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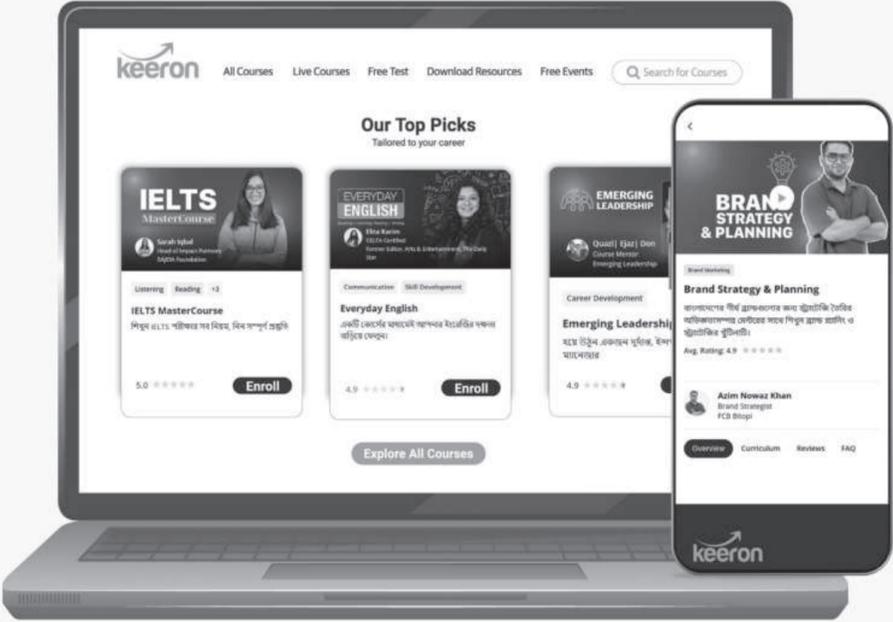
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No upsets, but plenty of heart
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Tarique vows crackdown on crime, graft

Puts drugs, gambling in his crosshairs during his first address to nation as PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday declared that stabilising law and order and strictly controlling corruption are the top priorities of his government. "The government is taking the highest measures to ensure peace and security in public life," he said in his first address to the nation since assuming office on Tuesday. In the 11-minute address, broadcast live on state-run BTV from 9:45pm, Tarique said the government began its journey with a fragile economy battered by corruption and misrule of the previous fascist regime, weakened governance structures, and deteriorating law and order. Outlining his government's vision, he stressed that the



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman chaired his first cabinet meeting at the Cabinet Division at the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday.



Holy Ramadan begins today

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh will begin observing the holy month of Ramadan today, after the new crescent moon was sighted last evening, marking a period of fasting and self-purification for Muslims worldwide.

The National Moon Sighting Committee took the decision at a meeting held at the conference room of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque with Religious Affairs Minister Kazi Shah Mofazzal Hossain Kaikobad in the chair, after reviewing

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New govt faces 5 early economic tests

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The new finance minister, Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, may have arrived in office with a long list of priorities – fiscal reform, banking stability, and negotiations with international lenders. Whether he anticipated it or not, his most immediate and politically sensitive challenge is inflation. For millions of households, the early success of the new government will be judged by a simpler measure: the price of food.

Ramadan has arrived – a period that traditionally brings a surge in demand for essential commodities and, often, a corresponding rise in prices. Recent data underscores the urgency. Inflation rose to 8.58 percent year-on-year in January, upending expectations of a slowdown.

Even more concerning, food inflation accelerated to 8.29 percent in January from 7.71 percent in December last year. This places the finance minister in a familiar but unforgiving political reality: public confidence in the government's economic management rises and falls with food prices.

Selim Raihan, a professor of economics at Dhaka University, has stressed that businesses must receive a clear and firm signal against unjustified price hikes, backed by a thorough assessment of supply conditions. Such a response demands tight coordination across ministries – finance, commerce,

PRIORITY TASKS FOR GOVT

- Keep food prices from rising
- Secure IMF support and stabilise the economy
- Control government spending and debt
- Boost revenue collection and plug tax leakage
- Prepare for life after LDC status

and home affairs working in concert – an area where past governments have often faltered. The political "honeymoon," Selim warns, may last no more than six months before public impatience begins to build.

The new administration led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman inherits an economy that is fragile and still tethered to external lifelines. Bangladesh entered an IMF programme in January 2023 after foreign exchange reserves fell

sharply, and since then the relationship has been marked by periodic tension.

The interim administration that preceded the current government had hoped international goodwill might ease negotiations, but lenders remained firm. Loan disbursements were paused when targets were missed, resumed after strict compliance in June, and slowed again in December.

Another IMF mission is expected in Dhaka next month, and sentiment or political narrative will carry little weight. The IMF will focus on fiscal discipline, monetary tightening, and reform progress. Securing continued support is essential, not only for IMF financing itself but also because its approval unlocks confidence among other international lenders. Without that endorsement, bilateral and multilateral partners tend to hold back.

Economist Mustafizur Rahman, also a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, has argued that the finance minister must "begin with a careful stock-taking of available resources." The IMF's emphasis on contractionary monetary policy – keeping interest rates high to curb inflation – presents a difficult balancing act. Should the government maintain tight policy to stabilise prices, or attempt to renegotiate terms to allow more room for growth?

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Mob culture will not be tolerated

Says home boss

STAFF CORRESPONDENTS

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said mob culture would not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Speaking to reporters at the home ministry after meeting officials on his first day in office, Salahuddin said people's democratic right to protest would remain intact, but unlawful acts would face an immediate response.

"This is the end of mob culture," he said. "There will be lawful democratic practices. But blocking highways and roads in the name of realising demands – this cannot continue. This is clear."

He said people can press their demands through proper procedures, including rallies and assemblies.

The home minister said the police and other agencies must rebuild their credibility and regain public trust through impartial law enforcement.

"Our police and many other organisations and agencies are inadequate.

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As head of government, I want to draw the people's attention to one thing: whether you voted for the BNP and gave it the mandate to form this government, or chose not to, or did not vote at all, you all hold equal claim to this government.

Tarique Rahman

rule of law would be the guiding principle in running the state. "We want to turn the country into a safe land for every citizen. Building a self-reliant, safe, humane, and democratic Bangladesh is the goal of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party government," he said.

The premier said he wanted to deliver a message to the nation that this country belongs to all, regardless of their party affiliation, religion, or caste, or whether they live in the hills or on the plains.

Tarique, also chairman of the BNP, and his 49-member council of ministers were sworn in on Tuesday afternoon following the party's landslide victory in the 13th national election held on February 12. He chaired his first cabinet meeting at the Secretariat around 3:00pm yesterday.

In his address, the prime minister said all constitutional, government, and non-government institutions would operate strictly in accordance with established laws and regulations. "Not party influence or political force, but the rule of law will be the final word in governing the state."

Reiterating the message of inclusivity, he said that under his administration, every citizen would enjoy equal rights, regardless of how they voted in the election.

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Zahir Uddin Swapon

Journalism would be free from fear

Says info minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will ensure an environment free from fear for journalism, said Zahir Uddin Swapon, the information and broadcasting minister.

Referring to his political life, the minister said he understands the mental distress people endure when living in fear, particularly those working in professions such as the media.

"If they have to remain under constant

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Justling broke out among low-income people who had been waiting in line for hours to buy subsidised essentials from a TCB truck in the capital's Darussalam area yesterday, ahead of Ramadan.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

LDC deferral request deadline is February 23

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The new government must apply to the United Nations Committee for Development Policy (UN CDP) by February 23 if it intends to defer Bangladesh's graduation from the least-developed country (LDC) category to developing nation status.

A report titled "Graduation from LDC: Challenges, Progress and Way Forward", prepared by the finance adviser to the now-dissolved interim government and handed over to the new finance minister on Sunday, cites recommendations from a high-level committee on LDC graduation.

Bangladesh is scheduled to graduate from LDC status on November 24, having already met all three UN criteria – income, human assets, and economic and environmental vulnerability – in two consecutive triennial reviews by the UN CDP.

A third review is currently underway ahead of the final transition.

Taking into account post-graduation risks as well as recent global and domestic shocks, the report suggested that Bangladesh may coordinate with fellow graduating countries such as Nepal and Lao PDR to seek a deferral of graduation from the UN CDP until 2030.

An Independent Assessment by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UNOHRLLS) also flagged some observations on a possible deferral.

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WHAT MINISTERS SAID ON THEIR FIRST DAY



Democratic values to be guiding principle

Says LGRD minister
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives, yesterday said rebuilding the nation through democratic values is the main challenge facing the new government. Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat on his first day in office, Fakhrul said the country has just gone through a major political transition.

"A big storm has passed over us. It is not reasonable to expect that everything will be fixed instantly in such a situation."

Asked whether a white paper would be published on the undertakings of the interim government, Fakhrul said it was unnecessary.

"They took responsibility at a special moment. The core issue was the transition to democracy, and they completed that. Credit should be given to them. They have done many good things."

Replying to a question on whether an election without the Awami League was inclusive, Fakhrul said the election has been recognised nationally and internationally as inclusive and acceptable.



Judges must uphold honesty, or resign

Says law minister
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Asaduzzaman, minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, yesterday stressed that judges must uphold honesty, warning that anyone involved in corruption will face both administrative and legal action.

"Those who feel a judge's salary cannot cover family expenses and those who believe they cannot sustain themselves on this salary may resign. This is my clear message," he said while speaking at an introductory meeting with officials and employees on his first day at the ministry.

"There is no separate definition of an honest judge. Integrity is inherently associated with the word judge," he added, noting that honesty is a fundamental expectation of the judiciary.

The minister warned that corruption would not be tolerated. "If anyone thinks they can get away with corruption, they will not. We will take administrative measures and also file corruption cases. Everyone must keep this in mind."



Will minimise load-shedding this Ramadan

Says power minister
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Iqbal Hassan Mahmood, minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, yesterday said ensuring a stable power supply during Ramadan and the irrigation season is the top priority of the new government.

"We are stepping into this sector at a critical time -- fasting begins tomorrow [today]. Nothing functions without electricity. We will try to minimise load shedding during Ramadan."

However, he noted that outages caused by technical reasons are a separate matter. "After managing power supply during Ramadan and irrigation, we will move to future planning."

The newly elected minister made the remarks while speaking to reporters after an introductory meeting with officials on his first day in office at the Secretariat.

During the meeting, the minister sought the officials' cooperation, saying the prime minister had emphasised a "Bangladesh first" policy.

"For us as well, Bangladesh comes first. We do not want the ministry to be run by partisan interests. We want an administration focused solely on Bangladesh."



Need big leaps, not small steps

Says education minister
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon, minister for Education and Primary and Mass Education, yesterday said the government would undertake wide-ranging reforms to modernise the country's education system, stressing that the sector now requires "big leaps" rather than incremental change. He made the remarks while speaking to reporters on his first day in office at the Secretariat.

"In the education sector, we now need not just small jumps, but much bigger leaps. That is what I believe, and we will work accordingly."

Asked whether the government was planning another curriculum overhaul, Milon ruled out abrupt changes. He added that the curriculum would be reviewed, not replaced.

"The world is now a global village. We must build our education system in line with international standards."

Milon noted that the country must adapt to the Fourth Industrial Revolution by incorporating nanotechnology, artificial intelligence, and robotics into education.



Will ensure attendance of doctors

Says health minister
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sardar Sakhawat Husain, minister for Health and Family Welfare, yesterday vowed to ensure timely attendance of doctors in all rural hospitals.

"They [doctors] must be present at their workplace on time... I will ensure it within 30 days," Sakhawat told reporters at his secretariat office.

"I will make surprise visits and take necessary action if I find them absent."

The minister said his first priority would be making the ministry corruption-free. "This ministry must be and shall be corruption-free... I will dislodge the syndicate. There will be no corruption, no nepotism, and no syndicate."

Replying to a question, the minister said he would not seek treatment abroad unless unavoidable. He stressed that facilities and service quality must be improved to discourage people from seeking treatment overseas.

Apart from maximising the use of existing infrastructure, the new government will develop a new framework to make health services more accessible, particularly in rural areas.



Planning to ease suffering of passengers

Says state minister for civil aviation
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

M Rashiduzzaman Millat, state minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism, yesterday said the government plans to ensure that air passengers receive their luggage promptly after completing immigration, as part of efforts to improve airport services.

Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat on his first day in office, he said authorities have begun planning changes to ease passenger inconvenience from ticketing to baggage collection.

"We want to redesign airport processes so that passengers do not face difficulties from ticketing to luggage handling," he said.

Millat said the initiative aims to end long waits at baggage belts, where passengers often spend one to two hours for their luggage, and to curb corruption linked to the process.

Addressing complaints about ticket shortages, he alleged that in many cases flights operate with empty seats while passengers are unable to obtain tickets, allegedly due to syndicates behind the system.



Work must begin on polls commitments

Says state minister for finance, planning
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Zonayed Saki, state minister for Finance and Planning, yesterday said work must begin immediately to implement commitments made in the election manifesto, with discussions covering short-, medium- and long-term measures.

He noted that the prime minister would soon present a 180-day plan before the cabinet.

Speaking to journalists at the Secretariat after the first cabinet meeting, Saki said the prime minister raised the matter during the session.

Saki stressed that time must not be wasted and commitments must be implemented. "With Ramadan beginning tomorrow, ensuring public comfort, from market stability to law and order, is everyone's responsibility."

Responding to a question about corruption, the state minister said cabinet members had been instructed to remain vigilant so that no one could use them for corruption or political shelter. "The government has made a commitment to maintain transparency," he added.



Middle Eastern labour markets to be reopened

Says state minister for expatriates' welfare
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nurul Haque Nur, state minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, yesterday said the government is working to reopen Middle Eastern labour markets that have narrowed in recent years. "We have placed this matter before the prime minister from our ministry, seeking special attention to restoring access to key labour destinations in the Gulf. Necessary steps will be taken," he said while speaking to reporters at the secretariat.

"Our labour market was opened during the time of former president Ziaur Rahman and continued during Khaleda Zia's government. But since then, especially under the Awami League government, many markets were restricted."

The state minister said expanding overseas employment remains a top priority, given the critical role remittances play in supporting the national economy. Earlier in the day, while visiting the ministry's offices after formally assuming charge, Nur told journalists reducing the high cost of overseas migration and curbing fraud would be his immediate focus.

READ FULL STORIES ON OUR WEBSITE

Tarique vows crackdown on crime, graft

FROM PAGE 1

"As head of government, I want to draw the people's attention to one thing: whether you voted for the BNP and gave it the mandate to form this government, or chose not to, or did not vote at all, you all hold equal claim to this government."

He said the BNP government believes that while political ideologies and religious identities may differ, the state belongs equally to all its citizens.

Identifying gambling and the spread of drugs as major drivers behind the deterioration of law and order, he said, "Law enforcement agencies are taking strict action on all fronts to curb gambling and drug abuse."

Extending greetings to the nation on the occasion of Ramadan, Tarique said the holy month is a time for self-purification and reflection, urging businesses to uphold its sanctity and not to treat it as an opportunity for profiteering.

He said he has already directed the authorities concerned to ensure uninterrupted gas, water, and electricity supply for fasting people during iftar, sehri, and taraweh prayers.

Tarique called on traders to remain vigilant so that essential commodity prices stay within the reach of ordinary people. "The BNP government is determined to dismantle all syndicates of irregularities and corruption in every sector," he said.

Tarique said the government's position towards all businesses -- small, medium or large -- is "simple and clear": it aims to take necessary measures to protect the interests of traders and consumers.

The government is open to receiving suggestions and complaints on the steps it should take to stabilise the market, he said.

"Buyers, sellers, recipients -- this government belongs to all. This government is yours. You have entrusted it with the responsibility of running the state through your votes. You are the strength of this government," Tarique added.

Addressing traffic congestion, the prime minister said gridlock in divisional cities, particularly in Dhaka, has become severely unmanageable, inflicting immense suffering on the public. "Alternative measures have become necessary to ease population pressure in the capital," he added.

He said initiatives are underway to overhaul the country's railway system so that people can stay in their own districts or homes and still go to work, go to the court, and conduct business activities efficiently and on time.

"As part of this plan, the activities of the rail, shipping, road, and bridges ministries are

"If our large population can be transformed into skilled manpower, it will become our human resource."
Tarique Rahman
Prime Minister

being reorganised and integrated first," he said, adding that if railway communication across the country can be made easy, affordable, and safe, people's dependence on city-centred living will decline and the environment will also improve.

Tarique said there is no end to the challenges facing the nation, but alongside those challenges lie many possibilities.

"If our large population can be transformed into skilled manpower, it will become our human resource," he said. By equipping themselves with skills, people will not only strengthen Bangladesh but also gain access to opportunities in the global market, he added.

