



Mob sets the building of The Daily Star on fire after vandalising and looting it on the night of December 18.

PHOTO: STAR

Mob attacks on Star, Prothom Alo scripted

Interim govt, Meta failed to act on long-running online incitement

The Daily Star and Dismislab, a fact-checking organisation, analysed 3,064 Facebook posts circulating before, during, and after the attacks and found that the assaults on the two media outlets last December were anything but sudden. Rather, the threats had been building in plain sight on social media for hours, days and even months. However, this is not just a story about the attacks themselves. This is a story about a predictable chain of events in which online incitement escalated into real-world violence, as monitoring systems, harmful-content moderation, and violence-prevention protocols failed to activate in time.

Star-DISMISLAB ANALYSIS

On the night of December 18, 2025, coordinated mobs attacked and set fire to the offices of two of Bangladesh's leading newspapers -- The Daily Star and Prothom Alo -- and the cultural institution Chhayanaut in Dhaka. The following evening, on December 19, the central office of Udichi Shilpigosthi, another cultural organisation, was also attacked and burned.

The Daily Star and Dismislab analysed 3,064 Facebook posts published between December 13 and 19 and found a clear link between online incitement and real-world violence.

Over several days, hostile narratives against the two newspapers were built up by influencers and right-wing activists. It then escalated into direct calls to burn and attack buildings at named locations across Dhaka.

Crowds later gathered, carried out attacks, and moved from one target to another in line with what was being posted on Facebook in real time.

The evidence indicates that law enforcement



Mobs set ablaze the Prothom Alo office on December 18, 2025.

PHOTO: STAR

agencies and Meta did not act on visible threats circulating on Facebook for more than 20 hours, even as the violence was being livestreamed. Phrases such as "Tonight", "Right now", and "Joy Bangla kore dite hobe [must be destroyed]" spread widely on Facebook, falsely describing the two newspapers as "Indian agents" and "anti-national forces".

Calls for violence continued through the night, undetected and unaddressed -- revealing sheer weaknesses in the monitoring

and response capacity of the Bangladesh authorities, as well as in Meta's ability to detect and moderate content that posed an imminent risk of harm.

THE INCITEMENT

Among the posts analysed, the first widely shared call for violence appeared on December 15, 2025, in a public Facebook group by a user based in Cox's Bazar. The group called "Bharot Birodhi Churanto Andolon [Ultimate Anti-India Movement]" has 68,000 members.

The post, containing a photo of the Prothom

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Govt to review 'harassment' cases filed after August 5

Salahuddin says falsely implicated individuals must not suffer

- ➔ New commission to reinvestigate the 2009 BDR carnage
- ➔ 2,701 constables to be recruited; past constable hiring to be reviewed
- ➔ Reinstatement process for 650 disqualified sub-inspectors and sergeants
- ➔ Lottery-based posting system for OCs and SPs scrapped
- ➔ Firearms licences issued over 17 years to be reviewed; 10,000 guns already illegal after non-deposit
- ➔ 'Enlisted assistants' proposed at passport offices to curb brokers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed has directed police to review cases filed after August 5 in which prominent businesspeople and other well-known members of society were named as accused and are allegedly facing harassment, and to take necessary steps.

He issued the directive at a meeting yesterday with the heads of all departments and law enforcement agencies under the home ministry.

Salahuddin also outlined government plans for fresh recruitment of police constables, the formation of a new commission to reinvestigate the BDR carnage, and efforts to end "mob culture" in the country.

Speaking to the media after the meeting, he said, "Taking advantage of the [post-August 5] situation, some opportunist groups have filed cases naming many people as accused to harass them, despite there being no question

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



New ICT chief prosecutor vows sincerity, justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Chief Prosecutor Aminul Islam yesterday said he would move cases at the International Crimes Tribunal forward with sincerity, speed, and in accordance with the law. He promised to ensure justice for the people who were killed or injured during the July uprising.

Aminul made the remarks after assuming office in the afternoon, following a gazette notification issued by the law ministry earlier in the day. He replaced Tajul Islam, who was appointed the ICT chief prosecutor by the interim government on September 7, 2024.

"I have taken on a crucial responsibility. I will strive to discharge my duties in line with the aspirations of those who were martyred and injured during the July uprising," Aminul said. "I will do my utmost to ensure that ongoing trials, as well as those to come, are conducted with sincerity, efficiency, and fairness."

He stressed that prosecutions would strictly

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Stay on message, avoid making stray remarks

Tarique instructs his cabinet; Family Card pilot launch likely on Mar 10

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and BAHARAM KHAN

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday directed ministers and state ministers to refrain from making unwarranted remarks that could trigger controversy or undermine the government's image.

At a meeting held at the Secretariat, he asked cabinet members to be cautious when speaking to the media, avoid making unnecessary comments, and share only verified and policy-based information so that the government's message remains clear and consistent to the people.

The directive comes after a few ministers made statements that were met with bewilderment, criticism, and ridicule.

For instance, Road Transport and Bridges, Railways and Shipping Minister Sheikh Rabiul Alam's comment on extortion on February 19 drew widespread criticism and debate on social media.

"The prime minister asked us not to speak on issues related to other ministries and to share only updates and developments concerning our own respective ministries," said a cabinet member on the condition

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Makeshift shops line the railway tracks at Jurain railgate in the capital yesterday as trains pass through the narrow corridor, putting vendors and customers at serious risk. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

BANGLA ACADEMY Literary Award 2025 winners announced

A&E DESK

Bangla Academy yesterday announced the recipients of the Bangla Academy Literary Award 2025 for their contributions in eight categories.

The names were disclosed through a press release, which also said that the awards will be formally conferred at the inaugural ceremony of the Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela 2026 on February 26 (Thursday). It added that the awards will be conferred by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

The names announced

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6





PHOTO: COLLECTED



Dhaka’s evolving love affair with strawberries

RBR

When locally grown strawberries first hit the Dhaka market, still in their trial runs, the fruits were as sour as sour could be. But trust us, Dhaka vendors, we’ve created a desi-styled street snack, like a bhorta mix, to go with it.

I first stumbled on this strange concoction around the Dhaka University campus, but dared to try it from a vendor sitting under the Karwan Bazar overpass.

Strawberries always felt like an exotic fruit, out of my reach. They belonged to rich tea parties or fancy breakfasts, savoured with melted chocolate, cheesecake, or Greek yoghurt. For the rest of us, they were too sour to bother with.

That changed once I picked a chunk from the recycled newspaper packet and let the vendor’s spice mixology hit me.

The sweet and sour taste of the strawberries clashed with the heat of green chilies, the tang of mustard oil or kasundi, which is a local fermented mustard sauce or relish, and the

sharpness of rock salt – all put together, worked delightfully well.

It was not mashed like a bhorta, but chopped and mixed, giving sour strawberries a fiery street-food identity. It became, and still is, a seasonal favourite in Dhaka.

However, after years of trial and error, local strawberries are now sweet, juicy, and plump, enticing people like me to even try going on strawberry-picking trips on the outskirts of Dhaka.

Picking your own strawberries from the fields is slowly but surely becoming an adventurous attraction. And with families and farmers posting reels and selfies among the vibrant red rows of the fruit, the only tune echoing in my mind is the timeless Beatles favourite: “Let me take you down, ‘cause I’m going to Strawberry Fields... Nothing is real, and nothing to get hung about... Strawberry Fields Forever.”

But getting here wasn’t easy. Commercial strawberry cultivation in Bangladesh took years of tests and trials, since the fruit is not traditionally native to the country. Pioneer cultivators faced losses in the



early years due to poor quality and hesitant buyers. The bigger challenge was to acclimatise strawberries to our tropical/sub-tropical climate and soil.

Fast forward to today: the net result is a bumper harvest of sweet, juicy strawberries. Social media is now flooded with advertisements inviting Dhaka residents to pick strawberries straight from the fields in Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Rajshahi, and Bogura. The sandy loam soil of these areas in

winter gives the right conditions for growing the profitable local varieties called Rabi 1, Rabi 2, and Rabi 3.

Now, things are looking good. Local strawberries are giving the imported ones stiff competition in terms of look, colour, size, and taste. And we, as buyers, have finally taken to the flavour – adding the fruit to our ice cream scoops, or making jam and compote to enrich our home-made confectionery.

Street prices vary between Tk 550 and Tk 1,200 per kilo in Dhaka markets, and Tk 250 to Tk 500 for wholesalers. And with Ramadan underway, strawberries have found a new role. After a long day of fasting, their hydrating juiciness offers both comfort and nourishment, making them a seasonal blessing on our iftar tables.

They slip easily into our iftar spread – whether tossed into fruit chaat, blended into a lassi, or simply eaten fresh after dates. They bring a refreshing sweetness to break the day’s fast. A fruit packed with vitamin C, antioxidants, and natural sweetness that was once seen as too exotic, too sour, now feels right at home on Dhaka’s iftar tables.

2 held over rape of woman in Bhola

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Two people were arrested yesterday in a case filed over the rape of a woman in Bhola’s Tazumuddin upazila on Sunday night.

The case was filed against three main accused – Rakib, Shakil and Rasel – yesterday afternoon, shortly after which Rakib was arrested.

The other arrestee Juwel was apprehended on suspicion of aiding the three, Sushanta Malo, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Tazumuddin Police Station told The Daily Star.

Police said operations were underway to find and arrest Shakil and Rasel.

The victim’s family and police said the 25-year-old mother of one was on her way home from a religious programme around 9:00pm when the three youths from a neighbouring village intercepted her, forcibly took her to the bank of the Meghna river and raped her throughout the night.

Locals found her in critical condition in an orchard near the site of the incident yesterday morning.

Speaking to journalists, the victim’s mother said, “My daughter told me three people did this to her – Rakib, Shakil and Rasel. All three used to be my daughter’s classmates in school.”

“They wanted to kill my daughter and dump her body in the river,” she alleged, adding, “We couldn’t find my daughter throughout the night.”

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

ICT prosecutor alleges corruption against Tajul, Tamim Both reject accusations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal has raised serious allegations of corruption and irregularities against Tajul Islam, the immediate past chief prosecutor of the court, and fellow prosecutor Gazi Monawar Hossain Tamim.

In a Facebook post yesterday, Prosecutor BM Sultan Mahmud alleged a series of irregularities, including money exchanges and questionable handling of high-profile cases.

According to the post, in late November last year, the wife of Abzal, an accused in the case over the killing and burning of six bodies in Ashulia, entered Tamim’s room in the evening carrying a heavy bag.

“After noticing the matter, we immediately went to Tajul Islam’s room and informed him. No action was taken; instead, we were scolded,” Sultan alleged.

He further claimed that Tamim later admitted in front of others that Abzal’s wife had visited his office. “The chief prosecutor only asked why the accused’s wife had gone to his room. The matter ended there,” he said.

Sultan alleged that Abzal was later made a state witness and eventually acquitted in the final verdict.

He also raised concerns over the Chankharpul

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Stay on message

FROM PAGE 1

of anonymity.

The prime minister also emphasised that transparency must be reflected in all official activities and that the government’s image should be upheld with responsibility and integrity.

Tarique also reviewed the attendance of ministers and state ministers and thanked a few cabinet members who had stayed beyond office hours to complete their work.

Earlier on Sunday, he had expressed anger at his cabinet members for not maintaining proper office hours and directed them to adhere strictly to official schedules.

The law ministry yesterday issued an office order directing all officers and employees to ensure regular attendance at work.

Absence without permission, leaving the office without permission and coming late to the office must be avoided, it said.

The ministry also instructed everyone to be present at their respective offices by 9:00am and not to leave before 5:00pm.

If any officer or employee remains absent without permission, leaves the office without approval or arrives late, disciplinary action will be taken against them, said the office order.

Earlier yesterday, Tarique attended his office at the Armed Forces Division in Dhaka Cantonment for the first time since becoming the PM.

He later went to the Secretariat, where Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen paid a courtesy call on him.

Tarique subsequently chaired

an inter-ministerial meeting on the launch of the Farmers’ Card programme aimed at ensuring fair prices for farmers’ produce.

“Real farmers must be identified and government services must reach them directly. Agriculture is the main power of the economy. So, we must ensure the highest use of technology to improve the living standard of farmers,” he said at the meeting held at the Secretariat.

The smart card system is being introduced to reduce the influence of middlemen and to make sure farmers can easily receive their fair dues and government subsidies.

After being informed about the technical details, distribution system and database progress of the Farmers’ Card, Tarique directed officials to implement the programme in the field as soon as possible.

He is likely to formally inaugurate the Family Card distribution programme on March 10.

The government will launch the programme on a pilot basis in one ward of 13 upazilas: Korail slum in Banani, Pangsha, Patenga, Banchharampur, Lama, Khalishpur, Charlesson, Dirai, Bhairab, Bogura Sadar, Lalpur, Thakurgaon and Nawabganj.

The card will be issued in the name of the female head of each household.

To ensure smooth implementation, committees will be formed at the upazila, union and ward levels.

In each upazila, a first-class officer will be designated as the supervising officer for the selected ward, with the upazila tag officer providing

necessary support.

Funds for the current fiscal year will be allocated to the social welfare ministry from the finance ministry’s block allocation.

Financial assistance will be disbursed to beneficiaries through any scheduled bank or mobile financial service of their choice.

Under the plan, one ward will be selected in each upazila, with 1,000 families in every ward receiving a Family Card.

If implemented in 10 upazilas, a total of 10,000 families will come under the first phase, The Daily Star has learnt from people with direct knowledge of the discussion.

Priority will be given to the rural poor, landless families, farm and day labourers, people unable to earn, widows and women-headed households.

Only one member per family will be eligible, and beneficiaries of certain existing schemes may not receive overlapping benefits.

Data from programmes such as the food ministry’s food-friendly scheme and the women and children affairs ministry’s Vulnerable Women Development programme may be integrated into the new system.

The ministry officials will outline eligibility criteria, administrative structure, monitoring mechanisms, expenditure details and technological management.

If the report is submitted and approved on schedule, the pilot phase could begin in the first week of March, said a state minister asking not to be named.

Govt to review ‘harassment’ cases filed

FROM PAGE 1

of their involvement. Among them are several prominent businesspeople and other well-known, distinguished members of society.”

He said the authorities have been asked to review the cases and take steps to ensure those falsely implicated do not suffer any further.

Responding to a question, the [home minister] said no separate committee will be needed for this. “This is the police’s job and they’ll do it,” he said, adding that no deadline has been set but a report “will be submitted quickly”.

Asked whether journalists are among those affected, he replied, “All people are included. The rule of law will apply to everyone.”

Adding that there was no need to single out any profession, he said, “If they are accused in cases under the ICT Act, they will be tried under that law. Those accused in other cases under general provisions will be tried accordingly. There is no reason to harass any particular [profession] separately.”

According to a recent Transparency International Bangladesh report, 1,785 cases – including 837 murder cases – linked to crimes against humanity during the July uprising had been filed nationwide as of November 19, 2025.

The watchdog expressed serious concern over what it termed the “indiscriminate filing of cases” following the uprising. It estimated that around 150,000 people across the country have been accused.

The report cited widespread allegations of “case trade”, retaliatory filings, political harassment and extortion, including threats of inclusion or promises of exclusion in cases. In many instances, law enforcement agencies accepted cases without proper investigation due to pressure, it said.

NEW PROBE BODY FOR BDR CARNAGE

In a significant development, the home minister announced that the government would form a new commission to reinvestigate the

2009 BDR carnage at Pilkhana.

“As per our decision to ensure justice, we will set up another enquiry body to investigate the BDR carnage,” he said, responding to a query about implementing the recommendations of the interim government’s commission.

FRESH CONSTABLE RECRUITMENT

Salahuddin also told reporters that recruitment to the post of police constable during the Awami League government’s three terms would be scrutinised following reports that some individuals secured jobs by forging their names and permanent addresses.

“Police have been asked to investigate such incidents.”

Addressing the manpower crisis in the force, he announced the urgent recruitment of 2,701 constables through the existing process, which will begin soon.

The minister also promised justice for around 650 sub-inspectors and sergeants who were “unfairly” disqualified at the final stage of recruitment in 2006.

He noted that although a file seeking their reinstatement had previously been sent to the chief adviser’s office following a court verdict, it had not been approved. “They will certainly receive justice and be reinstated.”

In a shift from recent policy, Salahuddin announced the cancellation of the lottery-based system for appointing officers-in-charge and superintendents of police. The system, introduced during the interim government, was deemed “not transparent” by the minister.

“From now on, postings will be based on service records, skills and qualifications. Only those deemed competent by the police department will be assigned to appropriate positions,” he said, adding that he [directed] district SPs to stop providing political protocol and to strictly adhere to statutory guidelines.

FIREARMS AND PASSPORTS

The home minister also said the

government will review and, if necessary, cancel firearms and ammunition licences issued during the 17-year tenure of the Awami League government, alleging that many were granted on political considerations.

He added that around 10,000 firearms have become illegal after holders failed to deposit them as directed by the interim government.

To curb the influence of brokers at passport offices, he proposed appointing “enlisted assistants” similar to the model used in sub-registry offices.

“These representatives would provide services for a fixed fee to assist those who struggle with the online application system.”

WARNING AGAINST MOB CULTURE

Salahuddin reiterated the government’s commitment to end “mob culture”, warning of punitive and decisive action. “I have already said the mob culture in Bangladesh has ended. We will react strongly and take prompt action if it occurs anywhere in the country.”

He added that the “era of realising demands by occupying roads and highways” is over and that all demands must be raised through due process of law.

Literary Award 2025

FROM PAGE 1

are: Mohon Raihan (poetry), Nasima Anis (fiction), Syed Azizul Haque (essays/prose), Hasan Hafiz (children’s literature), Ali Ahmed (translation), Mustafa Majid and Israel Khan (research), Farseem Mannan Mohammedy (science), and Maidul Hasan (Liberation War).

The press release added that the executive council of the Bangla Academy approved the Bangla Academy Literary Award 2025 based on the recommendations of the nomination committee and in line with the decision of the award committee.

Drones disrupt 50 Vietnam flights during Lunar New Year

AFP, Hanoi

Unauthorised drones disrupted more than 50 flights at Vietnam’s Danang international airport during the busy Lunar New Year holiday, state media said yesterday.

