Satodaskathi village in Jhalakathi Sadar upazila, adding that as a woman, Elen would better understand their concerns. She alleged that members of the Hindu

community in the area have been feeling insecure for quite a long time now.

"Besides ensuring security, Elen Bhutto will play a vital role in the development of our area, which remains largely underdeveloped," said another voter, Lipi Gharami.

Elen's supporters expressed confidence in her victory.

"Bhabi (Elen) is a humble person who can easily connect with ordinary people," said supporter Md

Jamal Chowdhury.

Talking to The Daily Star, Elen Bhutto said voters have been responding warmly, citing the long-standing relationships she has built over the years.

"Even as a female candidate, I do not face any obstacles," she said while campaigning on foot in the remote Premahar village.

"I am hopeful of victory," she added, saying she is assuring voters of public welfare initiatives pledged by her party if elected.

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**e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের "Transmission Infrastructure Development Project for Southern Area of Chattogram Division & Hi-Tech City at Kaliakoir" শীর্ষক প্রকল্প দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টালে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Reference	Title of Works
1219626	27.21.2604.461.07.001.24.1612; Date: 22/01/2026	Procurement of Vehicle services, 2 nos 7 seated Microbus for 12 months on monthly rental basis.

আগ্রহী দরদাতাগণকে [www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোঃ মঞ্জুর আলম  
প্রকল্প পরিচালক (অস্থায়ী/প্রকৌশলী)  
চট্টগ্রাম বিভাগের দক্ষিণাঞ্চল এবং কালিয়াকোরে  
হাই-টেক সিটি'র সঞ্চালন অবকাঠামো উন্নয়ন প্রকল্প

**PRAYER TIMING**  
**FEBRUARY 5**

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-15 5-52 7-15  
JAMAAT 6-05 1-15 4-30 5-56 7-45  
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology**  
141-142, Love Road, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208  
Phone: 02 8870422 (Ext.-201) Web: [www.aust.edu](http://www.aust.edu)  
Ref. No. AUST/CoE & UE/OTM/Tender-11/2025-26

**Tender Invitation**

Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST) is inviting sealed bids from bona fide/reputed organizations/ distributors/ business partners/agents for:

1. Procurement of Answer scripts & additional sheet for CoE Office
2. Procurement of Lighting protection system for UE Office

The bidders must submit earnest money @ 2.5% of the quoted price in the form of Pay Order issued from any scheduled bank drawn in favor of "Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology" along with their offer. Interested bidders may collect schedule of tender from the Procurement Office of AUST on all working days till Feb. 10, 2026 by 4pm. The sealed offer must be submitted on **Feb. 16, 2026 (Monday)** by 2.00pm at the Treasurer Office and the tenders will be opened at 02:30pm on the same day (Feb. 16, 2026). Representatives of the participating bidders may remain present at the time of opening the tenders.

The AUST authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without showing any reason what-so-ever and is not bound to award the work order to the lowest bidder.

**INNOVATION:: CREATION:: LEADERSHIP**



# Shadow of refugee camps

FROM PAGE 1  
"This used to be a green place where everyone knew everyone," he said. "Now, Rohingya refugees make up the majority here."

Mofiz said his family once owned mango and jackfruit orchards, along with a betel leaf plantation. "All of it is gone to the camp," he said.

He claimed the land — khas land cultivated by his family for generations — was taken over in 2017 at the height of the influx. "The army came and asked us to hand over the land," he said. "They asked for documents. Where would we get papers? My father and grandfather cultivated this land. But our words meant nothing. We were threatened, and, eventually, the land was taken."

Whether legal or not, such cultivation had sustained families like Mofiz's for decades. Its loss, he said, destroyed livelihoods overnight.

Living alongside the camps has also brought fear. "We never worried about sending our children to school or madrasa before. Now we are scared. There are unknown people everywhere," he said, pointing to the rise of armed gangs inside the camps, kidnappings for ransom, and cross-border criminal networks.

Not only the Bengali population but also Rohingyas in the camps report feeling increasingly vulnerable, citing a spike in armed activity and score-settling by drug traffickers.

Land loss has also ended cattle rearing for Mofiz and others in Lambashia. Waste from the camps, he said, has polluted surrounding farmland and canals.

Beyond physical insecurity, Mofiz spoke of social suffocation. "Earlier, we didn't have to answer questions about where we were going," he said. "Now police ask for ID cards all the time. It has become difficult to arrange marriages and other social functions. Guests hesitate to come because they are questioned. Even bringing a vehicle for a wedding is a problem."

Asked about his expectations from politicians contesting the election, he

said: "I want my old life back. We want to live freely again. They must go back to their country."

Amir Hossain, a local trader, sounded more pragmatic. "Repatriation does not depend on us," he said. "But harassment of locals in the name of security must stop."

He said whenever locals protest land or movement restrictions, they are asked to produce ownership documents. "We have lived here for generations. Now they threaten to drive us out of our own homes. That must stop."

Politicians, he said, offer reassurance but little else. "They say everything will be okay. But nothing changes."

Despite their anger, both men said they would vote.

There is also deep resentment over economic displacement.

The surge of foreign funds for refugees brought limited short-term employment for locals, largely in camp construction. These benefits were uneven and faded as development activity slowed and refugees increasingly filled low-paid jobs once held by locals. Although local NGOs were directed to allocate 25 percent of funds for local welfare, residents say the impact has been minimal. As a result, modest economic gains are increasingly outweighed by concerns over livelihood encroachment and growing insecurity.

Locals say wages have fallen as Rohingyas offer cheaper labour. Businesses are being lost. In Kutupalong Bazar, many shopkeepers are Rohingyas. Landlords prefer them as tenants, locals say, because they can charge higher rents.

Din Mohammed, from Lambashia, said he once ran a small grocery shop in Kutupalong Bazar. "Customers dwindled. They [Rohingyas] are the majority and prefer to buy from their own."

Eventually, he had to sell the shop. Refugees are not permitted to operate businesses or work outside the camp perimeter, but locals say enforcement is weak or nonexistent.

As I walked through farmland near Lambashia, three villagers approached

me, assuming I might be from an NGO or government office. They pointed to a canal running through their fields, clogged with waste flowing from the camps.

"During the rainy season, our land is flooded with this waste," said Ekram, one of the locals. "Fish are gone. Farming is becoming impossible." Complaints to local officials and politicians, he said, had led nowhere.

"So many people from another country are destroying our lives," he said. "We cannot accept this. The government has to send them back."

Even local political leaders acknowledge the scale of the problem. Chairman of Rajapalong Union Parishad Shahedul Islam Chowdhury, nephew of BNP MP candidate Shahjahan Chowdhury, admitted that what villagers spoke about is true. He acknowledged abductions and ransom demands by armed gangs, and even murder.

About six weeks ago, he said, a villager was abducted and later found dead, hanging from a tree. "We informed police and the administration. Nothing happened. In the end, we only found the body."

"After 2024, the police have become, what should I say, disabled," he added.

He fears the long-term consequences. "Sometimes I fear that we will become outsiders in our own land."

The chairman hopes that an elected parliament will at least allow the issue to be raised repeatedly. But among ordinary residents of Ukhia, belief in repatriation is fading. What remains is a demand for reduced insecurity — curbing armed activity in the camps, stopping abductions, and easing restrictions on locals' movement.

For Ukhia's host community, as the February 12 election approaches, fear of being permanently outnumbered continues to grow, so does the anger at the absence of answers. No one here knows if, or when, the refugees will ever return to Myanmar. That uncertainty has become the central political reality here, one that no candidate in the February 12 elections seems able to resolve.

# IAB pledges governance with Islamic values

FROM PAGE 1  
ensuring a safe, secure, and celebratory environment for the protection and practice of all religious beliefs," the manifesto said.

IAB said its "Manifesto of Public Expectations" has three sections with eight points on state governance, six on state reform, and 28 points on sectoral planning.

Its state governance agenda includes treating state power as a responsibility; ensuring a stable transition of power; maintaining respectful and cooperative foreign relations with all countries, including neighbours; ensuring good governance, transparency and accountability; addressing discrimination through legal, institutional and social measures; eradicating corruption; and safeguarding women's dignity and

rights. "Islam provides the most effective framework for women's employment, rights, dignity and freedom," Multi Rezaul said, adding that all the measures in this regard would be taken in line with the thousand-year-old beliefs, values and traditions of the land.

On state reform, the party said it would uphold the spirit of the Liberation War and the July uprising, introduce a proportional representation (PR) system in national elections, ensure a balance of power, establish a service-oriented, skilled and honest bureaucracy, and build a self-reliant, multidimensional state defence system.

Among its 28 point development agenda, IAB pledged to turn Bangladesh into an investment haven for foreigners, decide on LDC graduation within a short time, ensure citizen services in both

cities and villages, coordinate between the Qawmi and general education systems, promote smart agriculture, provide seeds, fertiliser and pesticides at affordable rates, introduce universal health facilities with free services for at least 20 percent of the population, and eliminate the broker-led system for labour workers by introducing a G2G mechanism.

The party also outlined region-specific plans for the Chattogram Hill Tracts, Rangpur and Barind regions, the Khulna-Barishal belt and haor areas. It pledged to evict all river grabbers and ensure the safety of water reservoirs.

For the Chattogram Hill Tracts, an inclusive policy will be taken, considering security, development, tourism and economic perspectives, while preserving the distinct identity of the hill communities, the IAB chief said.

# 'No such thing as mob violence'

FROM PAGE 2  
The administration is fully prepared to ensure a peaceful 13th national parliamentary election and referendum.

Stating that preparations were going well, Jahangir said: "CCTV cameras have already been installed at most polling centres. At two or three centres where there are no boundary walls, arrangements will be made with bamboo fencing."

Addressing concerns over illegal arms, he said law enforcement agencies are recovering illegal weapons on a regular basis.

"I am saying this repeatedly — illegal arms are being seized continuously. The election will be very peaceful and festive."

Jahangir also said a large number of security personnel would be deployed nationwide during the election.

Around 100,000 members of the army will be on duty, along with 5,000 from the navy, 37,000 from the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), 4,000 from the Coast Guard, 150,000 police personnel, 9,000 members of Rab and more than 500,000 members of the Ansar.

# Jamaat expels leader

FROM PAGE 2  
Meanwhile, SUM Ruhul Amin Bhuiyan, district Jamaat ameer and candidate for Lakshmipur-2, said, "As soon as the allegations against Sharif surfaced following the seizure, we immediately expelled him from the party. A press release will be issued shortly."

On Tuesday afternoon, police, acting on a tip-off, raided "Mariam Press" on Old Court Road in Lakshmipur town. During the drive, police seized six fake ballot seals, a mobile phone, and a computer.

Sohel was detained on the spot in the presence of Executive Magistrate Hasan Mahmud Nahid from the deputy commissioner's office.

Md Abu Tareq, superintendent of Lakshmipur police, told this newspaper that police were trying to arrest the other accused.

The SP also noted that police

obtained WhatsApp conversations and voice messages between the two regarding the production of the seals.

Expressing concern, BNP Joint Secretary General and candidate for Lakshmipur-3, Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anee, said he learnt that Soheli is a Jamaat activist.

"There is a deep conspiracy; it is a blueprint for election engineering. Along with seals, there may even be attempts to print counterfeit ballots," he told a press conference at Bashir Vila in the town on Tuesday night.

At a separate press conference that night, Rezaul Karim, secretary of Jamaat's Dhaka city north unit and candidate for Lakshmipur-3, denied that Soheli had any ties with the party.

Regarding Sharif's involvement, he said police should investigate the incident and ensure appropriate punishment for whoever is found guilty.

# 'By all means we'll ensure security'

FROM PAGE 2  
Jamaat, he said, wants to pass future leadership to the youth and establish honesty, competence, and sacrifice in politics.

"On February 13, a new sun will rise in the eastern sky of Bangladesh. That verdict will be delivered by the people on February 12. We seek shelter not abroad, but in the hearts of our people."

The Jamaat chief also spoke at a rally at Tangail Shaheed Pouro Udyan where he alleged that some people are threatening potential polling agents of his party in some places.

Meanwhile in Narayanganj, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam

Porwar alleged that BNP and India are behind the hacking of the party chief's account.

"We believe a cyberattack has been launched as part of a coordinated plan involving the BNP, Bangabhaban, and India to destroy the image of Jamaat-e-Islami," he said while addressing a rally at Shimrail truck stand.

"Failing to achieve anything through propaganda, threats, and terror, they have now resorted to cyberattacks to undermine the dignity and image of the party, as well as its leadership."

[Our Lalmonirhat, Narayanganj, and Tangail correspondents contributed to this report.]

# EC cancels polls

FROM PAGE 2  
constituency must be cancelled.

Asked about the next steps, EC Masud said a fresh election schedule would be announced later.

"The EC has not yet decided when the election will be held. However, I think it might take place after February 12," he said.

Nuruzzaman Badal, the Jamaat-e-Islami nominee for the Sherpur-3 (Sreebordi-Jhenagati) constituency, passed away early yesterday.

The 51-year-old candidate died around 3:00am while being taken to a hospital in Mymensingh. He had been suffering from kidney problem for a long time.

In Sherpur-3 constituency, others contesting candidates are — BNP nominee Md Mahmudul Haque Rubel, Bangladeshier Samajtantrik Dal-Basod (Marxist) nominee Md Mizanur Rahman, Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) nominee Abu Taleb Md Saifuddin, and independent candidate Md Aminul Islam.

Meanwhile, EC Masud said the election in Sherpur-3 cannot be held on February 12 following the death of a candidate, as the law requires at least 15 days after announcing a new schedule.

# Jamaat misusing

FROM PAGE 2  
including the Pir of Charmonai, had publicly stated that Jamaat-e-Islami was not an Islamic party.

"Many alem-ulema have said clearly that Jamaat talks about Islam only to confuse and mislead people," he said.

Later, Fakhrul exchanged views with members of the Hindu community at the Bashbhanga Kali Mandir premises in Begunbari union.

Describing Hindus and Muslims as "two flowers from the same stem", he said people of different faiths had lived side by side for generations but were now being divided deliberately. "Live without fear. Why should you be afraid? This is your country as much as mine. The rights I enjoy are the same rights you have," he said.

# 3 juveniles rape

FROM PAGE 16  
foul smell coming from an abandoned house in Baraipara village. Police recovered Maria's decomposed body from a steel trunk inside the house, which her family later identified. Her father filed a murder case that day.

Given the gravity of the incident, Tangail Superintendent of Police Muhammad Shamsul Alam Sarkar assigned Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Adibul Islam and Assistant Superintendent of Police (Madhupur Circle) Ariful Islam to assist the investigating officer.

Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh  
**Ministry of Chattogram Hill Tracts Affairs**  
**BANDARBAN HILL DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
Bandarban, Bangladesh.  
Phone : + 8802333302161 (Office), www.bhdc.gov.bd, bhdcdbd@gmail.com

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Memo No. 29.35.0300.000.004.38.0153.25-100 Date: 02/02/2026

## e-GP: Tender Notice No. 05/2025-2026 (LTM, Code No. 221000900)

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

Sl. No.	Package No.	Tender ID.	Description of works	Tender documents last selling date & time	Tender closing date & time	Tender opening date & time
01.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-123	1223924	Construction of a library at Baishari Upor Chak Para at Naikhonghari Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
02.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-122	1223923	Vertical extension of the Baishari Girls' High School building at Naikhonghari Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
03.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-121	1223922	Vertical extension of Ashartoli Tahmilul Quran Dakhil Madrasa at Naikhonghari Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
04.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-120	1223921	Construction of an educational building for Naikhonghari Sadar Chamudia Islamia Tahfizul Quran Madrasa and Orphanage Madrasa at Naikhonghari Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
05.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-119	1223920	Construction of Alikadam Merichar Primary and Junior Secondary School building at Alikadam Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
06.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-118	1223919	Construction of an academic building at Sonaichhari Adarsh High School in Phaitong Union at Lama Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
07.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-117	1223918	Construction of an academic building for Madinatul Uloom Tahfizul Quran Madrasa and Orphanage in Ward No. 1 of Faifong Union at Lama Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
08.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-116	1223917	Construction of the academic building of Master Md. Abdul High School at Lama Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
09.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-115	1223916	Construction of the boundary wall in Dhulla Para Private Primary School at Lama Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
10.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-114	1223914	Construction of Fasiakhali Majumdar Noorani Madrasa, Hefazkhana and Orphanage building at Lama Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
11.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-113	1223913	Completion of unfinished work of Ashrafia Islamia Madrasa's hostel at Lama Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
12.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-112	1223911	Construction of hostel for the Fasiakhali Sapergara Jamiria Miftahul Koran Madrasa, Hefzkhana and Orphanage at Lama Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
13.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-111	1223909	Supply of furniture at Residential Hostel and Academy building for the students of Ghazalia Shekhina High School and College at Lama Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
14.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-110	1223908	Renovation of the academic building, girl's common room and prayer room of Lama Islamia Fazil (Degree) Madrasa at Lama Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
15.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-109	1223907	Construction of Matamuhuri hostel for students from remote areas of Lama Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
16.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-108	1223905	Vertical extension of Roonglien Tharba hostel in Dim Pahar by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
17.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-107	1223904	Construction of a semi pacca building for Rumbet Para school at Thanchi Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
18.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-106	1223902	Vertical extension of Thanchi Girls High School hostel at Thanchi Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
19.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-105	1223901	Vertical extension of the hostel building of Longbaitong Orphanage at Ruma Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
20.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-104	1223900	Construction of Ruma Agrabongsha girl's hostel building at Ruma Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
21.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-103	1223898	Construction of office building and hostel for the Bawm Women's Organization (BNM) at Ruma Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
22.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-102	1223897	Construction of Ruma IBC hostel at Ruma Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
23.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/20 25-26/W-101	1223896	Construction of a hostel for Khumi students in Rowanghari Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
24.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-100	1223891	Construction of a building and renovation of the hostel of Chuanchung Hope of the Children Home Residential School in Tongkabati Union of Bandarban Sadar Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
25.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-099	1223889	Construction of a kitchen and dining hall at the Empu Para Non-Government Primary School's hostel by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
26.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-098	1223887	Vertical extension of the Border Guard Public School and College in Kraikkhang Para at Bandarban Sadar Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
27.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-097	1223885	Renovation of the Hnara Government Primary School building and construction of retaining wall at Bandarban Sadar Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
28.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-096	1223884	Construction of a hostel for the orphanage in Balaghata Lemujhiri at Bandarban Sadar Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
29.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-095	1223883	Construction of Fadullah Hafezkhana and Forkaniya Madrasa Building at Bandarban Sadar Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
30.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-094	1223882	Construction of a public library building in Sat Komol Para of Bandarban Sadar Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
31.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-093	1223881	Construction of a library building in Tompru Para at Bandarban Sadar Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
32.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-092	1223879	Construction of a girl's hostel at Bangladesh Bawm Tribal Baptist Church in Lemujhiri area of Bandarban Sadar Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
33.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-091	1223878	Construction of kitchen and bathroom for Fatimatooz Zahra (R) Mahila Madrasa at Bandarban Pourashava by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
34.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-090	1223877	Construction of Army Para Forkania Madrasa at Bandarban Pourashava by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
35.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-089	1223876	Construction of Shah Aktaria Orphanage building adjacent to Bus Station Baitush-Sharaf Madrasa at Bandarban Pourashava by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
36.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-088	1223875	Construction of roads, stairs and a passenger shed for parents at Kachingghata Government Primary School at Bandarban Pourashava by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
37.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-087	1223873	Construction of an academic building at Al-Faruk Institute School at Bandarban Pourashava by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
38.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-086	1223872	Construction of boundary wall for the Olambad Emdadia Anwarul Uloom Madrasa and Orphanage at Naikhonghari Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
39.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-085	1223870	Construction of drain with cover slab inside the Baishari Headman Chak Para and a stair leading to the grave yard at Naikhonghari Upazila by BHDC.	25 Feb 2026 17:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM	26 Feb 2026 15:00 PM
40.	eGP/BHDC/DEV/2 025-26/W-084	1223869	Improvement of road			

## Xi, Putin hail 'stabilising' China-Russia alliance

AFP, Moscow

China's President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin hailed their countries' "stabilising" economic, political and security alliance in the face of "turbulent" times globally, as they spoke via video call yesterday.

Moscow and Beijing have sought to present a united front against the West.

The call comes days after top officials from both countries agreed ties could "break new ground" this year as Moscow and Beijing ramp up economic cooperation.

"Since the beginning of the year, the international situation has become increasingly turbulent," Xi told Putin.

Addressing Xi as his "dear friend", Putin expressed a similar message, saying "the foreign policy alliance between Moscow and Beijing remains an important stabilising factor".



Federal agents detain an anti-immigration protester in Minneapolis, Minnesota, US on Tuesday. The action comes after a US judge on Saturday denied Minnesota's bid to force Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to suspend its sweeping detention and deportation operation in the state, which has left two US citizens dead and fuelled massive protests.

PHOTO: AFP



## Move on Says Trump as Epstein files trigger probe into British politician

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump made a fresh plea Tuesday for Americans to move on from the Jeffrey Epstein scandal, even as it left a prominent British politician facing a criminal probe on the other side of the Atlantic.

Former British ambassador to Washington Peter Mandelson resigned from the upper house of parliament amid allegations he passed confidential information to late sex offender Epstein.

The fallout from the latest release of millions of documents linked to Epstein continued in the United States too, where former president Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary will testify in Congress later this month.

Britain's former prince Andrew has moved from his luxurious Windsor home to a royal estate in eastern England, the BBC reported Tuesday, as he faces renewed scrutiny over his ties to Epstein.

## US-Iran talks 'still scheduled'

Says White House after Iranian drone shot down

AFP, Washington

A US fighter jet shot down an Iranian drone that approached an American aircraft carrier in the Middle East on Tuesday, Washington said, as renewed tensions on the high seas overshadowed plans for nuclear talks.

White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told Fox News that US envoy Steve Witkoff is still expected "to have conversations with the Iranians late this week," despite the incident.

The downing of the drone was the second clash between the foes in Middle Eastern waters on the same day, after Iranian forces attempted to detain a US-flagged tanker in the Strait of Hormuz.

Washington and Tehran have agreed to talks after US President Donald Trump repeatedly threatened Iran with military action -- and Iran warned that it would respond with strikes on US vessels and bases.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian confirmed on Tuesday that he had ordered the start of talks with the United States,

provided they were free of threats, after Trump suggested "bad things" would happen without a deal.

US and Iran are due to hold talks in Oman tomorrow after Tehran requested a change of venue to limit negotiations to its nuclear programme, a regional official said.

Iran wanted the meeting to take

place in Oman as a continuation of previous rounds of talks held in the Gulf Arab country on its nuclear programme, asking for a change of location from Turkey to avoid any expansion of the discussions to issues such as Tehran's ballistic missiles, the regional official said.

A prominent Iranian news agency has in recent days published without comment images of US bases in the Middle East. The images carry no comment and only the day of the week and the date according to the Persian calendar. The picture for Tuesday showed an aerial view of the Al Dhafra air base outside Abu Dhabi, which is used

by US and French forces.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told Witkoff in Jerusalem on Tuesday that Iran "cannot be trusted," according to a statement from Netanyahu's office.

The US opposes Iran's nuclear program, which it maintains is a precursor to acquiring nuclear



weapons, while Tehran insists it is for civilian research purposes. Washington also wants to curtail Iran's support for proxy forces in the region and cut its vast arsenal of ballistic missiles.

Meanwhile, Iranian media reported yesterday that women in Iran can now formally obtain a license to ride a motorcycle, ending years of legal ambiguity surrounding two-wheelers.

Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref signed a resolution on Tuesday aimed at clarifying the traffic code, which was approved by Iran's cabinet in late January.

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## Gunmen kill 162 in new Nigeria attack

AFP, Jos

Gunmen have killed at least 162 people in Kwara state in west-central Nigeria, authorities said yesterday, with the toll expected to rise.

Parts of Nigeria are plagued by armed gangs -- locally known as bandits who loot villages and kidnap for ransom -- as well as intercommunal violence in the central states and jihadist groups that are active in the northeast and northwest.

"This morning I was told that 162 dead bodies were counted," Sa'idu Baba Ahmed, a local lawmaker in the Kaiama region, told AFP. The attack was confirmed by police, who did not provide casualty figures, and the state government, which blamed it on "terrorist cells".

"Many others escaped into the bush with guns," Ahmed said, adding that more bodies could be found there.

The gunmen invaded Woro village around 6:00 pm on Tuesday and set "shops and the king's palace ablaze," said Ahmed.

He said the traditional king's whereabouts was unknown.

Kwara state governor Abdurrahman AbdulRazaq condemned the attack as "a cowardly expression of frustration by terrorist cells following the ongoing counterterrorism campaigns in parts of the state".

## 197 separatists killed after attacks in Balochistan

Says Pak security official

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's security forces have killed almost 200 separatist insurgents in southwestern Balochistan province since they launched a wave of attacks over the weekend, a security official said yesterday, taking the overall death toll past 250.

Fighting has continued between government forces and the militants following the coordinated attacks, with sporadic clashes still taking place in some districts after gunmen stormed banks, jails, police stations and military installations.

Pakistan has been battling a Baloch separatist insurgency for decades, with frequent armed attacks on security forces, foreign nationals and non-local Pakistanis in the mineral rich province bordering Afghanistan and Iran.

A senior official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told AFP yesterday that "197 terrorists have been killed in the ongoing counter-terrorism operations". He added that at least 36 civilians and 22 security personnel were killed during the coordinated attacks in restive Balochistan.



## Russia demands Ukraine give in as UAE talks open

AFP, Abu Dhabi

Moscow yesterday demanded Kyiv accept its conditions to end the four-year-war and vowed to press on with its invasion otherwise, as negotiations between the two sides opened in Abu Dhabi.

The US-mediated talks are the latest round of negotiations in a flurry of diplomacy that has so far failed to strike a deal to halt the war, unleashed by Russia's February 2022 invasion.

The war has spiralled into Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II, with hundreds of thousands killed, millions forced to flee their homes in Ukraine and much of eastern and southern Ukraine decimated.

The Kremlin's hardline rhetoric -- along with a massive Russian drone and missile barrage in the run-up to the talks, pounding Ukraine's energy grid and knocking out power and heating in temperatures far below freezing -- threatened to overshadow any chances of progress in the Emirati capital.

"Our position is well known," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday as the talks got underway.

"Until the Kyiv regime makes the appropriate decisions, the special military operation continues," he said, using Russia's term for the offensive.

On Tuesday, Russian strikes on the southern Ukrainian region of Zaporizhzhia killed three -- including two teenagers -- and wounded at least 12 people, regional governor Ivan Fedorov said on Telegram.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
Office of the Project Director  
Adaptation Initiative for Climate Vulnerable Offshore Small Islands and Riverine Charland in Bangladesh  
Department of Environment  
E / 16, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

**e-GP Request for Express of Interest (EOI) Notice**  
Published date: 05.02.2026

Sl	Proposal ID & Method	REOI Reference, Package & Name of Service	REOI Closing Date & Time
1	1208689 SIC	Ref : 22.02.0000.065.14.020.24- 198 Package : SD10 Name of Service : Knowledge Management and Communication Specialist	02 March 2026 02:00 pm
2	1204040 SIC	Ref : 22.02.0000.065.14.020.24- 199 Package : SD13 Name of Service : Construction Works Supervisor (4), Civil Engineer (1)	02 March 2026 02:00 pm

This is an online REOI, where only e-REOI will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline/ hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-REOI, please register on e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd/>). The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all EOIs.

Mirza Shawkat Ali  
Project Director  
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GD-258

Government of the Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh  
Office of the Inspector General  
Bangladesh Police  
Police Headquarters, Dhaka.

**Corrigendum of International Tender Notice**  
Memo No-44.01.0000.058.07.019.25/170  
Date: 03 /02/2026.

Invitation for International Tender Notice Published in different national dailies as per Invitation tender ref No-44.01.0000.058.07.019.25/05(2025-2026) Date: 02/02/2026 for procurement of 7.62x51 mm Cartridge in FY 2025-2026 is hereby amended as follows:

Published	Revised
Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional): 09 March 2026, at 12.00 hrs. NCCOM Building (Conference Room 2nd Floor), Bangladesh Police, Police Headquarters, Dhaka.	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional): 09 February 2026, at 12.00 hrs. NCCOM Building (Conference Room 2nd Floor), Bangladesh Police, Police Headquarters, Dhaka.

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GD-261

## Education must be steered back on track

A priority for the next government

The quality of education has been the biggest casualty of institutional apathy and misgovernance in Bangladesh. Despite lofty rhetoric about the importance of education, precious little has been done to bring about qualitative reform in the system. As a result, it continues to drift without a clear destination. At a recent policy dialogue on SDG 4, educationists and civil society representatives warned that decades of policy reversals, weak implementation, the absence of a long-term education plan, poor learning outcomes, and low investment have resulted in the country falling behind on its most fundamental development goal: quality education for all.

It is an absurd conundrum that for decades education has been treated as a secondary issue rather than a national priority. Curricula and assessment systems have been frequently revised and changed, creating confusion, with students, teachers, and parents bearing the consequences.

While enrolment has gone up, it has not translated into better-educated citizens. Literacy levels remain as low as 50 percent. How can we hope to be ready for a technological future with such deficiencies? Poverty, child labour, child marriage, displacement due to climate change, shortages of teachers, and infrastructure gaps serve to push the most disadvantaged children—especially girls—out of school. Unless these obstacles are addressed, it will be impossible to make any real change in educational outcomes. Education spending, meanwhile, has persistently remained far below the internationally recommended 4-6 percent of GDP. As a result, teacher development, nutrition, school facilities, and foundational learning have all been severely neglected.

It is puzzling why the interim government, otherwise so vocal about reforms, failed to set up an education reform commission, which should have been a priority. Moreover, the sudden announcement of a draft Education Act, despite being just days away from the national election, only confirms the lack of attention paid to this sector. It is, however, encouraging that the draft aims, among other things, to regulate institutions and phase out coaching centres and guidebooks. But the way the process was rushed, with no significant departures from existing rules and regulations, suggests an attempt to preserve the status quo rather than reform it. As experts have pointed out, the draft does not include a rights-based approach to education, resource mobilisation, per-student allocation benchmarks, or clear mechanisms to ensure equity in education.

Bangladesh needs a stable education system that is protected from political volatility. This requires a permanent education commission to prevent policy shifts with the changes of government. Both primary and secondary education must be brought under a unified planning framework to ensure universal schooling. Investment in education must be increased to 4-6 percent of GDP. Introducing a universal mid-day meal programme at the primary and secondary levels, strengthening the capacity and status of teachers, and ensuring basic literacy and numeracy at the primary level are recommendations that the next government must take seriously.

## Protect food from hazardous chemicals

Over 33 percent of samples failing safety tests should set off alarm bells

Food safety has long been a major public health concern in Bangladesh, and the latest findings of the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA) underscore how far we still are from ensuring food safety. According to BFSA data for FY2024-25, 33.3 percent of tested food samples—571 out of 1,713—were found to be adulterated, contaminated, or nutritionally substandard. That such a high proportion of commonly consumed food items fail basic safety and quality checks should be a matter of grave concern for both policymakers and the public.

According to the study, pickles, sauces, chips, puffed rice, fruit drinks, edible oils, dalda, and honey were among the everyday items found to be unsafe. That many of these products are widely consumed by children is particularly worrying. Some 65 percent of chips tested contained acrylamide, a chemical linked to serious health risks, in amounts often exceeding internationally accepted limits. Edible oils lacking the required Vitamin A content and mustard oil adulterated with soybean oil further expose how consumers are being cheated and put at risk. According to BFSA data, the proportion of unsafe food samples has risen sharply, from 8.5 percent in FY2022-23 to 15.4 percent in FY2023-24, and now more than doubling to over 33 percent.

Excessive use of fertilisers and pesticides in crops, hormones in livestock, and production methods that prioritise yield over safety reveal deep-rooted problems in the food system. Late last year, a study revealed the widespread use of highly hazardous pesticides in crops and vegetables. It identified at least 17 pesticides classified as dangerous by the FAO and WHO, several of which are linked to cancer, neurological disorders, and long-term organ damage. That such chemicals, banned in dozens of countries, remain available in Bangladesh exposes the glaring regulatory gaps and weak enforcement that ultimately compromise public health.

While technological interventions to boost production are necessary, they must not come at the cost of people's health. The government therefore must take strict measures to ensure that all food items are safe for consumption. This includes strengthening inspections, enforcing penalties against violators without exception, and ensuring that safety standards are rigorously applied in practice. It is encouraging that the BFSA plans to create a database compiling test results and making them public. Greater transparency can empower consumers and put pressure on producers to comply with standards, but to achieve real results, all relevant authorities must coordinate their efforts effectively.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY



### Senate acquits Trump

On this day in 2020, after being impeached by the House of Representatives over his actions in the Ukraine scandal, US President Donald Trump was acquitted in the Senate.

# Youth vote and the limits of democratic absorption



Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her X handle is @tasneem\_tayeb.

TASNEEM TAYEB

"We dreamt of a country where all people, regardless of gender, race, religion, would have equal opportunity... We expected policy changes and reforms, but it is far away from what we dreamt of." A 25-year-old student who participated in the 2024 mass uprising said these words to Reuters late last month while commenting on the February 12 election, in which he and his peers are expected to vote. These are not words of withdrawal or even of anger. The mood is rather one of subdued disappointment or cautious realism.

This election will not be a test of whether young Bangladeshis care about politics. They do. On the streets, in classrooms, online, and often at considerable personal cost. What this election will test is something more difficult: whether the political system has found a way to accommodate them.

Nearly 44 percent of Bangladesh's electoral roll—more than five crore voters—are between the ages of 18 and 37. It is the largest youth electorate the country has ever seen, a fact that is often presented as evidence of Bangladesh's democratic vitality. But numbers alone do not confer democratic legitimacy. Political systems do not fail when citizens stay away; they fail when citizens arrive in large numbers and still feel politically unmoored.