"In this competitive technological age, to survive with dignity and prosperity, we must each become proficient in some field or skill.

"To the millions of students and young people of our country, I say this: the government stands ready to provide every possible form of support so that you may build yourselves with merit, knowledge, and science."

He further said his government began its journey with a clear commitment to ensuring employment and a climate conducive to work.

The prime minister also urged everyone to remain conscious in offices to avoid unnecessary or excessive use of gas, electricity, and water.

"But before calling on all government and private officials, employees and the general public to practise austerity, I wanted to set an example through the ministers and MPs. In the first meeting of the BNP parliamentary party, we decided that no MP elected from BNP will import tax-free cars using government facilities or take plots."

Tarique said he had earlier told the people that if allowed to run the state, the BNP government would follow Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) ideal of justice, and that the decisions of the BNP parliamentary party reflect it.

He said that after returning to the country on December 25 last year, following nearly 18 years abroad, he had announced a plan for the nation and its people.

Before the February 12 national election, he presented many aspects of that plan to citizens while visiting different parts of the country.

He said that through their votes, the people have placed their trust in the BNP. "It is now the responsibility of the BNP government to seize this opportunity and fulfill all commitments.

"We have already begun implementing our plans and fulfilling promises, In Sha Allah. On this journey of fulfilling our commitments, we look forward to your continued support in the days ahead," he added.

The translation of the speech was done by The Daily Star.

From ashes to resilience

FROM PAGE 12

features video, photographs, light and sound, sculpture, painting, poetic theatre, and recorded testimonies from staffers who witnessed the attack.

It will remain open to the public daily from 11:00am to 1:00pm and 3:00pm to 5:00pm until February 28.

The inauguration drew members of the Editors' Council, the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab), diplomats stationed in Dhaka, journalists, media professionals, artists, writers, and business leaders. Prothom Alo Executive Editor Sajjad Sharif moderated the programme.

Transcom Group Chief Executive Officer Simeen Rahman also visited the exhibition.

Speaking at the event, Prothom Alo Editor Matiuur Rahman called for an end to longstanding divisions within the journalist community, urging solidarity against future threats.

Referring to the newspaper's motto, "Truth is Courage," he said factual reporting remained the strongest shield.

"We want this division to end," he said. "In the future, we will stand by any journalist or media organisation facing attacks or danger, regardless of their ideology or beliefs."

He noted that while Prothom Alo and The Daily Star had faced sustained pressure, other publications such as Naya Diganta, Sangram, Jaijaidin, and Amar Desh had seen their editors subjected to arrest, harassment, and torture.

"We condemned those actions then. We will be even more conscious and responsible in defending each other moving forward."

Mahfuz Anam, The Daily Star editor and publisher, said the arson attacks on Prothom Alo and The Daily Star were not simply fires set at two news organisations, but an assault on independent journalism and freedom of thought.

He added that the attacks were not a sudden incident and had a specific plan and objective behind it.

He urged the new government to conduct a thorough investigation, identify both the planners and the perpetrators, and expose them before the public.

Mahfuz Anam also recalled the courage and dedication of journalists

and other staffers of the two organisations who returned to work despite the devastation and restored the news flow as quickly as possible.

At the event, Noab President AK Azad, also the publisher of Samakal, called for "rock-solid unity" among publishers and editors to counter future attempts to stifle the press.

"This is not the end of the attacks. More will come. But if publishers, editors, and journalists remain united, we will be ready to strike back."

Jatiya Press Club President Hasan Hafiz criticised the interim administration for failing to safeguard media institutions. "The failure and responsibility must be taken by those who were in charge during the transition."

Dewan Hanif Mahmud, editor of Bonik Barta and general secretary of the Editors' Council, described the burning of newspaper offices as the "lowest of the lowest" point for any society.

"A very bad message has been sent to the whole world about Bangladesh: that newspaper offices are burnt in this country," he said.

Kader Gani Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), said media freedom is inseparable from democracy.

"The Daily Star and Prothom Alo have been turned into skeletons. But we have also seen that even a skeleton can have a soul," he said, warning journalists against "embracing fascism" in any form.

On the night of December 18 last year, a mob launched coordinated attacks on the offices of the two leading newspapers, in what media leaders described as a deliberate attempt to intimidate independent journalism.

The attackers also targeted Chhayanaut, one of the country's leading cultural institutions.

At another event, diplomats call for stronger protection of freedom of speech and press in Bangladesh.

Ambassadors, high commissioners, and other representatives of diplomatic missions joined the programme in front of the Prothom Alo office in the afternoon.

Among those present were European Union Ambassador and Head of Delegation Michael Miller,

Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma, British High Commissioner Sarah Cooke, Canadian High Commissioner Ajit Singh, French Ambassador Jean-Marc Séré-Charlet, and Italian Ambassador Antonio Alessandro.

EU Ambassador Miller said he and many of his colleagues came in December to express solidarity and returned because they believe in media freedom and freedom of expression. He also described journalists as fearless defenders of democracy.

The Italian ambassador said freedom of information lies at the core of their values.

British envoy Sarah Cooke said they joined the programme to show support for media freedom, which she described as a foundation of democracy.

Recalling the "shocking" events in December, she said that as a member of the Media Freedom Coalition in Bangladesh, they had strongly condemned the attacks on journalists, editors, and media houses.

US Embassy Spokesperson Poornima Rai said the United States is fully committed to freedom of expression and stands with The Daily Star and Prothom Alo.

Fireworks shop explosion kills 12 in China

AFP, Beijing

An explosion at a fireworks shop in central China killed 12 people yesterday, the second day of the Lunar New Year holiday, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Setting off fireworks and firecrackers is common during holiday celebrations in China, especially around Lunar New Year, which fell on Tuesday.

While many larger cities, including the capital Beijing, have banned the practice in recent years -- in part due to pollution -- towns and rural areas are often filled with the sounds of exploding firecrackers and "missile" fireworks for days on end during the holiday period.

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ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূবালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়

Govt to pursue bold, responsible foreign policy

Says foreign affairs minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will pursue a bold and responsible foreign policy while maintaining good relations with all countries and fully protecting national interests, said Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman yesterday.

"The guiding principle of our foreign policy is 'Bangladesh First'. We will conduct foreign affairs by fully protecting our national interests," he told journalists at the state guest house Padma after a meeting with Nepalese Foreign Minister Bala Nanda Sharma.

He said the BNP government's foreign policy would be based on sovereign equality, mutual respect, non-interference in internal affairs, national dignity and mutual benefit.

Khalilur, who served as National Security Adviser during the interim government, said the previous

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman pays tribute to the martyrs of the Liberation War at the National Memorial in Savar yesterday.

Saleh appointed as press secretary to prime minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abu Abdullah M Saleh has been appointed as the press secretary to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, with the status of a secretary.



At the same time, Atiqur Rahman Ruman has been appointed as the additional press secretary, Md Mehedul Islam private secretary-2, and Abdur Rahman Sani, assistant private secretary-2.

The Ministry of Public Administration issued four separate notifications regarding the contractual appointment yesterday.

According to the notifications, signed by the ministry's Deputy Secretary Mohammad Nur-e-Alam, their appointment will take effect from the date they join.

The BNP formed the government for a fourth time after 20 years, winning more than two-thirds of the seats in the 13th national parliamentary election. On February 17, Tarique and other members of his cabinet took oath.

PHOTO: PTI

Ducusu's gains marred by some leaders' excesses

MAHATHIR MOHAMMED

In its first four months at the helm of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu), the Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed panel took a number of initiatives for the welfare of Dhaka University students, but some of its leaders faced criticism for their excesses on the campus.

With its own budget, the Ducusu organised seminars and workshops on career development, research and skill development. It arranged legal support for 119 students over cyber harassment and disputes since September last year, according to Ducusu's four-monthly report published last month.



Assault on anyone -- be it a teacher or a destitute person -- is a crime, which is not expected from Ducusu leaders... They cannot assault or harass anyone over ideological differences.

MUSTAQ HOSSAIN, Former Ducusu general secretary

Ducusu leaders persuaded the university authorities to allocate Tk 5.5 crore for the renovation of old dormitories considered vulnerable to earthquakes and another Tk 50 lakh for the facelift of the DU central mosque.

They also played a key role in fulfilling the longstanding demand for evening bus service for nonresident students and pushed for introducing an online subscription system at the central library to boost its resources.

These positive steps were marred by the actions of some Ducusu leaders, who drew flak for their involvement

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Dhaka, Ctg city polls likely after Eid

LGD writes to EC to prioritise city corporation elections

DIPAN NANDY and AHMED DEEPTO

With the 13th parliamentary election now over, the Election Commission (EC) has begun preparations for elections to three major metropolitan local government bodies.

The Local Government Division (LGD) has formally requested the EC to take necessary steps to organise polls for Dhaka North City Corporation, Dhaka South City Corporation and Chattogram City Corporation. Following the request, the EC has initiated preliminary preparations, with elections expected after Eid-ul-Fitr. Government officials have also indicated that local elections will be prioritised.

The secretary of the Local Government Division sent two separate letters to the EC in the last week of January.

The letters stated, "The first meeting of DSCC was held on June 2, 2020. Accordingly, its five-year tenure ended on June 1, 2025. Meanwhile, the first meeting of DNCC was held on June 3, 2020, and its term expired on June 2, 2025. In addition, the first meeting



AT A GLANCE

- DNCC, DSCC terms expired in June 2025
- CCC term ends Feb 22 this year
- Local bodies largely run by administrators after uprising
- Service seekers suffer due to absence of elected reps

of Chattogram City Corporation took place on February 23, 2021. Under the law, its tenure ends on February 22, this year."

The letters added that under the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, elections must legally be held within 180 days prior

to the expiry of a corporation's term.

Since the fall of the Awami League government following the July mass uprising on August 5, 2024, many local government institutions have remained without elected representatives. Except for union parishads, elected representatives of 12 city corporations, all 330 municipalities, 61 zilla parishad chairmen, 493 out of 495 upazila parishad chairmen, and 988 vice-chairmen and women vice-chairmen of upazila parishads were removed as many went into hiding.

Following a court order, Shahadat Hossain, who finished second in the election, assumed office as mayor of Chattogram City Corporation.

The remaining bodies are still vacant. Most union parishad chairmen and members are also in hiding. As a result, nearly all local government institutions are currently being run by administrators.

Due to the absence of public representatives in these local government agencies, people have been living in extreme suffering for the last one and a half years. For

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

'Hadi received death threats repeatedly'

ICT-2 accepts Oct 6 statement of slain Inqilab Moncho spokesperson

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A few months before his death, Sharif Osman Hadi told the investigation officer in a crimes against humanity case that he had been receiving repeated death threats.

He warned that without swift justice, "future mass killings by Awami men would be unimaginable".

Hadi gave the statement on October 6 last year as a prosecution witness in the case against Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader and six other party leaders and affiliates.

Yesterday, the International Crimes Tribunal-2 accepted his statement as formal testimony

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



July charter's legality challenged at HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A petition was filed with the High Court yesterday challenging the legality of the July charter.

Supreme Court lawyer Md Eunus Ali Akond submitted the petition.

Akond said the constitution contains no provision for a charter of this nature, particularly its proposals for a referendum and a 100-member upper house in parliament.

He said the HC could hold a hearing on the petition next week.

Jamaat-e-Islami lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir said they will place arguments before the HC opposing both the petition.

Restore civic liberties, freedom of expression

PEN Bangladesh urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

PEN Bangladesh has congratulated the newly elected government on receiving an overwhelming mandate to lead the country at a critical stage in its democratic transition.

In a statement issued on February 16, PEN Bangladesh President Dr Shamsad Mortuza and Secretary Jahanara Parveen said the strong public endorsement carries both legitimacy and responsibility to revitalise democratic institutions, restore public trust, and rebalance authority and constitutional rights.

PEN Bangladesh -- the national chapter of PEN International -- urged the government to prioritise restoring civic freedoms, particularly the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression under Article 39 of the Constitution.

It called for the immediate release of writers, journalists, and activists detained solely for peaceful expression; an independent and transparent review of alleged civil rights violations; reform of repressive legal provisions that criminalise speech under broad or vague clauses; and institutional safeguards to protect media independence, artistic freedom, and digital rights.



US Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent Christensen visited the SM Sultan Art Conservation Project at Bengal Shilpalay in the capital yesterday. He was received by Bengal Foundation Chair Abul Khair and other trustees, and toured the foundation's exhibition and conservation facilities.

PHOTO: COURTESY

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Govt to pursue bold Hadi received death Ducsu's gains marred by some leaders' excesses

FROM PAGE 3
administration also sought to uphold these principles and rebalance Bangladesh's foreign policy.

Referring to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's slogan of "Bangladesh First", he said the government would carefully assess national interests in all foreign engagements. "This is our red line," he added.

He said the government aims to return to the foreign policy approach of late President Ziaur Rahman, during whose tenure Bangladesh successfully sought election to the UN Security Council and played a key role in founding SAARC.

Asked about strained relations with India since the July uprising, the minister said Bangladesh wants good relations with all countries while safeguarding its interests.

On the Rohingya issue, he said Bangladesh's focus would increase. He noted that during the interim government, contacts were made with the Arakan Army and the Myanmar government, and those efforts would continue to seek a prompt solution.

Responding to questions about a possible conflict

of interest, as he served as National Security Adviser during the election period, he dismissed allegations of election irregularities, saying vote counting could be reviewed if needed.

On BNP's earlier demand for his removal as NSA before the election, he said, "I did not force myself into this position. Different people may have different initial perceptions. Those perceptions change over time, don't they?"

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaid said her new role would be challenging but interesting.

She reiterated that the government will protect national interests while maintaining good relations with all countries, and that foreign policy will reflect the will of the people.

During the meeting, Bangladesh and Nepal reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

The two foreign ministers reviewed longstanding ties based on good neighbourliness and shared aspirations, and discussed enhancing cooperation in trade, energy, connectivity and tourism.

FROM PAGE 3
following a prosecution petition.

Hadi, spokesperson for Inqilab Moncho, described the alleged role of top Awami League leaders in the killing of unarmed protesters during the July uprising.

He also said he had received death threats from multiple phone numbers and had filed GDs with Shahbagh Police Station.

Hadi died on December 18 last year while undergoing treatment in Singapore, six days after he was shot in Paltan, Dhaka.

Apart from Quader, the other accused are AFM Bahauddin Nasim, former state minister Mohammad Ali Arafat, Jubo League President Sheikh Fazle Shams Parash, General Secretary Moinul Hossain Khan Nikhil, and Chhatra League President and General Secretary Saddam Hussain and Sheikh Wali Asif Inan.

In his statement, Hadi alleged that law enforcers and armed AL activists, acting on directives from the ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, opened fire on protesters in Feni, Lakshimpur and Cumilla.

He also said Quader publicly claimed that the Chhatra League alone was enough to suppress the movement, which he alleged encouraged and legitimised violence by the party's "armed cadres".

He further testified that on August 3, Quader ordered resistance from metropolitan to ward levels, triggering armed attacks on unarmed civilians. He alleged that the directive was carried out by Bahauddin Nasim.

Hadi also alleged that Inan coordinated with Hasina by phone on July 17, 2024, to plan and execute lethal attacks on protesters.

He said a recorded phone conversation later broadcast by Al Jazeera included discussions on targeting demonstrators. According to Hadi, Inan distributed weapons among BCL activists, leading to multiple deaths.

He said BCL and Jubo League members -- equipped with pistols, machetes, rods and hockey sticks -- blocked student protesters at key intersections in Dhaka on July 14 under the leadership of Parash, Nikhil, Saddam and Inan.

FROM PAGE 3
in teacher harassment and undue campus policing.

Over the past few months, several Ducsu leaders were engaged in protractorial drives to evict makeshift shops and destitute people from the campus.

One of them even punished outsiders for entering the DU central playground.

On December 11 last year, a group of students, led by Ducsu Social Welfare Secretary AB Zubair, harassed three teachers who belonged to the pro-Awami League "Need Dal".

The incident occurred at the Faculty of Social Sciences after the three -- Prof AKM Jamal Uddin, Prof Azmal Hossain Bhuiyan, and Prof Zenat Huda -- submitted a memorandum to the VC, demanding that the teachers who were barred from taking classes be allowed to resume duties.

Video footage circulated on social media shows a group of students chasing Prof Jamal and blocking the path of his car.

Zubair later claimed that they only intended to hand over an "accomplice of fascism" to police.

Another Ducsu leader, Sarba Mitra Chakma, hogged the headlines for all the wrong reasons.

A video clip circulated on social media on January 25 showed him forcing a group of boys to do squats while holding their ears at the DU central playground. The boys had entered the field to play.