Two separate incidents last week saw flights delayed or forced

into holding patterns before landing when authorities detected drones flying dangerously close to aircraft, the Thanh Nien newspaper reported.

It was not clear who was operating the drones or how close they came to the aircraft.

However, a total of 54 flights

were delayed because of the drone incursions, Thanh Nien said, citing airport authorities.

Danang airport officials did not immediately respond to AFP’s request for comment.

Vietnam bans the private use of unmanned aerial vehicles and high-intensity lighting around airports.

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Local govt
polls will be
held on time
Says LGRD minister
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the local government election would be held on time as per existing rules and regulations.

"The local government elections are not being delayed and will be held at the right time. This election will be given priority," Fakhrul told reporters at the party's Nayapaltan central office.

On finalising candidates for the reserved seats for women, Fakhrul said

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

6 ADMINISTRATORS
Jamaat, NCP
slam their
appointments
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar yesterday said the newly-formed BNP government has acted against public expectations by appointing party-affiliated individuals as administrators to six city corporations.

He made the remarks in a statement issued yesterday by the party's central publicity department.

According to the statement, a February 22 notification from the Local Government Division appointed party figures as administrators to Dhaka North City Corporation, Dhaka South City Corporation, Khulna City Corporation, Sylhet City Corporation, Narayanganj City Corporation and Gazipur City Corporation.

Porwar alleged that the decision shows the BNP government has, from the outset, gone against the aspirations of the people.

He said the July uprising aimed to establish a discrimination-free and democratic social order, complete the trial of the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman adorn Maj Gen Mir Mushfiqur Rahman, GOC of the 24 Infantry Division, with the rank badge of lieutenant general at the PM's office in Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

PHOTO: PTD

BNP leaders at helm
of 6 city corporations

Political appointment of administrators draws flak

DIPAN NANDY

A day after assuming charge as minister for local government, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir announced that the government was considering holding local government elections at the earliest possible time.

Five days later, the government appointed new administrators to six city corporations across the country yesterday.

All of them are office-bearing BNP leaders, including some who recently lost in the national parliamentary elections.

According to a notification, Abdus Salam has been appointed administrator of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), while Shafiqul Islam Khan has been assigned to Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).

Nazrul Islam Monju has been made administrator of Khulna City Corporation (KCC), Abdul Quiyum Choudhury of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC), Sakhawat Hossain Khan of Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC), and Shawkat Hossain Sarkar of Gazipur City



Clockwise from left, Abdus Salam (DSCC); Shafiqul Islam Khan (DNCC); Nazrul Islam Monju (Khulna); Shawkat Hossain Sarkar (Gazipur); Sakhawat Hossain Khan (Narayanganj) and Abdul Quiyum Choudhury (Sylhet).

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Corporation (GCC).

The notification said the elected councils are formed or until further instructions are issued.

Criticising the move, Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said this is a bad example of targeted partisan political

control of local government institutions.

"If politically affiliated individuals are elected through free and fair elections, no one would raise concerns. But ahead of local government elections, this may be viewed as a strategic move to influence the polls. The electoral playing field will be distorted whenever

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Sovereignty,
mutual respect
to guide foreign
policy: Khalilur

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman yesterday said Bangladesh's foreign policy will be guided by independence, sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, mutual benefit and national dignity.

"We hope to establish and sustain deep relationships with all our friendly nations, both in our region and across the world," he told reporters at the foreign ministry after meetings with foreign diplomats.

He said Bangladesh would resolve all bilateral issues in a dignified manner grounded in mutual respect, ensuring that the national interest is protected.

He said he observed immense confidence among foreign diplomats in the new government and a strong eagerness to work closely with Dhaka.

Yesterday, US Ambassador Brent Christensen, European Union Ambassador Michael Miller and other EU ambassadors of Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden paid a courtesy call on Khalilur.

On Sunday, ambassadors of India,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Ziaul Ahsan was
'beyond my control'
Iqbal Karim Bhuiya tells ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former army chief General (ret'd) Iqbal Karim Bhuiya yesterday told International Crimes Tribunal-1 that he took no written action against Major General (relieved) Ziaul Ahsan, despite knowing him to be a "serial killer" based on intelligence from multiple sources.

During cross-examination, Iqbal said Ziaul was beyond his direct control at the time, which prevented him from issuing formal orders.

Instead, Iqbal claimed that he verbally instructed the then Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) Jaglul and the commanding officer of the army security unit Brig Gen Fazal to advise Ziaul to refrain from wrongdoing.

"I could not take any action, as Ziaul was out of my control," Iqbal said in response to defence counsel Aminul Ghani Titto's question about whether he had issued any written directive.

Rejecting the defence's claim that no instructions were given, he maintained that he had verbally directed the two officers to counsel Ziaul.

Iqbal said his conclusion that Ziaul was a "serial killer" was personal and based on intelligence from "various sources", though he acknowledged that none of the information was documented.

In response to another defence question, he said the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) might not have submitted any adverse report against Ziaul during promotion board meetings, as DGFI and Rab carried out "misdeeds in mutual cooperation".

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Sunflower field in
Pabna draws crowdsAHMED HUMAYUN KABIR
TOPU, Pabna

A vibrant sunflower field at an agricultural farm in Tebunia of Pabna, operated by the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), has drawn a surge of visitors.

Originally set up for producing and processing pulses and oil seeds, the



facility has begun cultivating sunflowers in the current fiscal year.

The farm's 6.57-acre sunflower field, now in full bloom with a striking expanse of yellow, has attracted people from across the district – from



students on school excursions to social media content creators seeking backdrops for photos and reels.

According to Md Omor Sharif, an office assistant at the BADC Tebunia farm, the primary objective remains seed production. "We have cultivated sunflowers on 6.57 acres this year to meet the rising national demand for seeds. Our target is to produce 2,300 kilogrammes of sunflower seeds," Sharif said.

Visitors said no other such scenic site exists in the district.

Jesmin Ara Shilpi, a schoolteacher, said the farm offers a rare touch of natural beauty close to urban areas.

Md Masud Rana, headteacher of Bhozendrapur Government Primary School, said he visited the farm with his students to observe the natural landscape.

However, the influx of visitors has created

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



A worker burns waste, including plastic, in Shahid Nagar of Lalbagh, Kamrangirchar, polluting the environment. Garbage dumping along the Buriganga continues to contaminate the water. Despite nearby garbage stations and ongoing initiatives, such illegal practices persist. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Man beaten to death over theft allegation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was allegedly beaten to death by a group of people in Dhaka's Shyampur on Sunday night after they accused him of attempting to steal construction rods.

The victim was identified as Abdur Rahim, 35, according to police.

The incident occurred around 10:30pm inside the BIWTA project area near Postogola Shmashan Ghat.

Locals captured Rahim on suspicion of theft and beat him up, said Shyampur Police Station Sub-inspector Md Shah Alam.

Police reached the scene and found Rahim critically injured. He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries around 5:30am yesterday, he said.

The SI said authorities are working to confirm his address. His body has been kept at the DMCH morgue for autopsy. "An investigation is underway," the SI added.



Scores of low-income families queue behind a TCB truck in the capital's Shahbagh area to purchase essentials for Ramadan yesterday. With commodity prices soaring, they often have to wait from early morning to buy items such as lentils, oil, sugar and dates. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

All publishers to join

FROM PAGE 3

After these decisions, the lottery for stall allocation was held on Sunday night.

Bangla Academy has announced that Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will inaugurate the fair at 2:00pm on February 26. This will mark his first major public event since assuming office.

Traditionally, Bangla Academy organises the Amar Ekushey Book Fair from February 1 every year. However, due to security concerns surrounding the February 12 parliamentary election, the academy had initially decided to advance the fair to December.

That move faced opposition from a section of publishers, as well as more than 30 social and cultural organisations, who demanded that the fair be held in the language month in keeping with tradition.

As a result, authorities withdrew the December plan. After the election and formation of the government, February 20 was set as the new start date.

However, with Ramadan already underway by then, a large section of publishers urged that the fair be postponed until after Eid-ul-Fitr, citing fears of low attendance and financial risks.

Bangla Academy remained firm on its decision. The fair was later deferred by five days to February 25 before the final decision was made on Sunday to begin on February 26.

Yesterday morning, Prokashok Oikya held a press conference at Jatiya Press Club, announcing its

reversal of the boycott.

Mahrukh Mohiuddin, managing director of UPL, said, "Publishers initially wanted the fair to be held after Eid, considering practical realities, but the interim government did not respond. After the new government took office, the cultural affairs minister and state minister held discussions with publishers. The publishers presented three conditions, and the government assured their fulfilment. Subsequently, more than 200 publishers submitted applications on the 19th of this month."

"In the interest of equal rights for all publishers, Prokashok Oikya decided not to take any pavilion and demanded that no one else be given one either. When we saw that pavilions were not being dismantled and our conditions were not being met, we announced our withdrawal. However, following a sincere understanding reached on Sunday night among the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangla Academy, and the Bangladesh Publishers and Booksellers Association (BAPUS), the government agreed to our conditions. Therefore, Prokashok Oikya is now participating in the fair," she added.

Selim Reza, member secretary of the Book Fair Management Committee, told The Daily Star, "We are happy that all publishers are participating in this year's fair. We hope it will be held in a festive atmosphere with everyone's involvement."

He also said more than 500 publishing houses are participating in this year's fair.

4 of family burnt in 'gas leak' fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four members of a family, including a three-year-old child, sustained burn injuries in a fire, suspected to have originated from a gas leak, at a rented flat in Dhaka's Rayerbazar early yesterday.

The incident occurred around 3:45am in a ground-floor apartment of a six-storey building near Mukti Cinema Hall. The injured were taken to the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery.

The victims were identified as Sheikh Noman, 35; his wife Pinky Akter, 32; their son Sanaaf Sheikh Maiyan, 3; and Noman's brother-in-law Riad Hasan Opu, 23.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

President accepts resignations of justices Mamnoon, Naima

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Mohammed Shahabuddin has accepted the resignation letters of High Court judges Mamnoon Rahman and Naima Haider.

The law ministry issued two separate gazette notifications to this effect yesterday.

According to the notifications, Justice Mamnoon Rahman and Justice Naima Haider submitted their resignations through signed letters addressed to the

president in accordance with Article 96(8) of the constitution. The president has approved them.

Justice Mamnoon Rahman, who had been on leave for about a year, tendered his resignation on February 2 citing personal reasons. He sent his resignation from Canada via email to the Supreme Court registrar general and the Ministry of Law.

Justice Naima Haider submitted her resignation on February 9.

Jamaat, NCP slam their appointments

FROM PAGE 3

massacre, and carry out necessary reforms.

As the first step, the 13th parliamentary election and a referendum were held, he said.

Porwar said the public expected the next step to be the election of representatives to local government bodies through a democratic process.

The statement said the Election Commission had

given positive indications about holding local government polls. In this context, appointing ruling party office-bearers as administrators contradicts public expectations.

Porwar described the move as morally unacceptable and a deception of the people.

He said it has created suspicion that the decision may be part of a plan to delay local government

elections and could pave the way for another "engineered election".

He demanded the cancellation of the appointments and the immediate announcement of election schedules for city corporations and all other local government tiers.

Meanwhile, National Citizen Party (NCP) spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan alleged that the ruling

party is reluctant to contest city polls due to poor vote prospects and is instead installing unelected mayors nationwide.

In a post on his verified Facebook page, Asif Mahmud said the ruling party, which had repeatedly criticised the interim government as unelected, is now itself fielding unelected mayors across the country.

Ziaul Ahsan was 'beyond my control'

FROM PAGE 3

Ziaul is accused of a crime against humanity case involving the enforced disappearance and killing of 104 people.

Iqbal also said that during his tenure as army chief from 2012 to 2015, he did not issue any directive to investigate Ziaul.

Although he claimed to have tried to bring Ziaul back to the Bangladesh Army, he could not produce documentary evidence, saying official records are routinely destroyed after a

certain period.

He admitted that he neither issued written orders nor personally summoned Ziaul. "He came to meet me once or twice," Iqbal said, adding that he never called him to his office.

"I do not recall whether any intelligence or service records mentioned Ziaul as a serial killer, or whether any army office maintained such records," he added.

Replying to another query, Iqbal acknowledged that he was appointed army chief superseding his

seniors, but said the decision considered factors beyond seniority, including staff college performance and other professional criteria.

He also alleged that DMI Jaglul was then transferred against his will due to Ziaul's influence.

When asked by defence counsel Aminul to mention the date of Jaglul's posting, Iqbal said he could not recall. "Sometimes I forget my date of birth," he remarked.

The tribunal fixed March 1 for continuation of the cross-examination.

11th DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF MD. RAFIUDDIN (BABLU)



Today the **24th** February is the **11th** death anniversary of late **Md. Rafiuddin (Bablu)**, Managing Director of **Modhumita Group** and youngest son of late Md. Sirajuddin founder of Modhumita Group.

Though he is not in this world he lives in our hearts, in our minds and in our memory.

All friends relatives and well wishers are requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

All Members of Modhumita Family

পুনঃ দরপত্র আহ্বান বিজ্ঞপ্তি

প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম : ময়মনসিংহ গার্লস ক্যাডেট কলেজ।
সরবরাহে কাজের বিবরণ :

গ্রুপ নং	কাজের শিরোনাম
ক।	ক্যাডেট মেসে মাছ সরবরাহ

পুনঃ দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ : ০৫ মার্চ ২০২৬ (২০০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত)।
পুনঃ দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময় : ০৫ মার্চ ২০২৬ (২২৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত)।
বিস্তারিত তথ্যের জন্য ভিজিট করুন www.army.mil.bd

আইএসপিআর/সেনা/১৬৩

তারপ্রাপ্ত অধ্যক্ষ
ময়মনসিংহ গার্লস ক্যাডেট কলেজ

ফিডি-৫৭২

পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি
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অ-দাবীকৃত (unclaimed) ডিভিডেন্ড গ্রহণ সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ এন্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন (বিএসইসি) এর নির্দেশনা মোতাবেক পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি এর সম্মানিত শেয়ারহোল্ডারগণের মধ্যে যেসকল ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠান ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থবছরের প্রাপ্য ডিভিডেন্ড গ্রহণ করেননি, তাদের প্রয়োজনীয় প্রমাণকসহ আগামী ২৪ মার্চ, ২০২৬খি: তারিখের মধ্যে কোম্পানি সচিবালয়/শেয়ার শাখা, গ্রিড ভবন, ৩য় তলা, এডিনিউ-৩, জহুরুল ইসলাম সিটি, আফতাবনগর, বাজা, ঢাকা-১২১২ ঠিকানায় যোগাযোগ করার জন্য বিনীতভাবে অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে। এ সময়ের মধ্যে যেসকল শেয়ারহোল্ডারগণ নিজ নিজ অ-দাবীকৃত/অ-বিলকৃত/অ-নিষ্পন্ন ডিভিডেন্ডের টাকা গ্রহণ করবেন না তাদের প্রাপ্য ডিভিডেন্ডের অর্থ বিএসইসি'র নির্দেশনা মোতাবেক ক্যাপিটাল মার্কেট স্ট্যাবিলাইজেশন ফান্ড (সিএমএসএফ)-এ স্থানান্তর করা হবে।

নির্দেশক্রমে,
মোঃ জাহাঙ্গীর আজাদ
কোম্পানি সচিব

EUROPEAN UNION
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The Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh is looking for a suitable candidate for the function of **"Administrative Assistant"**.

The full job description, job requirements and application guidelines (how to apply) can be found on our website: <https://bit.ly/JobsatEU>

The deadline for receiving applications is **Tuesday, 31 March 2026 at 16:00 hours**.

Please note that only electronic applications received within the deadline will be accepted. Paper and late applications will be disregarded.

Only short listed candidates will be contacted.

Any form of persuasion, telephone call, or other form of contact during the selection process will automatically disqualify the applicant.

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Invitation for e-Tender

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following goods:

SL No.	Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Tender Description	Tender Closing Date & Time
01	1232790	JB/IT-Proc-47/OTM/LED Video Wall/2025	Tender for Procurement of LED Video Wall (Supply, Installation & Commissioning) following Open Tendering Method.	12.03.2026 12.30 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP System portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP portal and e-GP Help Desk (Email: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

GD-380

Saf
(Mohammad Shakhawat Hossain)
Deputy General Manager

‘Key instigator’ in Dipu killing arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Detectives on Sunday night arrested a youth for his alleged involvement in the killing of garment worker Dipu Chandra Das in the Dubaliapara area of Bhaluka upazila in Mymensingh.

The arrestee, Md Bablu Mia, 24.

Md Abdullah Al Mamun, additional superintendent of police (administration) in Mymensingh, said primary investigation found that Bablu was present at the scene and played a key role in instigating the incident. He was the first to gather people at the factory gate and incited the crowd through slogans.

He later actively participated in the assault and killing of Dipu in front of the gate and helped move the body to Square Masterbari Main Road, the additional SP said.

Police said drives are ongoing to arrest other fugitives involved in the incident.

Dipu, 27, was beaten to death and his body was set on fire by a mob in Bhaluka on the night of December 18 over allegations of “hurting religious sentiments.”

The victim’s brother, Apu Chandra Das, filed a case with Bhaluka Police Station the following day, accusing 140-150 unnamed people.

Police said 23 suspects have been arrested so far. Three key witnesses have given statements under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and 11 accused have made confessional statements in court.

4 of family burnt

FROM PAGE 4

Riad said they were asleep when a loud explosion jolted them awake. Seeing flames inside the room, he rushed out carrying the child.

He said Pinky had gone to the kitchen to prepare sehri when the explosion occurred, suspecting that gas had accumulated due to a leak and ignited when the stove was lit.

Dr Shawon Bin Rahman, resident surgeon at the burn institute, said Noman sustained 25 percent burns, Pinky 75 percent, Maiyan 24 percent and Riad seven percent.

Pinky is in critical condition, while Noman and Maiyan have been kept in the High Dependency Unit, the doctor said.

Family members said Noman works at a private company and Pinky is a homemaker. Riad, a first-year degree student from Mohanganj upazila in Netrakona, had arrived in Dhaka the previous day.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Water crisis deepens in Ctg as salinity spikes

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

Hundreds of residents in Chattogram are struggling to get enough water as saltwater intrusion in the Halda River and reduced releases from Kaptai Lake have sharply curtailed freshwater production of the Chattogram Water and Sewerage Authority.