This is the paradox shaping the current moment. Youth turnout is expected to be significantly high, with some estimates even putting it above 90 percent. And yet, enthusiasm about the political choices on offer remains strikingly thin. Many young voters who demanded a "new Bangladesh" after 2024 now describe being pushed back toward familiar parties by default rather than choice. Others hover in a space of uncertainty, participating without a real sense of ownership, voting without conviction.

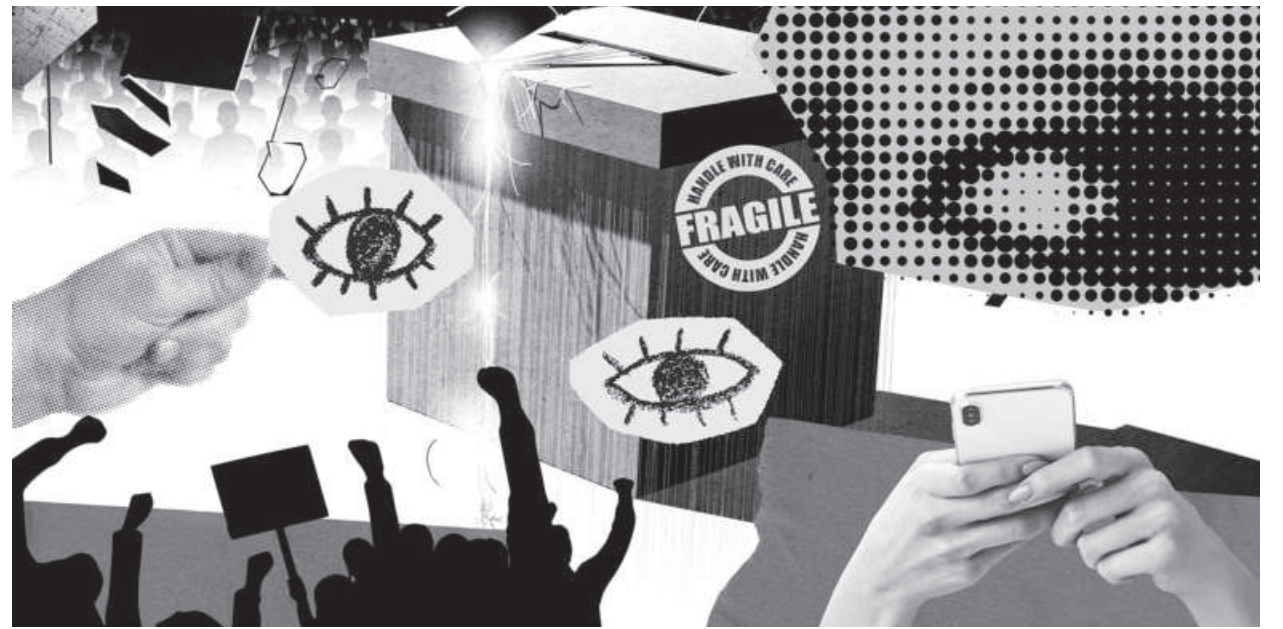
Political legitimacy rests on more than procedure. As German philosopher Jürgen Habermas warned, systems can work on paper and still fail if they cease to be responsive. British social theorist David Beetham made a similar point: consent must be justified, not assumed. In Bangladesh, young people are participating, but many do not feel their political language—of opportunity, quality, dignity, fairness—has been absorbed into how politics operates. While participation grows, integration of youth voices lags. Voting shifts from ownership to a tick-box exercise, and verdict becomes fragile.

This fragility did not emerge overnight. The 2024 uprising represented a rupture in political order, but not a redesign of political pathways.

Protests disrupted power. Institutions under the interim regime responded by restoring routine to some extent. Elections were scheduled, procedures resumed. In doing so, the system demonstrated a capacity for survival, but not for learning.

This is not a failure of youth mobilisation. Movements are rarely designed to build parties. They surface to express grievances and force visibility. The deeper failure lies in the political field itself: its narrow leadership pipelines, its closed organisational cultures, its inability to translate mobilisation into durable institutional change.

US political theorist Iris Marion



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

Young warned against precisely this form of exclusion: systems that include citizens numerically while excluding them structurally. Representation, she argued, is not simply about counting voices but about whether social perspectives are incorporated into decision-making processes. By that measure, many young Bangladeshis are present but unheard. They are inside the system, yet lingering at the margins.

This is evident in how different actors speak about the election. The old guards and institutions tend to frame the moment in the language of order, stability, legitimacy, and reform that is suspended somewhere in the future. Youth speak instead about employment, equity, and change more in the present. They are not arguing about the same things. They are speaking different political languages.

An editorial in The Daily Star

captured this misalignment very precisely: "The old way of doing electoral politics—simply dumping empty promises into manifestos—is unlikely to work with this increasingly vocal voter population." The observation is understated but consequential: traditional electoral rituals no longer command automatic credibility.

Youth voices are explicit about the distance they feel. Voters who wanted a "New Bangladesh" free from the baggage of the past now feel they are being forced to choose between the old guard and alliances, which does not reflect their aspirations, said a 23-year-old archaeology student interviewed by Reuters. Another, reflecting on the aftermath of 2024, put it more starkly: "After a year, I feel the spirit of the July revolution is completely lost. Violence has increased... and the interim government is not taking steps that make us feel secure."

These are not radical demands or calls for ideological reinvention. They are pleas for institutional seriousness, for politics that takes lived experience as a starting point rather than an inconvenience.

compromise, adjustment, survival within imperfect systems. Gen-Z learned politics through rupture: visibility, collective action, and moral clarity. One seeks entry; the other seeks redesign. The tension between these orientations explains why some young voters settle, others resist, and many hesitate.

This is not an unfamiliar challenge. Other large, power-holding institutions have confronted similar generational tensions without mistaking participation for satisfaction. In many multinational corporations, differences between millennials and Gen-Z are treated less as attitude problems and more as questions of organisational design. Cultures are recalibrated, feedback loops are redesigned, and strategies are revisited when engagement falters. The point is not that politics should borrow corporate models, but that systems capable of learning respond to misalignment by altering their architecture, not by celebrating participation while deferring change.

What makes this election pivotal is not merely that youth votes could

swing outcomes. It is that youth participation has raised the moral stakes of democratic performance. High turnout combined with low integration produces a volatile form of legitimacy, one that can unravel quickly if post-election governance fails to respond substantively and quickly.

This is where democratic theory becomes uncomfortably practical. Legitimacy, as Habermas reminded us, cannot be banked indefinitely. It must be reproduced through responsiveness. Elections can restore order. They cannot restore trust on their own.

The ballots will be counted. A new government will be formed. Stability may well be achieved. The unresolved question is whether the expectations carried into polling stations by millions of young voters will be absorbed into how power is exercised, or whether those will once again be deferred, managed, and normalised away.

# True patriotism means confronting our environmental crisis



Dr Ahad Chowdhury is a geologist, currently teaching at Jefferson Community and Technical College in Louisville, Kentucky.

AHAD CHOWDHURY

When Gita Gopinath, former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), recently stated at Davos that pollution kills millions of Indians annually and makes investors hesitant, she was accused of being unpatriotic. But the uncomfortable truth is, if stating facts about environmental degradation is considered unpatriotic, then we are choosing nationalist sentiment over national survival.

Gopinath's central message was economic reality: pollution costs India between five to nine percent of GDP through health losses and reduced productivity. Bangladesh faces an equally severe reality.

Bangladesh ranks second globally for air pollution and harbours the world's largest arsenic groundwater contamination crisis, affecting 50 million people, and our rivers are

systematically degraded through industrial and untreated sewage. The Dupi Tila aquifer, located beneath the Madhupur Clay, is rapidly running out of water. The recent November 2025 5.7 magnitude (M) Narsingdi earthquake revealed that seismic waves were amplified in places due to anthropogenic modification of the subsurface. These are physical realities operating according to chemical and geological principles that do not yield to political pressure.

Such environmental degradation directly influences national economic performance, as when companies move capital, they move people—executives, technical experts, skilled workers. If environmental conditions threaten health, high-value investment hesitates regardless of tax incentives. This is why environmental restoration must be comprehensive, requiring

four integrated elements: compliance, decisive action, restoration, and sustainability.

Compliance means enforcing environmental standards based on scientific understanding. Bangladesh has environmental laws; what is missing is consistent enforcement. Decisive action indicates moving beyond studies to actual implementation. Restoration means actively remediating contaminated sites, not accepting existing contamination as permanent. Sustainability signifies maintaining environmental quality while meeting development needs.

A practical, cost-effective measure to convert contaminated industrial sites into restored landscapes is EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) corrective action frameworks adapted to local conditions. It starts with identifying hotspot sources through compliance inspections, facility assessments, and systematic site characterisation using geophysical methods integrated with targeted drilling. Then, pollution is controlled through chemical and biological treatment of wastewater and industrial effluents, potentially including constructed wetlands for additional treatment before discharge.

Pollution is later contained using

engineered barriers with locally available clay materials; biological barriers using biochar and indigenous microbes; pump-and-treat systems; in-situ treatment technologies; bioremediation with native plant species; and monitored natural attenuation where appropriate. These approaches, detailed in EPA's regulatory framework, have successfully restored thousands of sites globally while building local technical capacity.

So, real patriotism would be fixing problems, not shooting messengers. When environment experts validate concerns about river degradation, when seismologists warn about earthquake vulnerability, when researchers document arsenic poisoning, they present evidence and recommend solutions based on data, not political convenience.

Bangladesh's choice is stark. We can face our crises with courage, implementing comprehensive management based on the four aforementioned elements—compliance, decisive action, restoration, and sustainability—or we can continue with rhetoric about sustainable development while practising environmental destruction until crisis forces restoration under far more difficult conditions.

NCP MANIFESTO DEBATE

# A manifesto misread: A rejoinder to 'Bold on youth, silent on inclusion'



Istiaq Akib is secretary of the Manifesto Sub-committee under the Central Election Steering Committee of the National Citizen Party (NCP).

ISTIAK AKIB

Kamal Ahmed recently wrote an opinion piece in The Daily Star titled "The NCP manifesto: Bold on youth, silent on inclusion." Public scrutiny of any electoral manifesto is both legitimate and essential in a democracy. However, critique must begin with an honest reading of the content in question. Unfortunately, Ahmed's article suggests that he might not have read the National Citizen Party manifesto, an 84-page document, and more worryingly, may not even have read the 36-point priority pledges carefully.

The column's headline and concluding paragraph claim that NCP's manifesto is silent on inclusion, which Ahmed identifies as "the most glaring disappointment." He makes a particularly bold assertion: "None of the NCP's 36 pledges address the concerns of religious minorities or ethnic communities, including Adivasis." This claim is factually incorrect.

The third point of the NCP's 36-point manifesto proposes the formation of a special cell under the Human Rights Commission authority to conduct independent investigations into incidents of violence, oppression, and persecution against minorities. This is an explicit and actionable pledge, not a vague commitment to "harmony," as is often the case in political rhetoric. The detailed version of the manifesto includes plans for the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and its communities (page 19), historically marginalised groups including Dalit, Harijan, and Scheduled Castes (SCs) (page 25), and pledge on access to learning mother tongue in primary education (page 51). Even if we put aside the full version, missing the third point of the 36-point manifesto is not a minor oversight; it seriously undermines the credibility of the entire critique, especially when the author goes on to accuse the party of a "troubling lack of empathy and understanding."

Ahmed also questions NCP's

**Perhaps the most surprising claim is that NCP provides no timeline for reaching a 12 percent tax-to-GDP ratio and that the proposal is "vague and inconsistent" because it lacks interim benchmarks. This is demonstrably untrue. Pages 29-32 of the manifesto address tax-to-GDP reform in detail. It includes a table specifying which sectors will be reformed, what measures will be taken, and how much revenue is expected to be raised in each year.**

commitment to lowering the voting age to 16, suggesting ambiguity about whether it applies only to youth councils or to all elections. NCP clearly states that the voting age will be reduced to 16 for all elections (page 46). The rationale is explained, and comparative references are provided, including examples from the United Kingdom, Austria, Brazil, and Argentina. In fact, this has been NCP's position for a long time, as reflected in formal proposals to reform commissions and in public speeches by the party leadership.

The article further compares NCP's pledge to create one crore jobs in five years with BNP's commitment of creating one crore jobs in 18

months, arguing that the emphasis on "decent jobs" makes NCP's target more ambitious. However, BNP's proposal translates to roughly 9.5 percent annual job growth, which has never occurred in modern economic history. Historical instances of high job growth, such as post-war reconstruction or recovery from major crises, typically range from 4 to 6 percent annually. By contrast, NCP's promise requires approximately 2.7 percent annual job growth, modestly above the average 2.2 percent job growth Bangladesh saw between 2010 and 2023. Yet Ahmed considers NCP's pledge more ambitious. But ambition is not the issue; clarity and planning are. And this is precisely where his

critique seems to fall short again, as the manifesto provides a sector-wise breakdown of job creation, detailing how employment will be generated across industries. Pages 48-50 of the manifesto outline the job-creation plan, its structure, and implementation logic.

Perhaps the most surprising claim in the article is that NCP provides no timeline for reaching a 12 percent tax-to-GDP ratio and that the proposal is "vague and inconsistent" because it lacks interim benchmarks. This is demonstrably untrue. Pages 29-32 of the manifesto address tax-to-GDP reform in detail. The document includes a table specifying which sectors will be reformed, what measures will be taken, and how much revenue is expected to be raised in each year as a result of these reforms. If anything, this section is among the most quantified parts of the manifesto.

All these create an unavoidable impression: the author either did not consult the full document or did so superficially. Such a lack of diligence is especially disappointing



VISUAL: ABIR HOSSAIN

when it comes from an experienced journalist who previously led the Media Reform Commission.

A manifesto is ultimately a public pledge that is open to scrutiny, debate, and improvement. NCP welcomes rigorous and fair-minded engagement, including on its pledges about inclusion, youth participation, employment, taxation, and governance reform. However, such engagement must be anchored in an accurate reading of the manifesto. We remain ready to participate in any constructive public discussion in the spirit of strengthening democratic accountability and advancing a more just and inclusive Bangladesh.

# Response to rejoinder: If this is inclusion, we need to relearn politics



Kamal Ahmed is consulting editor at The Daily Star. He led the Media Reform Commission under the interim government. His X handle is @ahmedkal.

KAMAL AHMED

The response from the National Citizen Party's (NCP's) secretary of the manifesto subcommittee, Istiaq Akib, to my analysis of their manifesto is a welcome development and a positive step towards fostering civilised dialogue—an essential element of democracy. It is also reassuring to see that good sense still prevails among aspiring young political actors who seek to bring fresh air into politics, rather than unleashing social media mobs. I must admit that, after reading the response, I went back and reread the manifesto more carefully and critically.

In his rejoinder, Istiaq Akib accuses me of misreading the manifesto and lacking diligence, questioning whether I had even read the 36 points, let alone the

entire document. He challenges my critique regarding the NCP programme's lack of inclusivity and the robustness of its proposed economic planning. Specifically, he alleges that by stating, "None of the NCP's 36 pledges address the concerns of religious minorities or ethnic communities, including Adivasis," I ignored what he describes as an "explicit and actionable pledge," which he insists is "not a vague commitment to harmony."

He cites the third point of the 36-point manifesto, which states: "A special cell with the authority to conduct independent investigations will be created under the Human Rights Commission to prevent any discriminatory acts, persecution, or oppression based on religious hatred, communalism, minority oppression, or ethnic identity."

That what the NCP is suggesting?

My emphasis on inclusion clearly stated that "these groups have long demanded equality, fairness, and respect for their rights, faiths, cultures, and ways of life." Against that backdrop, it is difficult to accept that the insertion of a single paragraph in an 84-page manifesto on the Chittagong Hill Tracts—one that vaguely refers to participation in decision-making without any clear commitments regarding the protection of ways of life, faiths, land rights, or the implementation of unfulfilled promises of the Peace Accord—is sufficient. If this is considered adequate, then the intent behind such a tick-box exercise in

inclusivity must be questioned.

Upon reviewing the manifesto again, I concede that I did not adequately consider the yearly implementation targets outlined in the document. Initially, I observed that the aim "to reduce inflation to six percent and raise the tax-to-GDP ratio to 12 percent" by the end of a parliamentary term was "both

**Upon reviewing the manifesto again, I concede that I did not adequately consider the yearly implementation targets outlined in the document. Initially, I observed that the aim "to reduce inflation to six percent and raise the tax-to-GDP ratio to 12 percent" by the end of a parliamentary term was "both vague and inconsistent." A closer examination, however, reveals how hollow these targets truly are.**

vague and inconsistent." A closer examination, however, reveals how hollow these targets truly are. The manifesto promises that necessary legal reforms (amendments) will be completed within the first year, despite the well-known reality that parliament will likely spend its first 180 working days functioning as a constituent assembly, significantly limiting its capacity to pass new legislation. Likewise, the plan to increase the number of taxpayers by more than six-fold within five years is so unrealistic that delving deeper into it seems futile. Anyone can examine the record to see how much success the interim government achieved by making TIN mandatory for certain services.