Faced with criticism, Mitra announced his resignation. He, however, withdrew the decision a couple of days later, saying students didn't want him to resign.

In October last year, both Zubair and Mitra stirred up controversy over their involvement in eviction drives on the campus.

Mustaq Hossain, former Ducsu general secretary, said, "Assault on anyone -- be it a teacher or a destitute person -- is a crime, which is not expected from Ducsu leaders... They cannot assault or harass anyone over ideological differences."

Asked whether Ducsu's involvement in eviction drives falls under its jurisdiction, Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan, Ducsu president and DU vice chancellor, said, "Security of students is our utmost priority. We'll take help from anyone -- from students to teachers -- to ensure that."

In reply to a query, he said, "No student has the authority to harass a teacher under any circumstances. If there is any allegation, it must be addressed through proper legal procedure."

Contacted, Ducsu General Secretary SM Farhad said, "We need to resist those who had ties with the fascists and supported attacks on students and killings in the past."

"We must respond and take steps to detain them and bring them to justice," he said, claiming that no incident of attack on any

teacher took place on the campus.

"We do not support taking the law into one's own hands. If anyone violates this, the responsibility lies solely with the individual," he added.

CLAIMS IN DUCSU REPORT

In its report, Ducsu claimed an array of achievements, some of which, according to DU officials, were misattributed to the students' union.

Ducsu said its accomplishments include the construction of Bangladesh-China Moitree Hall and the allocation of Tk 2,800 crore by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) for the improvement of DU infrastructure.

However, the Ecneec approval came on July 30, 2025, and the contract for the hall was signed on January 5 that year, months before the September 9 Ducsu election.

Ducsu also claimed the renovation of DU's Mortuza Medical Centre as one of its achievements. However, the work was launched on August 20 last year.

When asked, Farhad said these projects were cited as accomplishments of Ducsu because it expedited the process,

acting as "a pressure group".

"For example, the approval by Ecneec would have been delayed if we did not push the authorities... We have also taken new initiatives and brought private sponsors to implement student-welfare initiatives," he added.

Explaining the process, he said, "The company offering sponsorship provides us with materials. If we need to purchase anything, we submit bills to the company for disbursement. In case it wants to send us money, the amount must be deposited in the Ducsu's bank account. Ducsu can use the fund upon submission of bills."

He further said they prefer to implement sponsor-funded initiatives without handling cash directly.

Asked about Ducsu funds, its Treasurer Prof HM Mosharrar Hossain said the DU authorities allocated Tk 25 lakh for Ducsu in October last year.

"Money from Ducsu's bank account can be spent only on its organisational activities and initiatives such as seminars, conferences and workshops," said Mosharrar, adding that Ducsu is not allowed to spend on any development work.

US envoy visits Dhaka, Ctg city polls likely

FROM PAGE 3
models aligned with Sultan's distinctive artistic philosophy and ideology.

A key component of the project was the training of emerging Bangladeshi art conservators, contributing to the development of local conservation expertise and long-term preservation capacity.

Christensen also visited the Quamrul Hassan Exhibition Hall at Bengal Shilpalay where a selection of artworks from the Bengal Foundation Collection was on display.

He also toured the Bengal Boi premises and learned about the Foundation's publishing, music and crafts initiatives.

Christensen was accompanied by his wife, Deanne Dao; US Embassy Deputy Management Officer Jennifer Johnson; Public Affairs Counselor Monica Shie; Public Engagement Specialist Raihana Sultana; and Public Engagement Coordinator, Faroha Suhrawardy.

FROM PAGE 3
various purposes, they have to go for services, including certificates from public representatives. However, due to the absence of public representatives, they are suffering in these matters.

Local Government Secretary Rezaul Maksud Jahedi told The Daily Star, "At the end of January, we informed the EC that the terms of 12 city corporations have expired. They should arrange elections as quickly as possible."

He added that elections for the two Dhaka city corporations and Chattogram would be held first, followed by the remaining nine city corporations. Later, district council, upazila parishad and municipal elections would be conducted in phases.

After the conclusion of the 13th parliamentary election, the EC began working on the letters from the Local Government Division.

EC officials said that under normal circumstances, the City Corporation Act requires elections to be held within 180 days before the completion of five years from the first meeting. However, extraordinary circumstances may alter that timeline.

In this regard, Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmani Masud confirmed to The Daily Star that the LGD had sent a letter regarding elections for the two Dhaka city corporations and Chattogram City Corporation.

He said, "Legally, there is no real need for the EC to be informed through letters. Even without letters, the commission can proceed with elections."

Asked what preparations the EC is taking in response to the letter, he said, "This will be announced soon. The commission has not yet held a specific discussion on the matter." He added, "The elections in these three city corporations are likely to be held after Eid."

Meanwhile, the BNP-led government announced on its first day in office that it would prioritise holding local government elections quickly.

Newly appointed Local Government Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said yesterday the government would move to organise local elections within a short timeframe. "We will arrange these elections as quickly as possible. We will make a decision on this very soon," he said.

held after Eid."

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Women's Bangladesh Premier League T20 (WBPL T20) Worldwide Media Rights Bangladesh Cricket Board

Ref No: BCB/Worldwide Media Rights /WBPL T20/ 2026/113 Date: 19th February 2026

Expression of Interest (EOI)

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) hereby invites Expression of Interest (EOI) along with Financial Offers from reputable TV Broadcasters, Digital Platforms and Marketing Agencies/Consortiums/Firm for acquiring the Worldwide Media Rights of the Women's Bangladesh Premier League T20 (WBPL T20) only for the inaugural edition (i.e. 1st Edition 2026) of the WBPL T20.

01. Satellite TV (Linear) Rights - Worldwide including Bangladesh.
02. Digital OTT (Over-the-Top) Rights - Worldwide including Bangladesh.

Eligibility Criteria :

- Any person, organization, or entity having an existing and unresolved dispute, claim, or litigation with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) or the International Cricket Council (ICC), whether on a point of law or matter of fact, shall be deemed ineligible to acquire the aforementioned rights or to participate in this Expression of Interest (EOI) process.
- Interested applicants including Television Broadcasters, Marketing Agencies, Digital Marketing Agencies, or Consortiums must possess the requisite experience, infrastructure, staffing, technical capability, resources, and financial standing necessary to effectively participate in the EOI process and perform the obligations arising therefrom.
- The Broadcaster/TV Channel must have been operational (on air) for a minimum period of three (03) years prior to the date of submission of the EOI. Marketing Agencies must demonstrate proven capability and reasonable experience in the marketing and management of international-standard cricket events.

EOI Submission Procedure:

A detailed Expression of Interest (EOI) document containing all relevant information, terms, and requirements for acquiring the Worldwide Media Rights has been prepared and will be available from Thursday, 19 February 2026.

Interested parties are required to submit their duly completed EOI applications in a sealed envelope, clearly marked "EOI for Worldwide Media Rights - WBPL T20 2026", addressed to the Chairperson, WBPL Governing Council, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), at the BCB Management Office, Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216, no later than the close of business hours on Thursday, 05 March 2026.

Applicants must submit their EOI, together with their Financial Offer, prepared in accordance with the instructions set out in the EOI document.

The Financial Offer shall include the TV production cost, in line with the technical specifications (TV Production Level) prescribed in the EOI document.

In addition to the hard copy submission, applicants may also submit their Financial Offer electronically via email at: wbplt20@bcb-cricket.com.

The EOI needs to be accompanied with the following documents:

- Company Profile and Individual Directors' / Owners' Profile.
- Latest auditor's report on financial statements (each consortium's member must submit separately).
- Bank Solvency Certificate along with bank Statement.
- Certified copy of Memorandum and Articles of Association along with certificate of Incorporation or similar constitutional documents.
- Updated VAT Registration Certificate, Trade License and Tax Identification Number (TIN) Certificate or similar documents.
- In case of consortium/ Joint Venture (JV) - a Notarized Consortium/ JV Agreement.

The BCB reserves the unconditional right to accept or reject any or all offers at its sole discretion without assigning any reason whatsoever during the EOI process. The BCB also reserves the right to amend, postpone or cancel the entire EOI process and / or modify, add or alter the terms of the document and/ or the conditions for EOI process by issuing further addendum(s) at any time prior to the submission of the EOI.

WBPL Governing Council
Bangladesh Cricket Board
Management Office: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216

Consultancy Opportunities

International Labour Organization (ILO) Dhaka is seeking applications from interested consultants for translation of legal documents related to labour laws and international labour standards.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) can be reviewed from the **United Nations Global Market Place (UNGM)** at <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/291012> Jaggaer ref: RFX_4405

The deadline for submission of proposal is **Tuesday, February 24, 2026, by 04:30 PM (BST time).**

actionaid Tender Notice

ActionAid Bangladesh invites sealed quotations from qualified vendors/suppliers for the purchase of visibility materials for the Nurturing of Youth Project and Non-Seed materials for the Green Skills Development Project. These materials will be distributed in various Rohingya camps located in Cox's Bazar. The details are as follows-

SL#	Name of Items	Quantity
1	Visibility Materials (Nurturing of Youth Project)	1 Job
2	Non-Seed Materials (Green Skills Development Project)	1 Job

The Tender Schedule will be available for collect at ActionAid Cox's Bazar Office (House No-752, Ward- 11, Jhawtola, Masjid Road, Cox's Bazar- 4700) from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm during office hour of 19-24 February 2026 (Working Day). Quotation needs to be submitted in sealed envelope on or before 25th February 2026 by 11:00 AM at above locations.

ActionAid Bangladesh may propose entering into long-term agreements (LTAs) with selected individual vendors for the specified categories of items to facilitate future procurement for a duration of one year. The authority of ActionAid Bangladesh reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Legal Notice

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 166 OF 2026

Enamul Haque Khan, President, Bangladesh Jeweller's Association of 15, New Eskaton Road, Level- 6, Moghbazar, Ramna, Dhaka-1000

-VERSUS-Petitioner
Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms of T.C.B Bhaban, 6th Floor, 1, Karwan Bazar, under police station Tejaon within district Dhaka and others

-----Respondents
Notice is hereby given that an application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994 and Rules 8 and 263 of the Companies Rule, 2009 has been filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh with a prayer for direction to call the Annual General Meeting of the Bangladesh Jeweller's Association having its registration No. T-176 for the calendar year 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 and also for subsequent calendar year(s), if fallen due, and further direction for holding and conducting the said AGM(s) in the manner of the Hon'ble Court thinks expedient on condoning the delay in holding said AGM(s). Upon preliminary hearing the Hon'ble High Court Division comprising Mr. Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque was pleased to admit the application on 15.02.2026 and hearing date will be fixed soon for appearance. Anyone desiring of opposing the said application may appear before the Hon'ble Court either personally or through an authorized Advocate on the date fixed. Copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of prescribed fees.

Mr. Shahinul Islam
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Imam Hasan & Associates,
14 Purana Paltan (10th Floor), Dhaka-1000.
Cell: 01714-548626

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society

National Head Quarter (NHQ)
684-686, Red Crescent Sarak, Bara Moghbazar, Dhaka 1217.
FAX: +88-02-4831088-9, Tel: 222-228, Dmcc: +88-02-8333430, web: www.bdrcc.org

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

1. Invitation Reference and Date	Pro. (Log./37/2026, date: 18/02/2026,
2. Procuring Entity Name	Secretary General, BDRCS
3. Name of Requisition Department	DR Department, National Headquarters, BDRCS, 684-686 Red Crescent Road, Bara Moghbazar, Dhaka-1217
4. Procurement Category	Service
5. Description of Tender/RFP	Framework Agreement for Financial Service Providers for Cash and Voucher Assistance Program
6. Procurement Method	OTM (Two envelope)
7. Source of Funds	BDRCS/IFRC/PNS
8. Purchase of Tender document	Tender/RFP documents and schedules with detailed information are available at the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) website: www.bdrcc.org . Interested bidders are requested to collect the tender/RFP documents within the stipulated timeframe from the below link: BDRCS website Tender/RFP Schedule Download Link: https://bdrcc.org/tender/
9. Tender Schedule available	From 19-02-2026 to 25-03-2026
10. Tender Submission Date and Time	25-03-2026 at 3:00 pm (If not possible for any unavoidable circumstance tender will be opened next office day at the same time & venue.)
11. Tender Opening Date and Time	25-03-2026 at 3:15 pm
12. Address of Tender Submission & Opening	Logistics Department, National Headquarters, BDRCS, 684-686 Red Crescent Road, Bara Moghbazar, Dhaka-1217.
13. Place/Date/Time of Pre-Tender Meeting	11:00 AM on 02 March 2026 in the Logistics Department Meeting Room, NHQ, BDRCS, 684-686, Red Crescent Sarak, Bara Moghbazar, Dhaka 1217.
14. Eligibility of Tenderer	As mentioned in Tender/RFP documents
15. Brief Description of works/ Related Services	Financial Service Providers for Cash and Voucher Assistance Program for 03 (three) years Framework Agreement initially.
16. Tender Security Amount	N/A
17. Completion Time in days	N/A

The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender/RFP or split the order without assigning any reason whatsoever and will not be bound to accept the lowest bid.

Size: 3 col x 4"
Dr. Kabir M. Ashraf Alam ndc
Secretary General

Women's Bangladesh Premier League T20 (WBPL T20) Title Sponsorship & Ground Branding Rights Bangladesh Cricket Board

Ref No: BCB/Title Sponsorship & Ground Branding Rights /WBPL T20/ 2026/112 Date: 19th February 2026

Expression of Interest (EOI)

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) hereby invites Expression of Interest (EOI) along with financial offers from the reputed Business Houses/ Companies/ Parties/ Agencies / Consortiums for acquiring the Title Sponsorship & Ground Branding Rights of the Women's Bangladesh Premier League T20 (WBPL T20) only for the inaugural edition (i.e. 1st Edition 2026) of the WBPL T20.

Eligibility Criteria :

- Entities engaged in the production, distribution, or promotion of tobacco, alcohol (including both surrogate and non-surrogate products), betting, or online betting, and/or their surrogate brands, shall not be eligible to participate in this Expression of Interest (EOI) process.
- Any person, organization, or entity having an existing and unresolved dispute, claim, or litigation with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) or the International Cricket Council (ICC), whether on a point of law or matter of fact, shall be ineligible to participate in the EOI process or to acquire the rights mentioned herein.
- Reputed business houses, companies, agencies, consortiums, or parties with proven experience in the marketing, sales, or management of organized cricket tournaments, series, or sports events shall be given preference during the evaluation of EOI submissions.
- Interested applicants, including companies, corporate houses, firms, agencies, or consortiums must possess the necessary experience, technical expertise, resources, operational capability, and financial stability to successfully participate in and execute all obligations arising from this EOI process.

EOI Submission Procedure:

A detailed Expression of Interest (EOI) document containing all relevant information, terms, and required forms pertaining to the acquisition of the Title Sponsorship and Ground Branding Rights will be available from Thursday, 19 February 2026, at the following locations:

- BCB Management Office, Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216
- BCB Official Website: www.tigercricket.com.bd

Interested parties are required to submit their duly completed EOI applications in a sealed envelope, clearly marked "EOI for Title Sponsorship and Ground Branding Rights - WBPL T20 2026", addressed to the Chairperson, WBPL Governing Council, Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), at the BCB Management Office, Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216, no later than the close of business hours on Thursday, 05 March 2026.

The EOI needs to be accompanied with the following documents:

- Company Profile and Individual Directors' / Owners' Profile.
- Latest auditor's report on financial statements (each consortium's member must submit separately).
- Bank Solvency Certificate along with bank Statement.
- Certified copy of Memorandum and Articles of Association along with certificate of Incorporation or similar constitutional documents.
- Updated VAT Registration Certificate, Trade License and Tax Identification Number (TIN) Certificate or similar documents.
- In case of consortium/ Joint Venture (JV) - a Notarized Consortium/ JV Agreement.

The BCB reserves the unconditional right to accept or reject any or all offers at its sole discretion without assigning any reason whatsoever during the EOI process. The BCB also reserves the right to amend, postpone or cancel the entire EOI process and / or modify, add or alter the terms of the document and/ or the conditions for EOI process by issuing further addendum(s) at any time prior to the submission of the EOI.

WBPL Governing Council
Bangladesh Cricket Board
Management Office: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216

INTERNATIONAL

Russia, Ukraine still differ on key issues

Says Zelensky after two-day peace talks in Geneva

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine and Russia did not find agreement on the central issues of how to end the four-year at US-mediated talks in Geneva, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday.

"We can see that some groundwork has been done, but for now the positions differ, because the negotiations were not easy," Zelensky said in a message to journalists, including from AFP, after the talks had finished.