The crisis has forced CWasa to shut down its two treatment plants for several hours each day, leaving many households with irregular and insufficient supply.

“We are getting water once or twice a week, which puts us into a severe crisis to complete our household work,” said Mahzabin Ahmed, a resident of Kalirhat in Akbarshah.

Mehedi Hasan, a CWasa meter inspector in the area, told The Daily Star, “We have been receiving complaints from consumers about water shortage over the last several days and have already informed our senior officials about the crisis.”

According to data obtained from CWasa, the Mohra and Madunghat water treatment plants have been hit hardest by rising salinity. Both plants have a daily production capacity of 90 million litres each.

From February 13 to 16, the Mohra plant remained shut for an average of seven hours a day due to excessive salinity in the raw water. During the four days, salinity in the plant area reached an average of 2,585 mg/l.

As a result, the plant’s average daily production dropped by around 20 million litres during the period.

At the Madunghat plant, salinity levels averaged 1,735 mg/l between February

13 and 16. The plant had to suspend operations for an average of two hours a day over the same period.

The shortage has put additional pressure on middle- and low-income residents, forcing many to buy water from the local market, said Muminul Hoque, a salesman of a private company and a resident of Kaibalyadham.

The state water supply agency had 1,02,525 registered connections as of October last year.



However, the agency has no official data on the number of consumers affected by the ongoing crisis.

According to CWasa, daily production has fallen to around 44-45 crore litres from 50 crore litres.

Residents in several areas have also complained about high salinity in the supplied water, saying it has become undrinkable.

“We used to drink CWasa water after boiling it. But now, the water has become undrinkable due to the high salinity. For the last several days, we have been

collecting water from a neighbour’s deep tubewell,” said Md Faruk, a resident of Enamul Hoque Road in Chawkbazar.

Maksud Alam, chief engineer of CWasa, said the increasing salinity in the Halda forced the closure of the two plants daily in the last three weeks, leading to a reduction in production.

“Our water production depends entirely on Kaptai Lake and the Halda River. During the dry season, the Halda’s upper reaches dry up, leaving us fully dependent on the Karnaphuli. But with less water in Kaptai Lake, the power plant has reduced its release, and the Karnaphuli’s flow has dropped. As a result, saltwater from the Bay of Bengal is entering the Karnaphuli and reaching the Halda, spreading salinity in both rivers,” he said.

Consumer rights activists voiced concern over the worsening salinity and water shortage.

Nazer Hossain, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, Chattogram division, said, “We informally requested CWasa to take preparations to tackle the crisis during the dry season, as the situation has remained unchecked for the last several years. But the agency failed.”

“We are demanding proper water supply for consumers as per their rights, especially during Iftar and Sehri times in Ramadan,” he added.

When asked, the CWasa chief engineer said, “As the lake’s water is gradually falling, we are now rationing the supply to consumers. This crisis is natural, and it cannot be resolved without rainfall.”

Sunflower field BNP leaders at helm of 6 city corporations

FROM PAGE 3

challenges for the farm’s staff. Despite the presence of guards, many visitors ignore restrictions, entering the field to take photographs and unintentionally damaging crops, said officials.

They said the farm authorities have deployed guards to tighten security and prevent damage to the flowers.

Officials also warned that constant human presence is deterring bees. Without these natural pollinators, the flowers cannot properly develop seeds.

“If pollination is hampered, many of the seeds will be sterile, and the production may fall short of the target,” Sharif said.

FROM PAGE 3
elections are held,” he told The Daily Star.

“The government should have avoided such a precedent so soon after a historic national election, which many expected would move away from the ‘winner takes all’ practice of monopolistic control over the politico-governance ecosystem,” he added.

Abdus Salam, the new DSCC administrator, previously served as deputy mayor of the undivided Dhaka City Corporation.

He was the member secretary of Dhaka Metropolitan BNP and currently serves on the advisory council of the BNP chairperson. He also acted

as chief coordinator of the election management committee for BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman in Dhaka-17 during the last election.

Shafiqul Islam Khan, the new DNCC administrator, was a BNP candidate from Dhaka-15 in the last election, where he lost to Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman. He is a former vice-president of the central Jubo Dal committee.

Nazrul Islam Monju, the new KCC administrator, is a central organising secretary of the BNP. He served 28 years as general secretary and president of Khulna Metropolitan BNP. A former MP, he was a BNP candidate in Khulna-2 in the last

election.

Reacting to his appointment, Monju said, “The prime minister has given me the responsibility to identify and solve Khulna’s problems. I will work on road development, easing traffic congestion at the three city entrances, eliminating mosquitoes, addressing waterlogging, and tackling drugs and extortion.”

Shawkat Hossain Sarkar, the new GCC administrator, is president of Gazipur Metropolitan BNP. He served as chairman of Kashimpur Union Parishad for 10 consecutive years until 2021.

Sakhawat Hossain Khan, the new administrator of NCC, is a senior vice-president of Narayanganj

Metropolitan BNP.

He gained prominence as a lawyer representing the plaintiff in the widely discussed seven-murder case. He also served as president of the Narayanganj District Bar Association and was a BNP candidate in the 2016 NCC election.

Abdul Quyum Choudhury, the new SCC administrator, is president of Sylhet District BNP. He had sought nomination for Sylhet-3 but did not receive it. During the last election, he served as coordinator for BNP candidates in all constituencies in Sylhet district.

He told The Daily Star, “I will review all aspects of the city corporation, assess its current condition, and then determine future plans. I hope to discharge this responsibility properly with everyone’s cooperation.”

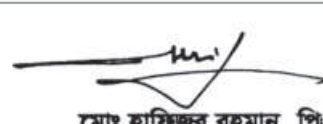
Meanwhile, following the appointments of the administrators, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Ishraque Hossain yesterday afternoon announced his candidacy for the DSCC mayoral post.

He had contested the same position in 2020 but was defeated.

On the other hand, on Sunday, the National Citizens’ Party (NCP) finalised its preliminary mayoral candidates for the two Dhaka city corporations.

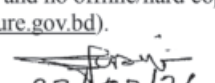
The party decided to nominate former interim government adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan for DSCC and Dhaka-18 constituency candidate Ariful Islam Adib for DNCC. (Our Sylhet correspondent contributed to this report)

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার	
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ	
অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়	
র‍্যাপিড অ্যাকশন ব্যাটালিয়ন-৭	
পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম।	
তারিখঃ ১১ ফাল্গুন ১৪৩২ বঙ্গাব্দ	২৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৬ খ্রিস্টাব্দ
“উন্মুক্ত যানবাহন নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি”	
র‍্যাব কোর্সেস সদর দপ্তর ন্যারক নং-৩৩০/৪১/অকেজো/যানবাহন/অপারেশন/৮৫ তারিখ ০২ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৬ মূলে আগামী ০৫ মার্চ ২০২৬ তারিখ রোজ বৃহস্পতিবার র‍্যাপিড অ্যাকশন ব্যাটালিয়ন-৭ (র‍্যাব-৭), পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম হতে সর্বমোট ১৩ টি অকেজো যানবাহন দরপত্র নিলামের মাধ্যমে বিক্রয় করা হবে। নিলামের শর্তসমূহ নিম্নরূপঃ	
১. মঞ্চালায়/বিভাগ	৮৫৫৭/এমটি/র‍্যাব-৭/১৭৫ তারিখঃ ২৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৬ ইং।
২. নিলামকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম	অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়, র‍্যাপিড অ্যাকশন ব্যাটালিয়ন-৭, পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম।
৩. সঙ্গ্রাহক সত্তা	অধিনায়ক, র‍্যাপিড অ্যাকশন ব্যাটালিয়ন-৭, পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম।
৪. দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি ন্যারক নং ও তারিখ	৮৫৫৭/এমটি/র‍্যাব-৭/১৭৫ তারিখঃ ২৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৬ ইং।
৫. বিষয়	নিশান সানি কার ০১ টি, মিস্ত্রিবিধি মাইক্রোবাস ০১ টি, এন্ড কল্টা কার ০১ টি, মিস্ত্রিবিধি ডাকল কেবিন পিকআপ ০১ টি, নিশান ডাকল কেবিন পিকআপ ০১ টি, মোটর সাইকেল হোভা সিটিজ ০৮ টি সর্বমোট ১৩ টি বিভিন্ন ধরনের যানবাহন দরপত্র নিলাম।
৬. জামানত/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট	অধিনায়ক, র‍্যাপিড অ্যাকশন ব্যাটালিয়ন-৭, পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম বরাবর ২৫,০০০/- (পঁচিশ হাজার) টাকার ব্যাংক ড্রাফট (ফেরত যোগ্য) জমা প্রদান সাপেক্ষে নিলামে অংশ গ্রহণ করা যাবে।
৭. দরপত্র তফসিলের (সিডিউল) মূল্য এবং দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের সময়সীমা	দরপত্র তফসিলের মূল্য ৭৫০/- (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা (অফেরত যোগ্য) র‍্যাব-৭, পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম এমটি অফিস হতে আগামী ২৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৬ তারিখ হতে ০৪ মার্চ ২০২৬ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময় সকাল ০৯০০ ঘটিকা হতে ১৫০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত সিডিউল করা যাবে।
৮. জামানত/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট জমা/গ্রহণ এবং দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	আগামী ০৫ মার্চ ২০২৬ তারিখ ১২০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত ব্যাটালিয়ন সদরে গ্রহণ করা হবে এবং ঐ দিনই ১২০০ ঘটিকায় নিলাম দরপত্র বাগ খোলা হবে।
৯. নিলাম যোগ্য মালামাল প্রদর্শন	নিলাম যোগ্য মালামাল প্রদর্শন পূর্বক ব্যাংক ড্রাফট করা যাবে।
১০. নিলাম মূল্য	বিস্মারটিএ কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত মূল্যের অধিক মূল্য ব্যতীত মালামাল নিলাম যোগ্য হবে না।
১১. অন্যান্য শর্ত	I. দি পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধি-২০০৬, রেগুলেশনস্-২০২৫ এবং সর্বশেষ সংশোধন মোতাবেক নিলাম কার্য পরিচালিত হবে।
১২.	II. সর্বোচ্চ দরদাতার নিকট নিলামকৃত দ্রব্যাদি হস্তান্তর করা হবে। সরকারি বিধি মোতাবেক ক্রেতা ১৫% ভ্যাট এবং ১০% আয়কর পরিশোধ করতঃ নিলাম যোগ্য মালামাল সংগ্রহ করতে পারবেন।
১৩.	III. নিলামের দিন হতে সর্বোচ্চ ০৩ (তিন) দিনের মধ্যে নিলামকৃত মালামাল সংগ্রহ করতে হবে।
১৪.	IV. কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে নিলামের সকল কার্যক্রম বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।


মোঃ হাফিজুর রহমান, পিসএসি
লেন্স কর্ণেল
অধিনায়ক
তারিখঃ ০২/৩৩/৩০০৪০০

 Chittagong Port Authority Marine Engineering Department					
e-Tender Notice			Dated: -02-2026		
SI No.	Tender ID No. & Ref No.	Contract Package No.	Name of works	Procurement method	Tender closing date & time
1	1220929	18.13.0000.812.07.020.25	Procurement of Different Accessories for Marine Engineering Department.	LTM	16-03-2026, 11:00am
2	1221530	18.13.0000.812.07.019.25	Procurement of Various Paint (Marine Quality) for Marine Engineering Department.	LTM	16-03-2026, 11:00am
3	1221354	18.13.0000.812.07.007.25	Procurement of Electrical Accessories for Marine Engineering Department.	LTM	16-03-2026, 11:00am
4	1221517	18.13.0000.812.07.017.25	Procurement of Various Paint (Marine Quality) for Marine Engineering Department.	LTM	16-03-2026, 11:00am

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 the e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<http://www.e procure.gov.bd>).


Executive Engineer (Marine)
Chittagong Port Authority

South Korea, Brazil sign key minerals, trade deals

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung held summit talks in Seoul yesterday with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, where they agreed to expand cooperation in sectors including trade, key minerals, technology and culture.

The leaders plan to elevate the relationship into a strategic partnership, and for the countries to work together to support stability on the Korean Peninsula, Lee said.

"Peace, built on conditions where conflict isn't needed, is the strongest form of security," the South Korean president told a press conference.

The leaders oversaw the signing of 10 memorandums of understanding spanning



trade and industrial policy, core minerals, digital economy including AI, agriculture, health and biotech, small-business exchanges and joint policing against cybercrime, narcotics and other transnational threats.

In earlier remarks, Lee said they adopted a four-year action plan to map out concrete steps for expanding bilateral cooperation, from strategic minerals to defence and space industries, as well as food security.

Brazil is South Korea's largest trading partner in South America. Lula said Brazil holds world's second largest rare-earth reserves and has substantial nickel deposits, and that his government hoped to attract investment from South Korean companies.



Japan's Emperor Naruhito, Empress Masako, and their daughter Princess Aiko, accompanied by Crown Prince Akishino, Crown Princess Kiko, their daughter Princess Kako, and their son Prince Hisahito, wave to visitors, during a public audience celebrating the Emperor's 66th birthday at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

US aims to provoke 'humanitarian catastrophe': Cuba

AFP, Geneva

Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez yesterday accused the United States of trying to trigger a "humanitarian catastrophe" in his country with an oil blockade he called an "aggressive escalation".

US President Donald Trump cut off key supplies of Venezuelan oil to Cuba after ousting Venezuela's president Nicolas Maduro, and has threatened sanctions on states that sell oil to Havana.

The United States "now imposes an energy blockade and intends to create a humanitarian catastrophe, using as a pretext the absurd assertion that Cuba constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat to its national security," Rodriguez told the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

Cuba, under a US trade embargo since 1962, has for years battled

extended power cuts and shortages of fuel, medicine and food, even before the Caribbean country of 9.6 million people lost its main oil supplier last month.

"These are criminal and illegal actions, constituting a ruthless collective punishment of the Cuban people," said Rodriguez. Trump described the Cuban government as an "extraordinary threat" to US national security. "Cuba does not threaten US or any other country," insisted Rodriguez.

"It is not Cuba that applies Monroe Doctrine national security and national defence strategies with the open purpose of domination, nor is it the country that deploys military forces and violates the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states."

Trump described the raid to seize Maduro as an update of Monroe Doctrine -- 1823 declaration by US president James Monroe that Latin America was closed to other powers.

LIBYAN BEACH 7 irregular migrants found dead

AFP, Tripoli

Seven irregular migrants from sub-Saharan Africa have been found dead on a beach east of Libya's capital, Tripoli, a Libyan Red Crescent worker told AFP on Sunday.

Among them were three children, the worker said, adding that there were likely other dead migrants who have not yet been found.

The Libyan Red Crescent did not provide details on the circumstances of their death. The organisation said in a statement it "recovered seven bodies from a beach in Qasr Al-Akhyar belonging to irregular migrants".

The bodies were found Saturday night in Qasr al-Akhyar.

Malaysia mulls law to curb premiership to two terms

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia introduced new legislation yesterday to restrict the prime minister's tenure to a maximum of two terms, a move aimed at boosting accountability and curbing the overreach of executive powers.

The Southeast Asian nation currently places no cap on how many terms a premier can serve.

Former leader Mahathir Mohamad held office for 24 years across two stints -- from 1981 to 2003 and again between 2018 and 2020.

Current Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in January announced a push for a two-term limit amid renewed calls for him to tackle corruption and improve governance.

In its election manifesto in 2022, Anwar's ruling Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition in 2022 pledged a two-term limit on the premiership.

But there has been criticism about the slow pace of reform, local media reports said.



China 'massively expanded' nuclear arsenal: US

AFP, Geneva

Washington yesterday accused China of dramatically swelling its nuclear arsenal, and doubled down on claims that Beijing has conducted secret nuclear tests, demanding again it be part of any future arms control treaty.

Washington said the lapsing earlier this month of New START -- the last treaty between top nuclear powers the United States and Russia -- presented the possibility to achieve a "better agreement" including Beijing.

China has publicly rejected calls to enter negotiations on a new three-way treaty.

Christopher Yeaw, the US assistant



secretary of state for arms control and nonproliferation, told the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva that New START had been seriously flawed and "did not account for the unprecedented, deliberate, rapid and opaque nuclear weapons build-up by China".

"Despite its claims to the contrary, China has deliberately and without

constraint, massively expanded its nuclear arsenal without transparency or any indication of China's intent or end point," he charged.

He added that US government officials "believe China may achieve parity within the next four or five years", without elaborating on what he meant by parity.

Both Russia and the United States have more than 5,000 nuclear weapons, according to the Nobel Peace Prize-winning campaign group ICAN.

But New START, which expired on February 5, restricted the United States and Russia to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads each -- a number Washington says China is fast approaching.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Principal

Nandail Govt. Technical School and College, Mymensingh

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Memo No. 57.03.6172.000.20.0001.26.072

Date: 23/02/2026

Corrigendum of e-Tender Notice (OTM)

Revised Memo 57.03.6172.000.20.0001.26.040 (dated 03/02/26) hereby supersedes and corrects the previous incorrect Memo No. 57.03.6172.000.20.0001.26.001.

Tender ID	Description of package	Tender publishing date & time	Last selling date & time	Tender closing date & time	Revised tender publishing date & time	Revised last selling date & time	Revised tender closing date & time
1218378	Procurement of Raw Materials and Retail Machinery	19/02/2026 10:00am	11/3/2026 1:00pm	11/3/2026 3:00pm	22/02/2026 07:00pm	15/3/2026 1:00pm	15/3/2026 3:00pm



Abdul Gafar

Principal (In-Charge)

Nandail Govt. Technical School and College

Mymensingh-2290

GD-373

প্রকল্প পরিচালকের কার্যালয়

* ইসলামী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের উন্নয়ন (৩য় পর্যায়)-১ম সংশোধিত- শীর্ষক প্রকল্প

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Memo No. IU/PD(3)/411/2026/99

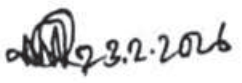
Date: 23/02/2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the following package:

Tender ID	Package No.	Description	Online tender notice publication date and time	Online tender closing date and time
1224107	IU/PD(3)/411/2025-2026/96	Supplying of utensils and crockery items for the 04 halls under Islamic University Development (3rd Phase)-1st Revised Project at Islamic University, Kushtia-7003	23-Feb-2026 12:00:00	10-Mar-2026 12:00:00

This is online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted on the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.