And what explanation has been offered for "decent work"? The manifesto provides figures for creating more than one crore jobs, but offers no clarity on how we are to know that these will not simply be low-wage positions. If these one crore jobs are indeed "decent work," then why is it unacceptable to describe this plan as more ambitious than the BNP's promise of one crore jobs? When the BNP unveils its manifesto, we will certainly scrutinise its employment plan to determine whether those jobs are decent or poorly paid, full-time or seasonal, and so forth.

On the issue of lowering the voting age to 16, there was no criticism in my analysis; rather, I called for clarity. This clarity is necessary because of the proposed establishment of an elected youth council. If young people are able to represent themselves directly in parliament, then the creation of a parallel representative body could generate unnecessary tension and conflict.

Overall, my assessment of the NCP manifesto acknowledged that its special focus on young people was predictable, given that the party was organised and launched by young activists who led the July uprising that ousted an autocratic regime. Once again, I reiterate that the NCP deserves appreciation for being the first party to unveil its manifesto ahead of the February 12 election.

CROSSWORD  
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Castor or Pollux
- 5 Olympian in a sled
- 10 Keyed up
- 12 Laughable
- 13 Skip a ceremony
- 14 Japanese assassin
- 15 Relay section
- 16 That woman
- 18 Clinic nickname
- 19 Wall art
- 21 Debt reminder
- 22 Starfish's cousin
- 24 Columbus's home
- 25 Come around, say
- 29 Coop group

30 Small quake

- 32 Leaf lifter
- 33 Cart puller
- 34 Part of college addresses
- 35 Water softener
- 37 Mystery writer
- 39 Fuming
- 40 Flower girl, often
- 41 VCR inserts
- 42 Seine summers

DOWN

- 1 Library sight
- 2 First family of 1842
- 3 Orbit point
- 4 Workout unit

5 Script bit

- 6 Numerical prefix
- 7 Kingsley role
- 8 Legally prohibit
- 9 Gasp, say
- 11 Hero, often
- 17 Charlotte team
- 20 Wise ones
- 21 Pursue
- 23 Make rough
- 25 Lady of Spain
- 26 Catch
- 27 Brunch dish
- 28 "Forget it!"
- 29 Custom
- 31 Tricks
- 33 Symmetry lines
- 36 Noshed
- 38 olf position

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MONDAY'S ANSWERS

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

## 'Roid' joins hands with 'Delhi Crime' production house

Bangladeshi filmmaker Mejbaur Rahman Sumon's latest feature film *Roid* has received a major international boost, with Widishaa Originals, the production house led by International Emmy Award-winning producer Apoorva Bakshi of *Delhi Crime* fame, joining the project as executive producer. The development was announced while the film is competing in the Tiger Competition section at the ongoing International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR).

The film marks Sumon's second feature film following the critically and commercially successful *Hava* (2022).

Speaking to Variety, Apoorva Bakshi described *Roid* as "powerful, mythic and deeply human," adding that the film presents emotion as a natural force. Sumon told Variety that the film was inspired by a real-life story shared by his mother.



# DREAMS COME TRUE: Putul's two-decade journey earns first National Award

SHARMIN JOYA

Aynun Naher Putul's Best Actress win for *Saatao* at the National Film Awards 2023 came as an unexpected but welcome moment in her two-decade-long career. An independent, crowd-funded film, *Saatao*—internationally known as *Memories of Gloomy Monsoons*—is directed by Khandaker Sumon and claimed three major honours at this year's National Film Awards, including Best Actress, Best Director, and Best Film. The film also received international recognition, including screenings at major festivals abroad and winning the Best Feature Film award. The Daily Star spoke to Putul about the film, her career journey, and her newly launched theatre production house.

**Congratulations on such a big win! Must you be on cloud 9 right now? Thank you so much! Honestly, it still feels unreal. It feels like I'm in a daze, as if this is a dream that might break at any moment. I've been shooting since morning, I have a live programme later, and the phone hasn't stopped ringing. I haven't really had the chance to sit with the feeling yet.**

**'Saatao' faced uncertainty in its early days. What was that phase like?**

At one point, we weren't even sure whether the film would be made, let alone released. We couldn't find anyone willing to invest in it. Eventually, it was made with public funding. From there, it travelled to different places, won awards, and today it has reached this point.

**In your career of two decades, you've worked across theatre, television and**



**films. Tell us how the journey began.**

It started in childhood in Jamalpur, through Monimela Khelaghor. From a very young age, I was drawn to singing, acting and dance. My interest in the arts was always stronger than my interest in formal studies. I studied Drama and Dramatics at Jahangirnagar University. I completed my Honours and Master's there, then an MPhil in Film, and I am currently pursuing a PhD in Film Studies. My brother and my teachers encouraged me to take this path. I've been a founding member of Theatre Arshinagar since 2012. Theatre is my emotional nourishment.

**You've also recently stepped into production. What led to that decision?**

It's a very recent step. My husband and I felt we could try to see what happens. There wasn't a detailed plan—we simply decided to begin. And then, quite unexpectedly, this moment arrived.

**You've worked on many major projects with legendary Humayun Ahmed. How significant was your experience of working with him?**

It was incredibly significant. At the time, I was very young, and working with him became part of my learning process. You don't learn everything through academic study—experience shapes you. My first project with him was *Chandra Karigor*, and the last was *Ghetuputro Komola*. I also worked on *Chhitika* in 2012, which was written by him. Observing his direction and working under him enriched my understanding of acting. Being able to work with him remains one of my greatest achievements.



## Prachyanat revives Tagore's 'Achalayatan' at Shilpakala today

Prachyanat has returned to the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy with its acclaimed staging of Rabindranath Tagore's *Achalayatan*, reviving the play for two performances today and tomorrow, February 5 and 6, at 7:00pm at the National Theatre Hall in Shegunbagicha.

Directed by Azad Abul Kalam, the production—Prachyanat's 42nd—revisits Tagore's symbolic drama through a sharp contemporary lens. Set inside a rigid educational institution ruled by ritual and fear, the play questions obedience, conformity, and the cost of inherited rules. Reimagined as a women's institution, the revival foregrounds power, patriarchy, and complicity.

## WHAT'S THE HAPS? Amar Bhashar Chalachitra 1432

Dhaka University Film Society returns with its flagship Bangla film festival, celebrating cinema's poster-lined past and enduring legacy. From classics like *Deya Neya* and *Rupban* to contemporary works including *Taandob* and *Ekhane Rajnoitik Alap Joruri*, the festival brings Bangla cinema back to the big screen.

DATE: TUESDAY-SUNDAY (FEBRUARY 3-8, 2026)  
TIME: 10:00AM ONWARDS  
VENUE: TSC, UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA



# NEWS

## 'No reason to fear going to polling stations' Govt decides to rename Rab instead

FROM PAGE 16  
attended by the three service chiefs and senior civil and law enforcement officials, the army chief said the armed forces were there to support the civil administration in ensuring a secure electoral process.

Waker said two considerations prompted the joint presence of the three service chiefs: to ensure the administration receives all necessary assistance from the armed services, and to send a clear message to voters and the nation that the authorities are serious and capable of holding a "beautiful" election.

"We are fully capable of conducting fair elections," he said. "Everyone—the government, the Election Commission, the police, the army, the navy, and the air force—is committed to holding the polls. There is no scope for the elections not taking place."

He said the armed forces would ensure robust patrolling to cover any shortfall after police are assigned to static duties, urging the civil administration, particularly deputy commissioners, to provide transport support so patrols can continue uninterrupted.

Warning about potential troublemakers, Waker said some criminals may attempt to create disorder in constituencies by instigating violence on election day, blocking voting, or preventing voters from reaching polling stations.

He said he expected the forces to take action against such offenders, including detention, and called on the authorities to ensure legal measures are taken against those involved.

"If criminals are detained and handed over but no legal steps are

taken, it will be counterproductive," Waker said.

Referring to the use of technology, the army chief said body-worn cameras, drones, and the Surokkha apps would make law and order management easier, including through live monitoring of activities at polling stations.

Waker said discussions had been held with the EC on monitoring financial transactions through bKash and limiting such transactions to prevent undue influence on the polls. He added that engagement was ongoing with the commission on restricting misinformation and propaganda, including content generated using artificial intelligence.

Describing claims that minorities were being targeted as "exaggerated information" and "not true," Waker said special attention was still needed to ensure minority voters can leave their homes, cast their votes, and return safely.

At the programme, Navy Chief Admiral M Nazmul Hassan said the navy aims to create a safe environment in which domestic and foreign observers can operate freely during the polls.

Nazmul said the navy is using drones, has deployed body-worn cameras in some areas, and, for the first time, has collected non-lethal weapons and riot control gear from police.

He noted that remote and char areas remain challenging due to poor communication systems and said some locations are known as safe havens for miscreants, requiring increased patrolling.

The navy chief also said social

media and artificial intelligence have emerged as major challenges, adding that personnel have been trained and instructed so they are not influenced or misled into making wrong decisions.

Air Chief Air Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan said the air force is fully prepared to support the polls, including transporting ballot boxes, personnel, and logistics to remote areas, particularly in hill tracts and coastal regions.

He said the air force would remain ready to provide air transport, casualty evacuation, and medical evacuation if needed, noting that air force personnel will also be deployed directly in the field alongside the army during the election.

He said specialised UAVs would provide live feeds to the Election Commission and the air command operations centre, while helicopters and transport aircraft would remain on standby, with assets positioned in Dhaka, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, and Jashore.

The air chief emphasised that all deployed personnel must maintain a visible presence, remain alert before and after voting, and ensure strict neutrality while on duty.

## Political violence

FROM PAGE 16  
including vandalism of homes and places of worship. These left one person dead and 27 injured, while 17 temples, 63 idols, and 65 homes were vandalised. Six cases of land grabbing targeting minority communities were also reported.

FROM PAGE 16  
On March 26, 2004, Rab was formed amid rising militancy and a deterioration in law and order during the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

The US imposed sanctions on Rab and several of its former and serving officials in December 2021 over serious allegations of human rights violations. After that, Rab's "crossfire" incidents nearly stopped.

Most recently, in a report on alleged human rights violations during the 2024 student movement, the UN human rights office, OHCHR, recommended the abolishment of Rab. Ignoring the calls, the interim government decided to rename Rab, 22 years after it was formed.

At the briefing, a reporter cited Transparency International Bangladesh's warning that the failure to control "mobs" could affect the election. The reporter also referred to survey findings indicating that more than 600 police personnel were attacked in various ways in 2025, asking how the polls could be ensured when the police themselves were under threat.

The home adviser said TIB shared its concerns and referred to the situation with the police between August 5 and 8, as well as the period that followed.

He said police morale and efficiency had since improved then and that there would be no problem in holding the election.

The adviser also urged reporters to compare the situation after the declaration of schedules in previous elections with the current environment.

At the briefing, Brig Gen Mohammad Ali Haidar Siddiqui, director general (operations and plans) of Armed Forces Division, said the joint forces recovered 199 weapons and arrested 1,807 people since the election schedule was announced.

He added that 106,223 personnel from the three services have been deployed nationwide.

Describing the recoveries as encouraging, the army officer said members of the forces have reached every district and upazila and would continue coordinated drives with the district administration, police, and other agencies.

Asked about the ownership of the weapons, Haidar said a full breakdown was not immediately available.

However, he said that of weapons that went missing from police and Rab, forces have so far recovered 4,432. Besides, 65 weapons missing from jail authorities and 328 missing licenced weapons were recovered.

He added that 2,906 weapons were recovered in cases involving illegal arms missing from police station storerooms. "In total, 7,731 weapons have been recovered since September."

## Fines for illegal gas

FROM PAGE 16  
exceeding the approved hourly load, will be treated as offences.

In formulating rules under the ordinance, the government has curtailed the role of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC).

While the Bangladesh Gas Act 2010 required the government to frame rules through a gazette notification in consultation with the regulator, the new ordinance omits any reference to BERC's involvement.

## Tobacco major driver of cancer

FROM PAGE 16  
the WHO global report published in October last year.

Against this backdrop, Bangladesh, along with the rest of the world, observed World Cancer Day on February 4 under the theme "United by Unique," calling for placing people at the centre of cancer care and their stories at the heart of the conversation.

The Public Health and Informatics Department at BMU has, for the first time in the country, established a population-based cancer registry in Hossainpur upazila and began the study in July 2023.

Led by Md Khalequzzaman, an associate professor at the department, the study team collected data from 2.32 lakh people across 51,900 households until March last year.

Of them, a total of 245 cancer patients were registered, including 129 males (52.7 percent) and 116 females (47.3 percent), the data show.

The findings indicate a cancer prevalence of 109.1 per 100,000 population, with a higher prevalence among males (118.9 per 1 lakh) than females (99.9 per 1 lakh).

Age-wise, the highest proportion of cancer cases was recorded in the 51-60 age group (28.6 percent), followed by the 41-50 age group (24.5 percent).

The team carried out follow up on 128 lakh participants, registering 69 new cases (53.6 percent 1,00,000 population) and the proportion of deaths is 11.1 percent.

A history of smoking was reported by 72.9 percent of the male cancer patients, while none of the female patients reported smoking.

However, smokeless tobacco use was more common among females (60.3 percent) than males (38 percent), the data show.

The study identified 38 types of cancer, with breast cancer accounting for the highest number of cases at 42 (17 percent), followed by lip and oral cavity cancer with 19 cases (7.8 percent).

Of the 38 cancer types, 14 are tobacco-related, accounting for 46 percent of all cancer cases, Khalequzzaman said.

Lip and oral cavity cancer accounted for 7.8 percent, followed by larynx cancer (6.9 percent), stomach

cancer (6.1 percent), cervix cancer (5.3 percent), lung cancer (4.9 percent) and oesophagus cancer (4.5 percent), the data show.

The top five cancers among males are oesophagus, lip and oral cavity, lung, hypopharynx and stomach, according to GLOBOCAN 2022, developed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the cancer research arm of WHO.

Among females, the top five cancers are breast, cervix uteri, oesophagus, gallbladder, and lip and oral cavity, the data show.

The study shows that tobacco use is a major factor driving the country's growing cancer burden, said Khalequzzaman.

"However, tobacco-related cancers are preventable by avoiding tobacco use, and the rising cancer burden can therefore be reduced."

Greater emphasis should be placed on controlling smokeless tobacco use, which has become more or less culturally accepted, as it is a leading cause of lip and oral cavity cancers—the most commonly reported cancers in the study.

## Dhaka inks deal with Tokyo to upgrade defence

FROM PAGE 16  
Bangladesh Navy's monitoring, surveillance, and disaster-relief capabilities, it added.

The ISPR said the defence agreement reflects deep mutual trust, a shared vision, and cooperation between the two countries, achieved through the far-sighted and effective diplomacy of Bangladesh's interim government.

Signed in full conformity with the principles of the UN Charter, the agreement will establish an institutional framework for the

acquisition of advanced defence technology and equipment, as well as joint research and development, to promote international peace and security and safeguard Bangladesh's independence and sovereignty, it added.

"At the same time, the strategic partnership between Bangladesh and Japan in South Asia will be further strengthened, making an important contribution to regional stability and global security.

"As a result of this historic agreement, exchanges of military

experts between the two countries are expected to increase, playing a significant role in enhancing Bangladesh's defence capabilities and implementing future plans," the statement read.

Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the agreement would contribute to closer cooperation between Japan and Bangladesh on defence equipment and technology, while helping maintain and enhance the production and technological base of Japan's defence industry, thereby contributing to Japan's security.

## CLIMATE ACTION

Eastern Bank PLC hosted the 2nd EBL Climate Change Action Awards 2026 on January 26 at the Radisson Blu Dhaka. This annual initiative is held in partnership with the European Union and embassies of Germany, France, Denmark, and Sweden. Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Ahsan H. Mansur attended as the Chief Guest and EBL Managing Director Ali Reza Iftekhar was also present. The following EBL Climate Action Awards 2026 winners demonstrate excellence in environmental sustainability through locally-led initiatives in five categories: Green Manufacturing, Energy Efficiency, Climate Smart Agriculture, Climate Education, and Adaptation and Resilience.



# IMPACTFUL SOLUTIONS DRIVING A GREEN FUTURE

## An approach towards green manufacturing

INSEE ECO Plus+ is a green cement launched by Siam City Cement (Bangladesh) Limited in 2024. Siam City Cement (Bangladesh) has secured the EBL Climate Change Action Award for its innovative approach to green manufacturing in Bangladesh.



It is specifically engineered to withstand the aggressive salinity and corrosive soil conditions of Bangladesh's coastal regions. By reducing clinker content to approximately 45-50 per cent through the integration of industrial by-products like slag and fly ash, the product achieves a 46 per cent lower carbon footprint than traditional Ordinary Portland Cement. It directly supports national climate commitments and global sustainability goals. Despite its low-clinker formulation, it provides superior durability, high surface resistivity, and enhanced chloride resistance. INSEE ECO Plus+ ensures a longer structural lifespan for infrastructure without compromising on compressive strength. Validated by rigorous scientific testing and technical partnerships, INSEE ECO Plus+ represents a transformative shift toward climate-smart construction and circular economy principles in the Bangladeshi market.