He said the fate of occupied territory in Ukraine's east and the future status of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, captured by Russian forces, were the unresolved "sensitive issues" in the talks. Zelensky accused Russia of "trying to drag out negotiations" when they could have reached the final stage.

However, Ukraine's lead negotiator Rustem Umerov



Heavy machinery demolishes a Palestinian building near Hebron in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday. A senior Israeli far-right minister vowed to encourage "emigration" from the Palestinian territories, despite mounting criticism of recent measures tightening Israel's control over West Bank. PHOTO: REUTERS

Ukraine's chief negotiator sees 'progress' in talks

talks: Zelensky

Ukraine peace talks 'difficult, but business-like': Russia

Russia 'trying to drag out' Geneva

said he there had been progress in talks with United States and Russia on ending the war.

"We are focused on working through the key provisions required to finalise the process. This is complex work that requires alignment among all parties and sufficient time. There is progress but no details can be disclosed at this stage," he told reporters.

The talks wrapped up after just two hours, much shorter than the six hours of meetings on Tuesday, according to the head of Russia's delegation.

Neither side elaborated on what they discussed or whether they had agreed on anything, but both signalled the discussions had been tricky.

Russia's top negotiator said two days of talks were "difficult", but fresh talks would be held soon. "They were difficult, but business-like. The next meeting will take place in the near future," Russia's Vladimir Medinsky told state media reporters after the talks.

Meanwhile, Ukraine reduced electricity imports by three percent to around 311 gigawatt hours last week amid milder weather, analyst DixiGroup said late on Tuesday.

Iran resisting Trump's 'red lines': Vance

AFP, Washington

Iran has not agreed to all the "red lines" set out by US President Donald Trump for a diplomatic solution, Vice President JD Vance said Tuesday after talks in Geneva.

Vance appeared to indicate that the US was still interested in diplomacy, after Trump threatened force if Iran's clerical state does not agree on key concerns starting with its nuclear program.

"In some ways, it went well; they agreed to meet afterwards," Vance said in a Fox News interview.

"But in other ways, it was very clear that the president has set some red lines that the Iranians are not yet willing to actually

acknowledge and work through," Vance told "The Story with Martha MacCallum" programme.

"We're going to keep on working it. But of course, the president reserves the ability to say when he thinks that diplomacy has reached its natural end," Vance said.

"We hope we don't get to that point, but if we do that will be the president's call."

The US will deter Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons "one way or the other," US Energy Secretary Chris Wright warned yesterday.

Meanwhile, Iran and Russia will conduct naval manoeuvres in the Sea of Oman today, Iranian media reported.

On Monday, the Revolutionary

Guards, the ideological arm of Iran's military, also launched exercises in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a challenge to US naval forces deployed in the region.

"The joint naval exercise of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Russia will take place tomorrow (today) in the Sea of Oman and in the northern Indian Ocean," the ISNA agency reported, citing an official.

"The aim is to strengthen maritime security and to deepen relations between the navies of the two countries," he said, without specifying the duration of the drill.

The war games come as Iran struck an upbeat tone following the second round of Oman-mediated negotiations in Geneva on Tuesday.

Japan PM Takaichi reappointed following election

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's lower house formally reappointed Sanae Takaichi as prime minister yesterday, 10 days after her historic landslide election victory.

Takaichi, 64, became Japan's first woman premier in October and won a two-thirds majority for her party in the snap lower house elections on February 8.

She has pledged to bolster Japan's defences to protect its territory and waters, likely further straining relations with Beijing, and to boost the flagging economy.

Takaichi suggested in November that Japan could intervene militarily if Beijing sought to take Taiwan by force.

China, which regards the democratic island as part of its territory and has not ruled out force to annex it, was furious.

Beijing's top diplomat Wang Yi told the Munich Security Conference on Saturday that forces in Japan were seeking to "revive militarism".



CENTRAL NIGERIA Gas explosion kills 38 miners

AFP, Jos Plateau

A gas explosion yesterday killed at least 38 lead miners who were down the pits at a mine in central Nigeria's Plateau state, local sources told AFP.

Twenty-seven others were injured in the blast at the Kampanin Zurak mining site in Plateau state's Bashar district, the acting traditional ruler told AFP.

"It is true that so far 38 people are confirmed dead and about 27 others have been rushed to hospital," Alhaji Aliyu Adamu Idris said.

Ibrahim Dattijo Sani, a miner at a nearby pit, told AFP that the victims were in the mines below ground where the explosion happened between 7:30 and 8:00 am (0630 and 0700 GMT).

"We are close to the sites, people were inside the mining pits and suddenly a gas exploded," Sani told AFP by telephone.

The west African country has seen similar fatal mine accidents in the past.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

নির্বাহী পরিচালকের কার্যালয়
শিশু-মাতৃ স্বাস্থ্য ইনস্টিটিউট
মাতৃয়াইল, ঢাকা-১৩৬২

Ref No. ICMH/Admin/2025-26/1587

Date: 18/02/26

e-Tender Notice

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (HYPERLINK <https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details, please contact support desk contact numbers.

e-Tender are invited in e-GP System Portal (HYPERLINK <https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Dr. Mohammad Ahsanul Haque, Joint Director, Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka-1362 for the Procurement of:

Tender Id	Package No. Package Description	Tender/proposal publication date & time	Tender/proposal last selling date & time	Tender/proposal closing/opening date & time
1226793	ICMH-2025-26/MSR-1 Procurement of MSR Medicine (NON EDCL) for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226794	ICMH-2025-26/MSR-2 Procurement of Surgical Instruments for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226795	ICMH-2025-26/MSR-3a Procurement of (MSR-3 PACKAGE-1) for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226796	ICMH-2025-26/MSR-3b Procurement of (MSR-3, PACKAGE-2) for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226797	ICMH-2025-26/MSR-3c Procurement of (MSR-3 PACKAGE-3) for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226798	ICMH-2025-26/MSR-3d Procurement of (MSR-3, PACKAGE-4) for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226799	ICMH-2025-26/MSR-3e Procurement of (MSR-3, PACKAGE-5) for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226800	ICMH-2025-26/MSR-3f Procurement of (MSR-3, PACKAGE-6) for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226802	ICMH-2025-26/stationary-4 Procurement of STATIONARY ITEMS for the F.Y 2025-2026 at	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00

1226801	Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka. ICMH-2025-26/linen-5 Procurement of LINEN for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226803	ICMH-2025-26/plumbing-6 Procurement of plumbing and sanitary for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226804	ICMH-2025-26/printing-7 Procurement of printing for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226805	ICMH-2025-26/fire-8 Procurement of fire Extinguisher for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226806	ICMH-2025-26/Elec.item-9 Procurement of Electric items for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka...	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226807	ICMH-2025-26/Com.item-10 Procurement of computer items for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226808	ICMH-2025-26/Com.Access-11 Procurement of Computer Accessories for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226809	ICMH-2025-26/AC.parts-12 Procurement of AC parts for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka.	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226810	ICMH-2025-26/MSR-3g Procurement of (MSR-3, PACKAGE-7) for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00
1226811	ICMH-2025-26/MSR-3h Procurement of (MSR-3, PACKAGE-8) for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka	19-Feb-2026 12:00	04-Mar-2026 16:00	05-Mar-2026 12:00

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e-Tender will be accepted only as stated in above list; accepted tenders will be opened online immediate as stated in above list.

GD-335

Brig. Gen. Md. Emdadul Haque
Executive Director
Institute of Child & Mother Health
Matuail, Dhaka-1362

Is LDC graduation deferment logical?

Dialogue at home and abroad will determine that

Bangladesh's graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category to developing nation status is no longer a matter of if, but when. The country has met all criteria for graduation set by the UNDP. But while this may bring us prestige, we must be pragmatic about the timing, for graduation also carries significant economic and developmental implications. It is crucial to assess whether we are fully prepared to absorb the economic shock that may accompany the transition. This requires dialogue at home and careful negotiation abroad. In this context, the new government's plan to seek a deferment of at least three years (business leaders have asked for six) seems logical.

Undoubtedly, graduation will have huge impacts on major industries such as apparel and pharmaceuticals. Currently, under LDC provisions, Bangladesh enjoys zero-duty access for 73 percent of its exports. The apparel sector alone accounts for over 80 percent of export earnings. After graduation, exporters will face tariffs of nearly 12.5 percent in the European Union once the temporary extension expires. Bangladesh could lose up to 14 percent of its exports, equivalent to \$8 billion annually, once it no longer has LDC's preferential trade benefits. In addition, there may be stricter compliance obligations in labour and environmental and intellectual property standards.

Another concern is the US trade agreement that has created an additional layer of uncertainty. The combined impact of losing LDC privileges and facing high tariff or compliance conditions imposed by the US trade policy will intensify pressure on exporters. The government should, therefore, review specific components of the US trade agreement and re-engage with the Trump administration to amend certain provisions, thereby better safeguarding Bangladesh's economic sovereignty.

The withdrawal of the TRIPS waiver—a temporary waiver by the World Trade Organization (WTO) allowing flexibility on intellectual property patent rules—will also affect local pharmaceuticals, which currently produce affordable generic versions of life-saving medicines such as cancer treatments and HIV antiretrovirals. Once patent protections are enforced, medicine prices will rise sharply, affecting not only profits but also public health. A deferment could give local pharmaceutical companies the leeway to produce active pharmaceutical ingredients domestically. Regulatory frameworks could be strengthened, and smoother transitions in intellectual property compliance could be negotiated.

Business chambers, banking leaders, and sectoral associations have cited existing bottlenecks—such as energy shortages, high borrowing costs, and regulatory inefficiencies—that challenge graduation preparedness. A national dialogue is therefore urgently needed to bring together the voices of relevant ministries, Bangladesh Bank, export associations, pharmaceutical representatives, economists, and civil society. Preparedness must include a smooth transition strategy, trade diversification plans, bilateral trade negotiations, central bank reforms, and infrastructure improvements.

Bangladesh also needs to negotiate with the UN and coordinate with co-graduating countries such as Nepal and Laos. There are precedents for postponing graduation: Myanmar, Timor-Leste, and the Solomon Islands have all deferred under compelling circumstances. Bangladesh, too, has faced economic turbulence before and after the July uprising, which must be taken into account. Negotiations to seek deferment will require a credible roadmap backed by data and reform commitments from the government.

Can students afford to lose more school days?

Schools, colleges must make up for disruptions in academic activities

At a time when our education sector is struggling to recover from repeated disruptions, the announcement of long Ramadan and Eid holidays in schools and colleges does raise concerns. According to the 2026 academic calendar, schools and colleges are to remain closed during Ramadan from February 18 till March 26, combining Ramadan, Eid-ul-Fitr, and summer holidays, before reopening on March 29 (Sunday). While religious and cultural observances are integral to our national life, the prolonged closure at this point demands careful review.

Over the past one and a half years, students across the country have endured frequent disruptions in academic activities caused by political unrest, administrative chaos, climatic events, forced teacher resignations, and other issues. Clashes between students at several institutions have also caused disruptions. The cumulative effect has been devastating, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who lack access to private tutoring, digital resources, or supportive learning environments at home.

Last year's HSC results starkly revealed the deterioration in college education standards. The pass rate was only 58.83 percent, the lowest in 21 years, and more than five lakh students failed. While school enrolment rates may have improved over the years, the learning outcomes remain alarmingly weak. A significant proportion of primary students struggle with basic literacy and numeracy. At the secondary level, rote learning continues to dominate classrooms, while critical thinking and problem-solving skills remain underdeveloped.

In this context, prolonged closures in educational institutions will have serious negative consequences. Long holidays inevitably reduce the time for meaningful teaching and assessment. As a result, teachers are forced to rush through syllabi, and students rely more on guidebooks and coaching centres, leaving learning outcomes weak and uneven. The government must therefore carefully reassess whether such duration and structure of breaks truly serve the best interests of students. If it is serious about achieving quality education for all, learning outcomes must guide policy decisions. Education must be treated as a national priority, and the government must commit to genuine systemic reforms required to strengthen the sector.

Decisive action is needed to deliver on education pledges



Dr Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at BRAC University. He was the convener of the consultation committee on primary and non-formal education appointed by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, as well as of the consultation committee on secondary education appointed by the Ministry of Education.

Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

MANZOOR AHMED

The overwhelming support of voters received by the BNP thrusts upon the new government a special responsibility and a challenge to meet people's expectations. The party's election pledges include a good number of education objectives and targets. Whether these promises reflect what is needed for essential education reform and how they can be turned into action and results are burning questions on people's minds.

Listed under the general tag line of "Achieving Equitable Socioeconomic Development and Sustainable State Capacity," with the heading "Education and Human Resource Development," the education objectives cover budget and infrastructure, primary and secondary education, higher education and research, madrasa and technical education, and teachers and overall reform.

Regarding the education budget, BNP has pledged to raise the allocation to five percent of GDP (from the current allocation of less than two percent) as well as to promote digital technology (free Wi-Fi, multimedia classrooms, a tab for each teacher) and provide free school lunch and sanitation facilities for girls. Presumably the increased budget will pay for these items.

On school education, the items mentioned include providing students with school uniforms, expanding pre-primary education, a compulsory third language instruction (beyond Bangla and English), and focusing on extracurricular and "creative talent development." The "one child, one tree" initiative is aimed at raising environmental awareness.

In higher education, key items include introducing student loans and support for higher education abroad, tax exemption for private universities, and upgrading the National University which regulates (very poorly) the academic quality of more than 2,200 colleges. Industry-academia collaboration and internship for students will be promoted.

Madrasa education and technical education are bracketed (in line with the current education

ministry administrative structure). Modernisation of madrasas is a goal. The certificates of Qawmi madrasas are to be recognised and priority to be given on jobs. "Technical and vocational education for all" is promised.

In the "Teachers and Reform" section, an education reform commission for overall quality improvement is promised. Curriculum reform, recruitment of meritorious



FILE VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

teachers, and simplifying the payment of retirement benefits for teachers and granting them state honours are mentioned. Special assistance will be provided to students injured in the July mass uprising.

An election manifesto, by its very nature, consists of pledges made to the public based on a general perception of key problems and popular demands. It is not expected to be a well-developed action plan and strategy for a sector, especially one as complex and critical as education. Nonetheless, the pledges made by the newly elected governing party deserve scrutiny for what is included and excluded, and the feasibility of fulfilling them.

In Bangladesh, raising the budget allocation for education, which is one

of the lowest in the world in terms of GDP ratio, has been a long held demand. Increasing it to five percent has to be a long-term commitment, which can be met as the tax-GDP ratio grows from the current level (6.8 percent). However, to signal the government's sincerity, public investment in education must be increased in real terms year to year. Equally urgent is to direct funds to activities that demonstrably impact classroom learning, reduce inequity, and ensure better efficiency and accountability. The spending on digital technology emphasised in the pledge will be helpful only if it produces the outcome in better student learning. So far, the track record has been far from satisfactory.

Regarding school education, one would have liked to see a commitment to a time-bound plan for universal

structure.

Civil society discourse on education and consultations held across the country with parents, teachers, students, and education activists, conducted by the Campaign for Popular Education and its partner organisations, have brought out some key education decisions that the new government should address to make a head start towards reform. Among these are three early actions recommended for the new government:

- Appoint a high-level education development task force to guide the formulation of a five-year education sector development plan and a 10-year education perspective plan.

- Bring all school education, from pre-primary to pre-university, under a single ministry to promote universal, inclusive and high quality education for all children.

- Launch a comprehensive early childhood care and development (ECCD) programme to progressively serve all children from birth to pre-primary, ensuring their healthy growth, development, and school readiness; this programme can be implemented through community-based organisations and NGOs with government support.

The education manifesto responds, as expected, to populist demands and perceptions, some of which may be difficult to implement or may not produce the intended outcome. It is necessary to examine if and how the sundry list becomes part of an education philosophy, vision, and a comprehensive plan for educational development. A total action plan with priorities, phasing, resource planning, implementing mechanism, designation of responsibilities, and the means of assessing progress has to be developed.

The two advisers of the interim government for the primary and mass education and education ministries, before their eventual departure, belatedly asked two consultation committees to provide recommendations on necessary reform in primary and secondary education. Another committee prepared a "vision" statement on future school education in the country. The reform ideas emanating from these committees do provide a reform agenda for the newly elected government. These can be regarded as the necessary groundwork for shaping the government's education development agenda. Education advocates and the civil society expect to make education an urgent topic for discourse with the new government.

Increasing investment in public health must be a top priority



Md Shafaat Ali Choyon is a public health professional with a background in business strategy and digital innovation.

MD SHAFAT ALI CHOYON

What a new government chooses to fund, plan for, or ignore in its first months reveals its level of priority or seriousness about its commitments to the people. In the health sector, Bangladesh's newly sworn-in administration faces that test against two closely linked threats that quietly undermine households nationwide: medical debt driven by high out-of-pocket health spending and climate- and disaster-related shocks, both of which expose the fragility of the health system. Health protection is also economic protection, and the new government must treat it as such.