Dr. Md. Nowab Ali

Project Director

"Islamic University Development (3rd phase)-1st Revised"

Islamic University, Kushtia-7003

GD-375



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Ref No. 57.03.3532.301.06.001.26-3989

Date: 23/02/2026

Invitation for e-Tender

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

Sl	Tender ID	Package No.	Description	Tender publishing date & time	Tender last selling date & time	Tender closing and opening date & time
1	1180953	GPI/Rev/25-26/PG-09	Supply of Furniture for Security Section (4112314)	24/02/2026 10:00	15/03/2026 16:00	16/03/2026 10:00
2	1180954	GPI/Rev/25-26/PG-10	Supply of Chemicals for Chemistry Lab (3256102)	24/02/2026 10:00	15/03/2026 16:00	16/03/2026 10:30
3	1180959	GPI/Rev/25-26/PG-11	Supply of Sports Goods for Physical Education Section (3256107)	24/02/2026 10:00	15/03/2026 16:00	16/03/2026 11:00
4	1180963	GPI/Rev/25-26/PG-12	Supply of Raw Materials for CST ET ENT RAC FOOD Non Tech Lab (3256105)	24/02/2026 10:00	15/03/2026 16:00	16/03/2026 11:30
5	1180964	GPI/Rev/25-26/PG-13	Supply Of Education & Learning Materials for Various Dep. & Lab (Code: 4112312)	24/02/2026 10:00	15/03/2026 16:00	16/03/2026 12:00
6	1180969	GPI/Rev/25-26/PG-15	Supply of Office Accessories for Computer Lab (4112310)	24/02/2026 10:00	15/03/2026 16:00	16/03/2026 12:30
7	1180972	GPI/Rev/25-26/PG-17	Supply of Books For ET, Non-tech Technology (3211127)	24/02/2026 10:00	15/03/2026 16:00	16/03/2026 13:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for selling/downloading the e-Tender documents from the e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to scheduled date and time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd, +8809609112233, +8801762625528, +8801762625529).



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GD-381



200 prisoners in Venezuela begin hunger strike

Seek release under new amnesty law

AFP, Caracas

More than 200 political prisoners in Venezuela have launched a hunger strike to demand their release, family members told AFP on Sunday, after a new mass amnesty law was enacted following the ouster of former leader Nicolas Maduro.

The strike began Friday night at the Rodeo 1 prison on the outskirts of Caracas, with the inmates complaining the law excludes many of them because they are accused of terrorism.

“Approximately 214 people in total, including Venezuelans and foreigners, are on hunger strike,” explained Yalitza Garcia, mother-in-law of a prisoner named Nahuel Agustin Gallo, an Argentine police officer accused of terrorism.

“They decided Friday to go on hunger strike because of the scope of the amnesty law, which excludes many of them,” said Shakira Ibarreto, daughter of a policeman arrested in 2024.

Not all the inmates at this prison are joining the hunger strike, the relatives said.

The amnesty law was engineered by interim leader Delcy Rodriguez under pressure from the United States.



Firefighters work at the compound of a private enterprise damaged in Russian drone strikes in Ukraine's Odesa region yesterday. Two people were killed, regional governor Oleg Kiper said, adding that three people were wounded.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Developing Russia’s nuke forces an ‘absolute priority’

Putin says after expiry of new START treaty with US

AFP, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin said Sunday that developing Russia's nuclear forces was now an “absolute priority” following the expiry of its last remaining nuclear treaty with the US.

“The development of the nuclear triad, which guarantees Russia's security and ensures effective strategic deterrence and a balance of forces in the world, remains an absolute priority,” Putin said in a video message.

His speech came on Russia's “Defender of the Fatherland Day”, a holiday that is an occasion for military pomp and Kremlin-sponsored patriotism.

Putin vowed to keep

“strengthening the army and navy” and draw on military experience from the nearly four-year conflict in Ukraine.



All branches of the armed forces would be improved, he said, including their “combat readiness, their mobility, and their ability to operate in all conditions, even the most difficult”.

Putin's remarks came just two days before the fourth anniversary

of Russia's assault on Ukraine that sparked a war that has shattered towns, uprooted millions and killed large numbers on both sides.

Moscow and Washington – the world's two main nuclear powers – are no longer bound by any arms control pact since the New START agreement expired earlier this month.

But Russia said it would continue taking a “responsible” approach to strategic nuclear capability and respecting the limits set on its arsenal.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz yesterday denounced the “utter barbarity” of Putin in a speech a day ahead of the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Human rights under assault globally

UN chief warns, citing widespread abuses of int'l law

REUTERS, Geneva

Human rights are under assault worldwide, the United Nations chief warned yesterday, citing widespread abuses of international law and devastating civilian suffering in conflicts in Sudan, Gaza, and Ukraine.

“The rule of law is being outmuscled by the rule of force,” said UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, speaking at the opening of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Human rights are being pushed back deliberately, Guterres said, urging member states not to view international human rights as a menu to pick from.

Guterres strongly defended the UN human rights system which is in “survival mode” because of funding cuts, attacks on some of its experts and the US' withdrawal from one of its key universal rights accountability mechanisms.

“Humanitarian needs are exploding while funding collapses,” he said.

The UN human rights office, like other parts of the organisation, faces a budget crunch following the decision to cut funding by the United States - the top donor to the UN - as well as other governments.

Washington in February paid about \$160 million of the more than \$4 billion it owes to the UN.

UN rights chief Volker Turk echoed the concerns. In a “deeply worrying trend”, he warned that “domination and supremacy are making a comeback”.

US-BACKED RAID

Mexican military kills cartel boss ‘El Mencho’

27 soldiers died

REUTERS, Mexico City

One of Mexico's most notorious drug lords, Nemesio Oseguera, or “El Mencho,” was killed in a military raid on Sunday, sparking widespread retaliatory violence.

President Claudia Sheinbaum has been under mounting pressure from Washington to intensify her offensive against drug cartels blamed for producing and smuggling drugs, particularly the synthetic opioid fentanyl, across the border to the US. Mexico's Security Minister Omar Garcia Harfuch said that 27 members of the National Guard died in attacks in Jalisco state.

Oseguera, 60, the mastermind of the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) died in custody after being injured in a military operation by Mexican special forces in the town of Tapalpa on Mexico's Pacific coast in Jalisco state, according to



Mexico's defense ministry.

His corpse arrived in Mexico City on Sunday afternoon in a heavily guarded convoy of National Guard troops. Reuters had reported on Sunday that a new US military-led task force played a role in the raid led and carried out by Mexican forces. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt later posted on social media that the United States provided intelligence support.

Leavitt added that the Trump administration “commends and thanks the Mexican military for their cooperation and successful execution of this operation.”

After reports of El Mencho's death, cartel henchmen blockaded highways with burning cars and torched businesses in more than a half a dozen states. In Jalisco's popular beach resort of Puerto Vallarta, frightened tourists on social media described a “war zone” as plumes of dark smoke rose into the sky from around the bay. Air Canada, United Airlines, Aeromexico and American Airlines suspended flights in the area.



Protesters hold placards during a rally ahead of former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte's pre-trial hearings on alleged crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (ICC), in Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines, yesterday. Duterte personally authorised murders and hand-picked some of the victims of his “war on drugs”, the ICC heard.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Major storm hits US

New York mayor orders citywide travel ban

AFP, New York

New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani ordered a shutdown Sunday of the city's entire traffic network to all but emergency travel ahead of a massive snowstorm expected to hit the northeast United States.

Starting at 9:00pm Sunday to noon yesterday a “state of emergency closes the streets, highways and bridges of New York City for all traffic, cars, trucks, scooters and E-bikes,” Mamdani told reporters.

The ban will not affect essential workers or New Yorkers needing to travel due to emergencies, according to Mamdani. New York is home to over eight million people.

“We are asking New Yorkers to avoid all non essential travel,” the mayor said. “New York City has not faced a storm of this scale in the last decade.”

The fast-developing storm is threatening to pummel the US East Coast with a foot or more of snow beginning Sunday, just weeks after the region

recovered from another devastating weather system.

Meteorologists issued blizzard warnings for New York and parts of at least six states, warning Saturday that heavy snow and gale-force winds are forecast to slam all major cities along the densely populated Interstate 95 northeast corridor, including Boston, Philadelphia, and even Washington further south.

The NWS headquarters said snowfall rates of more than one inch (2.5 centimeters) an hour will occur at times along parts of the East Coast, with huge snow totals making travel nearly impossible. Power outages are likely.

The mega storm that swept across the eastern half of the country in late January was linked to more than 100 deaths nationwide, and slammed some cities with heavy snow and sleet that froze into rock-hard ice.

Meanwhile, more than 5,000 flights have been cancelled, data from the tracker FlightAware showed early yesterday.

Indian forces kill three ‘rebels’ in J&K

AFP, Mumbai

Clashes between security forces and militants in Indian-administered Kashmir killed three suspected rebel fighters on Sunday, the Indian army said, the second such incident in the disputed territory this month.

An army statement said three militants were killed during a military operation in the high-altitude Kishtwar district after it received “credible” intelligence of a rebel presence in the area.

The army added that security forces had recovered weapons from the site. Earlier this month, three militants were killed in another army operation in Kashmir.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since their independence from British rule in 1947.

Curiosity in action

How inquiry-based learning shapes lifelong learners

By Tanjina Hossain

In today's ever-changing world, where adaptability and critical thinking matter more than memorising facts, education must go beyond teaching children what to know – it must teach them how to think. The International Baccalaureate (IB) Primary Years Programme (PYP) embodies this belief by inspiring students to become curious inquirers, thoughtful collaborators and creative problem solvers who see learning as a lifelong pursuit.

At the heart of the PYP, a natural sense of curiosity inspires students to think critically about their world, act ethically within it and adapt with purpose and empathy. It cultivates more than academic excellence – it builds character, perspective and a sense of responsibility towards the greater good.

As one of my poems often shared with PYP teachers and students puts it:

“Every question asked opens a new door,
Every answer found leads to learning much more.
Young hands that create, and open minds that roam,
Inquiry makes learning a joy to explore.”

In PYP classrooms, teachers guide students to think deeply, make connections across subjects and translate abstract ideas into practical understanding. The result is a transformation of education from a routine exercise to an authentic journey of discovery.



Inquiry in action: Health and well-being

In the PYP, children learn through units of inquiry where they explore ideas for five to six weeks. Each unit has a central idea, such as “The choices we make affect our health and well-being”.

Within this unit, students investigate how everyday choices – from sleep and nutrition to exercise and hydration – affect their physical and emotional health. They begin not with textbooks, but with their questions, observations and personal reflections. Through this process, they learn to connect what they study in school to real-life experiences.

The learning in the PYP is transdisciplinary, drawing on different subject areas to develop an understanding of the central idea. Science lessons unpack how the digestive process works, while mathematics becomes practical as students record and analyse their personal sleep patterns or water intake, and survey peers about food habits.

Through connected learning experiences, students read scientific texts in their language class and



interview healthcare professionals. Throughout this process, learning becomes personal. Students begin to recognise the direct connection between knowledge and action, developing both self-awareness and responsibility for their own well-being.

Exploring energy and sustainability

Every choice we make affects the world around us, and our students are discovering this through experience. In our PYP classroom, curiosity drives learning as students explore where energy comes from, how it is used and the impact it has on the environment. They learn about the different types of energy and how factors, such as government decisions and local conditions, affect how people access and use them.

However, this curiosity does not stay confined to the classroom. Students conduct energy audits at home and school, observe how energy is used and record simple actions they can take to save energy. They design awareness posters and propose community initiatives, such as walking to school or carpooling, discovering how even small actions can create meaningful change.

Through this journey, curiosity and critical thinking grows into a sense of responsibility and a belief in their ability to make a difference, showing that learning about energy and sustainability is both meaningful and empowering.

A lifelong mindset of inquiry

Across these examples, inquiry-based learning helps students move beyond content mastery to develop the mindset of lifelong learning. Students are not merely absorbing information – they are constructing knowledge, developing agency and seeing themselves as capable learners.

Each question sparks curiosity, every investigation strengthens independence and every reflection nurtures compassion, creativity and confidence. In the end, curiosity is not just a spark at the beginning of learning – it is the fuel that sustains it. Through inquiry, students are not only prepared to navigate the complexities of the future but to help shape it thoughtfully, responsibly and compassionately.

Tanjina Hossain is the Primary Years Programme Coordinator at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka.

Mob attacks on Star, Prothom Alo scripted

FROM PAGE 1

Alo building marked out by a red cross, said, “These are India’s powerhouses in Bangladesh. This country will not be safe until all Indian agents, including Prothom Alo and Daily Star, are ‘Joy Bangla-ed’.”

Originally, “Joy Bangla” is a Bangla phrase meaning “Victory to Bengal”, and has been in use since the 1971 Liberation War. In recent years, however, “Joy Bangla Kora” has taken on a very destructive meaning on social media, often used to imply destroying or eliminating something or someone.

Another Facebook post appeared on the same day in a different group titled “Bharot Birodhi Shoinik [Anti-India Soldier]”, which has more than 100,000 members. The post, made by a group moderator named Md Fakrul Islam, read, “Burn the offices of Prothom Alo and Daily Star.”

The direct calls to violence began intensifying from the night of December 17, roughly 32 hours before the actual event. They continued the next day.

Almost all the posts were made by profiles with real-sounding names, but with little to no personal information or regular social activities. Their online behaviour mostly involves posting and amplifying hate speech.

VIOLENCE UNFOLDS, INCITEMENT INTENSIFIES

Since the late evening of December 18, 2025, the atmosphere was already tense in Dhaka and elsewhere. Emotions ran high across social media immediately after the death of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, a potential candidate in the February election and convener of Inqilab Moncho, was announced around 9:40pm.

Soon, groups of protesters marched towards Shahbagh in the capital, which helped set the stage for the violence that unfolded throughout the night and the next day.

Findings show social media calls for violence were most frequent between 11:30pm on December 18 and 1:00am on December 19. This was the period when crowds began gathering, preparing for the assault, and carrying out the actual attacks on the two newspapers.

Around 11:15pm on December 18, a small group of individuals first gathered outside the Prothom Alo premises in Karwan Bazar, marking the start of a violent night. Over the next 30 minutes, the mob grew in size and became increasingly aggressive, and by 11:45pm, the attacks began.

Between 10:00pm and 11:00pm – just before the mob assembled in front of the Bangla daily – there were at least nine direct calls for violence posted on Facebook.

“Burn down Prothom Alo, demolish Daily Star to the ground, blow up the Indian Embassy and Indian hegemony,” one post declared. It was posted from a profile in a Facebook group called Pinaki Bhattacharya - পিনাকী ভট্টাচার্য, which has 157,000 members.

Pinaki Bhattacharya is a Bangladeshi national and social media influencer, currently living in France, with 3.1 million followers on Facebook. Pinaki is not among the administrators of this group, and during the violence, he made no posts directly calling for attacks. However, he has long positioned himself as a harsh critic of the two dailies and labelled both as pro-Indian outlets.

The volume of incitement surged over the next 45 minutes, between 11:00pm and 11:45pm, with 34 more unique posts directly calling for violence against the two newspapers. To draw attention, many posters used tactics such as tagging all their followers or adding hashtags like “#highlight”.

Sakib Ahmed was among those posting during that period, as people were starting to congregate. He posted in the “Bharot Birodhi Churanto Andolon” public group as well as the other group called “Bharot Birodhi Shoinik”, writing, “Prothom Alo, Daily Star, Kalbela! Tomorrow is their last day!”

Together, the two groups have around 180,000 members.

Sakib, 21, is an undergraduate psychology student at Government Azizul Haque College in Bogura. “I saw that people were on the streets and I knew what would happen next. So I posted that to spread the word,” he told The Daily Star in January 2026. He insisted that no one instructed him to make the post.

THE PROVOCATEURS

Fifteen minutes after the attack began on Prothom Alo, US-based Bangladeshi influencer Elias Hossain issued his first direct call for violence of the night. “Come to Prothom Alo,

FROM ONLINE INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE ON THE GROUND		
TIME	POST NARRATIVE	ON THE GROUND VIOLENCE
Dec 17 midnight-- Dec 18 10:30pm	“Indian agents,” “enemies of the revolution,” “traitors.”	No on the ground attacks yet
10:30pm--11:15pm	“Burn it down, demolish it,” specifying the “Karwan Bazar” location	People gather outside Prothom Alo
11:15pm--11:45pm	“Tonight is the right time! If the target is missed, we will regret it again,”	Crowd increases; slogans intensify
11:45pm	Live broadcasting of the attack	Vandalism begins
11:50pm--12:00am, Dec 19	“End (Grave) of Prothom Alo,” “Next target...”	Fire at Prothom Alo; staffers evacuate
Dec 19 midnight--12:20am	“On the soil of Bengal, the grave of Prothom Alo has been dug. Next target: The Daily Star.”	Attackers move towards The Daily Star
12:11am	“Grab them one by one and slaughter them”	Chhyanaut, Udichi threatened, not yet attacked
12:20am--12:30am	“First The Light [Prothom Alo] is finished, Daily Star is de,,,d [dead].”	Crowds intensify at The Daily Star
12:30am--1:00am	“Daily Star done, well done boys”	Vandalism and arson
1:00am--onwards	“Fire at Prothom Alo and Daily Star offices due to an electrical short circuit!”	Journalists trapped; rescue delayed
1:30am--2:00am	“Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Chhyanaut – all legal targets”	Chhyanaut attacked
7:30pm	“Crush all those patronised by India like Udichi”	Udichi attacked, set on fire



Despite repeated requests Meta didn't cooperate with us to deactivate accounts found to be responsible for inciting and mobilising violence.



“To all my friends, I am deeply sorry that I failed you. I made scores of calls to the right people, trying to mobilise help, but it did not arrive in time.”