**Sustainability cannot remain one-sided from the seller's perspective alone; it becomes meaningful only when products reach consumers who are aware and concerned. Buyers with sustainable requirements push companies to recognise their responsibility, and such recognition helps brands build stronger, lasting value.**

**Mahmud Hasan**  
Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, SCCBD

**"Cassetex has built a traceability tool ensuring batteries are managed responsibly to break the toxic cycle between cheap transport and suffering."**

**Tauseef Anwar**  
Co-founder & Chief Business Officer  
Cassetex Ltd

## Transforming Sustainable Battery Infrastructure



Cassetex has secured the EBL Climate Change Action Award for its innovative approach to battery infrastructure in Bangladesh. The initiative tackles a severe public health crisis caused by toxic lead pollution from traditional lead-acid batteries. This contamination permanently affects brain development in children and damages the local food chain. To combat this, the company introduced a comprehensive traceability tool to manage the entire battery lifecycle. Their unique battery swapping model replaces long charging hours with instant service to ensure continuous productivity for drivers. These lithium-ion batteries are forty per cent lighter than conventional models, which allows vehicles to carry more load and generate higher income. Beyond transportation, the project aims to establish a national recycling centre to recover valuable minerals from battery waste. This strategic move could generate billions of dollars for the national economy while promoting energy independence. This initiative makes clean mobility truly sustainable for future generations.

## Innovative Floating Pond Farming Success



Youth Action for Sustainable Future (YASF) has received the EBL Climate Change Action Award for its innovative floating pond farming project in Mehediaganj. This region faces frequent flooding that often washes away traditional fish stocks and destroys local livelihoods. To solve this crisis the organization introduced climate resilient structures built from bamboo and unused drums. These floating platforms keep fish nets secure during tidal surges and heavy monsoons. Additionally farmers grow vegetables like bottle gourd on top of these structures to create a dual production system. This low cost model reduces construction expenses by seventy percent compared to concrete embankments. Results show that fish survival rates have increased significantly since the implementation of this project. The initiative provides a scalable and sustainable solution for flood prone communities across Bangladesh. By empowering local farmers and youth volunteers the project ensures year round food security and economic stability in vulnerable areas.

**This low-cost and locally led approach substantially improves resilience, food security, and livelihood stability in flood-affected communities.**

**Md Hanif**  
President  
YASF

**We are planning to establish a dedicated Climate, Environment and Nature Desk to provide regular coverage of regional and global climate issues, which will be among the first such initiatives in Bangladesh's media landscape.**

**Md A J Sagor**  
Host, Concept & Development Lead,  
Somoy Nature, Somoy TV.

## Somoy Nature advancing climate resilience



Somoy TV has achieved significant recognition by winning the EBL Climate Change Action Award for its pioneering initiative called Somoy Nature. This project effectively addresses the critical gap between complex scientific research and public understanding regarding environmental crises. Through a structured five step workflow, the production team creates data driven explainer videos that simplify essential topics like water security and disaster risks. The initiative has reached over twenty million people across various digital platforms and has successfully reduced public panic during national environmental emergencies. Expert collaborations ensure that every video report is scientifically accurate while remaining highly accessible to general audiences. National researchers and disaster management experts have praised the program for its essential role in fostering community resilience and informed policymaking. Looking forward, Somoy TV aims to expand this successful model across South Asia to tackle shared regional challenges together. This prestigious award highlights the vital role of media in building a climate smart society through responsible journalism and innovative visual storytelling.

## SCALING TOMORROW'S SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS



**"We believe it is critical to celebrate those who translate commitment into action through impactful climate solutions."**

**Ali Reza Iftekhar**  
Managing Director  
EBL



EBL is one of the leading financial institutions in Bangladesh dedicated to fostering sustainable development and environmental stewardship through innovative green finance and strategic climate action initiatives.

**THE DAILY STAR (TDS):** What is the vision behind these awards and the specific impact you hope to achieve?

**ALI REZA IFTEKHAR (ARD):** The EBL Climate Change Action Awards recognise and amplify impactful climate solutions driving change in Bangladesh. By celebrating those who translate commitment into action, we spotlight innovation in green manufacturing and climate-smart agriculture. This initiative aims to inspire replication, attract investment, and foster collaboration for a sustainable future. Ultimately, the program honors pioneers protecting the environment through practical local solutions, accelerating the transition toward a resilient and climate smart economy for the benefit of all.

**TDS:** How will these awards influence and transform the sustainability landscape in Bangladesh?

**ARI:** These awards act as a powerful catalyst for change within the sustainability landscape. By formally recognising high-impact initiatives through a transparent selection process, the programme helps set clear benchmarks for what meaningful climate action looks like. The awards bring visibility to successful models that can be scaled or adapted across different sectors. This encourages diverse industries to adopt sustainable practices and motivates organisations to integrate climate considerations into their core strategies. Importantly, the awards also help bridge the gap between innovation and policy discussions. By highlighting solutions that align with national priorities, the programme contributes to a more coordinated and action-orientated landscape in the country. It promotes a culture where environmental stewardship is valued as a key pillar of corporate success.

**TDS:** What other strategic measures is EBL taking to implement real climate action?

**ARI:** Beyond the awards, we have embedded climate responsibility into our core business strategy. We are the first bank in Bangladesh to initiate carbon accounting. Currently, over eighty per cent of our total lending portfolio is dedicated specifically to sustainable finance. We measure emissions from our financed portfolio and our own supply chain to ensure transparency. To reduce direct emissions, we use sustainable aviation fuel for document transportation to achieve a thirty per cent carbon reduction. We are developing a comprehensive decarbonisation roadmap that aims to exceed national climate targets. Additionally, we use a Climate Risk Assessment Module to evaluate physical and transition risks. This ensures that our framework aligns with global standards and supports international disclosure requirements.

## SECURING LIVELIHOODS AGAINST CLIMATE SHOCKS



**"We bridge the gap between climate vulnerability and financial stability, turning insurance into a practical tool for national resilience."**

**Farzanah Chowdhury**  
Managing Director and CEO  
Green Delta Insurance PLC



Green Delta Insurance (GDI) is a premier insurer, uniquely integrating inclusive microinsurance into its core business to provide sustainable financial protection for climate-vulnerable rural communities and smallholder farmers across Bangladesh.

**THE DAILY STAR (TDS):** What specific climate vulnerabilities in Bangladesh led Green Delta Insurance to move beyond traditional insurance and develop a "Climate Risk Insurance" model?

**FARZANAH CHOWDHURY (FC):** Bangladesh's climate risk is structural, not occasional. Floods, cyclones, and erratic rainfall repeatedly disrupt rural livelihoods, particularly for smallholders outside formal safety nets. Traditional insurance, designed for low-frequency, high-value asset loss, was not built for this reality. We moved beyond conventional insurance because the greatest losses are often income and productivity,

not just physical assets. Repeated shocks erode earnings and push households into debt. Green Delta Insurance is the only publicly listed insurer globally to integrate inclusive microinsurance into its core business not as CSR, but as a sustainable protection mechanism. Our philosophy is "any product, anywhere, any season," utilising partnerships with the UNDP, IFC, and WFP to reach underserved communities.

**TDS:** How does GDI's "parametric" model function, and what role does AI play in verifying livestock claims?

**FC:** Our parametric model triggers automatic payouts when predefined climate thresholds are crossed. By utilising satellite data and meteorological records, we remove subjectivity and eliminate the need for individual claim filings. For livestock, GDI uses AI-enabled biometric muzzle-print recognition and NFC tagging. This digital system allows us to verify animal identity instantly

and prevent fraud, making rural livestock insurance commercially viable. Compared to traditional settlements that take months, our tech-driven process delivers payouts to mobile wallets within days, ensuring transparency and building trust among skeptical communities.

**TDS:** What are the quantitative milestones of GDI's climate insurance portfolio in terms of household reach and claims disbursed?

**FC:** GDI has built the nation's largest inclusive portfolio, insuring 1.63 million+ households across 50 districts. We have disbursed BDT 232+ million in claims, supporting 338,000 crop farmers and 25,000 flood-affected families. These milestones represent confidence restored, debt avoided, and stabilized livelihoods. Our experience shows that tech-driven insurance is a practical resilience tool, not just a financial product, ensuring national resilience.

# Essential skills to excel at a communications role

NAZMUL HOSSAIN

At 8.43 AM, a message flashes up on a phone that has already been vibrating all morning. A customer has posted a shaky video of smoke drifting across a shop floor. In the comments, people are guessing, blaming, sharing, embellishing. The facts are incomplete, the feeling is loud, and the organisation has a choice to make in public. Say nothing and the story fills the silence. Say the wrong thing and it becomes the story.

Careers in communications are built in moments like this, even when the day job looks calmer from the outside. Behind the press release, the campaign launch, the internal update, the social post and the spokesperson briefing sits a set of skills that combine craft and judgement. You can learn the tools quickly. What takes longer, and what employers notice, is whether you can turn information into understanding, and whether people trust you when it matters.

## WRITING THAT RESPECTS THE READER

Writing remains the core currency of communications, regardless of channel. It is not simply a knack for neat phrasing. It is the ability to decide what is true, what is relevant, and what a reader needs first. Traditional news writing reduces that discipline to three essentials: accuracy, brevity and clarity. Miss the first and you lose credibility. Ignore the second and you waste attention. Neglect the third and you force readers to do your work for you.

Good communicators treat accuracy as an everyday habit rather than a crisis response. They check names, numbers, dates, locations, and the meaning of what a source has said, because mistakes spread faster than corrections. They also understand fairness. Even when you are writing for an organisation, your words carry an obligation to the public and to the people affected by what you publish. That means using neutral language when neutrality is required, avoiding inflated claims, and recognising what you do not yet know.

Clarity is not about making things simplistic. It is about making them usable. Plain English helps because it assumes the reader is busy, distracted, and possibly anxious, and it does not punish them for it. Shorter sentences, active voice, and verb-led phrasing create momentum and reduce the chances of misunderstanding. The difference between "a decision was made regarding implementation" and "we decided to implement" is not stylistic trivia. It is the difference between a message that lands and one that slides off the page.

There is also a subtler writing skill that matters in communications: register.

You need to sound like a human being without sounding casual when the moment demands care. You need to be formal without becoming foggy. The best writers can shift tone for an internal staff note, a regulator update, a customer apology, and a fundraising appeal, while still sounding consistent. That ability comes from paying attention to audience and purpose, and from reading widely enough to develop an ear for what works.

## STORY SENSE, STRUCTURE AND THE ABILITY TO HOLD ATTENTION

Communications professionals sometimes flinch at the word "story", as if it implies spin. But story, at its best, is simply structure: what is happening, why it matters, and what should happen next. A feature writer learns early that a piece must grab attention, keep it, and leave an impression. That same arc applies to comms, whether you are writing a

decide what happens next.

## LISTENING, REPORTING AND THE HABIT OF GETTING IT RIGHT

Many early career communicators focus on outputs: the newsletter, the press release, the post. Senior communicators focus on inputs: what is actually happening, what people believe is happening, and what evidence supports either view. That is reporting, even when you do not call it that. You are gathering information, verifying it, deciding what is material, and presenting it in a form that others can use.

Listening is part of that, and it is more than politeness in meetings. It includes stakeholder interviews that draw out what a senior leader is reluctant to say plainly. It includes reading the mood of staff channels, community groups and comment threads, and distinguishing a loud minority from a genuine shift in

misunderstand, and what will they do with the information.

Judgement is the skill that sits underneath. It shows up when you decide that a technically correct line is still misleading in context. It shows up when you choose to publish a partial update because silence would fuel speculation, while being explicit about what you are still confirming. It shows up when you know when to push back on a senior figure who wants a slogan rather than an answer.

This is where ethical instincts become career defining. The temptation in communications is always to polish. The craft is learning how to be clear and persuasive without being slippery. Trust, once lost, is difficult to regain, and communications teams are often the first to feel the consequences of shortcuts taken elsewhere.

## COLLABORATION, CONFIDENCE AND THE ABILITY TO KEEP LEARNING

Communications is a team sport played across departments. You will work with policy, product, HR, legal, operations, designers, videographers, analysts and executives, often with competing priorities and time pressures. Collaboration is not about being agreeable. It is about making progress without losing precision. It includes project management, briefing well, keeping deadlines realistic, and being able to say, calmly, that a message cannot go out yet because it is not accurate enough.

Confidence matters, too, but it should be the quiet kind, grounded in preparation. It is the confidence to ask basic questions, to admit when you do not know something, and to revise a draft without taking it personally. Strong communicators rewrite. They proofread. They read their work aloud. They respect punctuation because it shapes meaning. They aim for plain language not because they cannot write elegantly, but because clarity is a form of respect.

Most of all, communications careers belong to the curious. Industries shift, platforms change, and audiences develop new expectations. The people who thrive are the ones who keep learning how to listen better, write sharper, and think more clearly about the consequences of what they publish.

In the end, the job is deceptively simple to describe. Find out what is going on. Decide what matters. Explain it in a way people can understand and trust. Do that consistently, and you build a career that lasts.

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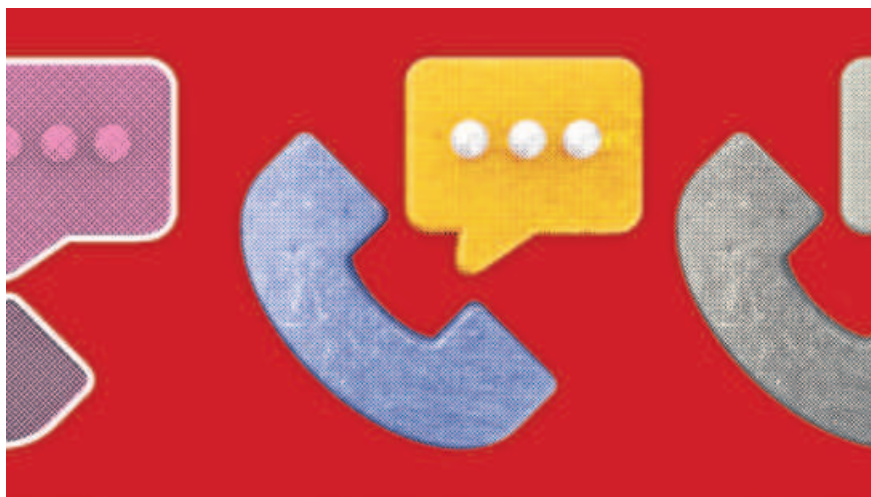


ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

case study, a CEO email, or a campaign landing page.

Structure is a career skill because it forces prioritisation. In a crisis statement, the first lines should address what people most urgently need to know. In a campaign, the opening should make a promise to the reader and then deliver on it. In an internal change programme, the message should anticipate the questions people will ask in the corridor and answer them before they become rumours. Knowing how to build that shape is part craft and part empathy, and it improves with practice, editing, and the willingness to cut your favourite line if it slows the reader down.

Good endings matter, too. People remember the last thing they read, and they often act on it. A strong finish can clarify next steps, reinforce reassurance, or invite engagement, while staying honest about uncertainty. A weak ending simply fades out, leaving the audience to

sentiment. It includes the discipline to ask one more question when something sounds neat but does not quite make sense.

With listening comes synthesis. Communicators are often handed competing versions of reality: legal caution, operational detail, leadership ambition, customer frustration. Your value is the ability to turn that into a single narrative that is accurate, fair, and comprehensible, without pretending tensions do not exist. When you can do that well, you become the person people rely on when the organisation is under strain.

## STRATEGIC THINKING AND JUDGEMENT UNDER PRESSURE

Communications is not just language. It is decision making about timing, channels, and risk. Strategy can sound grand, but it often comes down to a few practical questions: who needs to know, what do they need to know now, what might they



IMAGE: REUTERS

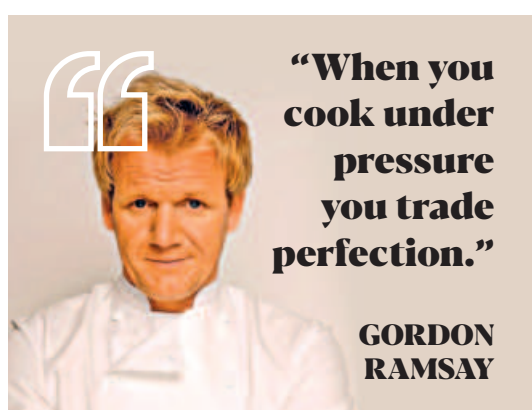
## Nvidia to make 'huge' investment in OpenAI: CEO Huang

NEXT STEP DESK

Nvidia plans to make what its chief executive, Jensen Huang, described as a "huge" investment in OpenAI, signalling continued backing for the ChatGPT maker. Speaking to reporters in Taipei on January 31, Nvidia CEO Huang rejected suggestions that he was unhappy with OpenAI, calling such claims "nonsense".

"We are going to make a huge investment in OpenAI," Huang said. He said Nvidia would take part in OpenAI's next funding round and that the investment would likely be the largest the chipmaker has ever made, though he ruled out a figure close to \$100 billion. In September 2025, Nvidia announced that it was considering investing up to \$100 billion in OpenAI.