Bangladesh's health financing model has a gaping structural flaw. According to the Bangladesh National Health Accounts 1997-2020, nearly 69 percent of total health expenditure is paid directly by households out of their own pockets, one of the highest shares in South Asia. Global evidence consistently shows that heavy reliance on out-of-pocket payments exposes families to catastrophic health expenditure and financial hardship.

A technical consultation hosted by the World Health Organization in Dhaka in November 2025, reviewing the draft Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Roadmap 2026-2035, reported that about 41.7 percent of the population, roughly 70 million

people, had experienced financial hardship due to health costs. The same consultation noted that Bangladesh's UHC service coverage index stands at just 54 out of 100, reflecting major gaps in access to essential services. When illness strikes, many families are forced to sell assets, borrow from informal lenders, or pull children out of school. A single, relatively prolonged hospitalisation can push a household from fragile stability into poverty.

This burden is not limited to rural areas. Urban informal workers like rickshaw pullers, day labourers, and small traders face the same exposure, often with higher living costs and no safety nets. In recent years, health sector allocations have hovered around five percent of the national budget, while public spending on health has remained below one percent of GDP, according to World Bank data. Research on health financing and universal coverage consistently shows that such low public investment constrains service coverage and leaves households to absorb risks individually, with long-term consequences for economic growth and inequality.

No serious observer would argue that Bangladesh can build universal health insurance overnight. But it is unacceptable when institutional inertia pushes even the prospect

of phased implementation into the background. The draft UHC Roadmap 2026-2035, developed jointly by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the World Health Organization, outlines a long-term strategy centred on population coverage, service coverage, and financial protection through pooled financing. The new government should adopt this roadmap as a binding policy commitment rather than leave it as another draft. An initial focus on low-income households, informal urban workers, and disaster-exposed communities linked to existing social protection programmes would stabilise household finances and protect labour productivity effectively.

The second half of this crisis receives far less attention. Bangladesh's disaster preparedness has rightly earned global recognition, particularly for cyclone early-warning systems that have saved countless lives. But these successes share a critical blind spot: health system continuity is still treated as secondary. A WHO inception meeting held in Cox's Bazar in December 2025 on integrating noncommunicable disease and mental health care into emergency preparedness acknowledged that while Bangladesh has strong systems for infectious disease outbreaks and trauma response, preparedness for chronic disease care during disasters remains limited. Health facilities often lack contingency planning, medicine supply chains are vulnerable to disruption, and frontline responders are not equipped to manage chronic conditions during crises.

Urban seismic risk compounds these vulnerabilities. Experts warn that a 7.5-magnitude earthquake in Dhaka could generate more than 31 million tons of debris and severely disrupt critical services. Bangladesh's

first-ever sub-national earthquake risk assessment has mapped hazards down to the upazila level and assessed exposure of buildings and critical infrastructure, including health facilities. Yet preparedness planning remains focused on building codes and search-and-rescue, with limited attention to whether hospitals and clinics could function after a major shock.

Community-level preparedness offers a practical and cost-effective solution. Bangladesh has more than 13,200 community clinics staffed by community health workers, widely recognised as the backbone of primary healthcare delivery. During COVID-19, these workers maintained essential services and community trust under extreme pressure. But their role in disaster response has never been formally embedded in preparedness planning. Integrating community health workers into disaster management structures would strengthen service continuity rather than forcing systems to improvise after failure.

Three priorities, therefore, should guide the first 18 to 24 months of the new government: adopt the UHC roadmap as a binding national commitment with clear phases and accountability; embed health system continuity into disaster planning, including backup power, medicine supply chains, and trained frontline workers; and reframe public health spending as economic stabilisation, setting a credible, time-bound target to raise public investment in health. Bangladesh's public healthcare has long suffered from poor planning and execution; it is time to make some progress in this regard.

The referendum mandate is real, but reform must return to the constitution



Barrister Khan Khalid Adnan is advocate at the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, fellow at the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, and head of the chamber at Khan Sajjur Rahman and Associates in Dhaka.

KHAN KHALID ADNAN

Bangladesh has just staged a rare democratic exercise: a parliamentary election and a referendum on constitutional reform on the same day. The Election Commission has gazetted the referendum result, with 68.59 percent of valid votes backing “Yes” on a turnout a little above 60 percent. The referendum was framed as consent to implement 48 constitutional reform measures under the July National Charter. Yet, within hours of the new parliament’s first oath-taking, the reform roadmap began to unravel, largely because the reform process was built on a legally brittle shortcut.

The fault line sits inside the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025. The ballot asked voters to consent to the order and to a bundled set of constitutional reform proposals. In case of a “Yes” win, the order says a constitutional reform council will be constituted, comprising the elected representatives, who will “serve concurrently” as the members of parliament and council members, and the council will have “full authority” to carry out constitutional reforms within a fixed period. It even declares that reforms adopted by the council are “deemed final” without further approval.

To activate that machinery, the order requires a second oath. After taking the parliamentary oath, MPs were meant to take, in the same ceremony, an oath as members of the council. BNP MPs refused that second oath. Salahuddin Ahmed’s public reasoning was blunt: none of them were elected as council members and steps could be taken only after the council was “constitutionally adopted” in parliament. MPs of the Jamaat-led alliance, by contrast, proceeded with the council oath.

BNP’s legal point is not nonsense. An oath is not a slogan; it is a constitutional device that signals where authority comes from and what binds office-holders. If a new constitutional body is to be created, the orthodox route is to amend the constitution first, define that body’s powers, and then prescribe any oath within the constitution’s own schedules and procedures. Forcing a second oath through an executive order, and treating refusal as defiance of “the people,” collapses law into politics. The implementation order itself tries to pre-empt this debate by dressing the council in parliamentary “privileges and immunities,”



VISUAL: BIPOB CHAKROBORTY

but that is not how constitutional legitimacy is built.

Still, BNP’s posture cannot be romanticised. A party that enjoys a decisive parliamentary majority can cite constitutional purity today and dilute reforms tomorrow. BNP says it remains committed to implementing the July charter. But a referendum “Yes” vote was, at minimum, a demand for constraints on the executive and for institutional guardrails. To treat that demand as optional parliamentary discretion is to turn popular consent into a blank cheque for the next supermajority.

That is precisely the logic that has repeatedly converted constitutional amendments into instruments of partisan entrenchment.

The more uncomfortable truth is that the interim government’s design made this collision almost inevitable. The implementation order is framed in the language of revolutionary legitimacy, invoking the “sovereign will” expressed through the July mass uprising as its

constitutional questions. The High Court previously declared unconstitutional key parts of the 15th Amendment, including the abolition of the caretaker government system, and it also reinstated the referendum requirement for constitutional amendments, with the hearing on the appeals adjourned till March 5. Separately, the Appellate Division in November 2025 reversed the 2011 verdict that had struck down the

accept. Now the system is notionally revived, but parties still dispute what an acceptable caretaker government structure should look like. If this debate becomes just another winner-takes-all bargaining match, the country risks repeating the same crisis one election later, only with new actors and the same temptations.

There is a solution, but it requires abandoning two comforting myths. The first myth is that a referendum can replace constitutional procedure. It cannot. The second myth is that parliamentary supremacy alone guarantees democratic legitimacy. It does not, especially in a polity where parliamentary supermajorities have historically been used to harden executive dominance. The only workable path, then, is to fuse the referendum’s political mandate with constitutionally orthodox, parliament-led lawmaking that can survive judicial review and future transfers of power.

That means the new parliament should initiate a transparent reform process that treats the July charter as a public draft, not as a sacred text and not as a menu. If BNP is sincere, it can table constitutional amendment bills in discrete packages, send them to an all-party committee, hold public hearings, publish draft clauses, and adopt a credible method for caretaker government selection and election-time administration that does not depend on the goodwill of the incumbent. If it wants to preserve the reform council concept, it should first amend the constitution to define the council’s status, powers, relationship with the amendment article, and the oath’s place in the constitution. Then the second oath would be law, not a political test of loyalty.

Just as importantly, the reform agenda should not be held hostage to the most contentious constitutional redesigns. Many governance reforms can be pursued through ordinary laws and institutional practice while constitutional questions are debated in the open. An overview of the July charter process captures both the ambition and the dissent that make genuine implementation harder than slogans suggest. Early, concrete improvements in election administration, policing, judicial appointments, and anti-corruption enforcement would help rebuild public trust and reduce the cynicism that grows when elites spend months arguing over procedure while everyday impunity continues.

The referendum result is not the end of the reform debate. It is the beginning of a constitutional test. Bangladesh can either treat law as a tool to rationalise political power, or treat law as the discipline that keeps power from devouring the republic. The difference will not be decided by who took which oath on day one. It will be decided by whether the winners choose constitutional restraint when restraint is against their immediate interest.

The new prime minister faces tough tests ahead



Zillur Rahman is a political analyst and president of the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS). He is the host of Tritiya Matra on Channel i. His X handle is @zillur.

ZILLUR RAHMAN

A landslide victory often feels like a coronation. Streets erupt, social media lights up, and the mandate seems unassailable. For the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the newly sworn-in Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, this was no ordinary victory. Winning 212 out of the 297 parliamentary seats with confirmed results, the BNP has secured a mandate that few could have imagined a decade ago. Analysts and observers alike attribute this overwhelming success to Tarique Rahman’s strategic vision, disciplined organisational leadership, and ability to connect with voters across urban and rural divides. His stewardship transformed fragmented opposition energy into coordinated campaigns while mobilising the party’s grassroots network with remarkable efficiency.

Yet, even as celebrations sweep the country, the scale of triumph brings both opportunity and burden. Electoral dominance provides unmatched authority, but it also raises expectations, heightens scrutiny, and draws the attention of both domestic and international adversaries. As the BNP returns to power after two decades, Tarique Rahman’s challenge now is to translate electoral success into stable governance and institutional credibility, and to sustain public trust.

Over the years, the state machinery—civil bureaucracy, law enforcement, and regulatory bodies—has been shaped by partisan politics. As a new political figure, as prime minister for the first time in 30 years, Tarique Rahman’s leadership will be tested in asserting authority

while avoiding institutional paralysis. Sweeping purges may satisfy loyalists, but risk alienating essential civil servants, while excessive restraint could frustrate grassroots supporters eager for rapid “correction” of past grievances. Restoring faith in public institutions will require visible commitment to the rule of law, judicial independence, and merit-based appointments. Here, Tarique needs to balance assertiveness with prudence, signalling change while preserving continuity, and demonstrate that a landslide mandate can be exercised responsibly.

The opposition remains a formidable challenge. While the Awami League remains weakened, it can still mobilise public demonstrations in the future. Meanwhile, Jamaat-e-Islami—which secured 68 seats, while its allies got nine—is poised to be a vocal and organised adversary with its strong parliamentary representation and enduring street-level influence. Tarique Rahman’s ability to manage these dynamics—containing parliamentary obstruction, preempting street mobilisations, and countering political narratives—will define the durability of his administration. The challenge, again, lies in striking the right balance: projecting strength without provoking instability and demonstrating responsiveness without appearing indecisive.

Even with 212 seats, electoral victory does not eliminate the need for diplomacy, both at home and abroad. International observers, particularly in Western capitals, remain attentive to policies that might empower

radical elements at the expense of women’s rights, minority protections, or counterterrorism commitments. Every major domestic decision may carry international implications. Tarique will need to reassure both foreign partners and domestic constituencies that Bangladesh will be governed responsibly henceforth.

Foreign relations will test the government’s strategic capacity. Relations with India, Bangladesh’s key partner, must be carefully managed. Past tensions over trade, border management, and regional cooperation make New Delhi cautious. Any misstep could spill into economic consequences, particularly in sectors dependent on regional stability. Moreover, over-accommodation risks domestic criticism from nationalist supporters. At the same time, China remains a vital partner, particularly in infrastructure and investment through the Belt and Road Initiative. Western governments continue to emphasise democratic governance, labour standards, and trade credibility. Tarique Rahman’s ability to navigate these complex diplomatic currents by asserting Bangladesh’s interests without alienating key partners will be central to his legacy.

Economic realities amplify the stakes. Inflationary pressures, foreign exchange constraints, and global supply chain volatility limit fiscal manoeuvring. Public expectations are soaring—job creation, energy stability, and price moderation are anticipated immediately. Structural reforms, including banking transparency, revenue mobilisation, and subsidy rationalisation, are essential and politically sensitive. The newly sworn-in PM’s leadership will be judged on whether the BNP can convert electoral euphoria into tangible economic outcomes. Managing competition within the party—senior leaders seeking influence over young reformists advocating modernisation—will require both political savvy and managerial skill.

Tarique Rahman’s decades-long

political career has been marked by exile, controversy, and polarising rhetoric. Now, as prime minister, his personal transition from opposition figure to head of government will be closely scrutinised. He must demonstrate inclusive leadership, institutional respect, and governance competence. Concentrating power too tightly risks internal resentment; delegating too widely risks

incoherence. Navigating this balance, while the nation watches, will test not only his political instincts but also his capacity to inspire confidence across Bangladesh’s divided society. Leadership in this context is less about electoral rhetoric and more about discipline, pragmatic governance, and the ability to deliver results under pressure.

If Tarique Rahman can leverage

his electoral triumph into inclusive governance, pragmatic foreign policy, and meaningful economic reform, this victory could mark a significant turning point for Bangladesh. If not, the landslide may become the opening chapter in yet another cycle of political confrontation—proving, once again, that in politics, the bigger the victory, the lonelier and more complex the road ahead.



Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Police Telecommunication Organization
Police Telecom Bhabon, Rajarbag, Dhaka.
[web: telecom.police.gov.bd](http://web:telecom.police.gov.bd)

CORRIGENDUM OF Invitation for e-Tender

Memo No-44.01.0000.057.11.045.25/1616/Betar Date: 18-02-2026.

Ministry/Division	Ministry of Home Affairs
Agency	Bangladesh Police
Procuring Entity Name	SP (Logistics), Police Telecom Organization
Invitation for	Designing, Supplying and Installing of 150-feet 3-Leg Self-Supported Tower.
e-Tender ID	1223557
Tender last selling date	01-03-2026.
Corrected Tender last selling date	05-03-2026.
Tender closing date and time	02-03-2026 at 12:30 hrs.
Corrected Tender closing date and time	08-03-2026 at 12:30 hrs.
Tender opening date and time :	02-03-2026 at 12:30 hrs.
Corrected Tender opening date and time	08-03-2026 at 12:30 hrs.



(Shahriar Bin Saleh)
BP 7810126915
SP (Logistics)
Police Telecommunication Organization
Rajarbag, Dhaka.
Mobile: 01320020041
[E-mail: splog.telecom@police.gov.bd](mailto:E-mail:splog.telecom@police.gov.bd)

GD-339

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'INTO MY LUNGS'

An unflinching visual inquiry into the hidden toll of Bangladesh's garment industry, this exhibition traces how cotton dust settles deep in workers' lungs while global fashion thrives. Through intimate, documentary-driven storytelling, it restores dignity and urgency to lives too often reduced to statistics.

DATE: FRIDAY-FRIDAY | JANUARY 23-FEBRUARY 20, 2026

TIME: 11:00AM-8:00PM

VENUE: ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE DE DHAKA, GULSHAN

INTO MY LUNGS



Armeen Musa's 'Bengali Baul vocal pack' makes headway in Splice

Singer, composer and producer Armeen Musa has released Bengali Folk Vocals (Baul) — a new vocal sample pack now available globally on Splice, one of the world's leading music production platforms.

Created in collaboration with the label Aaroh, curated by Indian composer Dhruv Goel, the collection introduces the expressive depth of Baul music, which is Bengal's centuries-old mystic folk tradition, into contemporary global production spaces.

Designed to be genre-agnostic, the pack features raw tonal vocal motifs and improvised textures that can be used across electronic music, film scoring, sound design, and cross-cultural fusion projects. By placing Baul vocals within a royalty-free, globally accessible production ecosystem, the initiative opens new possibilities for producers and composers worldwide to engage with Bengali folk traditions.

Splice, used by millions of producers, composers, and DJs internationally, offers royalty-free sounds that are widely integrated into modern electronic, pop, film and experimental music workflows. Bengali Folk Vocals (Baul) marks only the second Bangladeshi-origin sample pack on the platform. The first, Contemporary Bengali Choir, was also produced by Armeen Musa, introducing modern Bengali choral textures to the global production community.