Shafiqul Alam, then-press secretary to CA



(Clockwise) The ruins of Udhichi after being set on fire by mob on December 19, 2025; The interiors of The Daily Star after the flames were extinguished, taken the morning after the attack; Furniture lies broken after mob vandalised Chhyanaut around 2:00am on Dec 19, 2025

PHOTO: STAR



everyone. Half the job is done,” he posted on Facebook at midnight. Within just one hour, the post garnered nearly 77,000 engagements.

Elias, once a journalist, posted his next call for violence five minutes later, writing, “Not a single brick of Prothom Alo must be left.” The post drew more than 95,000 engagements over the next hour.

Offline, the mob set fire to Prothom Alo around the same time.

Another post came five minutes later. “If the army comes to save Prothom Alo, give them the due answer.” This post received more engagement than each of the previous ones.

At 12:20am on December 19, he posted, “Prothom Alo done, now come to Daily Star everyone.”

Within four minutes of that, employees of The Daily Star rushed downstairs to escape the premises, only to find a mob gathering and hurling stones at the building. The Daily Star journalists and employees immediately ran upstairs and took shelter on the roof, where they were trapped in thick smoke until they were rescued after 4:00am. That post reached 77,000 people in one hour.

Elias went on to publish four more posts over the next three hours, each calling for further violence or justifying it. One post falsely claimed that no staff members were trapped inside the building, insisting instead that everyone had already escaped. Together, these four posts amassed more than 2.67 million engagements.

From midnight to half past midnight – the interval between the attacks on Prothom Alo and The Daily Star – direct calls for violence from other actors also intensified. During this period, 87 posts (excluding those from Elias) calling for or celebrating the attacks generated more than 30,000 engagements.

Other influential users provoked violence in similar language.

Former Vice-President of Zia Cyber Force, Meer Zahan, posted at 1:00am on December 19: “The list is not very long, add more if there are any. 1. Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, Dhanmondi. 2. Chhyanaut, Dhanmondi. 3. Udichi. 3. Prothom Alo. 4. Daily Star. Unless these are ‘Joy Bangla-ed’, their jumping around won’t stop.”

By 1:30pm on December 19, hours before the attack on the Udichi office was underway, this post had more than 8,500 reactions and was shared more than 300 times.

Additionally, various pages that claim to post satire and memes built hostile narratives against the two newspapers. Satirical Facebook page Anwar TV posted a photocard with images of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star buildings and wrote, “Prothom Alo and The Daily Star are the largest enablers of Indian hegemony in the country.”

On the ground, this online hate translated into a physical blockade of emergency rescue services, putting lives at risk. TV footage shows the mob obstructing fire service vehicles as they attempted to reach The Daily Star, forcing them to turn back, as 29 journalists and staffers remained trapped inside the burning building.

Around 12:35am on December 19, the attackers broke through the steel gate and glass doors of The Daily Star building and entered the premises. Inside, they set fires on the first three floors, destroyed computers and equipment and looted valuables from different floors.

A similar scene unfolded at Prothom Alo.

At 1:45am, an initial Fire Service unit arrived near the Karwan Bazar metro station but was intercepted by the mob, forcing it to retreat.

The siege only began to ease when a portion of the mob diverted towards The Daily Star, thinning the crowd. Only then were the joint forces able to secure the perimeter, finally allowing firefighters to begin operations at 2:30am, nearly three hours after the fire was first ignited.

“That day, we faced several obstacles while trying to reach the accident sites. However, with the cooperation of the army, members of the law enforcement agencies, and many others present, we were ultimately able to reach the locations and douse the blaze,” Lt Col Mohammad Tajul Islam Chowdhury, Director (Operations and Maintenance) of the Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence, told The Daily Star on February 8.

During the attacks, Bangladeshi law enforcers and security forces stood by as spectators. Several officers would later say, off the record, that they had received no instructions to intervene.

CHANGING TARGETS, SHIFTING NARRATIVES

Two hours after the assault on The Daily Star and three hours after the arson attack on Prothom Alo, social media posts began identifying Chhyanaut Bhaban in Dhanmondi as the next target. The call to attack Chhyanaut was repeated at least 15 more times before the institution was finally set ablaze around 1:30am on December 19, leaving the building heavily damaged.

The name appeared online as a target as early as 11:38pm on December 18. One post, by a user named Faruk Khan, listed four locations – Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Chhyanaut and the Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre – with their addresses. Exploiting Hadi’s death to justify the attacks, this poster wrote: “Tonight is the perfect time. If we

miss the target, we will regret it again until we lose another Hadi.”

Faruk’s profile contained little personal information beyond a “Daripalla” badge (Daripalla – weighing scales – is Jamaat’s electoral symbol). His post was copied verbatim by other users. At that moment, at least one newspaper was already under attack.

Between the start of the violence and the following morning, 958 unique Facebook posts directly called for or celebrated the attacks, generating 360,455 likes, shares, and comments. And eight public Facebook groups with a combined membership of about 1 million at the time of the attack, published 88 posts inciting or justifying the violence, none of which were removed in real time.

The fourth major target, the central office of Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigosthi on Topkhana Road near Jatiya Press Club, was not attacked until around 7:00pm on December 19. A fire broke out around 7:30pm and was brought under control 30-40 minutes later. No casualties were reported, but the building suffered extensive damage.

Threats against Udichi had circulated since the night of December 18. At least 10 Facebook posts called for the organisation to be destroyed and its members killed.

One post shared at 12:11am on December 19 read: “Chhyanaut, Udichi, Megh Mallar – we have to grab them one by one and slaughter them.” The account that posted it appeared anonymous and contained almost no personal information.

From late December 18 into the early hours of December 19, the tone of online content shifted. Direct incitement gave way to celebration, satire, and mockery, with many users praising the attacks using

expressions such as “Alhamdulillah” meaning “praise be to Allah”. Some users framed the assaults as the “right thing to do” or a “necessary step”.

At least 38 users circulated narratives seeking to justify the violence, including claims that “closing The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and the Indian Embassy would make the country 95 per cent healthy”.

“As long as Prothom Alo and The Daily Star remain in this country, Indian hegemony will remain. Now is the time to bury Prothom Alo and Mujibism,” read one post. Various users also spread misinformation immediately after the arson that the fire on both media started from a gas stove or electric short circuit.

A LONG-RUNNING CAMPAIGN

Findings show that the online posts that directly called for or celebrated attacks outnumbered narrative-building posts by roughly 20 to 1, and generated nearly 30 times more engagement.

But this adversarial campaign against The Daily Star and Prothom Alo did not begin in December 2025.

For over a year beforehand, two Bangladeshi diaspora influencers, Pinaki Bhattacharya and Elias Hossain, had been consistently advancing a hostile narrative against the two outlets on Facebook and YouTube. They falsely accused the two papers of “serving Indian interests” and discrediting some of their reporting during Sheikh



Hasina’s government.

Over time, a range of pages with satirical names mimicking the two newspapers, such as “Delhi Star,” “Delhir Alo,” and “Prothom Alu”, appeared on social media, frequently spreading misleading claims about their editors and editorial stance.

In November 2024, crowds gathered outside both newspapers for several days, chanting slogans that labelled them “Indian agents” and Sheikh Hasina’s “enablers.” Around the same time, Pinaki announced a “Ziafat”, a ceremonial cow slaughter, outside the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star offices as part of a protest-celebration.

The December 2025 attacks followed a renewed wave of incitement triggered by the shooting of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi in Dhaka on December 12. Posts circulating after the shooting essentially claimed that Prothom Alo and The Daily Star had “set the ground” for the incident.

After Hadi’s death on December 18, this narrative intensified sharply, falsely branding the newspapers as “Indian agents”, “cultural fascists”, “agents of foreigners”, “associates of militant dramas”, “associates of the Pilkhana and Shapla killings”, “enemies of the revolution”, and “traitors”, making it a catalyst to organise a mob.

In an article earlier this month, an Indian fact-checking portal (boomlive.in) wrote how, for more than a year, Pinaki and Elias have run parallel and often overlapping campaigns on Facebook and YouTube “to instigate and organise a series of mob attacks on political and media institutions in Bangladesh, thanks, partly, to their proximity to power”.

META, GOVT TURNED BLIND

Despite days of threats circulating

Mob attacks on Star, Prothom Alo scripted

FROM PAGE 8

on social media and over 20 hours of coordinated violence across four locations, the responses from Bangladeshi law enforcement and Meta came largely after the fact.

Speaking to The Daily Star in January, AHM Shahadat Hossain, additional inspector general (Media and Public Relations) at Police Headquarters, said, “Almost all major police units monitor social media to identify provocative or instigating posts that could undermine law and order or disrupt communal harmony.”

However, senior law enforcement sources said the police cyber wing lacks macro-monitoring tools and, in practice, monitors social media much like an ordinary user. Their capacity is largely limited to manual browsing, making it difficult to detect coordinated spikes in harmful content.

In a statement on December 23, Irene Khan, UN special rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, wrote, “When hate speech and smear campaigns endanger the safety of media outlets, journalists,



interim government’s failure to address impunity and uphold media and artistic freedom.”

As violence unfolded, the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) reported 165 pieces of content to social media platforms from December 18 midnight through December 19, it told The Daily Star.

It added that many posts were reported for removal in the early hours of December 19 and that it held an online meeting with senior Facebook officials the same day, urging the platform to remove or block harmful content in the interest of public safety.

“When hate speech and smear campaigns endanger the safety of media outlets, journalists, artists and civil society leaders -- and no corrective action is taken by government or platforms -- it is only a matter of time before words translate into violence,” said Irene Khan, UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression.



Protesters gather at Shabagh on the night of December 18, 2025. PHOTO: STAR

artists and civil society leaders -- and no corrective action is taken by government or platforms -- it is only a matter of time before words translate into violence.

“The mob attacks [on Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Chhyanaut and Udichi] did not emerge in a vacuum but are the consequences of the

At 7:13pm on December 19, about 20 hours after the first attacks began, the BTRC sent an urgent letter to Meta warning that online support for Hadi’s death and calls for violence against media institutions were escalating.

The regulator said that despite “repeated requests from government

calls to the right people, trying to mobilise help, but it did not arrive in time,” he wrote, adding, “I am deeply sorry that I failed you.”

On December 22, four days after the attacks, SN Nazrul Islam, additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, briefed the media for the first time. “If we had gone into

VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROTOCOL
TOOK BACK SEAT

The Police Regulations, Bengal (PRB) provides a “ladder of force,” outlining the steps for managing public disorder. Under this legal framework, police are required to escalate force incrementally.

- Police or a magistrate must declare the assembly “unlawful” and issue a clear warning to disperse.
- Police should attempt to contain the crowd by forming a barrier between them and their intended target by standing in a cordon or using water cannons.
- If barriers are breached, the police are allowed to resort to baton-charging. The protocol dictates targeting the lower body to minimise life-threatening injuries.
- If batons fail to disperse the mob, the next step involves firing teargas or rubber bullets.
- When all four steps fail, police can use lethal weapons, but only at specific targets and below the waist.

VIOULATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAWS

The UN Rabat Plan of Action, an international human rights framework, is often used to assess when speech qualifies as incitement to violence. It identifies six indicators for determining incitement: context, the speaker’s position and influence, intent, the nature of the content, its extent, and the likelihood of resulting harm.

- All six indicators were strongly present in the case of the attack on Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Chhyanaut and Udichi.
- The context involved political tension, public emotion over a potential candidate’s death, and a long running anti media narrative.
- The content was disseminated by influencers with large followings, content creators, political activists, and satirical pages – actors capable of shaping crowds and behaviour.
- The intent was explicit: the posts used immediate, instructional language such as “tonight itself,” “right now,” and “if you miss the target you will regret it.”
- The nature and extent of the content heightened the risk, as posts named specific institutions and locations making real world violence more likely.
- The scale of dissemination was also significant: hundreds of posts within hours, live broadcasts during the attacks, real time incitement, and celebratory content immediately afterward.
- All this underscored both the severity of the violence and the magnitude of potential harm.

suffered a trauma just a year ago and we had to work to bring them to their current state. The election is ahead and if there were any police casualties, I would not be able to proceed [into the election] with them.”

He added, “The fact that no human life was lost in such a major incident is what we see as our achievement.”

DMP Commissioner Sheikh Md Sazzat Ali did not respond to our requests for comments for this story.

Asked about the police response at a press conference on February 9, he said, “The attack on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo happened at 11:00pm. However, due to traffic congestion, I could not send my officers there on time. If there hadn’t been a traffic jam, we could have arrived much sooner.”

The now-former home adviser, Lt Gen (retd) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, could not be reached even after several attempts. The Daily Star called and texted him in early February 2026.

META’S POLICY VIOLATION

All of the social media content analysed in this investigation breached Meta’s Community Standards on violence and incitement, particularly posts that identified specific targets and instructed mobs to attack them.

Meta’s own policy states: “We aim to prevent potential offline harm that may be related to content on Facebook... We remove language that incites or facilitates serious violence.” It further says the company removes content and disables accounts when it believes there is “a genuine risk of physical harm or direct threats to public safety,” and that it assesses language and context to distinguish casual statements from credible threats.

Despite this, a substantial portion of the analysed posts from December 15 to 19 were still accessible in late January, more than a month after the attacks.

Meta did remove the Facebook page of influencer Elias Hossain on the afternoon of December 19, 2025, several hours before the BTRC sent its formal letter to the company, but more than 12 hours after the offices of Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and Chhyanaut had already been vandalised, looted and set on fire.

METHODOLOGY

Facebook posts from December 13-19, 2025, were collected by searching keywords such as Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, Delhi Star, Prothomalu, Chhyanaut and Udichi both during and in the aftermath of the attacks. The analysis then focused on posts that sought to legitimise attacks on these four institutions, explicitly called for such attacks, or mocked or celebrated the attacks in the aftermath.

Reporting: Zyma Islam
Additional reporting and research: Dismislab team, Mir Rowanak
[Zyma Islam is a senior reporter and Mir Rowanak is an intern at The Daily Star.]

New ICT chief prosecutor vows sincerity

FROM PAGE 1

follow legal procedures and would not be driven by political motives or personal vendettas. “Those who have not committed wrongdoings will not face harassment. But for the real perpetrators, the message is equally clear; they will get the punishment they deserve.”

Rejecting any notion of political influence, Aminul said the tribunal operates solely under the law. “There cannot be any directives beyond the law. Any such directive will not be acceptable during my tenure,” he said, responding to questions about whether the government has given him any specific instructions regarding the trials.

Asked about perceptions that, as a lawyer perceived to be aligned with BNP, his appointment might slow proceedings or favour members of the Awami League, Aminul dismissed the concern.

“Under a party-backed government focused on accelerating national progress, the pace of judicial proceedings should increase, not slow down,” he said, adding that

the tribunal’s work would continue without bias.

He also pledged continuity, saying that he would follow the approach of the previous prosecution team while working to improve efficiency. “I will apply all my skills and knowledge to manage these cases more effectively,” he said, seeking cooperation from all stakeholders.

Outgoing chief prosecutor Tajul expressed confidence that the trials over crimes against humanity committed during the July uprising would continue smoothly under Aminul’s leadership.

“I hope that under the new chief prosecutor, the tribunal will continue the trials properly,” Tajul said, adding that there was no cause for concern over the continuity of proceedings.

A journalist asked, “You earlier mentioned that the law minister gave a green signal and that the government has goodwill. We understand you may have had meetings. Can you elaborate on this?”

Tajul replied, “Initially, we were told by the government that we should continue as we are, and

we acted on that understanding. Then, yesterday [Sunday], I was informed that the government wishes to replace someone here. I asked if they wanted me to resign voluntarily, and I was told no, that it was unnecessary.

“The idea was that, through a natural process, when someone is replaced, I would step aside at that time. There was no need for an unnecessary resignation. I felt that resigning at this stage would not be justified.

“...There is no need to resign. A resignation could have sent a different message, which is why I considered it appropriate to continue until the formal replacement,” Tajul said.

Tajul formally handed over the charge to Aminul at the Chief Prosecutor’s Office around 2:15pm, exchanging greetings and presenting him with flowers.

Aminul, in turn, praised Tajul’s contributions, saying he would be remembered by the nation for his role, and expressed hope for continued unity in meeting public expectations.

ICT prosecutor alleges corruption against

FROM PAGE 2

case, in which law enforcers opened fire on protesters, killing at least six people. Sultan claimed that despite a video clip showing Sub-Inspector Ashrafal instructing others to open fire, he was made a witness instead of an accused. “I have that video. Anyone can see it if needed,” he said.

He further questioned why Assistant Police Commissioner Al Imran Hossain was reportedly relieved from the Abu Sayed killing case in Rangpur, alleging that several witnesses had mentioned Imran’s name before the court.

Sultan also alleged that former IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun was made a state witness without justification. “Under his direct instructions, his force emptied the laps of hundreds of mothers,” he said. “Not only IGP Mamun, but in the Ashulia case, Abzal was also made a state witness in exchange for money. A syndicate of three or four people

has been involved in this cycle from the beginning,” he alleged.

He further claimed that “Tajul and Shishir Monir’s syndicate” allowed notorious police officers, including the IGP, to evade trial and turned the chief prosecutor’s office into a money-making tool.

“Are these not acts of corruption? Is this not a betrayal of the blood of the martyrs?” he asked.

When asked about the allegations at a press conference yesterday, Tajul Islam said, “These are personal allegations, of which I have no knowledge. We have investigated such claims, and they are completely false. It is unfortunate if anyone spreads such stories out of personal malice.”

“The tribunal’s proceedings have been fully transparent and proven in court. Anyone making false accusations with dishonest intent should remember that the entire nation, along with the media, has witnessed how transparently the

trials have been conducted,” he added.

Prosecutor Gazi Monawar Hossain Tamim told The Daily Star, “These allegations have been made against me out of personal malice. I serve as a prosecutor administrator, and many people visit my office every day. I firmly state that no one can prove any accusation against me.”

Supreme Court lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir expressed surprise at the allegations, calling them “incredible and whimsical, based on surmise and conjecture.”

“If my learned friend has any credible information, he can disclose it to the public. I am always ready to face any credible allegation,” he said.

Asked whether he would investigate the corruption allegations, newly appointed Chief Prosecutor Aminul Islam said he would act if he received a formal complaint.