In January 2026, the Wall Street Journal reported that Huang had privately questioned OpenAI's business discipline and highlighted increasing competition from rivals, including Alphabet's Google and the AI start-up Anthropic.



"When you cook under pressure you trade perfection."

GORDON RAMSAY

# The Gen Z guide to making sense of money at work

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Money at work is rarely just about a paycheck. It shapes mobility, confidence, autonomy, and the kind of life that feels possible. It influences where we live, how we move through cities, what we say yes to, and how much space we feel allowed to take up. Despite this, workplace money remains poorly explained, and conversations around pay often feel awkward, opaque, or emotionally loaded. Making sense of money at work often involves understanding how value is measured, how time converts into income, how energy relates to reward, and how lifestyle expectations quietly shape financial pressure.

## YOUR SALARY IS A SIGNAL, NOT A SCORE

A salary communicates information. It reflects how a role is valued within a specific organisation, industry, and moment in time. Treating salary as a signal rather than a score allows distance from emotional attachment to numbers. Early career pay often represents potential, learning capacity, and structural constraints rather than personal capability. Reading salary as data creates perspective. Different industries price skills differently. Certain roles scale faster. Some organisations prioritise stability while others prioritise acceleration. Observing these patterns builds financial literacy. It encourages comparison between roles and trajectories rather than between individuals. Over time, the direction of growth matters more than the starting figure. This mindset supports confidence without entitlement as money becomes contextual rather than personal.

## PAY BANDS TELL YOU MORE THAN OFFER LETTERS

Every role sits inside an invisible pay range. Understanding this changes how salary conversations feel. Pay bands usually reflect seniority, budget ownership, and replacement cost. An offer often lands somewhere within that range based on urgency, negotiation comfort, and internal parity. Learning to ask where a role sits within its band provides clarity. It reveals room for growth without

demanding immediate change. Observing peers at similar levels also offers insight as patterns emerge around experience, tenure, and responsibility. This information supports realistic expectations. It also frames future conversations around progression. Pay bands help separate role value from personal worth as they clarify what movement looks like within the system. This understanding encourages patience and planning.

## BENEFITS SHAPE LIFESTYLE MORE THAN PAY SLIPS

Workplace benefits quietly influence everyday

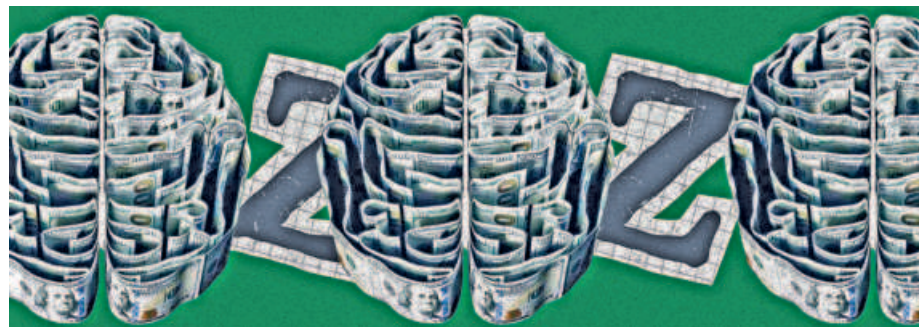


ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

life. Health coverage, learning budgets, travel allowances, flexibility, and leave policies affect time, energy, and spending patterns. Two identical salaries create very different realities depending on the benefits attached. Understanding benefits requires imagining daily routines rather than monthly income. Transport support changes commuting costs. Flexible hours reshape energy distribution. Learning allowances influence growth without personal expense. These elements reduce invisible costs and shape sustainability. Benefits also reveal organisational values, because investment in development signals long-term thinking.

## INCREMENTS REWARD PATTERNS, NOT MOMENTS

Salary growth often reflects consistency over time. Organisations reward reliability, ownership, and visible contribution rather than isolated excellence. Understanding this pattern reframes expectations around

increments. Tracking work creates leverage. Documenting responsibilities, learning curves, and outcomes builds narrative clarity. Growth conversations become grounded in evidence. Preparation replaces anxiety. Increment cycles usually follow a structure wherein budget timelines, organisational health, and role maturity influence outcomes. Awareness creates patience and realism, while financial clarity develops through understanding timing and process. Viewing increments as structural outcomes encourages long-term thinking and ensures that contributions align with context.

## BONUSES FOLLOW LOGIC, EVEN WHEN THEY FEEL RANDOM

Bonuses often appear unpredictable, yet they usually follow internal logic. Performance pools, team targets, company health, and leadership discretion shape outcomes. Understanding what bonuses are tied to clarifies expectations. Some bonuses reward revenue. Others reward retention or completion. Asking what behaviour bonuses encourage reveals intent. However, timing matters too. Bonuses often align with fiscal close or milestone delivery. Observing who receives bonuses and why builds pattern recognition. This insight reduces confusion. Bonuses also reflect risk sharing. Variable pay shifts uncertainty from the organisation to the individual. Understanding this dynamic helps evaluate stability. Bonuses feel clearer when seen as structural tools rather than surprise rewards. This perspective supports planning and reduces emotional attachment.

## JOBS SPOTLIGHT



**BRAC Bank**  
Manager/Senior Manager, Digital Loan Underwriting  
Deadline: February 7  
Eligibility:  
Post-graduation/ Graduation preferably in Business Administration, Economics, or Engineering from a reputed university with a satisfactory academic record.  
Minimum experience: 6 years

**Bangladesh Red Crescent Society**  
Field Officer  
Deadline: February 7  
Eligibility:  
Master's in Geography & Environment, Disaster Management, Development Studies, or Social Science.  
Minimum experience: 2 years

**World Food Programme**  
Finance Officer, NOA  
Deadline: February 9  
Eligibility:  
Advanced university degree (Master's or equivalent). Education in Finance, Business Administration, Accounting, or any relevant field is preferable.  
Minimum experience: 5 years

**Bangladesh Army International University of Science and Technology**  
Lecturer, Mathematics  
Deadline: February 15  
Eligibility:  
Honours and Master's with a major in Physics from a reputed university.  
Minimum experience: N/A

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



IMAGE: PEXELS

## DeepSeek is looking for AI search engineers: report

NEXT STEP DESK

Chinese AI company DeepSeek is planning to launch an AI search engine and develop more automated software, according to a report by Bloomberg News. The plans were reportedly revealed in multiple job adverts from the company this month.

According to Bloomberg, DeepSeek is seeking to hire specialists to build a search engine that supports multiple languages. The planned search tool is multimodal, meaning it can understand and process a range of inputs from text to images and audio. It is also looking for workers to develop AI "agents", which are tools that can perform tasks with little human input, as per the report.

The move signals the company's next big step after the success of its earlier AI model, named R1, according to the report. Other leading AI companies, such as OpenAI and Google, are also investing in similar search and agent technology. DeepSeek's job ads repeated its goal to build advanced artificial general intelligence, or AGI - a type of AI that could match or exceed human ability in many areas.



JUSTICE IN CRISIS

# ROHINGYA REFUGEE

## crisis and global failure of justice

**Justice in Crisis**  
In response to the Gambia's allegation against Myanmar, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered temporary measures in 2020 to stop the genocide and protect evidence. However, the orders remain largely symbolic as military operations are still ongoing in Rakhine State, humanitarian access is limited, and there is no real accountability in sight.

SAYED MOHAMMAD ABU DAUD

Years after the mass exodus of Rohingya people from Myanmar, the crisis stands as one of the clearest examples of the global failure of justice. Although Myanmar is bound by the Geneva Conventions, customary international humanitarian law norms, and the Genocide Convention of 1948, the Rohingya people are still deprived of justice, safety, and a viable path to return home. The problem, therefore, lies not in the absence of legal rules, but in the absence of principled enforcement.

International courts have played a role, although lacking effects. In response to the Gambia's allegation against Myanmar, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered temporary measures in 2020 to stop the genocide and protect evidence. However, the orders remain largely symbolic as military operations are still ongoing in Rakhine State, humanitarian access is limited, and there is no real accountability in sight. Although the ICJ has moral and legal authority, it has limited enforcement mechanism. Consequently, its decisions could end up being nothing more than formal condemnations.

The International Criminal

Court (ICC) suffers from similar limitations. However, in 2018, it was decided that the ICC can deal with crimes that cross borders to a signatory State, like that of the forced deportation of Rohingya people to Bangladesh (although Myanmar is not a signatory to the Rome Statute). While this has allowed an investigation to proceed, it does not address the full scale of atrocities committed within Myanmar. Eventually, arrests remain impossible without cooperation from the very same authorities accused of the crimes. As a result, justice delayed, in this context, increasingly resembles justice denied.

Furthermore, geopolitics has further weakened enforcement. China and Russia have repeatedly protected Myanmar from strong actions by the UN Security Council using their veto powers. On the other hand, ASEAN's long-standing policy of non-interference has led to careful diplomacy instead of holding the states accountable. As a result, most of ASEAN's work is still symbolic, with little or no effect to stop the mass atrocities. This paralysis exposes a harsh reality: international humanitarian law depends both on legal obligation and on political will.

The consequences of this

failure are borne most heavily (and disproportionately) by Bangladesh. The conditions for more than a million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char are increasingly deteriorating. The scarcity of funds has resulted in reduced food rations, limited educational opportunities, and overburdened health services. Moreover, donor fatigue has made an already fragile humanitarian situation even more vulnerable. On the other hand, the lack of accountability in Myanmar makes safe, voluntary, and dignified return rather impossible.

If the world really cares about justice, it needs to stop responding in bits and pieces and start working together. Bangladesh, willing ASEAN members, and relevant UN bodies could all support a regional system for collecting and documenting evidence. This could help keep the evidence safe and protect the witnesses, even if Myanmar remains unwilling to cooperate. Justice should not rely on the acquiescence of alleged offenders.

At the same time, sanctions need to be clear and impactful as well. While individual national measures have little effect, a unified sanctions regime aimed

at military leaders, military-owned businesses, and arms transfers would put real pressure on them. Trade privileges and development cooperation ought to be explicitly contingent upon demonstrable adherence to international court directives. Similarly, ASEAN must also reflect on its actions. The principle of non-intervention should not equate to lack of responsibility. Establishing a regional framework that aligns humanitarian access with accountability will eventually strengthen ASEAN's credibility.

Indeed, as of 2026, the Rohingya crisis shows a dangerous schism between law and reality. International humanitarian law is well developed, but it fails when political interests trump accountability. Closing this gap is not only a legal imperative but also a moral one. For the Rohingya people, justice delayed is a lived experience in overcrowded camps, through uncertain futures and broken promises. The world must now decide whether international law will remain a statement of principles or finally become a tool that delivers justice.

The writer teaches law at the European University of Bangladesh.

## LAW LETTER

## Digital surveillance and the right to privacy

The unprecedented growth of digital innovations within the twenty-first century has significantly shaped the way governance, communication, and daily living are conducted. This is because innovations like Artificial Intelligence (AI), biometric technology, as well as data analytics tools, while promoting security and efficiency, also reinforce concerns with respect to digital surveillance and right to privacy. The challenge of balancing between security and freedom has emerged as one of the key issues in debates on human rights within this context.

Notably, the scope of privacy has been broadened in the digital age to encompass the concerns of intrusion on physical privacy, informational privacy, and privacy relating to decision-making. It can be argued that the proliferation of the use of smartphones and other devices, such as wearable technology and smart systems, has made the users more susceptible to privacy concerns. The worst part of all these is that much of this happens in a passive and largely unsuspected manner.

Modern surveillance tools have become widespread and advanced. This is because biometric identification tools, facial recognition software, location monitoring, and mass data



retention have made it possible for individuals to be continuously tracked and monitored. Certain state activities, such as creating massive biometric databases and monitoring systems, have been proposed and advertised to ensure national and internal security. Unfortunately, these activities have several implications for the existing privacy norms and standards.

Alongside the state-controlled surveillance, there is this phenomenon of "surveillance capitalism," whereby the data of private citizens is collected, analysed, and exploited for securitization, purposes of targeted advertising and the prediction of behaviour by for-profit companies. By such targeted advertisements and content moderation practices, the behavioural and even political opinions as well as actions can be influenced. The terms of privacy policies are also too complex and, to a certain extent, do not offer any alternatives to consent and are thus largely a mere formality.

Thus, a legal vacuum persists in all these respects. A majority of nations do not have a full code of practice in relation to data protection. Even where a code exists, in certain nations, the exemption provisions in regard to the nation's

## RIGHTS VISION

## Recognising a judicially enforceable right to environment

ZAID EKRAM

The issue of climate justice in Bangladesh has long been relegated to the footnotes of constitutional discourse. In the original version of our Constitution, environmentalism was regarded neither as a constitutional right nor as a state policy. When the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution introduced Article 18A in 2011, it was the first express mention made within the Constitution itself of environmental protection. However, the clause was incorporated in the non-binding part of the Constitution, namely 'Fundamental Principles of State Policy'. As such, the so-called "right" to the environment was no more than an empty promise, due to the provision of Article 8(2) that renders fundamental principles judicially unenforceable. Indeed, Article 18A simply requires the state to "protect and improve the environment", but it does not grant citizens an enforceable right. As such, the courts have had to continuously rely on a dynamic interpretation of Article 32 of the right to life. In the cases *Grameenphone Ltd v BTRC* and *Nazrul and Brothers Ltd v Government of Bangladesh* (2020), arguments referencing Article 18A were made only tangentially to underscore the inherent shortcomings of the prevailing system of laws. This conundrum leads to two main concerns: first, environmental rights depend on broad judicial interpretations of the right to life, which can potentially dilute the right to life; second, environmental governance is based on the discretion of the executive

rather than citizen-activated mechanisms of enforcement.

Bangladesh can no longer ignore the enforceability of environmental rights. The UN Human Rights Council Resolution 48/13 (2021) and the UN General Assembly Resolution 76/300 (2022) affirm the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. The recent 2025 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice in respect of Climate Change reiterated that certain rules of international law relating to climate system, may give rise to erga omnes obligations binding upon all states regardless of their treaty memberships. Moreover, the Court recognised that climate-related obligations do not only derive from treaties, such as the Kyoto Protocol, and Paris Agreement, but also from customary international law norms. Notably, Bangladesh's very submissions before the ICJ itself expressly acknowledged that this right is "now well accepted under international law". Accordingly, in my opinion, to deny judicial enforceability at the national level is to do what Bangladesh itself has denounced at the international level.

The end of authoritarian government in 2024 has created what was dubbed by some scholars a "constitutional moment", when fundamental constitutional changes are possible. Other post-authoritarian contexts elsewhere demonstrate how progressive environmental rights are incorporated within the constitutions. South Africa incorporated within its 1996 Constitution an enforceable right to an

environment not harmful to health or well being, and Kenya incorporated within its 2010 Constitution a right specifically to a clean and healthy environment. Kenyan jurisprudence, especially per the judgment *Peter K. Waweru v Republic* (2006), shows that these rights can be made justiciable by balancing environmental integrity and public interest. Both countries reveal that ESC rights, once relegated to a secondary status as non-justiciable, can be both



incorporated and enforced without depriving democratic governance.

In this light, it needs to be mentioned that the Constitution Reform Commission of Bangladesh has emulated this comparative trend by calling for entrenching progressive environmental rights within the Constitution. Failing to take advantage of this would entail forfeiting a crucial moment of rights-

based rejuvenation.

Critics regularly contend that judicial protection of ESC rights poses the peril of judicial overreach on issues of policy and allocation of resources. However, comparative constitutional practice inform that courts can practice restraint and, at the same time, ensure accountability. The popular case *Minister of Health v Treatment Action Campaign* (2002) of the South African Constitutional Court is a key example in this regard. Analogously, progressive realisation of duties empowers courts to reconcile rights protection with available resources. Far from upsetting separation of powers, judicially enforceable ESC rights can strengthen democratic accountability and hold the state to account for its inaction.

Budgetary constraints are yet another usual counterargument. However, budgetary issue may arise in cases relating to civil and political rights as well. In conclusion, in order to meet international standards of law and comparative practice, Bangladesh must move beyond its prevailing reliance on expansive reading of the right to life. While the courts have commendably expanded the ambit of Article 32 to encompass environmental concerns, this method is unhelpful both for the sake of rights and state's duties. Granting a justiciable right to a safe, clean, healthy, sustainable, and balanced environment would increase clarity in governance, consistency in application and enforcement of rules.

The writer is student of Law, University of Dhaka.

**There needs to be a strong human rights-oriented regulatory framework in place. The regulation of surveillance should meet the principles of legality, in that laws should be clear, accessible, and narrowly tailored, have a legitimate aim, and be put in place as a last resort.**

security are typically opaque and unnecessarily broad. Additionally, the international movement of data makes the regulations difficult to implement.

The deeper significance of digital surveillance also lies within its ethical ramifications. When all citizens are under perpetual observation, a "chilling effect" on other fundamental rights is triggered that holds back active participation by citizens within a democratic setup. The worst victims of this are minorities, activists, and people with non-dominant opinions in societies.