The Baul pack features performances by acclaimed vocalists Baby Akhter and Lokman Siddiqi, whose voices carry the spiritual, poetic and improvisational essence of the tradition. Baby Akhter has



previously been featured in global projects by British-Bangladeshi composer and producer Kishon Khan, helping bring Baul influences into contemporary jazz and world music spaces. Lokman Siddiqi, a practising Baul singer, remains deeply rooted in oral tradition and devotional

performance.

The collection is produced by Armeen, who was the first Bangladeshi to be part of a Grammy-nominated album, *Shuruaat*. Her work consistently bridges South Asian musical traditions with contemporary global sound practices.



Richie and Mamo to host special Ramadan shows on Deepto TV

With Ramadan approaching, Deepto TV has announced a special lineup of daily culinary programmes for the holy month. Actress Zakiya Bari Mamo will host *Mojar Ranna*, airing every day at 3:50pm, featuring recipes for iftar, dinner and sheri. Richie Solaiman will present *Shorbot Shomahar* at 5:15pm, offering a variety of refreshing beverages ideal for iftar.

The channel will also broadcast *Kazi Farms Kitchen Shohoj Iftar* at 2:20pm, hosted by Shababa Islam, focusing on simple iftar dishes. Another programme, *Digital Kitchen*, will air daily at 4:05pm, highlighting traditional regional cuisine prepared by six chefs and hosted by Mahmuda Maha.

Saudi Film Festival 2026 spotlights Korean cinema



The 12th Saudi Film Festival will run from April 23 to 29, 2026, at the King Abdulaziz Centre for World Culture (Ithra) in Dhahran, spotlighting Korean cinema under the theme Cinema of the Journey.

Organised by the Cinema Association in partnership with Ithra and backed by the Saudi Film Commission, the festival has operated since 2008 as a platform for Saudi and Gulf filmmakers. Founder Ahmed Al-Mulla said creators remain central to its mission.

The programme will feature Arab and international films exploring transformation through travel and migration. The Korean focus follows a 2025 cooperation agreement between the Saudi Film Commission and the Korean Film Council.

Pravina Deshpande passes away at 60



Actor Pravina Deshpande, known for her roles in Hindi and Marathi films and television, died on February 17 after a prolonged battle with cancer. She was 60.

Her family confirmed the news in a statement posted on her official Instagram account, saying she "left for her heavenly abode" on Tuesday, February 17. Her cremation was held the same day at the Hindu Crematorium in Chakala

Parsiwada, Andheri East, Mumbai.

The Cine & TV Artists' Association, of which she had been a member since 2008, expressed condolences.

Deshpande appeared in films including *Ready, Ek Villain* and *Parmanu: The Story of Pokhran*, and in television dramas such as *Kumkum* and *Kulfi Kumar Bajewala*. Her final screen appearance was in the web series *Taskare*.

NEWS

'Strongly opposed Ziaul's promotion'

FROM PAGE 12
was promoted from lieutenant colonel to colonel, despite his firm objection.

"I summoned the then quartermaster general Major General Momin and told him clearly, 'Ziaul Ahsan is a serial killer. I am against his promotion. You must raise this objection exactly in this manner at the promotion board meeting'."

Although Momin conveyed the objection, most members of the promotion board still endorsed the promotion, branding him a "good officer", he said, adding that many acted out of concern for their own future interests rather than professional merit. "Ziaul was never a good officer," Iqbal asserted.

Ziaul stands accused of orchestrating the enforced disappearance and murder of 104 people between 2010 and 2013.

During the hearing, defence counsel Aminul Ghani Titto asked how many promotions Ziaul received during Iqbal's tenure. Iqbal replied that there was only one.

He said it was highly unusual in the army to promote an officer to lieutenant colonel without completion of the Staff College course — a key prerequisite for higher command. "Ziaul never achieved the qualification to attend Staff College, nor did he complete the course. He also never commanded a battalion as a lieutenant colonel. On these grounds alone, he was not fit to be promoted to colonel."

The former army chief further alleged that a few days after the promotion board meeting, Major General Momin

was removed from the army and posted as Bangladesh's ambassador to Bahrain for opposing Ziaul's promotion.

"This was a deputation posting, commonly known in service parlance as a 'dumping post'," he said, suggesting punitive intent.

Asked by the defence counsel how many officers were promoted after he became a promotion board member following his elevation to major general in 2003, Iqbal said he could not recall.

"In many cases, I approved lists of officers proposed by the government despite my unwillingness. In some cases, officers were included in the list by Maj Gen [ret'd] Tarique Ahmed Siddique, which he informed the then prime minister."

Iqbal added that he did not always comply with orders from Siddique, whom he informally described as the army's "super chief" in practice. Pressed to specify instances, he said he could not submit written evidence.

The hearing took place before a two-member bench of the tribunal led by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, with Justice Md Mohitul Haque Enam Chowdhury as the other member.

The tribunal fixed February 23 as the next date of cross-examination after the defence sought time.

Earlier in the day, Ziaul was produced before the tribunal under heavy security in a prison van.

TRIAL BEGINS AGAINST JOY, PALAK
Meanwhile, the formal trial against Sajeb Wazed Joy, son of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and Zunaïd Ahmed Palak, former state minister for

ICT, began yesterday at the ICT-1 over allegations of crimes against humanity during the 2024 uprising.

In his opening statement, Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam told the tribunal that the case seeks justice for a "planned, systematic and widespread" campaign of violence unleashed by the state against unarmed protesters.

He said more than 1,500 people were killed and over 25,000 injured during the July-August period. Many were left permanently disabled or blinded, as security forces and ruling party cadres carried out coordinated attacks to suppress a nationwide student-led movement.

The prosecution alleged that Joy, as then ICT adviser, and Palak, as state minister, played key roles in orchestrating internet shutdowns, blocking social media platforms, and facilitating the use of lethal force, including "shoot at sight" orders, to crush the uprising and conceal the atrocities.

Investigators found that decisions to cut mobile and broadband internet originated from Joy, in consultation with Hasina, and were implemented by Palak.

The tribunal framed three charges against both accused on January 21 and yesterday set February 25 for recording deposition of the first prosecution witness following the prosecution's plea.

The prosecution plans to produce 32 witnesses, including victims, relatives of the dead, telecom officials, and forensic and IT experts.

Coordinate to achieve goals

FROM PAGE 12
In his first meeting with the council of ministers, he unveiled a 180-day action plan with sector-wise targets, timelines, and responsibilities to ensure progress.

While meeting secretaries during his around seven-hour stay at the Secretariat, from 12:30pm, he sought the administration's full support in implementing the BNP's election pledges.

In a break with tradition, the meetings were held at the Secretariat instead of the Prime Minister's Office.

The PM, who was sworn in on Tuesday, began his first working day by paying homage to the martyrs of the War of Liberation at the National Memorial in Savar, accompanied later by cabinet members.

Around noon, he visited the graves of his late father, BNP founder and president Ziaur Rahman, and former prime minister Khaleda Zia at Zia Uddin and offered prayers before heading to the Secretariat.

Tarique rode in his own vehicle and used his own driver and fuel instead of a government-provided car, PMO sources said, adding that he has decided to continue the practice. He

has also ordered a reduction in the size of his motorcade to ease congestion.

During the more than one-hour cabinet meeting, Tarique asked ministers to submit ministry-wise action plans, after which further steps would be taken in line with his instructions. He stressed taking a "strong stance" against corruption and directed measures to keep prices stable during Ramadan, an immediate challenge for the government.

Ministers were asked to monitor the market closely to prevent price hikes of essentials. Meeting sources said stable prices would help the government earn public confidence from the outset.

Referring to the strong public mandate, he reminded ministers that people expect good governance and accountability. Sources said law and order must be ensured in the coming days, as the public anticipates immediate stability and security from the new government.

The government's election pledges, including family, farmers, and health cards, were also discussed. Tarique asked ministers to identify visible steps that could be implemented quickly.

The BNP has highlighted at least

35 priority issues in its 180-day plan, including education, law and order, women's empowerment, employment generation, environmental protection, ICT-based development, and loan management. Ministerial sources said the PM instructed them to review the list and prepare detailed ministry-wise implementation plans.

About an hour after the cabinet meeting, Tarique held a nearly 15-minute meeting with secretaries. He assured them that affiliation or background would not influence official matters and sought their cooperation in delivering the government's commitments.

A festive mood prevailed at the Secretariat, where ministers and state ministers were welcomed with flowers by officials. Several ministers exchanged greetings with officers and employees. Security was tightened.

PMO sources said the prime minister has decided to hold future cabinet meetings at the Secretariat to reduce traffic disruption caused by ministers travelling to the PMO. He has also instructed authorities to stop the roadside deployment of uniformed police during his movements in the capital.

Woman files case alleging rape in Hatia

FROM PAGE 12
100 unnamed people.

Earlier in the day, she was released from Noakhali General Hospital.

The victim's lawyer, Noman Siddiqui, said the court has taken the complaint into cognisance.

After the hearing, it ordered Officer-in-Charge of Hatia Police Station Md Saiful Alam to record the complaint as a regular case and submit an investigation report. It also directed Noakhali's Superintendent of Police TM Mosharraf Hossain to ensure the woman's security.

OC Saiful confirmed the filing of the case, while Additional SP Abu Tayyub Md Arif Hossain said necessary security measures will be taken for the victim's family.

According to the case statement, the woman was raped and tortured

for voting for her preferred candidate in the national election. It added that the prime accused, Abdur Rahman, 32, a resident of the Dhansiri Shelter Project in Ward No 9 of Chanandi Union and son of Abul Kashem, led a group, including Emran Hossain alias Kala Emran, 35, and Belal Majhi, 38, into the woman's home around 11:00pm on Friday, following the polls on Thursday.

They then tied her husband's hands, taped his mouth shut, and confined him. Rahman raped her while Emran and Belal stood guard, and the others reportedly "celebrated outside", the statement added.

Speaking to this correspondent last night, she said, "I don't have the courage to return to my home. After being released from the hospital this afternoon, I filed the case in court. My

husband and I are currently staying at a relative's house."

All the accused are currently in hiding, she added.

Earlier on Tuesday, she told The Daily Star that on the night of the incident, Rahman, Emran and Belal entered her house, saying, "You supported the NCP? Today we will show you the consequences."

The following morning, they returned, dragged the couple out of their house, and physically assaulted them.

The victim was subsequently admitted to the 250-bed general hospital later that afternoon.

On Sunday, police filed a General Diary with Hatia Police Station in this connection and ordered the forensic examination of the victim.

Govt must act on July reforms

FROM PAGE 12
the "Clean Dhaka, Green Dhaka" programme in his constituency in the Mirpur and Kafrul areas.

He said not taking the oath as a member of the Constitution Reform Council amounts to insulting July.

"It was the July uprising that made this election possible. Because of that election, Tarique Rahman became prime minister, and I became opposition leader. Without July, could we have reached these

positions? Could we have gained this chance to serve?" Shafiqur asked.

He said the July uprising must be formally recognised and honoured, and that all reform proposals arising from the aspirations of the uprising should be implemented as a "sacred responsibility" of parliament.

"You know that yesterday we took two oaths, one as members of parliament and another as members of the Constitution Reform Council.

We want to go to parliament and do something good for the country, In Sha Allah. And through reforms, we want to remove the garbage of society, from garbage on the streets, in drains and scattered waste, to the garbage in people's minds," he added.

The Jamaat ameer said his participation in yesterday's cleanliness drive means giving a message to the people that the party will build a clean society.

Govt closes schools for Ramadan

FROM PAGE 12
and staffers will also get the weekend (Friday and Saturday), extending their break until March 28. This change revises the previously announced 2026 holiday list.

The government decision came after the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on February 16 stayed a High Court order that had directed

the government to keep all secondary schools closed throughout Ramadan.

Justice Farah Mahbub, chamber judge of the Appellate Division, passed the order following a petition filed by the government.

On February 15, the HC made the order after a preliminary hearing of a writ petition. Supreme Court lawyer Elyas Ali Mondal filed the petition,

challenging the legality of keeping secondary schools open for the first 18 days of Ramadan.

With the stay order, the government's decision to keep schools open until the 18th of Ramadan remained in effect at that time. The latest revision now brings the closure into effect from today, the first day of Ramadan.

New govt faces 5 early economic tests

FROM PAGE 1
Stabilising reserves offer some breathing space, but not a free pass. Indeed, the apparent stability in foreign exchange reserves is partly the result of economic sluggishness. Investment has slowed, imports have moderated, and credit growth in the banking sector has reached historically low levels.

Businesses remain cautious, uncertain about the broader economic climate. Should the government succeed in reviving growth, demand for foreign currency will inevitably rise, putting pressure on reserves once again. History provides a warning: gross reserves that once exceeded \$45 billion fell rapidly when the balance of payments shifted unfavourably.

The fiscal picture is equally demanding. A proposed Pay Commission recommendation for raising civil service salaries looms large over the budget. Implementing the raise would require roughly Tk 1 trillion annually – on top of the Tk 1.31 trillion spent on salaries and pensions for government employees. The additional cost alone would be about two and a half times the country's entire health budget. Mustafizur cautions that such a decision cannot be made lightly. "Any pay increase must be tied to realistic projections of revenue growth and fiscal capacity," he said.

Preparations for the FY2027 budget must begin immediately, and revenue mobilisation will be the deciding factor. For nearly two decades, Bangladesh has failed to generate a revenue surplus, forcing the government to finance its development programme largely through borrowing. If operational spending continues to expand unchecked, the country risks reaching a tipping point where borrowing is needed not for investment, but simply to sustain routine expenditures.

MOUNTING DEBT
Public debt figures underscore the urgency. In just over three years, total public debt has surged by around 60 percent, reaching Tk 21.5 trillion by September 2025.

The composition of that debt is shifting as well. Borrowing from national savings certificates – once a preferred but expensive source – has plateaued, while reliance on bank financing has grown sharply. Debt from the banking sector has risen by 85 percent since 2022. Although this reduces the government's immediate interest burden, it has another consequence: by absorbing liquidity through treasury bonds, the state crowds out private investment, limiting credit available for businesses.

To sustain public finances without suffocating growth, the government must raise

more revenue from an economy that remains under-taxed. Economists frequently point to substantial leakage in value-added tax (VAT) collection. While VAT is paid at hundreds of thousands of points across the country, the government receives it from only a fraction of them. Strengthening tax administration, reducing evasion, and modernising collection systems could yield significant gains without raising rates.

Structural reform, however, is easier prescribed than delivered. Granting genuine autonomy to the central bank and overhauling the National Board of Revenue have long been discussed, but the implementation of related policies is slow.

Meanwhile, the banking sector itself requires deep repair. Amendments to the Bank Company Act – particularly rules governing family representation on bank boards – have stalled in the face of entrenched interests. Restoring confidence in financial institutions is essential if businesses are to invest and growth is to recover.

Beyond domestic economics, a geopolitical deadline approaches. Bangladesh is scheduled to graduate in November from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category, a milestone that reflects progress but also carries costs. Graduation would

gradually phase out valuable trade preferences, potentially affecting exports. Debate continues over whether the country should seek an extension, and time is short. With key international meetings approaching, a decision must be made quickly if any adjustment is to be pursued.

There is a clear indication that the new government will seek to defer the LDC graduation by at least three years. Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Mukhtar told this newspaper on Tuesday that the deferment aligns with the BNP's policy position.

In the end, the new administration faces a dense web of interconnected challenges. From stabilising food prices during Ramadan to negotiating with international lenders, from managing public debt to reforming tax and banking systems, each task influences the others. Success will require not only sound policy but also coordination, credibility, and political resolve.

If the finance minister can navigate these pressures, the government will secure more than a brief honeymoon. It will establish the foundation for a stable and effective term. If not, the early satisfaction of returning to power may quickly give way to the harder reality of governing in turbulent economic times.

LDC deferral request deadline is February 23

FROM PAGE 1
Such an application could be submitted before the UN CDP's annual plenary, scheduled for February 24-27.

"Therefore, the elected government must take immediate action [by February 23] and instruct the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh's mission in New York to present the matter at the annual plenary."

To ensure a sustainable transition, a Smooth Transition Strategy (STS) had been formulated in collaboration with UN-ESCAP, in line with UN guidelines and with participation from all stakeholders.

The Economic Relations Division (ERD) has been reviewing implementation progress regularly, it added.

The ERD has prepared a proposal seeking the government's policy decision on the matter, The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry

officials involved with the proceedings.

According to the proposal, Bangladesh could not make adequate preparations for graduation due to a series of internal and external shocks, in addition to the pandemic.

The challenges include the political transition following the July Uprising, the Ukraine war, the Middle East crisis and uncertainty in the global trading system, it said.

"These challenges put pressure on the macroeconomy, making it difficult to carry out graduation preparations as expected," the proposal added.