“Today is not the day for such queries,” he said.



A trailer carries an armoured US military vehicle as American troops head toward the Iraqi Kurdistan region, withdrawing from the Qasrak military base in northeastern Syria, near Qamishli, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Key Maoist guerrilla surrenders: India

AFP, New Delhi

Indian government officials have said the surrender of a senior Maoist guerrilla commander heralds the “final phase” to end the decades-long Maoist insurgency.

New Delhi has launched an all-out campaign against the insurgents, also known as Naxalites after the village in the Himalayan foothills where the Maoist-inspired insurgency began nearly six decades ago, and vowed to end the rebellion by the end of March.

Maoist commander Thippiri Tirupati, also known as Devji, had been active for years in Chattisgarh state.

“This is the final phase,” Chattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma said in a statement posted on social media late Sunday. “It marks a powerful step towards the complete eradication of armed Naxalism.”

The Naxalite rebellion once held sway across nearly a third of the country, with an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 fighters at its peak in the mid-

2000s, but it has been dramatically weakened in recent years.

More than 10,000 people have died in the insurgency.

The Maoists say they are fighting for the rights of marginalised indigenous people in forest regions, where mining companies also eye valuable resources.

Since 2024, more than 500 Maoist rebels have been killed, including some of the top commanders, according to government figures.

Home Minister Amit Shah has repeatedly vowed to crush the rebels.

BAFTA 2026 ‘One Battle After Another’ dominates



Robert Aramayo celebrates his Leading Actor win

Ryan Coogler’s ‘Sinners’ made history with three wins, becoming the most awarded film by a Black director at the BAFTAs. The film secured Original Screenplay, Supporting Actress for Wunmi Mosaku, and Original Score for Ludwig Göransson.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The 79th British Academy Film Awards took place at London’s Royal Festival Hall on 23rd February (Bangladesh time), marking one of the key milestones in this year’s awards season. Hosted for the first time by Scottish actor Alan Cumming, the ceremony brought together leading figures from British and international cinema to honour films released in 2025.

The evening combined established names with emerging talent, reflecting both the strength of the UK industry and its growing global reach. With several closely contested categories and a wide spread of nominations, this year’s BAFTAs highlighted a competitive field and offered early signals ahead of the Oscars.

Leading the nominations, Paul Thomas Anderson’s *One Battle After Another* received 14 nods, followed closely by Ryan Coogler’s *Sinners* with 13. Chloé Zhao’s



The Cast and crew of One ‘Battle After Another’ pose with their awards at BAFTA

Hamnet and Josh Safdie’s *Marty Supreme* earned 11 nominations each, setting the stage for a highly competitive race.

One Battle After Another emerged as the night’s biggest winner, taking home Best Film and Best Director for Paul Thomas Anderson. The film also won Adapted Screenplay, Cinematography, Editing, and Supporting Actor for Sean Penn, cementing its status as the most celebrated film of the evening.

Ryan Coogler’s *Sinners* made history with three wins, becoming the most awarded film by a Black director at the BAFTAs. The film secured Original Screenplay, Supporting Actress for Wunmi Mosaku, and Original

In the technical categories, *Frankenstein* stood out, winning Costume Design, Makeup & Hair, and Production Design. Jessie Buckley won Leading Actress for *Hamnet*, while Robert Aramayo claimed Leading Actor for *I Swear*. Aramayo’s victory was a highlight of the night, as he also took home the EE Rising Star Award, triumphing over contenders including Timothée Chalamet and Leonardo DiCaprio.

Sentimental Value made history as the first Norwegian film to win a BAFTA, taking home Best Film Not in the English Language, while British international feature Oscar submission *My Father’s Shadow* won Outstanding British Debut.

The ceremony featured several memorable performances, including Jessie Ware’s emotional rendition of Barbra Streisand’s *The Way We Were* during the In Memoriam tribute. The segment honoured icons such as Diane Keaton, Terence Stamp, Catherine O’Hara, Rob Reiner, Gene Hackman, Robert Duvall, Tom Stoppard, Brigitte Bardot, Lalo Schiffrin, Michael Madsen, Val Kilmer, and Indian actor Dharmendra.

India had a strong presence at this year’s BAFTAs, reflected both in its representation on stage and among the winners. Bollywood actor Alia Bhatt made her debut as a presenter, greeting the audience with a warm *Namaskar* before announcing the winner for Best Film Not in the English Language.

A significant highlight came with the Manipuri film *Boong*, produced by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani and directed by Lakshmi Priya Devi, which won Best Children’s & Family Film. Accepting the award, Devi spoke about the ongoing unrest in Manipur and expressed hope for peace.

Read the full winners list online

WHAT’S THE HAPS?

‘Alo’

Amid blackened walls and melted machinery, artist Mahbubur Rahman’s *Alo* transforms the fire-scarred premises of Prothom Alo into testimony and resistance. Visitors walk through ruin and reflection, confronting violence against journalism while witnessing art insist on memory, accountability, and light returning after devastation and silence toward collective courage and renewal together again.

DATE: THURSDAY-SATURDAY | FEBRUARY 19–28, 2026
TIME: 11:00AM–1:00PM AND 3:00PM–5:00PM
VENUE: PRAGATI INSURANCE BHABAN, 20-21, KARWAN BAZAR

Bratya Basu plans film with Mosharraf Karim and Chanchal Chowdhury



Indian filmmaker and politician Bratya Basu has expressed interest in bringing Bangladeshi actors Mosharraf Karim and Chanchal Chowdhury together for a future film. Basu, who previously directed Mosharraf Karim in *Dictionary* and *Hubba*, has recently wrapped shooting for *Shekhor*, starring Chanchal. According to the actor, the director hopes to collaborate with both performers in a single project and may also appear on screen alongside them.

Chanchal shared that discussions began during the shooting of *Bonolota Express*, where he reunited with Mosharraf Karim after years. He also highlighted the importance of renewed cross-border collaborations to expand Bengali cinema’s global reach.

NEWS

Gas blast during sehri

FROM PAGE 16
Shakhawat’s son Shawon, 17, and daughter Umme Ayman, 10; Suman, 37, and his son Anas, 7, and daughter Ayesha, 4; and Shipon, 32, were also badly burnt.

The victims are originally from Barura upazila in Cumilla.

They were first taken to the Burn and Plastic Surgery unit at Chattogram Medical College Hospital and were later referred to Dhaka.

Nur Jahan Begum Rani died on the way to Dhaka, confirmed Md Jamshed, a family member.

Dr Rafique Ahmed, head of CMCH burn unit, said all patients had inhalation injuries along with burns. “Shakhawat, Rani, and Pakhi suffered 100 percent burns.”

The atmosphere at the burn unit was heavy, filled with the sharp scent of antiseptics and the steady hum of monitors.

The injuries were severe: victims suffered burns that went deeper than the skin, while inhaling superheated air and toxic gases left their lungs badly damaged.

For the children, Umme Ayman and Ayesha, the trauma was both physical and psychological, lying in a ward surrounded by family members too injured to comfort them.

From his hospital bed, Shakhawat briefly spoke to reporters.

“We were sitting at the dining table after sehri and waiting for Fajr prayer,” he said weakly. “Suddenly, there was a loud bang, and fire blew the door open in an instant.”

Fire Service officials suspect a gas leak as the primary cause of the blast but said they can confirm only after a full investigation.

“When gas accumulates in a closed space, even a small spark – from a light switch, refrigerator, or lift – can trigger an explosion,” said Khalilur Rahman, senior station officer at Halishahar Fire Service.

The explosion occurred around 4:30am. Five firefighting units rushed to the spot and managed to control the blaze around 5:30am.

Police cordoned off the six-storey building as a safety measure. Neighbours gathered in small groups, shaken by the incident, which has renewed concerns over residential safety and gas line maintenance in densely populated areas.

During a visit, the correspondents found that the front doors of all the flats from the second to the fourth floor were blown to pieces following the shockwave of the blast. The elevator doors had also fallen apart

on those floors. Each floor contains four flats.

Upon entering the flat from which the explosion originated, as confirmed by CCTV footage, there was visible fire damage in the dining area and the bedrooms. Household items were found scattered around the kitchen. Due to the intense heat, the ceiling fan and other furniture in the apartment had melted.

Building owner Didarul Alam, a US expatriate who was staying at a different block, said the building was constructed 16 years ago with a pipeline gas connection, and the line is fully functional.

He does not believe the gas leak came from the pipeline, insisting that he kept it properly maintained.

SM Shakhawat Hossain, assistant explosives inspector at the Department of Explosives, Chattogram, told The Daily Star that his team visited the site to investigate the origin of the blast.

He also confirmed the blast originated from the second-floor flat.

“Primarily, we assume that there was a gas leak and it accumulated inside the flat for a long time. Later, a spark or fire set off the explosion,” he said.

Four hacked

FROM PAGE 16
Khalil’s wife, Monjura Begum, alleged that around 50 to 55 men from the rival group attacked their house before dawn.

“After having sehri, we were preparing to sleep when 50 to 55 people from Tarapur village, belonging to former chairman Khayruzzaman Khayer Molla’s group, attacked our house with local weapons,” she said.

“They dragged my husband Khalil Sheikh and son Tahajjat Sheikh out of the house and hacked them repeatedly with sharp weapons. They also hacked Ferdous to death before leaving.”

During the clash, Osikur Fakir from the rival faction was critically injured and taken to Narail district hospital, where he later died.

“Operations are underway to arrest those responsible for the killings. Whoever is involved in this incident will not be spared,” said SP Shikder.

Oli Miah, officer-in-charge of Narail Sadar Police Station, said the process to file a case over the incident was underway.

Additional police have been deployed in the area, and patrols have been strengthened to prevent further violence. The situation remains tense but under control, he added.

2 held over rape

FROM PAGE 2
We later found her around a kilometre away from our home in an orchard near where the incident occurred.”

After being rescued, the victim was taken to Tazumuddin Health Complex. As her condition deteriorated, she was later moved to Bhola 250-bed General Hospital.

Senior consultant at the hospital Dr Suraiya Yasnoor said, “We have received a rape victim who was bleeding profusely and sustained severe injuries to her genitals. We’re providing her with necessary treatment.”

Contacted, Bhola’s Superintendent of Police Md Shahidullah Kawsar said, “We’ve spoken to the victim. She told us she was gangraped and gave us three names. The victim’s father filed a case naming those three as prime accused. We’ve already arrested two, and efforts are underway to arrest the others, who are currently on the run.”

He added, “The victim appeared slightly intellectually disabled. She can, however, speak and was able to identify the culprits.”

Iran vows ‘ferocious response’

FROM PAGE 16
represented by envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Reuters yesterday reported that Iran has indicated it is prepared to make concessions on its nuclear programme in talks with the US in return for the lifting of sanctions and recognition of its right to enrich uranium, as it seeks to avert a US attack.

Both sides remain sharply divided – even over the scope and sequencing of relief from crippling US sanctions – following two rounds of talks, a senior Iranian official told Reuters.

Analysts say the move suggests Tehran is trying to keep diplomacy alive and stave off a major US strike.

The official said Tehran would seriously consider a combination of sending half of its most highly enriched uranium abroad, diluting the rest and taking part in creating a regional enrichment consortium, an idea periodically raised in years of Iran-linked diplomacy.

Iran would do this in return for US recognition of Iran’s right to “peaceful nuclear enrichment” under a deal that would also include lifting economic sanctions, the official said.

In addition, Iran has offered openings for US companies to participate as contractors in Iran’s large oil and gas industries, the official said, in negotiations to resolve decades of dispute over Tehran’s nuclear activities.

“Within the economic package under negotiation, the United States has also been offered opportunities for serious investment and tangible economic interests in Iran’s oil industry,” the official said.

The White House did not respond immediately to queries on the issue.

The fear of an imminent conflict has also prompted several foreign countries to urge their citizens to leave Iran. India yesterday joined Sweden, Serbia, Poland and Australia in calling for its citizens – estimated at 10,000 in the country by the foreign ministry – to leave Iran.

13 secretaries removed

FROM PAGE 16
contractual appointments was expected once the new government took office, adding that some reshuffling of regular secretaries was also on the cards.

According to another source from the Cabinet Division, Public Administration Adviser Ismail Zabiullah, Minister of State for Public Administration Abdul Bari, and Prime Minister’s Principal Secretary ABM Abdus Sattar met Tarique Rahman yesterday afternoon. Immediately after that meeting, a significant directive was sent to the public administration ministry’s APD (Appointment, Promotion, and Deputation) wing. Afterwards, the ministry began issuing a series of official orders.

In another development, the government removed former secretary AHM Nurul Islam from his position as chairman of the Board of Directors of Eastern Lubricants Blenders PLC (ELBPLC), according to an official memorandum sent by the Energy and Mineral Resources Division to the chairman of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation.

Secretariat sources indicate that the prime minister aims to restructure the administration to make it more efficient by implementing necessary changes. For this reason, he has been working from the Secretariat since his first day in office.

According to sources close to the head of government, the premier does not wish to see the traditional, stagnant atmosphere in government offices, inside or outside the Secretariat. He is also regularly monitoring the attendance of ministers and secretaries.

In light of the developments, various ministries and divisions have begun to take precautions.

Yesterday, the law ministry took a strict stance against irregularities in office attendance. Officers and employees were warned that they would face disciplinary action under existing laws and regulations if they failed to reach the office by 9:00am or leave the workplace early without permission.

Requesting anonymity, a joint secretary of the Cabinet Division told The Daily Star, “The changes in the administration have only just begun. The bigger changes lie ahead.”

President to convene first session of 13th JS on Mar 12

FROM PAGE 16
session of the new parliament within 30 days of publication of the gazette of the parliamentary election results.

He does so in accordance with the written advice of the prime minister.

The gazette of the MPs elected in the 13th Jatiya Sangsad election held on February 12 was published on February 13.

The national election was held in 299 of the 300 parliamentary seats. Results have been announced for 297 seats.

Of them, BNP won 209 seats, and three of its alliance partners won three seats. BNP candidates were also leading in the two seats where results remain suspended.

On the other hand, Jamaat-e-Islami won 68 seats; its 11-party alliance partner, the National Citizen Party (NCP) won six seats; Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis won two seats; and Khelafat Majlis won one seat.

Islami Andolan won one seat, and independent candidates won seven seats.

As the speaker of the 12th Jatiya Sangsad, Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury reportedly resigned from the post, a senior BNP leader is expected to preside over the first sitting, said an official of the parliament secretariat.

Immediately after the House goes into its maiden sitting, the speaker and deputy speaker will be elected, and they will be sworn in by the president.

After the speaker and the deputy speaker are elected, the session is likely to be adjourned for 15 to 20 minutes for their oath-taking.

The new speaker will then preside over the session.

The Business Advisory Committee of the new parliament will also be formed at the first sitting with the new speaker as its head.

The committee will decide the tenure of the inaugural session and other businesses of parliament.

The main task of the treasury bench in the first sitting is to place those ordinances before the House which the government wants to turn into law.

The interim government promulgated or amended a total of 130 ordinances during its 18-month tenure.

The standing committees on different ministries are likely to be formed during this session.

President Shahabuddin will also address the first sitting of the session in line with the constitution, according to sources at the parliament secretariat.

The cabinet will approve the speech, and MPs will discuss the president’s speech.

At the first sitting, the House will also adopt an obituary motion.

LAW BEYOND THE BOOKS

Rethinking the child labour laws in Bangladesh



KAUSHIK DUTTA and TASNUR ISLAM TOMA

Child labour in Bangladesh is typically associated with factories and hazardous industries. Yet a recent experience by the law students from East west University revealed another reality of the street children whose labour remains largely invisible in law and policy discourse. Recently, a group of law students from East West University Law Clinic, with the support of a social organization Pother Ishkul, organised a series of sessions with street children under the “Street Law” programme conducted by

Special provisions should be introduced in the labour legislation for street children under fourteen years, recognising their compulsion to work for survival; guidelines should be developed for small-scale employers employing street children, that focus on safety, fair wages, and non-exploitation; and transitional education programmes should be implemented that combine part-time education with part-time work, enabling children to gradually shift away from full-time labour while maintaining their livelihood.

the Law Clinic. Through open conversations they engaged with seventeen children between the ages of seven and seventeen, mostly living around the Gulistan Stadium Gate No. 3 area. These children worked in small tea stalls, Sharbat shops, scrap collection or sweeping. Their daily earnings ranged between 100/- to 300/-, barely enough to survive. The Bangladesh Labour Act 2006 recognises

three categories of workers based on their age-children under fourteen who are prohibited from employment, adolescents between fourteen and eighteen who are allowed to work under certain conditions, and adults being eighteen or above who are fully eligible for employment. What the law failed to recognise is the existence of children under fourteen who are compelled to work for survival, placing them entirely outside regulation. It is true that international instruments such as the ILO Conventions and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasise protecting children from hazardous labour; however, it is equally important that law does not remain isolated from local realities. The law cannot function with the assumption that in Bangladesh every child under the age of fourteen has family care or social protection.

The grim consequences of this legal vacuum become even more apparent through individual stories. The law students met Nahid, a fifteen-year-old boy who collects scrap materials during the day and also works as a sweeper. He earns about 300/- a day, and deposits the entire amount with a shop owner. He has no idea how the money is kept, or whether he will ever be able to claim it back. This is not an isolated story, across Ershad Road and beyond, hundreds of children live in the same way. Another boy, Arif, aged seventeen, works at a tea stall and is forced to pay 100/- everyday as chanda even with his irregular income. Fifteen-year-old Nur A-Alam collects loads of scarps across Dhaka, doing such heavy lifting as no child should do. Twelve-year-old Rafi works with his uncle in a small tea-stall and has never been inside of a classroom.

Fourteen-year old Jibon sweeps the street around bus terminals and has to share his little income with his younger brother. Another child, Badar, the youngest aged only seven years, does not yet work, but his future hangs in uncertainty. A local group is trying to get him enrolled in a school but this is merely a glimmer of hope in an otherwise bleak reality.