To meet these demands, there needs to be a strong human rights-oriented regulatory framework in place. The regulation of surveillance should meet the principles of legality, in that laws should be clear, accessible, and narrowly tailored, have a legitimate aim, and be put in place as a last resort. Moreover, such actions should be proportionate, meaning that effects on human rights should be limited and should not last for too long. Strong mechanisms of accountability, such as independent oversight bodies, access to justice, and requirements of transparency and effective remedy, will also help ensure that the right to privacy is not undermined by invasive measures such as surveillance.

All in all, although national and cyber security are genuine matters of concern for states, the concern of individual liberty and privacy cannot be ignored. A careful balance needs to be struck to address both the concerns.

Akash Ahmed  
Law student, Bangladesh University of Professionals

FROM PAGES TO PIXELS

# A dream rewritten: Rokeya's radical vision and its cinematic afterlife

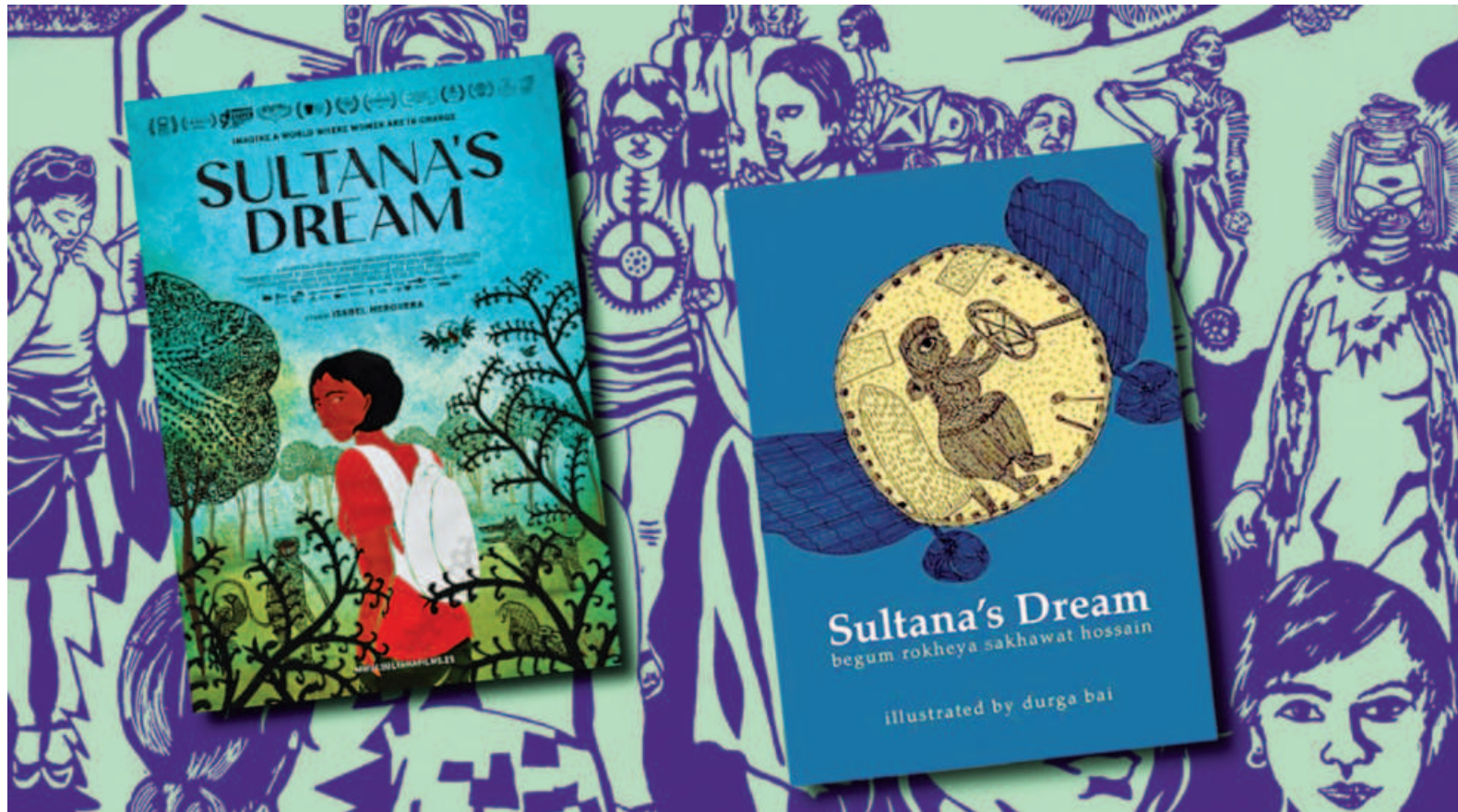


ILLUSTRATION: MAISHA SYEDA

**Ladyland's environmental futurism is thus inseparable from its postcolonial critique: sustainability, self-sufficiency, and nonviolent technological defense function as rejections of imperial science and its hierarchies of knowledge.**

SARA KABIR, SABRINA SAZZAD, KASHFIA NAHREEN

"There is no place on earth where women are safe," declares Inés, the protagonist of Isabel Herguera's animated film *Sultana's Dream* (2023). Loosely inspired by Begum Rokeya's seminal short story of the same name, the film follows Inés's journey of self-discovery after she encounters a copy of *Sultana's Dream* (1905) and is profoundly affected by its vision. As the narrative moves through the bustling streets and intimate encounters she experiences along the way, the film weaves Inés's personal search for a safe space for women with fragments of Rokeya's life and legacy. Yet, as the story unfolds and the adaptation increasingly departs from its literary source, an unavoidable question emerges: does the film ultimately do justice to the radical imagination and historical significance of the work it invokes?

This film has emerged from an unconventional method of production that shaped both its aesthetic and its narrative form. Developed through a series of drawing workshops conducted across India between 2013 and 2014—with widows rooted in tradition, self-

employed women, and art and design students—it adopts a collective, open-ended approach in which participants reinterpreted Begum Rokeya's text through their own social and cultural experiences. These responses influenced the script and visual language of the film, resulting in a mixed-media structure: hand-drawn ink and watercolor animation depicts Inés's contemporary journey, Begum Rokeya's life appears in shadow silhouette cutouts evoking pre-cinematic shadow theatre, and *Ladyland* is rendered through intricate mehendi-inspired patterns. Unified by monochromatic palettes in muted browns and pastels, the film privileges atmosphere and symbolism over material specificity. While this methodology reflects a feminist commitment to participatory authorship, it also helps explain the film's diffuse focus, positioning *Sultana's Dream* less as a direct book-to-screen adaptation than as a collage of reflections that prioritises multiplicity over fidelity to Rokeya's speculative vision.

Any adaptation necessarily involves interpretation, compression, and creative liberty, particularly when translating a century-old literary

text across cultures and media. Artistic license is not, in itself, a failure. However, *Sultana's Dream*—the movie—positions itself less as a direct adaptation and more as a meditative response to Rokeya's legacy, increasingly privileging Inés's personal journey and contemporary side-plots over the structural and ideological core of the original text. It is within this shift—from adaptation to abstraction—that many of the film's representational shortcomings begin to surface.

While the animated film is rich in evocative imagery, its storytelling remains thin and uneven, with characters that often feel underdeveloped and one-dimensional. The film does thoughtfully attempt to demonstrate the many shared experiences and struggles faced by women across the globe, yet the storytelling did not translate well into a cohesive narrative. One such instance is when Inés travels to Vrindavan in India, she encounters widowed women who are portrayed as guarded and unwelcoming—an interaction that is framed without sufficient context or nuance. Rather than interrogating the social and historical conditions that shape their lives, the film presents their

resistance through a lens that risks stereotyping, reinforcing a flattening and categorical depiction of South Asian women. This tendency to gesture toward complexity without fully engaging it—substituting atmosphere and symbolism for depth—emerges not only in the film's characterisations, but also in its approach to Rokeya's speculative world.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the film's treatment of *Ladyland* itself. Gone are the sustainable, renewable innovations that form the backbone of Begum Rokeya's *Ladyland*: the solar- and wind-powered technologies devised by women to till fields, cook food, regulate indoor climates, enable travel, and even defend the nation without bloodshed. In Herguera's adaptation, this carefully articulated solarpunk infrastructure is replaced by a single speculative device—a "frequency amplifier" that repels enemies by amplifying sonar energy. This substitution does more than streamline Rokeya's worldbuilding; it fundamentally alters the political and epistemic force of her science fiction. Writing in English under British colonial rule, at a time when women in Bengal were systematically denied access to higher education and scientific authorship, Rokeya's vision positioned women as scientists and engineers whose renewable technologies directly challenged both patriarchal authority and colonial models of extractive, militarised modernity. *Ladyland*'s environmental futurism is thus inseparable from its postcolonial critique: sustainability, self-sufficiency, and nonviolent technological defense function as rejections of imperial science and its hierarchies of knowledge. By erasing these elements, the adaptation reframes *Sultana's Dream* as a symbolic feminist fable rather than the pioneering work of science fiction it was, obscuring Rokeya's most radical claim—that women from the colonised world could imagine, design, and sustain technologically advanced futures on their own terms, decades before such ideas entered Western speculative discourse.

Throughout the narrative, the film weaves in different languages. Spoken by different characters, the incorporation of Spanish, Bangla, English, Hindi, Basque, Italian signifies Inés's journey throughout the globe in search of safe spaces for women. While this attempt at showcasing different languages and dialects from around the world is commendable, the transition between the languages feels ornamental and devoid of meaning. An instance of which is seen in the

inclusion of the folk song in Bangla that Inés experiences during her visit to Pairaband, Bangladesh, the birth place of Begum Rokeya. While the song is beautifully sung with its tune, the lyrics feel inorganic and have a rather conversational tone. Instead of capturing the typical nuance of folk songs, the song opts for direct exposition in recounting Begum Rokeya's story. In doing so, the film oversimplifies the very cultural aspects rooted in Begum Rokeya's abode and disregards the unique flairs of Bangladeshi folk songs.

In addition to failing to engage the complexities of South Asian cultures and womanhood, the adaptation reproduces subtle but telling cultural misrepresentations—most notably in its costuming of the characters. Begum Rokeya is depicted in a salwar kameez, while Sakhawat Hossain appears in a tupi and panjabi, visual choices that read less as historical accuracy than as a generalised, western-facing shorthand for Muslim identity. Historical photographic evidence available online, however, shows Rokeya wearing sarees and Sakhawat Hossain dressed in a suit and tie, reflecting the cosmopolitan, reformist milieu in which they lived. More broadly, Bangali men in the film appear visually indistinguishable from one another, uniformly rendered in tupi-panjabi and long beards, as though regional, class, and ideological differences did not exist. Such aesthetic homogenisation raises an unavoidable question: does the film reflect a European tendency to view the cultures of the Indian subcontinent as a monolith, stripped of internal diversity? Whether born of indifference or unconscious bias, these choices echo the same logic of simplification that undermines the film's engagement with Rokeya's radical, historically grounded vision.

**This is an excerpt. Read the full essay on *The Daily Star* and *Star Books and Literature's* websites.**

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BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

## The wilderness in me

Review of 'The God of The Woods' (Riverhead Books, 2024) by Liz Moore

TAHMINA HOSSAIN

*The God of the Woods* caught my attention while I was excavating for my next read on Goodreads. It is the latest novel by Liz Moore. The mystery genre is my guilty pleasure; the fact that this novel won the Goodreads Choice Award for Readers' Favourite Mystery & Thriller in 2024 made me pick it up. The book, *The God of the Woods*, is about the coincidental disappearances of Bear and Barbara. Both are separate incidents as Bear goes missing in the 1960s, and Barbara goes missing in 1975. They are the children of the Van Laar family—an affluent and influential family situated in the Adirondack Mountains, New York, United States. Their source of fortune comes from banking. Money is their only notable power; it brings them comfort but never peace. Rather than making them formidable, it renders them as dependent as the people who rely on the Van Laar for employment. However, deluded by their financial power, the Van Laar family never comprehends this dependency. Moreover, they are obsessed with maintaining a pristine reputation to safeguard their business alliances. All decisions revolve around protecting this reputation, such as the marriage between Peter Van Laar III and Alice, or the events that erupt after the disappearances of their children.

The mother of Bear and Barbara is Alice, who stays in a wonderland. She faces many

betrayals and misfortunes and is a true definition of fragile in every sense. Alice gets mentally abused by her ruthless husband. However, you feel neither sympathy nor pity for her. It's because she is more of a nuisance, considered a burden, even to herself. She is never cruel; at the same time, she is never kind either. She is emotionally reckless and irresponsible, but never naïve. She can be as demanding as her husband to people whom Alice considers socially lower than her, but fails to be as assertive as he is. She is not childish, but her thoughts are more like a teenager's than like an adult's. Sometimes, I feel she is as arrogant and as narcissistic as her in-laws and as hypocritical as her parents and sister, in a more palatable form.

**Alice believes that Barbara eats too frequently and should restrain herself. Alice disregards the fact that Barbara is physically healthy, actively exercises, and is never fat. Alice finds it difficult to look at the physical changes that Barbara is going through, and Alice wants to carve those changes by restricting Barbara's food intake.**

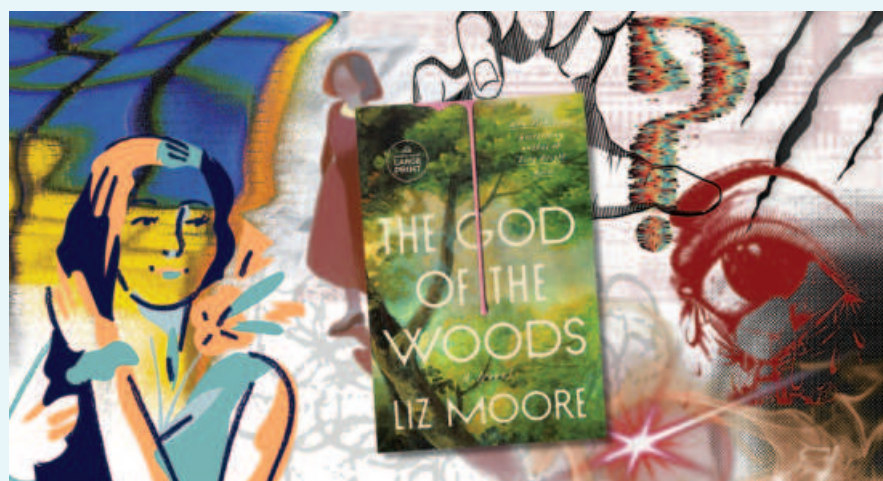


ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

For Alice, love comes easily for her first child, Bear, who is perhaps the only person she has ever truly loved in her entire life. Unfortunately, Alice does not feel the same affection for her second child, Barbara.

Peter and Alice were happy with Bear because he was a son who would eventually inherit the Van Laar legacy and protect it. After his disappearance, the second child, Barbara, is supposed to be his replacement. But Barbara is rebellious and has a bold and daring sense of style. Everything about her is loud and eye-catching. Her rebellious nature and eccentric choice are a cry for

attention from her family; a fight against the negligence she has faced since childhood. Alice is physically weak and appears fragile and malnourished, yet in her mind, this is the ideal body. As a result, she occasionally forbids Barbara from eating and instructs the cooks not to give her any food. Barbara is 12 years-old, and her body is naturally undergoing changes. Alice believes that Barbara eats too frequently and should restrain herself. Alice disregards the fact that Barbara is physically healthy, actively exercises, and is never fat. Alice finds it difficult to look at the physical changes that

Barbara is going through, and Alice wants to carve those changes by restricting Barbara's food intake. Thus, starved, Barbara would occasionally tiptoe to the kitchen to eat. The cook would leave quietly, giving her privacy and hiding her activity from her emotionally distant parents.

Now, let's start with the shortcomings, which are foremost about the chronology. The timeline oscillates excessively, almost abruptly, jumping from 1950 to 1975 with no chronological order. As a result, it is hard to keep the story in line. You feel jostled every few pages. Secondly, Moore swiftly changes points of view among a plethora of characters. And, this book carries many characters. Moreover, the frequent shifts in the timeline and points of view do little to aid the plot. Although this makes the plot and motive clear, it gives you a hefty background. However, it also made the story appear incoherent. Lastly, Moore overused cliffhangers. It was redundant and clichéd. Nonetheless, if you can push through these interruptions, then the book will be totally worth your time. The writing is smooth, and the cliff hangers do keep one engaged till the end.

*Tahmina Hossain is first and foremost a reader, a lover of literature, and then a writer. If you enjoy rambling about literature like her, then reach out at: [literary.ramblings.by.t@gmail.com](mailto:literary.ramblings.by.t@gmail.com).*



Bangladesh national team cricketers were supposed to be playing official warm-up matches ahead of the T20 World Cup, set to begin on February 7 in Sri Lanka and India. Instead, the Tigers are preparing for a domestic five-day, three-team tournament -- the ODOMMO Bangladesh T20 Cup 2026 -- which begins today with Dhumketu XI facing Duronto XI. The tournament was arranged by the Bangladesh Cricket Board to fill the World Cup void after Bangladesh were replaced by Scotland following the board's refusal to send the team to India due to security concerns. However, pacer Mustafizur Rahman, whose exclusion from the Indian Premier League sparked the chain of events that led to Bangladesh's omission from the global event, appeared all smiles during yesterday's practice, set to turn out for Dhumketu XI today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



## Pakistan in form on the field, in limbo off it

AGENCIES

Pakistan arrived in Colombo riding a wave of confidence ahead of the ICC T20 World Cup.