Citing the ongoing economic downturn, lack of capacity of the private sector to cope with graduation preparedness and post-graduation challenges, the proposal recommended that Bangladesh request the UN CDP to extend the preparation period

by another three years – until November 24, 2029 – through a formal communication before February 22.

Finance ministry officials said the ERD would forward the proposal seeking deferral of graduation until 2030 once it receives approval from the prime minister.

Speaking to reporters yesterday, Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Mukhtar said the government has already initiated steps to defer Bangladesh's graduation from the LDC category.

The process started yesterday, he said, adding that his ministry would soon begin coordination with the ERD on the issue.

The UN graduation framework provides clearly defined procedural avenues through which countries may, under specific circumstances, seek additional time before transitioning out of the LDC category.

A UN CDP mission

visited Bangladesh in November last year to assess the country's preparedness for graduation. The mission said that the end-February 2026 plenary of the UN CDP represents the final structured opportunity to pursue a deferral through the standard review process.

If this window is missed, any subsequent request by the Bangladesh government would have to be made under the crisis or emergency provisions of the CDP's Enhanced Monitoring Mechanism (EMM) framework before the country's scheduled graduation in November 2026, it said.

The mission also observed that recent experiences of other graduating countries show such provisions are time-bound, evidence-based and subject to CDP assessment followed by endorsement from the UN General Assembly.

Journalism would be free from fear

FROM PAGE 1
surveillance, it becomes even more difficult. Since we know the problems, and since the prime minister has included media freedom in his plans, we will create a fear-free environment for journalism in Bangladesh, Insha'Allah."

While speaking to journalists at the Secretariat after the cabinet meeting yesterday, Swapon said the government is working to confirm the mechanism for ensuring the free flow of information and media freedom.

One of the important political commitments on which the government

assumed office was the free flow of information and media freedom.

"We have been saying these things for a long time. But to confirm the mechanism, we are working on it. Since we mean it, we want to make the mechanism clearer."

A commission was formed during the interim government's tenure, and its proposals are now with the government.

He, along with the state minister and others, sat to review all reports so that they could move towards a workable plan regarding media freedom.

Mob culture will not be tolerated

FROM PAGE 1
Police must become friends of the people. The image that was damaged earlier must be restored," said the new home boss.

Vowing to build a "totally corruption free" ministry, he said, "There must be accountability and transparency for everyone. We will not allow any illegality."

He warned that if anyone from any force is found involved in criminal activities, action will be taken without delay.

Earlier in the day, at the end of the cabinet meeting, Salahuddin said the government has set a 180-day priority plan.

"As part of our initial priorities, we will work to improve the situation regarding commodity prices, keep the supply chain intact, and ensure there is no disruption in the power and energy sectors, particularly gas and electricity."

Addressing reporters, he said government officials would discharge their duties in accordance with the constitution, the laws of the land, and the rules of business.

Salahuddin added that the government would assess officials based on merit, not personal or political affiliation.

Holy Ramadan begins today

FROM PAGE 1
information on the sighting of the Ramadan moon of 1447 Hijri received from all district administrations, the Islamic Foundation headquarters and its divisional and district offices, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, and the Space Research and Remote Sensing Organisation, sources at the Islamic Foundation told The Daily Star.

Taraweeh prayers began

last night and Shab-e-Qadr will be observed across the country on the night of March 16, 2026.

Among others present at the meeting were Religious Affairs Secretary Md Kamal Uddin; Director General of the Islamic Foundation Abdus Salam Khan; Joint Secretary of the ministry Sadeq Ahmed; Chief Information Officer Md Nizamul Kabir; Khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque Mufti Muhammad Abdul

Malek; Principal of Dhaka Alia Madrasa Professor Mohammad Obaidul Haque; Islamic Foundation Board of Governors member Maulana Syed Md Mosaddek Billah Al Madani; Chief Mufti of Jameya Mahmudia Rezaul Karim Abrar; Bangladesh Television Director Md Zahurul Islam Mia; Senior Assistant Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Fuad Hasan Parag; Director of Islamic Foundation Dawah and Culture

Division Dr Mohammad Harunur Rashid; Director of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department Md Mominul Islam; Chief Scientific Officer of SPARRSO Dr Muhammad Shahidul Islam; and Vice-Principal of Jamiatul Ulum Islamia Abdul Gaffar.

Muslims are meant to fast from dawn to dusk during the lunar month, a time of restraint and austerity.

LEGAL NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH, HIGH COURT DIVISION (STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 156 OF 2026
IN THE MATTER OF: An application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) and Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 and Rules 8 & 263 of the Companies Rule, 2009.
AND
IN THE MATTER OF: Moshan Ara Begum
-VERSUS-
The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms and another
Dear Mr./Ms.
Please take notice that on behalf of the Petitioner namely Moshan Ara Begum, wife of Late ABM Shafigur Rahman, one of the Shareholders and Managing Directors of SAMI OVERSEAS LTD., having her address at 1/A/2, Sky View Galaxy, 90, Nayapattan, Dhaka-1000, Dhaka, Bangladesh, that an application under 81(2) read with section 85(3) and Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 along with Rules 8 & 263 of the Companies Rules, 2009 for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting of SAMI OVERSEAS LTD. for the calendar years of 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 has been filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Upon preliminary hearing, the Hon'ble Company Bench, comprising Madam Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque vide order dated 8th February, 2026 was pleased to admit the application & directed to publish notice about the application in the newspapers and file an affidavit-in-compliance before the said Court within 12th March, 2026. Any person or persons having interest in the said application may appear either personally or through duly authorized Advocate before the Court. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment of required costs. Yours faithfully,
Amimul Islam Shakil, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, Mukti Bhaban (3rd Floor), 21/1 Purana Paltan, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.

LEGAL NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH, HIGH COURT DIVISION (STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 158 OF 2026
IN THE MATTER OF: An application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) and Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 and Rules 8 & 263 of the Companies Rule, 2009.
AND
IN THE MATTER OF: Mostafa Kamal
-VERSUS-
Registrar Joint Stock Companies and Firms and another
Dear Mr./Ms.
Please take notice that on behalf of the Petitioner namely Mostafa Kamal, son of Suruj Mia, one of the Shareholders and Managing Director of BD TOUR INTERNATIONAL LIMITED, having his address at Rafiq Tea, Baraboo, Dighi Bonabo, Tarabo, Ruggan, Narayanganj, Bangladesh, that an application under 81(2) read with section 85(3) and 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 along with Rules 8 & 263 of the Companies Rules, 2009 for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting of BD TOUR INTERNATIONAL LIMITED for the calendar years of 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 has been filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Upon preliminary hearing, the Hon'ble Company Bench, comprising Madam Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque vide order dated 08.02.2026 was pleased to admit the application & directed to publish notice about the application in the newspapers and file an affidavit-in-compliance before the said Court within 12th March, 2026. Any person or persons having interest in the said application may appear either personally or through duly authorized Advocate before the Court. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment of required costs. Yours faithfully,
Amimul Islam Shakil, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, Mukti Bhaban (3rd Floor), 21/1 Purana Paltan, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Police Telecommunication Organization
Police Telecom Bhabon, Rajarbag, Dhaka.
web: telecom.police.gov.bd

CORRIGENDUM OF Invitation for e-Tender

Memo No-44.01.0000.057.11.042.25/1615/Betar Date: 18-02-2026.

Ministry/Division	Ministry of Home Affairs
Agency	Bangladesh Police
Procuring Entity Name	SP (Logistics), Police Telecom Organization
Invitation for	Designing, Supplying and Installing of 250 & 150-foot 3-Leg Self-Supported Tower.
e-Tender ID	1223556
Tender last selling date	22-02-2026.
Corrected Tender last selling date	26-02-2026.
Tender closing date and time	23-02-2026 at 12:30 hrs.
Corrected Tender closing date and time	01-03-2026 at 12:30 hrs.
Tender opening date and time	23-02-2026 at 12:30 hrs.
Corrected Tender opening date and time	01-03-2026 at 12:30 hrs.

(Shahriar Bin Saleh)
BP 7810126915
SP (Logistics)
Police Telecommunication Organization
Rajarbag, Dhaka.
Mobile: 01320020041
E-mail: splog.telecom@police.gov.bd

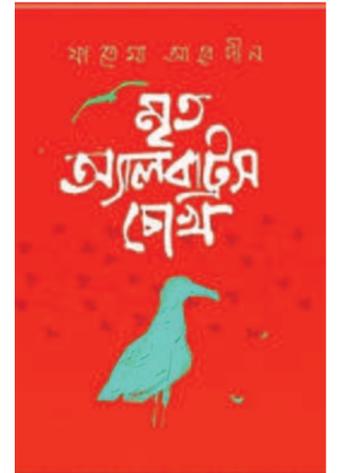
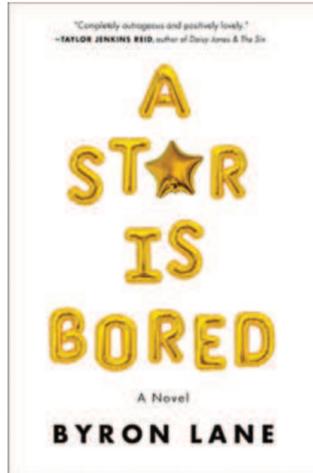
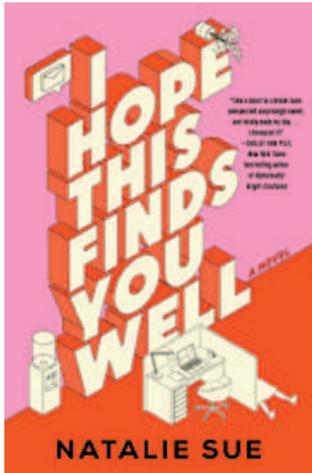
ত্রয়োদশ জাতীয় সংসদ নির্বাচনে
নিরঙ্কুশ সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠতা অর্জনের মাধ্যমে
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের ১৯তম প্রধানমন্ত্রী হিসেবে শপথ গ্রহণ করায়

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী
জনাব তারেক রহমান-কে
মধুমতি ব্যাংকের পক্ষ থেকে
আন্তরিক অভিনন্দন ও শুভেচ্ছা।

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THE SHELF

5 books to help you wind down after your 9-to-5



Charlie Besson is sitting in his idling car outside a Hollywood mansion, about to interview for the most chaotic assisting position imaginable. The client is Kathi Kannon, a famous actress and bestselling author with a larger-than-life reputation and zero interest in being low maintenance.

NUR-E-JANNAT ALIF

After a workday full of tabs, pings, and “oh just a quick call,” your brain usually wants one of two things: something soft enough to sink into, or something sharp enough to cut through the fog. These 5 do both, in different ways, without asking you to optimise your rest.

I Hope This Finds You Well
Natalie Sue
William Morrow, 2024

First on the list is, of course, a quintessential workplace comedy. Natalie Sue’s debut, *I Hope This Finds You Well*, is quite tongue-in-cheek, a droll and here to pick you right back up, if, in case it does not find you well. Jolene is an exhausted admin at Supershops, Inc. who survives office life by writing vicious email postscripts and hiding them in white text. When one such email exposes her and sends her to the boss with his hands at odd places, she is overdue for sensitivity training and put under strict email rules. Then, miraculously or concerningly, an IT mistake gives her access to her coworkers’ private emails and DMs. Once she starts reading them (out of curiosity, obviously), she quickly learns that layoffs are coming. Jolene uses the intel she finds to try to save

her job. But the deeper she gets into everyone’s secrets, the harder it is to keep her distance, especially with Cliff, the oddly kind HR guy.

Kheerer Putul
Abanindranath Tagore
Ananda Publishers Pvt Ltd., 2000

If your brain feels overheated after work, which, let’s be honest, it does, then this fairy tale by Abanindranath Tagore is a great reset. It is short, effortless on the surface, and quietly absorbing. *Kheerer Putul* is a Bangla children’s fantasy that has a kheer doll sitting at the centre of the story. The plot moves through small tests of character, clever choices, and the kind of clear, storybook fairness that adult life rarely gives you. What makes it good for winding down is the pace. It does not demand intense focus or long emotional buildup, and it does not require you to track a hundred details. You can read a few pages at a time and still feel like you got somewhere. It also has that calming, old-story rhythm—repetition, simple turns, and a light sense of wonder without being heavy or preachy. If your day was all screens and speed, this one gently slows you back to a more human reading tempo.

A Star is Bored
Byron Lane
Henry Holt & Company, 2020

Trivia: The author of this book was actually a beloved assistant to the late Carrie Fisher, and this novel is loosely (totally) contingent on his time working for her.

Charlie Besson is sitting in his idling car outside a Hollywood mansion, about to interview for the most chaotic assisting position imaginable. The client is Kathi Kannon, a famous actress and bestselling author with a larger-than-life reputation and zero interest in being low maintenance. He eventually gets hired, and the book turns into a fast, bright ride through the personal-assistant universe—last-minute demands, dramatic errands, sudden travel, and the weird intimacy of being the person who holds someone else’s life together. There are late-night shopping sprees, impulsive trips, and the backstage view of fame that feels glamorous for five seconds and exhausting right after. As Charlie and Kathi grow closer, the job becomes more than work. Their bond starts to feel like friendship, and Charlie begins to question the role he has been playing in his own life. Caught between loyalty to the star who changed his world and the desire to step out of the sidelines, he has to decide whether he will keep living as support staff or finally claim a story of his own.

Discontent
Beatrice Serrano, Maya Faye Lethem (Translator)
Vintage, 2025

Marisa looks like she is doing everything right, a great apartment in central Madrid, a steady relationship with her attractive neighbour, and a fast climb at a prestigious advertising agency. However, behind her polished office persona, she is miserable. She hides in her office, dissociates until the end of the workday, and drifts between dread, sarcasm, and self-destructive fantasies, all while holding up a career built on half-truths and stolen credit. When she is forced to attend the company’s annual team-building retreat in the Spanish mountains, the fragile system she has built to survive starts to collapse. Cut off from her usual escape routes and trapped with an unhinged boss, cheerfully compliant coworkers, and unsettling retreat staff, Marisa’s lies begin to catch up with her. As an old, buried incident from her workplace resurfaces, the retreat becomes a pressure cooker that pushes her toward a public unravelling. *Discontent* is a dark office comedy about corporate dread, performed competence, and what happens when the feelings you suppress all week finally break through.
Mrito Albatross Chokh

Fatema Abedin Batighar, 2020

Mrito Albatross Chokh is a collection of ten short stories written between 2011 and 2020, rooted firmly in the everyday lives we recognise. Set in a dense city of clustered apartments where private spaces collide, the book captures how modern life compresses people, relationships, and emotions into the same narrow walls, balconies, kitchens, and silences. Each story is, at its core, an account of human connection and its fractures. The characters sometimes lose themselves in the glitter of ordinary living, sometimes face the raw truth of scarcity, and sometimes find companionship in something as unexpected as a mobile app. Across the collection, the author paints intimate scenes of an extraordinary father-child bond, the complicated knots between husband and wife, the aching emptiness of a childless couple, grief for the dead, and the lingering tears for a lost lover.

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

ESSAY

Money and language: TRANSACTION AND TENSION

AZFAR HUSSAIN

In addition to today’s transnational corporations and the global explosion of their advertisements, the works of William Shakespeare and Karl Marx keep teaching us a great deal about the relationship between money and language. It is more than intriguing that Marx is an ardent Shakespeare aficionado, one who does not merely quote Shakespeare at whatever chance he gets, but one who suggests that Shakespeare has an acute sense of political economy; that Shakespeare effectively and instructively dramatises an interplay between the economic and the linguistic.

In his early work *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, particularly in the chapter called “The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society,” Marx enthusiastically quotes from Shakespeare’s play “The Timon of Athens” (1623) to make certain points about the God-like power of money which is also the power of language itself: “[...] Thou visible God! / That solder’st close impossibilities, / And makest them kiss! That speak’st with every tongue, / To every purpose! O thou touch of hearts!”

Yes, money speaks with every tongue—it’s Marx’s Shakespearean point, or perhaps Shakespeare’s “Marxist” point.

And, more clearly than ever before, capitalism today as a mode of economic production continuously evolves and enacts its own tongue—its own suitable mode of linguistic production—while also tending to globalise and even universalise it by transforming money into the most powerful, attractive, magnetic, and even erotic language, while suggesting thereby that to have money is to have language—the language of power and beauty and sensual gratification all at once.