Conversation with the employers of these children revealed another layer of complexity which is not reflected in the law. It should be noted that these children are employed by small vendors working within the informal economy themselves, many of whom struggle to make ends meet. One of such employers, a vendor, locally known as Chandu Mama, explained that many of the children who work under him do not have any birth certificates. Without identification documents, they lack recognition as a citizen, and cannot access education or healthcare. He recalled a time when he had to use his own identification papers to register the marriage of one boy who had no legal identity of his own. Another shopkeeper explained that the children working in his stall do not have fixed hours, nor do they get proper medical attention when sick. Even toilets and bathing facilities require payment, making hygiene a daily challenge for these children.

From a legal perspective, these employers are in violation of the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006-section 34 in particular. Apart from employing children under fourteen, which is expressly prohibited by the Act, these employers also do not maintain employment records, cannot ensure occupational safety, and are unable to provide

most of the facilities mandated by the Act. If they are forced to comply fully, the inevitable outcome would be the dismissal of all underage workers. And once again, it is the same children who will bear the brunt.

Labour laws must therefore respond to the lived reality, particularly that of the street children, and policies must be framed in a way to accommodate the real needs. It is important to clarify that the solution certainly does not lie in legalising child labour, but in recognising that pushing a vast majority of working children outside the scope of legal protection is no solution either. Based on their field visit, the students at East West University's Law Clinic propose that a more viable approach lies in developing a regulatory framework that govern child labour in a manner that prioritises and safeguards the best interests of the child above anything else. Accordingly, special provision should be introduced in the labour legislation for street children under fourteen years, recognising their compulsion to work for survival; guidelines should be developed for small-scale employers employing street children, that focus on safety, fair wages, and non-exploitation; and transitional education programmes should be implemented that combine part-time schooling with part-time work, enabling children to gradually shift away from full-time labour while maintaining their livelihood.

The writers are students of law, East West University, who conducted research with their peers as part of a project with the Law Clinic Programme under the supervision of Oishe Rahman, Lecturer, East West University.

COURT CORRIDOR

Staying criminal proceedings due to pending civil suits

RAJIB KUMAR DEB

Stay of criminal proceedings refers to the issue of not proceeding with a criminal case until a formal judicial order reopens it because the matter is sub-judice or pending in another court. The concept comes into play especially when there is a pending civil litigation on the same subject-matter because it entails a potential risk of contradictory judicial decisions.

Although our Constitution and other statutory laws do not give an explicit answer to whether criminal proceedings should be stayed when civil suits remain pending, several legal principles and judicial precedents evolved within the constitutional and statutory ambit, adding to the court's discretion to stay the proceedings in appropriate cases.

The procedural aspects of the stay of criminal proceedings are founded upon the interpretive guidance derived from the constitutional provisions such as right to protection of law (article 31), right to fair trial (article 35), and the writ jurisdiction of the High Court Division (HCD) (article 102). On the other hand, statutory provisions from the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 (CrPC) and the Code of Civil Procedure 1908 (CPC), and several binding legal precedents supplement these constitutional protections. For



instance, sections 344 and 561A of the CrPC contemplate judicial interventions in staying criminal proceedings. The former permits adjournment or postponement of criminal proceedings, while the latter grants inherent power to the High Court Division to prevent abuse of process and to secure the ends of justice. These provisions, in different circumstances, have been applied, recognising that with parallel proceedings arising out of the same transaction may warrant an adjournment of the criminal proceedings. As of judicial precedents having binding force in genuine circumstances, the court decided whether it

would apply its inherent powers in disputes, amongst others, relating to the same financial transactions, title declaration, cases of forgery, and fraud as well as prosecution under Negotiable Instrument Act 1881 (NI Act). In case of parallel civil and criminal proceedings involving the same parties arising out of the same financial transactions, the HCD invoked its inherent power under section 561A, and stayed criminal proceedings under section 138 of the NI Act, in view of a pending Artha Rin Adalat suit (2016). The Court opined that to deposit a sum in both proceedings is likely to cause undue hardship on the accused.

However, in a 2013 case, the Appellate Division opined that a civil suit under section 42 of the Specific Relief Act, 1877 on the same cause of action, does not bar prosecution under section 138 of the NI Act. It viewed that the accused could present defence against the allegation of fraud within the criminal trial itself. Same views have been upheld in some other cases recorded in 9 BLC (HCD) 88, 11 BLC 116, and 49 DLR 258.

Again, in a 1991 case, we saw that where forgery is alleged in a criminal proceeding, and at the same time, documents in question

Although our Constitution and other statutory laws do not give an explicit answer to whether criminal proceedings should be stayed when civil suits remain pending, several legal principles and judicial precedents evolved within the constitutional and statutory ambit, adding to the court's discretion to stay the proceedings in appropriate cases.

are also the subject of a civil proceedings, the AD held that criminal proceedings may be stayed if the civil suit was filed first and involves the same documents. In scenarios involving simultaneous prosecutions under section 420 of the Penal Code 1860 and section 138 of the NI Act, no direct judicial precedent in Bangladesh currently exists. However, Article 35(2) of the Constitution and Section 403 of the CrPC (prohibition of double jeopardy) offer guidance on avoiding redundant oppressive prosecutions. In 56 DLR 622, the HCD acknowledged that the existence of a counter case arising from the same incident can justify an adjournment. This reflects a commitment against contradictory outcomes.

In summary, in the absence of any explicit rule, it is left to the court's discretion to decide whether it would stay a criminal proceeding due to a pending civil suit. The rule on staying proceedings reflects a complex interplay of statutory discretion, constitutional safeguards, and judicial activism ensuring that the legal process is not misused as a tool of oppression, while upholding the integrity of criminal adjudication.

The writer is Judge (Joint District and Sessions Judge) at Bangladesh Judicial Service.

The \$30 billion bill comes due

Govt must generate more revenue, spend less to ensure fiscal sobriety

There is a fundamental law of economic gravity: you have to pay for what you borrow. For Bangladesh, that reality amounts to more than \$30 billion this fiscal year. Next year, the country's public debt servicing is expected to near \$34 billion, according to projections from the International Monetary Fund. Bangladesh's total public debt has climbed to roughly \$189 billion, reaching 41 percent of GDP in the 2024-25 fiscal year, up from 39 percent the year before.

To the layperson, these are just large numbers. But to the IMF and economists, they are flashing warning lights indicating "rollover risk"—a prospect that the government will find it increasingly difficult, and punishingly expensive, to borrow new money just to repay old loans. The vulnerability is rooted in ballooning government expenditure and weak revenue collection. The country's tax-to-GDP ratio currently languishes below seven percent. With the state coffers remarkably thin, the strain of repayment is thus becoming severe. In the current fiscal year, servicing domestic debt alone is projected to absorb a staggering 89 percent of government revenue, a figure significantly higher than that of peer nations.

The new finance minister, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, has announced that the government intends to raise the tax-to-GDP ratio up to eight percent in the upcoming budget. But the IMF makes it clear that a far more aggressive improvement in revenue mobilisation is necessary. Without it, extreme scenarios, such as a major natural disaster, could send the debt service-to-revenue ratio surging past 110 percent by the end of the decade.

When a government is strapped for cash, it typically turns inward, borrowing heavily from domestic banks. The collateral damage of this strategy is the private sector, which gets "crowded out" as less money is left for businesses to borrow and expand. Furthermore, the IMF warns that the financial system's capacity to absorb all this government debt is under strain. If the government is forced to rely on the central bank to prop up insolvent banks, it risks losing its grip on short-term interest rates. That is a classic recipe for a vicious economic cycle. Currency depreciation and soaring inflation could further erode the country's debt sustainability.

Economists and IMF officials aren't the only ones anxious about the country's debt trajectory. In a note to his successor, former finance adviser Salehuddin Ahmed acknowledged that Bangladesh's debt risk has slipped from "low" to "moderate." While the debt level remains technically tolerable by IMF benchmarks, Ahmed pointed out an inconvenient truth: loan repayments have now surpassed what the government earns from exports or domestic revenue.

To avoid being crushed by its own obligations, the government must generate more revenue and spend less. Expanding the tax net will require bureaucratic resolve, but there is no alternative to bringing more people into the formal tax system. At the same time, the government must trim its own budget, scaling back inefficient subsidies and debt-fuelled vanity projects. Fiscal sobriety is rarely glamorous, but the alternative—a slow-burning crisis driven by heavy borrowing—is far worse.

Rein in mugging gangs

Mohammadpur, Adabor residents deserve to live in peace

A recent report by this daily paints a frustrating picture of continued mugging and extortion instances in Dhaka's Mohammadpur and Adabor areas, leaving the residents and business owners in these neighbourhoods in a constant state of fear. What's worse is that these attacks don't just occur at night but even in broad daylight, as though the criminals have no care for the repercussions of their actions, pointing to a systemic failure to curb this menace for years.

In one reported incident, a 10th-grader was severely injured on Sunday night after muggers hacked at his legs with sharp weapons in Mohammadpur's Nabinagar Housing area. Earlier, on Friday night, muggers knifed a member of the Special Protection Battalion (SPBn) of police inside the Rayerbazar Intellectuals' Graveyard. And as per a report in this daily, on Saturday night, a group of miscreants allegedly attacked the employees of an embroidery factory in Adabor, shortly after they were paid their monthly wages. The incident left at least two individuals wounded. Several CCTV videos have also been circulating, which show how extortionists and gangs attack pedestrians and commuters during the day.

Police have taken action and made arrests in some of these cases, but those actions have not been effective enough to stop the crimes. In fact, several initiatives were undertaken in the past to deal with this issue, but they rarely produced a permanent solution. It is clearly affecting the quality of the residents' lives, so much so that they have staged demonstrations on several occasions demanding respite from these criminals.

The police chief recently asked field-level officers to take strict measures against criminals. The newly elected Dhaka-13 MP also said surveillance of the area would be beefed up with increased patrolling and the installation of 550 CCTV cameras and 20 police boxes. These are promising initiatives. Given the historical vulnerability of Mohammadpur and adjacent areas to mugging and other petty crimes, authorities need to be pragmatic in their approach. The priority should be dismantling all local gangs and extortion rings. The local police must be equipped with adequate resources right away so that they can do their job effectively. Now that we have an elected government in place, it is up to them to prioritise the safety of residents in areas such as Mohammadpur and Adabor where violence and crime fester in every corner.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Russia invades Ukraine



On this day in 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, triggering Europe's largest ground war since World War II and upending global security.

Planning beyond an LDC graduation deferment



MACRO MIRROR
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Views expressed in the article are
the author's own.

FAHMIDA KHATUN

The question of deferring Bangladesh's graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status has predictably resurfaced following the formation of the BNP government. Last year, the business community strongly advocated for the deferral, stating deep concerns about the country's preparedness for a post-LDC reality. Although the interim government initially appeared to favour a deferment, it later decided not to pursue it. Now, the Economic Relations Division (ERD) of the new government has sent a letter to the chair of the United Nations Committee for Development Policy (CDP) requesting an extension of the preparatory period for LDC graduation until November 24, 2029.

Last November, Bangladesh submitted its 2025 annual report to the CDP, confirming that it continued to meet all three LDC graduation criteria and remained on track for graduation in November 2026 despite economic shocks, while progressing with its Smooth Transition Strategy. The three criteria are per capita gross national income (GNI), human asset index (HAI), and economic vulnerability index (EVI). To delay graduation now, the government will have to convince the CDP that the country's socio-economic situation has deteriorated beyond its capacity to absorb post-graduation shocks.

In its latest letter, the government argued that concurrent global and domestic shocks such as the pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, financial instability, and political upheaval have disrupted preparation, strained macroeconomic stability, and constrained reform efforts. Increasing trade uncertainties and the risk of losing preferential access might weaken its competitiveness. Therefore, a delay would support reform consolidation and economic stabilisation.

The UN's LDC classification carries significant practical benefits, including preferential market access, special and differential treatment under World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, concessional financing, and targeted technical assistance. Clear quantitative criteria determine graduation from this status, which requires a country to meet at least two of the three criteria in two consecutive triennial reviews. Alternatively, a country may qualify for

graduation if its GNI per capita reaches at least three times the prescribed threshold, even if it does not satisfy the other two criteria.

The CDP, under the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), reviews each country's performance every three years and recommends graduation once the criteria are met. ECOSOC then endorses this recommendation, and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) formalises the decision, typically providing a three-year preparatory period for the country to adapt to losing LDC-specific support.

Deferring LDC graduation is an exceptional measure and is not automatic or solely based on domestic preferences. The CDP might suggest



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

postponement for the next triennial review. Alternatively, a government can formally notify the UN secretary-general of its concerns, allowing the matter to be discussed by ECOSOC or the UNGA. In rare cases, when severe economic downturns cause a country to fall below the graduation thresholds, the process is halted, and the country remains classified as an LDC until it meets the criteria again.

Deferrals of LDC graduation are rare, but not unprecedented. The Solomon Islands secured a three-year postponement in 2023 after catastrophic natural disasters and civil unrest severely weakened its development prospects. Similarly, Angola secured a delay when global oil price shocks pushed its economic indicators below the required thresholds; its strong diplomatic backing helped secure UN approval. In

than policy preferences alone. For Bangladesh, this presents a challenge. Although its economy has recently slowed and faces structural issues, the country's key graduation indicators remain above UN thresholds, making deferment on empirical grounds hard to justify.

Regardless of the outcome of the deferment request, Bangladesh needs to prepare for leaving LDC status. Graduation signifies economic growth but it also requires major adjustments. Benefits like preferential trade access, concessional financing, and special treatment under global trade rules will gradually decrease. Without proactive measures, these changes could impact exports, fiscal stability, and jobs. The emphasis should therefore move from arguing over classification to enhancing domestic capacity and resilience.

Firstly, institutional and regulatory reforms are crucial for fostering sustainable and competitive growth. Robust institutions will underpin Bangladesh's resilience after graduation. Strengthening trade negotiation skills to negotiate free trade agreements (FTAs) and preferential treaties with major markets is needed. Regulatory systems covering standards, quality, and intellectual property should meet international standards. Agencies handling trade and investment must develop analytical capabilities to predict market changes and adapt strategically to global challenges.

Second, fiscal and governance reforms should be implemented to sustainably manage increasing fiscal pressures. As concessional financing diminishes after graduation, boosting domestic resource mobilisation will become essential. Tax reforms should expand the tax base, cut exemptions, and enhance compliance. Tariff reform needs to strike a balance between keeping prices competitive and meeting revenue objectives. Ensuring transparent governance, fighting corruption, streamlining public procurement, and reforming the judicial system are vital for boosting investor confidence. Effective debt management and maintaining sufficient foreign exchange reserves will also support resilience against external shocks.

Third, Bangladesh needs to expand beyond ready-made garments to maintain sustained growth and long-term economic resilience. Investing in sectors like light engineering, agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, and IT services is crucial. Skills development and technical training should match the needs of emerging industries. Encouraging innovation via research collaborations, technology adoption, and public-private partnerships will elevate the economy along the value chain and boost global competitiveness.

Fourth, strengthening social protection systems and consolidating human capital improvements are crucial. A transition from LDC might raise economic risks for some groups, so robust social safety nets, retraining initiatives, and employment support can act as safeguards. Ongoing investment in health and education, as well as inclusive policies, can sustain human capital achievements and ensure sustainable development rather than increased inequality.

Bangladesh is at a critical juncture. Its future achievements will depend less on retaining LDC status than on implementing strategic reforms, strengthening institutions, and fostering collective determination to turn graduation into a chance for resilient, inclusive growth.

Bangladesh's renewables drive must include women



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WASIUR RAHMAN TONMOY

As Bangladesh slowly advances towards clean and sustainable energy, the transition is not only about cutting carbon emissions. It is also about exploring new avenues for job creation, economic growth, and a fairer and more equal society. And for this to be successful, women must be at the centre of it.

Women play a crucial role in managing domestic energy—through daily decision-making regarding cooking fuels, electricity use, and energy conservation—and when energy prices go up or energy shortages occur, women are the first to feel the pinch. But in the renewable energy sector, women's role is still largely confined to being users, not designers, technologists, entrepreneurs, or decision-makers.

According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), women constitute only about 32 percent of the total global workforce in the renewable energy sector, with even lower representation in technical and decision-making positions. Bangladesh, despite its positive growth in the energy sector, has fallen short

in ensuring maximum women's participation.

According to the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA), the contribution of renewable energy to the country's total electricity generation is about 5.4 percent; however, the country has made great strides in solar energy. Some six million solar home systems have already been installed, providing electricity to over 18 million people. And failing to utilise women in this rapidly expanding industry is a serious economic oversight, especially when the country is doing its best to strike a balance between economic development and climate obligations.

Lessons can be learned from other nations in this regard. In Nepal, government-backed schemes for renewable energy have opened doors for women entrepreneurs in solar and micro-hydro power. In India, women-led self-help groups (SHGs) are now skilled at setting up and looking after solar pumps to provide affordable clean energy for irrigation, gaining both income and respect within their communities. Meanwhile, Germany's

Energiewende initiative has been instrumental in getting young women to consider careers in renewable energy research and engineering. These instances demonstrate that real change can happen when policies are robust and investment in training is prioritised.

For Bangladesh, the key starting point is capacity building. More young women need to be encouraged to pursue science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in their higher education journey. Scholarships, internships, and partnerships between universities and renewable energy companies can help create a bridge between academic education and employment. Technical and vocational education and training institutions can also offer short courses in solar power installation, maintenance, and green entrepreneurship to build a skilled labour group in the renewable energy sector.

At the community level, rural women need to be provided with training that is practical and accessible. The training should be designed in such a way that it takes into consideration the realities of social life, such as mobility restrictions and caregiving responsibilities.

Policy reform is another crucial step. To institutionalise women's involvement, gender-responsive budgeting in the energy sector is essential, along with support for businesses hiring and training women and the establishment of gender

targets within the national energy strategy. Furthermore, civil society, development partners, and the private sector must work together to track progress and ensure accountability.

The renewable energy sector is a technical area, and it is also a rapidly growing market. Women-owned businesses can provide, install, and maintain solar home systems, biogas plants, and mini-grids. With microfinance and business skills, these businesses can provide jobs and boost local economies while helping to address climate change.

Bangladesh has pledged to meet the sustainable development goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 7 on universal and clean energy, SDG 8 on decent work, SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, and SDG 13 on climate action. All these goals are interlinked, and achieving one goal helps to advance another.