A 2-1 series win over South Africa, victory in a home tri-series, and a dominant 3-0 sweep of Australia had restored belief in a team eager to silence recent doubts.

On the field, Pakistan looks settled, sharp and ready. Off the field, however, attention shifted from cricketing form to a decision that could define their campaign.

The controversy centres on whether Pakistan will finally boycott their high-profile group match against archrivals India in the global event on February 15.

The situation escalated after Bangladesh refused to play in India over security concerns and was replaced by Scotland in the aftermath of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman's exclusion from Indian Premier League franchise Kolkata Knight Riders.

Pakistan have backed Bangladesh, and although their participation in the tournament was later approved by its government, the restriction on facing India remains unresolved.

The Pakistan government has instructed the team to take part in the tournament but to boycott the India match. However, the Pakistan Cricket Board has reportedly yet to formally notify the ICC, leaving the matter clouded in uncertainty. The ICC has already issued a warning, hinting at potential future consequences.

The stakes could not be higher. A forfeit would hand India two points and leave Pakistan with no margin for error in Group A. They would then need



to beat the Netherlands, the United States, and Namibia to remain in contention for a semifinal spot.

Captain Salman Agha made it clear that the decision to finally boycott the India match lies beyond the players' control. "That is not our decision. We have to follow what our government decides," he said, while emphasising that the team remains focused on winning matches.

The government, however, has not clarified its position should Pakistan and India meet later in the tournament, potentially in a semifinal or final. Pakistan are eager to avoid a repeat of the 2024 T20 World Cup, where a shock super-over defeat to co-hosts the United States ended their campaign early.

Since then, the team has faced criticism for struggling to adapt to the evolving demands of T20 cricket. The batting unit has been under scrutiny, and last year's record -- with 21 of 34 T20 wins coming against lower-ranked teams -- did little to silence doubters.

Now, as Pakistan stand at a crossroads, their form suggests promise, but their fate may hinge more on politics than performance. Whether they take the field against India or not, the decision will shape not only their World Cup journey but also the future dynamics of international cricket.

## 'To change my life, I had to change myself'

Bangladesh batter *Sobhana Mostary* has turned around a difficult start to her international career, with recent ICC events underlining her growing consistency and attacking intent. Bangladesh booked qualification for this year's ICC Women's T20 World Cup in dominant fashion, going unbeaten across seven matches at the Qualifier in Nepal, with Mostary finishing as the tournament's second-highest run-getter. In an exclusive interview with *The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi*, she reflects on her early struggles, the factors behind her improvement, and more. Excerpts follow:



**DS:** Early in your career, there was criticism around your lack of big scores and questions over your place in the team. How challenging was that phase mentally, and what kept you going?

**SM:** I admit that the start of my career was not what I, the people around me, or the cricket board had expected. It was a very difficult time... I realised that if I wanted to change my life, I had to change myself.

**DS:** Your coaches have described you as the team's most improved batter.

**SM:** I am grateful to the management and especially my captain, [Nigar Sultana] Joty apu. I am thankful they never demotivated me. Sometimes getting dropped is good because it makes you realise what you need to focus on.

**DS:** What do you see as the biggest factors behind your recent consistency at the international level?

**SM:** Fitness is a factor, but the main difference is adapting to international intensity. I worked on maintaining my temperament and focus after crossing 35-40 runs. In the past, when I had to hit immediately, my fitness wasn't where it needed to be; shots that used to travel 60 yards and get caught are now going 80 yards for sixes. Practising patience against big teams like England and Australia in the last World Cup also gave me the confidence to hold the innings together.

I read an article about Rohit Sharma having a tough start to his career, but he ended up becoming a legend and winning the World Cup. I want my career to finish beautifully like his.

**DS:** Who have been your batting inspirations over the years?

**SM:** I follow South African captain Laura Wolvaardt. My childhood idol is Harmanpreet Kaur because I like her long-handle batting style, which I also use. At a younger age, I liked Tamim Iqbal. When I was nine, I once cried for a week because my father bought me an SS bat instead of a CA bat, which Tamim bhai was using. My father then got me the CA bat after a week.

**DS:** Finally, how did you react to the Bangladesh men's team missing out on the T20 World Cup?

**SM:** I was hopeful they would be able to go. I remember going to the Australia World Cup when I was young, and it was the best time of my life. Every player dreams of playing in the World Cup, so missing it is very hard to accept, but we have to accept the reality.

## JAHANARA ALLEGATIONS BCB inquiry finds misconduct by Monjurul

SPORTS REPORTER

The Independent Inquiry Committee formed to examine allegations raised by former Bangladesh women's team captain Jahanara Alam has found prima facie evidence of inappropriate conduct by former selector and team manager Monjurul Islam.

The committee -- chaired by Justice Tariq ul Hakim, former judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh -- examined four specific allegations made by Jahanara. While two allegations could not be substantiated, the remaining two were found to have evidence of misconduct upon initial examination.

Following the findings, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has engaged its legal team to take appropriate action in line with its zero-tolerance policy on harassment and misconduct.

"The committee noted behaviour inconsistent with professional standards, and observed that certain actions fell within the definition of misconduct and harassment under the applicable guidelines of the Supreme Court," stated the BCB

press release, provided yesterday.

"The board is committed to pursuing appropriate actions and measures in accordance with its regulations and applicable law," it added.

The BCB also announced the formation of a Complaint Committee, headed by Rubaba Dowla, BCB director and chairperson of the Women's Wing Committee.



"Simultaneously, the BCB has strengthened its institutional safeguards through the adoption of a BCB Complaint Committee in accordance with the High Court Division's 2009 judgment," the statement further read.

"In addition, the committee has been entrusted with working towards the establishment of an independent complaint mechanism and the implementation of mandatory awareness training

to ensure a safe and respectful environment across Bangladesh cricket."

The inquiry process had faced several delays. Last year, after Jahanara had alleged in a YouTube interview with journalist Riasad Azim that she received indecent proposals from members of the national team management during the 2022 ICC Women's World Cup, soon BCB initially formed a three-member committee on November 8 -- later expanded to five members on November 12. On December 2, the board announced that the report was expected by December 20. However, in a press release on December 21, BCB confirmed it had formally received Jahanara's complaint and granted the committee an extension until January 31. The report was ultimately submitted to board president Aminul Islam Bulbul on February 2.

Jahanara had accused Monjurul of ruining her career in national colours because she did not accept his advances. She also named the late Towhid Mahmood and another board official, Sarfaraz Babu, as having approached her with indecent proposals.

## MCC announces 73 law changes

STAR SPORTS DESK

As many as 73 changes in laws of cricket have been announced by the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), with the amendments set to come into effect from October this year. The MCC said the 'new edition of the Laws of Cricket', the first since 2022, has been drafted in to ensure laws are 'up to date and fit for the modern game and that they should be as inclusive as possible'. Major changes are as follows:

**Mandatory completion of final over:** If a wicket falls during the last over of the day in multi-day cricket, the over must be finished.

**Wicketkeeper positioning clarified:** Keepers will no longer be penalised for having gloves marginally ahead of the stumps during the bowler's run-up.

**'Bunny hop catch' removed:** Fielders going beyond the

boundary may touch the ball only once while airborne and must then land fully inside the boundary for the remainder of the play.

**Laminated bats legalised in open-age cricket:** Laminated bats -- made by bonding multiple pieces of wood -- are now permitted beyond junior levels.

**Overthrow defined for the first time:** An overthrow is now officially described as a throw at the stumps to prevent runs or attempt a run-out. Misfields near the boundary will no longer be treated as overthrows.

**Fielding captain's role in deliberate short runs:** The fielding side gains additional authority to decide which batter faces the next ball in cases of deliberate short running, expanding existing provisions.

**Ball considered 'finally settled' sooner:** The ball will be deemed settled when held by any fielder or stationary on the ground.



Bangladesh's players celebrate one of their four goals against Nepal in their last round-robin match of the SAFF Women's U-19 Championship in Pokhara yesterday. Alpi Akter's hat-trick ensured the five-time champions sealed a dominant win and finished the group stage with three straight victories. They will face India in Saturday's final.

PHOTO: SAFF



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## Govt decides to rename Rab instead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While the United Nations and various human rights organisations have long called for the abolition of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), the government has instead decided to rename it.

Its name will be Special Intervention Force (SIF).

Confirming the development, Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said, "The chief adviser has already given his approval. A government order will be issued soon."

The adviser told a press briefing, after a meeting of the law-and-order core committee at the home ministry on Tuesday, that the force's uniform would also be changed.

He added that the decision reflected changes in the force's operational standards over time.

"You have already seen their standard of work. If you compare their standard of work from one-and-a-half years ago to now, there is a big change," he said, adding that the renaming was part of that broader transformation

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



Vehicles kick up a cloud of dust on a busy street in Hasnabad of Keraniganj, Dhaka, yesterday. Construction work and improper cleaning of roads result in such poor air quality in the neighbourhood.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

## 'No reason to fear going to polling stations'

Says army chief alongside air force, navy chiefs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army chief Waker-uz-Zaman said the government, all its institutions and law enforcement agencies, and the three armed services are fully committed to holding a free and fair election, stressing that there is "no scope" for the polls not being held.

He said voters, including members of minority communities, have no reason to fear going to polling stations on February 12, as authorities have deployed an "unprecedentedly large security force" to ensure a peaceful election.

More than one lakh army personnel have been deployed for the polls, alongside 3,730 air force members and 5,000 naval personnel, he said. The wider security arrangement also includes around 1.5 lakh police members, six lakh Ansar personnel, and members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC).

Addressing an exchange of views in Gazipur on Tuesday,

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



## Fines for illegal gas use to double

Govt set to amend gas act

BAHARAM KHAN and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government is set to amend the Bangladesh Gas Act 2010, nearly doubling the fines for illegal gas use and introducing provisions to penalise property owners – including land, flat or building owners – for illegal usage.

Fines for illegal household gas use – currently between Tk 10,000 and Tk 20,000 – will be increased to a maximum of Tk 40,000, as per the draft of Bangladesh Gas (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026, which is set to be placed before the advisory council meeting today for approval.

Commercial users will face fines of up to Tk 80,000, up from the existing Tk 40,000.



For industrial users, captive power plants and CNG refuelling stations, the maximum fine will rise to Tk 4 lakh from Tk 2 lakh.

Meanwhile, irregularities in the power and fertiliser sectors will attract fines of up to Tk 10 lakh, double the current ceiling of Tk 5 lakh.

The draft ordinance has retained the imprisonment provisions unchanged, ranging from six months to five years.

A new paragraph added to the offences and penalties chapter states that if gas is used illegally – either directly or with the assistance or instigation of a contractor or any other person – the owner of the premises where the offence is committed, along with any involved employee of the gas company, contractor or other individual, will be deemed offenders.

According to the draft, the use of gas by non-metered consumers with more stoves than the approved number, as well as gas consumption by metered consumers

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## Political violence kills 195 in 17 months

HRSS reports; Odhikar says 328 killed since Aug 2024

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 195 people have been killed and 11,229 injured in political violence across the country over the past 17 months, according to the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS).

In its report titled "Human Rights Situation in Bangladesh (September 2024–January 2026)," unveiled at a press meet at the Press Club yesterday, HRSS said nearly half of the incidents – 704 in total – resulted from internal feuds within the BNP and its affiliated bodies. These clashes led to 121 deaths and 7,131 injuries.

In another report titled "Report on Violence Prior to the 13th National Parliamentary Election" published on the same day, HRSS said at least five people were killed and 970 injured in election-related violence across the country in the two months following the announcement of the 13th Parliamentary Election schedule.

The report documented 162 incidents between December 11, 2025 – the day the election schedule was announced – and January 31, 2026. These incidents included clashes, attacks, vandalism, and arson involving rival candidates and their supporters, often stemming from disputes over nominations and local political dominance,

HRSS said at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

Meanwhile, human rights organisation Odhikar yesterday reported a higher death toll for a similar period. According to Odhikar, 328 people were killed and 9,182 injured in political violence between August 9, 2024, and December 31, 2025.

**HRSS REPORT (Sept 2024-Jan 2026)**

- ➔ BNP's internal clashes leave 121 dead
- ➔ Mob violence claimed 259 lives
- ➔ 60 became victims of extrajudicial killings
- ➔ 127 died in prison custody

Odhikar's data on BNP internal conflicts, covering January 1 to December 11, 2025, showed at least 76 BNP members killed and 3,746 injured due to infighting. According to Odhikar, two people were killed and 25 injured between the announcement of the polls and

December 31, 2025.

HRSS described the rise in mob violence and lynching as "extremely alarming." Its report recorded 413 incidents of mob violence nationwide under the interim government over 17 months, resulting in at least 259 deaths. Odhikar reported 181 deaths by public lynching during its reporting period.

Both reports highlighted the severity of these killings, noting that victims were often beaten to death or set on fire, citing, for instance, the case of garment worker Dipu Chandra Das, who was beaten and his body burned following allegations of blasphemy.

The HRSS report also documented at least 60 deaths in alleged clashes with law enforcement, in custody, or due to torture. The breakdown included six deaths in clashes or alleged "gunfights," 22 from torture, 12 in police custody, and 20 from gunshot wounds. In addition, at least 127 accused individuals died in prison custody nationwide during the same period. Odhikar reported 45 victims of extrajudicial killings and 122 deaths in prison custody over 17 months.

Attacks on minority communities were also recorded. HRSS documented 56 incidents,

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

### WORLD CANCER DAY

## Tobacco major driver of cancer

Shows recent study on a Kishoreganj upazila

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Nearly half the patients in a rural upazila are suffering from tobacco-related cancer, indicating tobacco use is a major factor driving the country's growing cancer burden.

As much as 46 per cent of the cancer patients in an upazila of Kishoreganj suffer from tobacco-related cancers, with cancers of the lip and oral cavity, larynx, stomach and lung being the most common, found a study by Bangladesh Medical University (BMU).

Around 73 per cent of the male cancer patients have a history of smoking, while about 60 per cent of female patients have a history of using smokeless tobacco, according to the population-based cancer registry covering 2.32 lakh residents of Hossainpur upazila.

While there is no comprehensive government data on the country's overall cancer situation, the latest World Health Organisation (WHO) cancer report, published in 2024, shows these cancers topping the list, supporting the BMU findings on tobacco's harmful impact on public health.

The findings come at a time when the country's projected tobacco consumption prevalence among people aged 15 and above stood at 31.4 per cent last year, higher than both the global and South-East Asia regional averages, according to the WHO.

Although the interim government has approved a stringent anti-tobacco law, its effective implementation remains a major challenge given the large number of tobacco users in the country.

An estimated 3.71 crore people aged 15 years or above consumed various tobacco products last year in Bangladesh, while 1.97 crore people smoked, according to

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## Dhaka inks deal with Tokyo to upgrade defence

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Japan have signed an agreement to accelerate Bangladesh's defence modernisation through the transfer of equipment and technology.

Principal Staff Officer of Bangladesh's Armed Forces Division (AFD) Lt Gen SM Kamrul Hasan and Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Saida Shinichi signed the agreement at the AFD headquarters in Dhaka on Tuesday.

"Through this agreement, the strategic partnership and long-standing friendship between the two countries have been elevated to a new height," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement.

Earlier in 2023, Bangladesh and Japan signed a deal and exchanged notes for 575 million yen (\$3.8 million) to provide four patrol ships to Bangladesh under Japan's Official Security Assistance (OSA) framework.

Moving away from its pacifist policy amid global geopolitical shifts, Japan established the OSA framework in 2023 to deepen security cooperation with partner countries, including Bangladesh, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Fiji.

Currently, Bangladesh imports around 70 per cent of its weapons from China, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Japan's foreign ministry has said Bangladesh, a strategic partner of Japan, is located in the Bay of Bengal region, an important sea lane for Japan. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly important to improve the

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Mourners gather near the bodies of Palestinians who, according to medics, were killed in an Israeli strike, at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City yesterday. Israeli tank shelling and airstrikes killed 21 people, including four children, in the enclave.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 3 juveniles rape, murder 7-year-old

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Three teenagers, arrested on charges of killing a seven-year-old girl in Tangail's Dhanbari upazila recently, have confessed before magistrates, police said yesterday.

Tangail Court Inspector Sazzad Hossain told The Daily Star that police produced the accused before the Tangail Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court on Tuesday. Magistrates recorded their confessional statements under Section 164.

During the statements, the teenagers admitted that two of them raped the child before killing her, while the third assisted in the crime.

The magistrates later sent the accused, aged between 13 and 16, to the Youth Development Centre in Gazipur.

The victim, Maria, was the daughter of Uzzal Hossain of Baraipara village in Jadunathpur union.

Nurus Salam, officer-in-charge of Dhanbari Police Station, said Maria went missing on January 26. Her father filed a general diary (GD) with the police station the same day.

On February 1, locals reported a

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