In fact, in his chapter “The Power of Money in Bourgeois Society”—a chapter I’ve already invoked and one that reads, to me, like a Baudelairean prose poem—Marx sharply underlines the language-like quality of money and the money-like quality of language, while also adumbrating the erotic nature—call it the “erotic value”—of money itself. For what is it, after all, that systemically



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

juxtaposes the female body and hard cash? And then, mark this: capitalism has already cashed in on that very nexus, with one Miss Universe presenting a striking image of her body wrapped in nothing but cash—cash and more cash—rendering visually concrete the point that money is not merely corporeal but irresistibly sexy. And, indeed, what is it that transforms the female body into an eroticised yet commodified language-on-sale from the striptease to the mainstream media to the international body industry? The answer is: the stubborn logic of capital itself.

And from the perspective of capital, if language does not have an exchange-value in the strict political-economic sense of the term, language ceases to be language as such. But in the process of producing and reproducing what might be called capitalism’s

money-language or language-money—that is, language itself as an exchange-value—capitalism also tends to homogenise, appropriate, destroy, and sometimes even flexibly accommodate spaces for different kinds of languages, including oppositional or “trouble-making” ones. VN Volosinov—the Russian philosopher of language—justly asserts: “[...] the ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign [say language], to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgments which occurs in it, to make the sign unidaccental.”

Money uniaccentualises; so does the language of money, and by extension the language of capitalism. This, I submit, is a fundamental tendency of a capitalist mode of linguistic production. Yet another

foundational tendency—one that underlies and even governs this very mode of production—is its drive to standardise and institutionalise language in such ways that language cannot be equally accessed or equally owned by its users within a given social space or community.

Thus, language becomes a site of class struggle and other forms of contestation—a contestation over the ownership of the “standard” means of linguistic production. And, thus, of course there are conflicts between those who use, say, so-called “polished” or “correct” language and those who do not. (Think of those card-carrying Tagore enthusiasts in our country—ones whose frowns tend to multiply with a vengeance when you deviate from what they call “standard” Bangla. And think of those

deshi shahebs as well—ones who are out there to police your damn accent, as you speak English. If, for instance, your accent falls on the “wrong” syllable, you are surely damned in the regime of our deshi shahebs! The cultural logics of class and colonialism go hand in hand either directly or secretly, you bet.)

But a capitalist mode of linguistic production cannot totally exhaust or extinguish other—and othered—modes of linguistic production. True, the history of capitalism—in tandem with the history of colonialism (Edward Said rightly characterises these histories as “intertwined” in *Culture and Imperialism*)—is a history of othering and even destroying indigenous languages. One only needs to think of the global spread of English since the emergence of early modern capitalism. Its linguistic imperialism has directly perpetrated violence upon numerous indigenous languages across the world.

Yet the history of capitalism also tells us that capitalism not only devalues and destroys but simultaneously generates its own opposites—its Other. Thus, in a world under capitalism, on the one hand we encounter the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of languages such as “Open Happiness!” (one of Coca-Cola’s slogans) and, on the other, we witness the production and exchange of languages that erupt as outcries of the Other—like the Latin American feminist poet and activist Nora Mendez’s scream: “Ana Maria furious/ when they would touch her child / when they would bleed her land.”

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

Dr Azfar Hussain is director of the graduate programme in social innovation and professor of integrative/interdisciplinary studies at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, US. He is also Summer Distinguished Professor of English and Humanities at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) and vice-president of the US-based Global Center for Advanced Studies.



Farhan ton powers Pakistan into Super Eight

Sahibzada Farhan's unbeaten 100 off 58 balls powered Pakistan to a 102-run win over Namibia in their do-or-die Group A match of the T20 World Cup in Colombo yesterday, completing the Super Eight line-up. Farhan reached three figures off 57 deliveries, becoming the second Pakistan batter to score a century in the competition after Ahmed Shehzad, who struck a 58-ball ton against Bangladesh in 2014. It was also the third century of this 10th edition, following hundreds by Sri Lanka's Pathum Nissanka and Canada's Yuvraj Samra, setting a new record for the most centuries in a single T20 World Cup edition. The 102-run margin also marked Pakistan's biggest victory in T20 World Cups, surpassing their previous best of an 82-run victory over the Netherlands in 2009.

NO UPSETS, but plenty of heart

ASHEFAQ-UL-ALAM

Going solely by outcomes, International Cricket Council's (ICC's) dream of globalising the game through T20s has taken a hit so far in the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup, with Associate nations seemingly regressing, reaching a low they have not experienced in over a decade.

A total of eight Associate sides are competing in the ongoing 20-team tournament in India and Sri Lanka, and till yesterday's India-Netherlands match in Ahmedabad, none of them have managed to beat any of the 12 Full Members they are competing alongside.

Yesterday, the line-up of the Super Eights got finalised, and unsurprisingly, none of the Associates made the cut, breaking a streak that had been running for the past five editions.

Since the 2014 edition in Bangladesh, at least one Associate side had managed to progress to the second round.

Netherlands did it in 2014, Afghanistan – who became a Full Member in 2017 – progressed in the 2016 edition in India, Scotland and Namibia snuck in in 2021 in the UAE, the Dutch returned to the second round in 2022 in Australia, and co-hosts USA did it in the 2024 edition.

However, results don't always present the whole picture as a few of the Associates had come close to toppling a big wig this year.

In the tournament opener, the Dutch had reduced Pakistan to 119-7 chasing 148 in Colombo before a brisk 29 off 11 balls from Faheem Ashraf rescued Pakistan.

Later on that very day in Mumbai, the USA had hosts India six down for just 77 runs before a brilliant 49-ball 84 from skipper Suryakumar Yadav took the score to 161-9, out of the reach of the Americans.

The fate of both of these games could've been different had Netherlands' Max O'Dowd not dropped Faheem for seven and USA's Shubham Ranjane not grassed a return catch from Suryakumar on 15.

Other than them, Nepal came the closest,

falling just four runs short of an incredible win over England, failing to score 10 runs in the final over against Sam Curran.

Beyond these close finishes, the Associates, like always, have brought fresh enthusiasm into the tournament. The Nepalese fans earned everyone's appreciation with their undying support for their cricket team.

Italy, making its World Cup debut in cricket, made a very positive first impression, which included a commanding 10-wicket win over Nepal.

Some individuals also shone brightly. Canada's 19-year-old youngster Yuvraj Samra smashed a 65-ball 110 against New Zealand in a losing cause.



USA pacer Shadley van Schalkwyk, till yesterday's India-Netherlands match, was the highest wicket-taker with 13 scalps.

Had lady luck favoured them in a few games, the 2026 edition could've become one of the most successful World Cups for Associate cricket. But even with the regression in outcomes, the Associates have shown plenty of progress on the field, seemingly closing the gulf with Full Members and their fans adding to the flamboyance of a World Cup.

Stabilising BCB central to Aminul's challenge



With Bangladesh Cricket Board standing as the clearest example of how instability at the top can stall sporting progress, new State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque must first address the immediate dysfunctions that have hindered the system – and restore basic stability across the country's sports landscape before moving towards long-desired constitutional and structural reforms.

For Aminul, the priorities are clear as the former national football team captain inherits an unsettled sports sector.

Read the full story on The Daily Star website.

Bangladesh's 2028 T20 WC spot confirmed

STAR SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh are confirmed to have a spot in the 2028 T20 World Cup, with their position in the ICC Men's T20I Team Rankings set to secure automatic qualification for the tournament in Australia and New Zealand.

The final list of 12 automatic qualifiers will be determined by the rankings as of March 9, the day after the scheduled final of the 2026 T20 World Cup.

Bangladesh, currently ranked 9th, are poised to claim the final three direct spots alongside Afghanistan (ranked 10th) and Ireland (ranked 12th), with no international fixtures left that could alter their standings before the cut-off date.

After being excluded from the ongoing T20 World Cup, there were concerns whether Bangladesh could secure an automatic qualification spot.

Co-hosts Australia and New Zealand were granted automatic entry for the 2028 edition, with New Zealand also qualifying through their Super Eight finish.

The remaining eight positions in the 20-team event will be filled through regional qualification pathways, based on the competitive strength of each region.

SUPER EIGHT GROUPS

GROUP 1	GROUP 2
India	England
South Africa	New Zealand
West Indies	Pakistan
Zimbabwe	Sri Lanka



All Group 1 matches will be held in India, while all Group 2 matches will be held in Sri Lanka

SUPER EIGHT SCHEDULE

- Feb 21:** New Zealand v Pakistan (Colombo)
- Feb 22:** England v Sri Lanka (Kandy); India v South Africa (Ahmedabad)
- Feb 23:** Zimbabwe v West Indies (Mumbai)
- Feb 24:** England v Pakistan (Kandy)
- Feb 25:** New Zealand v Sri Lanka (Colombo)
- Feb 26:** West Indies v South Africa (Ahmedabad); India v Zimbabwe (Chennai)
- Feb 27:** England v New Zealand (Colombo)
- Feb 28:** Sri Lanka v Pakistan (Kandy)
- March 1:** Zimbabwe v South Africa (New Delhi); India v West Indies (Kolkata)

World Cup winning Germany footballer Mesut Ozil attends the inauguration ceremony of the Shaheed Buddhijibi Mortuza Medical Centre of the University of Dhaka yesterday following its renovation. The programme was also attended by Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Niaz Ahmed Khan, Turkish Ambassador to Bangladesh Ramis Sen, and Bilal Erdogan, son of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

PHOTO: COURTESY



Racism allegations mar Real's win in Lisbon

AGENCIES

Allegations of racial abuse overshadowed Real Madrid's 1-0 victory away to Benfica in the first leg of their Champions League play-off tie yesterday.

The visitors returned to Lisbon less than three weeks after a dramatic 4-2 defeat at the same venue, when goalkeeper Anatoli Trubin struck a stunning late goal to send Benfica into the knockout stages on goal difference and push Real into the play-offs. This time, however, the headlines were dominated by controversy.

Vinicius Junior settled the contest with a superb early second-half strike, arrowing a shot into the top corner. His brilliance quickly gave way to tension. The Brazilian was booked for dancing in front of the home fans, prompting an exchange with Benfica's Argentine winger Gianluca Prestianni.

During the confrontation, Prestianni pulled his shirt over his mouth before appearing to say something to Vinicius, who immediately approached referee Francois Letexier, pointing at Prestianni and seemingly claiming he had been called "mono" – the Spanish word for monkey. Play was halted for several minutes before resuming, with Vinicius subjected to jeers from sections of the home crowd.

The stoppage contributed to 12 minutes of added time but Benfica failed to find an equaliser and now

face an uphill task at the Bernabeu next week.

The match remained spiky throughout. Benfica coach Jose Mourinho was sent off late on for angrily protesting that Vinicius should have received a second yellow card. He will miss the return leg.



After the game, Real coach Alvaro Arbeloa told Movistar: "(Racism) is something we have to eradicate from the world of football and if the players don't fix it then this is very complicated."

Vinicius also responded on Instagram. "Racists are, above all, cowards. They need to put their shirts over their mouths to show how weak they are," he wrote,

referencing the gesture made during the clash. "Nothing that happened today should be tolerated in my life or my family's."

Mourinho said Prestianni had denied racially abusing Vinicius and criticised the Brazilian's celebration. "When you score a goal like that,

you celebrate in a respectful way," Mourinho said. "There is something wrong because it happens in every stadium – where Vinicius plays, something happens, always."

Prestianni denied the accusation on Instagram, insisting he had "never" directed racist insults.

UEFA said it would "investigate allegations of discriminatory behaviour."

PHOTO: FACEBOOK

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Pubali Bank PLC. a leading largest private commercial bank with 518 online branches, 22 Islamic Banking Windows and 276 Sub-branches with a diverse and motivated workforce is inviting applications from the tech-savvy professionals who are highly qualified, dynamic and experienced to guide the bank forward to its next phase of innovation and growth in software technology in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

FOR: ICT OPERATION DIVISION

1. Senior Principal Officer (Database Administrator) No. of Posts: 02
2. Senior Officer (Assistant Database Administrator) No. of Posts: 03
3. Senior Officer (Network Engineer) No. of Posts: 02
4. Senior Officer (System Engineer) No. of Posts: 03
5. Officer (Assistant ICT Security Engineer) No. of Posts: 04
6. Officer (Assistant Network Engineer) No. of Posts: 02
7. Junior Officer (Junior Assistant ICT Security Engineer) No. of Posts: 04
8. Junior Officer (Junior Assistant Network Engineer) No. of Posts: 05
9. Junior Officer (BACH, BEFTN & RTGS support Engineer) No. of Posts: 03
10. Junior Officer (Software Support Engineer) No. of Posts: 12
11. Junior Officer (Network/IP Telephone Support Engineer) No. of Posts: 02
12. Junior Officer (System Support Engineer) No. of Posts: 06

FOR: SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION AS SOFTWARE DEVELOPER

1. Senior Principal Officer No. of Posts: 05
2. Principal Officer No. of Posts: 05
3. Senior Officer No. of Posts: 40
4. Officer No. of Posts: 17



For details, please visit <https://www.pubalibangla.com/career>
Interested candidates who fulfill the requirements should apply online by 06:00 p.m. of 16 March, 2026.

- One candidate can apply for one post only.
- Only short-listed candidates will be called for written test/interview. No TA/DA will be applicable for this purpose.
- Management of the Bank reserves the right to reject any or all applications without assigning any reason whatsoever.

HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION
Head Office, 26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka



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From ashes to resilience

Exhibition opens at burnt Prothom Alo building; journalist leaders, diplomats back press freedom

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special art exhibition titled "Alo" (Light), documenting the recent arson attacks on newspaper offices, opened yesterday at the charred Prothom Alo office in the capital's Karwan Bazar, transforming destruction into a striking meditation on survival and resilience.

At the inauguration, journalist leaders pledged stronger unity to bolster independent journalism and democracy.

In another session, diplomats stationed in Dhaka expressed solidarity with The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, underscoring freedom of the press and freedom of expression as pillars of democracy.

Curated by eminent artist Mahbubur Rahman, the exhibition uses remnants of the December 18, 2025, arson attack to create a visual record of resilience. The exhibition

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Expressing solidarity with Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, ambassadors, high commissioners, and other diplomatic mission representatives yesterday attended a special art exhibition titled 'Alo' (Light), documenting the recent vandalism and arson attacks on the newspaper offices, at the charred Prothom Alo office in the capital's Karwan Bazar. PHOTO: STAR

Govt must act on July reforms

Shafiqur says otherwise opposition won't stay silent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and opposition leader Shafiqur Rahman warned yesterday that the party would not remain silent if the government fails to act on reform proposals made in the wake of the July uprising.

"If the government takes initiative, we, as the opposition, will extend full cooperation. But if the government does not take initiative, then we will speak out on behalf of the people," he said after launching

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Woman files case alleging rape in Hatia

6 accused named, 50-100 unnamed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A case was filed over the alleged rape and torture of a woman in Noakhali's Hatia upazila yesterday, five days after the incident.

The victim filed the case with the district's Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal

around 4:00pm, accusing six named and some 50 to

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Coordinate to achieve goals

Tarique tells ministers, secretaries; rolls out 180-day action plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tarique Rahman spent a busy first day as prime minister yesterday, holding meetings with ministers and top bureaucrats where he asked them to work in a coordinated manner to achieve his government's goals while remaining above influence or nepotism.

In separate meetings with his council of ministers and secretaries, he also set out his government's immediate priorities, including maintaining law and order and curbing corruption, and directed them to stabilise commodity prices and ensure uninterrupted power supply during Ramadan.

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'Strongly opposed Ziaul's promotion'

Former army chief tells ICT-1, calls officer a 'serial killer'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former army chief General (ret'd) Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 that he had strongly opposed the promotion of Ziaul Ahsan, calling him a "serial killer" unfit for advancement.

During the cross-examination in a case filed over crimes against humanity, Iqbal told the tribunal that during his tenure as army chief from 2012 to 2015, Ziaul

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Govt closes schools for Ramadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Revising the annual holiday schedule, the new government yesterday announced the closure of primary and secondary schools (classes I-X) from today during Ramadan.

Classes will remain suspended until March 26.

To this end, two ministries -- the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education -- issued separate notifications.

As March 26 falls on a Thursday, teachers

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PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 19

	Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	5:15	12:45	4:30	5:58	7:30
JAMAAT	5:25	1:15	4:45	6:08	8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	FEB	SEHRI	IFTAR
1	19		5:58
2	20	5:11	5:58
3	21	5:11	5:59

BEPZIA
Congratulations
the Hon'ble Prime Minister
TARIQUE RAHMAN

Bangladesh EPZ Investors' Association (BEPZIA) conveys heartiest congratulations to Tarique Rahman, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh & the Hon'ble Chairman of BEPZA Board of Governors.

BEPZIA, the sole trade body within the EPZ, remains highly optimistic about driving substantial economic growth in Bangladesh under his dynamic leadership.

Warmest congratulations to
Mr. Tarique Rahman
on his appointment as the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
May his visionary guidance lead the nation toward a future of renewed hope and prosperity.

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