It is important to remember that the country's renewable energy transition is not just about megawatts and technology, but also the people. If women are trained, supported, and given leadership opportunities across the renewable energy value chain, Bangladesh will not only move faster towards clean energy; it will also move closer to a more equal and resilient future.

The shift to renewable energy is already underway. Now is the time to ensure that women are not standing on the sidelines but rather helping lead the way.

Rethinking the Bangladesh-US trade deal following the legal blow



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

M.G. QUIBRIA

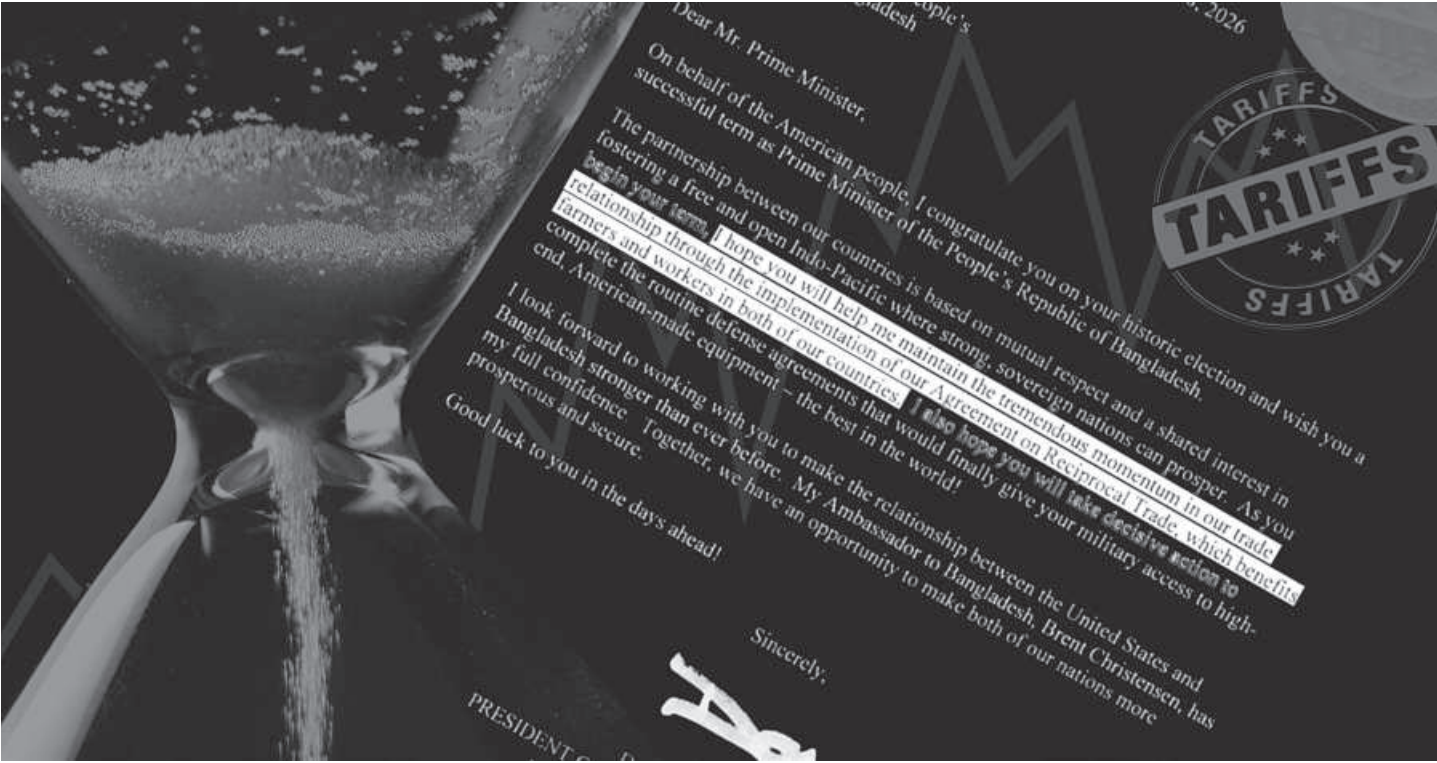
On February 18, a White House congratulatory letter sent to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman urged Dhaka to “maintain the tremendous momentum” in implementing the recently signed Agreement on Reciprocal Trade and to take “decisive action” on pending defense agreements. The message was unmistakable: trade access is being bundled with security alignment. The published text of the trade deal confirms exactly that.

For weeks beforehand, Bangladeshis were told to wait while a deal with the United States was being negotiated under non-disclosure agreements. Now that the text is public, secrecy makes sense: this is not a deal most informed citizens would have endorsed. What has been signed amounts to a comprehensive constraint on Bangladesh's economic sovereignty. The US gets binding commitments across trade regulation, digital policy, agricultural standards, procurement, and security alignment. Bangladesh, by contrast, gets conditional tariff relief—conditional on compliance as judged unilaterally by Washington and backed by the threat of tariff reimposition.

The interim government rushed to finalise this deal just before the election, locking in long-term commitments it will neither implement nor publicly defend. That is not just bad governance; it borders on being immoral. One does not bind future elected governments to restrictive obligations when one will not be there to bear the consequences.

The interim government signed the deal as if the world were still unipolar. It is not. China is Bangladesh's largest trading partner. India shares a border and deep economic ties with us. The Gulf, ASEAN, Japan, South Korea, and Europe all represent critical economic relationships. Yet this agreement requires Bangladesh to align its export controls with US policy, mirror the latter's security-related trade actions, and potentially distance Dhaka from economic partners Washington considers threats. The clause obliging Bangladesh to “adopt or maintain a complementary restrictive measure” in support of US security actions imports US geopolitical conflicts into Bangladesh's trade policy.

In a multipolar world, small and medium powers survive by maintaining balance.



VISUAL: AFIA JAHIN

Vietnam trades with all major blocs. Indonesia hedges carefully. Even US allies like Singapore and South Korea carefully preserve economic ties with China while maintaining security relationships with Washington.

This agreement, as it stands, goes beyond controlling what Bangladesh does; it constrains what deals Bangladesh may make with other countries. Dhaka may not, for instance, sign agreements that use technical standards deemed “incompatible” with US standards, including health and safety measures that “disadvantage U.S. exports” or which Washington simply disfavors. Want a free trade agreement with China? The US can view it as engagement with a “non-market country” and reimpose higher tariffs. Want to buy nuclear reactors from Russia or China for power generation? Prohibited. Want digital economy partnerships with countries the US considers rivals? Grounds for agreement

termination.

Thus, the United States has virtually granted itself de facto control over Bangladesh's economic relationships with the wider world. The agreement does, however, offer one significant benefit: Bangladeshi garments made with US cotton and man-made fibre would get zero tariffs in the US market. This could give Bangladesh's garment sector a competitive edge.

That is the logic of extraterritorial sanctions, diplomatically softened but unmistakable.

Bangladesh must also “support multilateral adoption of a permanent moratorium” on customs duties on electronic transmissions at the WTO—an unresolved and contested issue with real revenue stakes for developing countries. The agreement also requires Bangladesh to accept the WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement—that prohibits harmful

farmer concerns, and regulatory credibility. Bangladesh is being locked into a permissive regime that could trigger public backlash.

The deal also becomes a procurement ledger: US aircraft, LNG, agricultural products—down to specific values. The shopping list includes 25 Boeing aircraft for Bangladesh Biman (14 firm orders plus options). When a loss-making state carrier faces fiscal pressure and dwindling reserves, embedding aircraft “purchase facilitation” into a trade agreement is not sound policy. It is external compulsion.

Finally, a word about the recent US Supreme Court ruling that has struck down President Donald Trump's global tariffs as illegal. As per its February 20 judgment, the court did not dismantle the Bangladesh-US “reciprocal trade” framework, but it did punch a hole through its tariff architecture. Key US concessions had been tied to tariff orders issued under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), and once that legal foundation fell, the deal's tariff promises—including lower rates and any special treatment for textiles and apparel—have become legally precarious unless reissued under a valid statutory basis.

Trump's subsequent response indicates that he may not relent despite legal hurdles. Rather than retreating, he has pivoted to Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, first imposing a 10 percent across-the-board tariff and then raising it to 15 percent—the statutory ceiling for 150 days without congressional approval—while keeping several other clauses of US trade-related laws in reserve as further fallback options.

So, the pressure is not going away; the legal ground is simply shifting. But Dhaka should read this moment as an opportunity, a chance to renegotiate from a stronger hand and secure terms that are clearer, more equitable, and more durable.

It must insist on at least five changes. First, replace unilateral tariff snapbacks with a neutral dispute-resolution process built on objective benchmarks and proportional remedies. Second, remove automatic “complementary” security restrictions and confine any export-control alignment to clearly defined, evidence-based threats—not blanket coordination. Third, reopen the biotech provisions so Bangladesh retains the right to conduct independent reviews and apply labelling rules consistent with public preferences and a rigorous, evidence-based safety review process. Fourth, delete the procurement “shopping lists” and ensure any purchases are strictly commercial, competitive, and fiscally sustainable. And fifth, end any pre-commitment of Bangladesh's WTO positions on contested digital issues, including the moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions.

‘Negotiated’ extortion is still extortion



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ABDULLAH A DEWAN

A recent remark by a government minister—that a mutually agreed or negotiated transaction is not extortion—cannot be seen as a casual misuse of words. Although the minister was talking about the transport sector, the logic could as easily be applied to any other sector, and as such, it can be seen as an attempt to redefine the nature of the state. When official language sanitises extortion or corruption, the rule of law is placed on the negotiating table.

True, at first hearing, such a claim may sound reasonable. If both sides of a “transaction” agree, where is the coercion? This argument borrows the vocabulary of markets but removes the institutional conditions that make markets legitimate. In doing so, it confuses a transaction with a distortion.

Consider an ordinary citizen seeking a passport, a hospital bed, a utility connection,

police assistance, or a business licence. The law already grants these as rights, subject to clear rules. But in reality, the process often stalls: a file does not move, a signature does not appear, a bed is suddenly unavailable, or an inspection is delayed. A “mutual understanding” at this juncture, followed by extra payment (read: bribe), could expedite the delivery or resumption of services, but would this be a voluntary exchange?

The service seeker, it should be pointed out, did not enter a negotiation as an equal party. One side of the deal controlled time, approval, and enforcement, while the other faced delay, denial, or exclusion. What is presented as reciprocity is actually a price imposed on vulnerability. Calling such an exchange “mutual” would be analytically no different from calling a ransom a market transaction.

In economics, a voluntary exchange takes

place within a framework of rights, rules, and enforceable contracts. A price is legitimate because the state guarantees that access does not depend on personal discretion. A bribe is paid precisely because the rule-based system has been suspended. It is a payment to bypass or manipulate a process that should operate automatically. The critical question here is not whether two individuals agree. The real question is: why would the payment be necessary in the first place?

From the standpoint of political economy, the answer is clear. The official who can delay an approval creates an artificial scarcity and then sells the relief from that scarcity. Nothing is produced here; income is merely transferred. This is the textbook definition of rent-seeking. Once such practices become normal, the structure of the economy changes. Investment flows not to the most efficient firms but to the most connected. Credit is allocated not by risk but by influence. Public projects are valued not for their social return but for their commission potential. Growth slows not because resources are scarce but because institutions are not credible.

The minister's argument is therefore not only economically flawed but also constitutionally dangerous. It converts rights into commodities.

In a republic, a public office is a source of trust. The citizen pays taxes so that services

are delivered impersonally. A bribe or “mutually negotiated” transaction is a second, privatised payment for the same right. To legitimise this as a negotiated exchange is to legitimise the sale of sovereignty in small administrative instalments.

Game theory explains why citizens still participate. They are not choosing between paying and not paying; they are choosing between paying and losing. In a system where officials cannot be credibly punished, and services cannot be obtained by rules, compliance becomes the rational survival strategy. What is described as “mutual” is therefore the behavioural outcome of a coercive structure.

The most damaging effect of such a statement lies in the signal it sends. When a private citizen pays, it is often an act of compulsion within a broken system. When a public official justifies the payment, it becomes an institutional endorsement. It tells the bureaucracy that extraction or extortion is acceptable. It tells citizens that integrity is irrational. It tells investors that formal rules are irrelevant. That is how adverse selection enters governance: the honest withdraw and the connected advance.

Beyond the immediate economic drain, the “negotiation” model inflicts a deeper wound on the social contract. High performing societies rely on generalised trust, the belief

that the system works the same for everyone. When a state official validates bribery as a mutual transaction, they signal the death of this trust. The individual no longer looks to the law for protection but to a patron for a favour. The result is a low-trust trap where the machinery of the state turns only because it is being “greased” by those it was built to serve.

No country has achieved sustained development by redefining corruption as consensual exchange. Rebranding a bribe as a negotiated payment does not change its nature. A tax is legal because it is authorised by law and enters the public treasury. A fee is legal because it is publicly notified and uniformly applied. A bribe is illegal because it converts public authority into private income. No amount of semantic innovation can erase that distinction.

At its core, the minister's argument asks the country to accept a transformation from a rights-based state to a bargaining-based state. But a state in which citizens must negotiate for what the law guarantees is not a republic. It is a marketplace of power.

A bribe is not defined by the presence of agreement. It is defined by the abuse of public authority. When the powerholder sells what the law requires him to provide, the transaction is neither mutual nor voluntary. It is corruption—economically, institutionally, and constitutionally.

CROSSWORD BY
THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

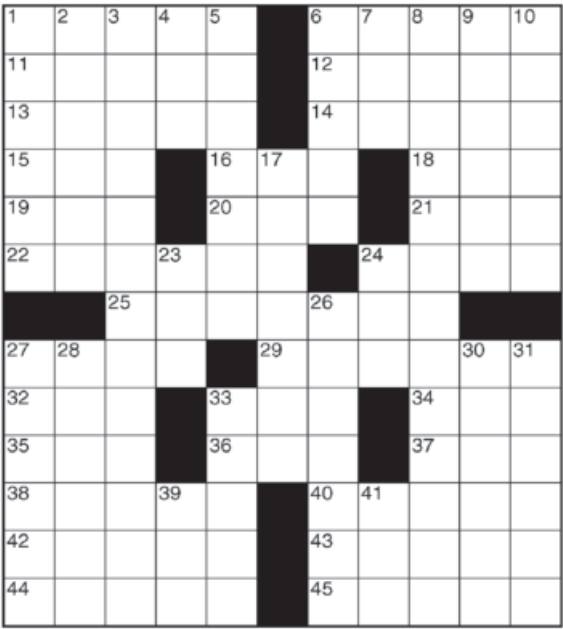
- 1 “Over There!” writer
- 6 Longed
- 11 Sports spot
- 12 Squalid
- 13 Pub orders
- 14 Bold poker bet
- 15 “favor”
- 16 Pewter component
- 18 Pilot's guess: Abbr.
- 19 English cathedral city
- 20 One-million link
- 21 de plume
- 22 Fill up the tank
- 24 Bushy do
- 25 Tel Aviv native
- 27 Out of the wind

DOWN

- 1 Big finale
- 2 Meadowlark's cousin
- 3 “Tom Jones” author
- 4 Tiny worker
- 29 Censors
- 32 Twisty fish
- 33 Singer Reed
- 34 Dealer's place
- 35 “Far out, dude!”
- 36 Form 1040 org.
- 37 Twosome
- 38 Nepali, e.g.
- 40 Bold way to solve crosswords
- 42 Keyed up
- 43 Singer Gill
- 44 Painter Degas
- 45 Raring to go

5 Less civil

- 6 Yoga pose
- 7 Animation unit
- 8 “Bridget Jones's Diary” author
- 9 Book worker
- 10 Energetic person
- 17 About to be a mother
- 23 Try out
- 24 Pub order
- 26 Hard to catch
- 27 Give fizz to
- 28 Not owned
- 30 Spring
- 31 Steamship worker
- 33 Cruise ship
- 39 Simile center
- 41 Long of “Soul Food”



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THE ‘ASIAN TIGER’ DREAM IS STALLING

It is time Bangladeshi founders look to the Gulf

MOHIDUL ALAM

There is a familiar refrain doing the rounds in Dhaka's startup circles. "The ecosystem is dead." "The ship is sinking." The mood is understandable, but it misdiagnoses the problem. Bangladesh's startup ecosystem is not dying. It is just working from the wrong map.

For the past decade, founders were encouraged to look east. The default playbook was to incorporate in Singapore, chase Southeast Asian (SEA) accelerators, and pitch to funds hunting for the "next Asian tiger". In 2025, that story looks far less convincing. Southeast Asia's venture boom has cooled, while a new centre of gravity for capital and demand is emerging closer to home, in the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia.

The era of flying to Singapore for a \$60,000 cheque and spending thousands just to get in the room is fading. The smart money has moved. Bangladeshi founders should move with it.

Southeast Asia reset: why the 'tiger' is tired

The wave of optimism that drove billions into Southeast Asia has met a hard reality check. A recent Lightspeed report notes that investors pumped \$72bn into SEA tech companies over the last five years, but returns have been sobering.

The region's public market champions were meant to provide clear exit pathways, yet many have struggled. Grab's market capitalisation is down roughly 65% since listing, and GoTo has fallen roughly 86%. Beneath the headlines is a structural issue: market depth.

Southeast Asia is often spoken about in the same breath as China or India, but the addressable, high-spending consumer base is far smaller than the mythology suggests. There are only about 16 million "power user" households earning over \$20,000 across the entire region. The massive, instantly monetisable middle class that underpinned so many pitch decks has been slower to materialise.

For Bangladeshi founders, the implication is straightforward. The liquidity tap is tightening. The "growth at all costs" model promoted by many accelerators is being replaced by a tougher demand for sustainability, and that shift is harder to support in markets where purchasing power is uneven and fragmentation is the norm.

The GCC awakening: where liquidity and demand are rising

While Southeast Asia cools, the Middle



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

East is moving in the opposite direction. In 2025, the MENA region saw startups raise \$7.5bn, a 225% year on-year increase.

Saudi Arabia is at the centre of that acceleration. In 2025 alone, the kingdom recorded \$1.72bn in venture capital funding, up 145% from the previous year, while deal volume rose 45% to 257 transactions. For the first time, Saudi Arabia surpassed the UAE in deal activity, accounting for 37% of all MENA transactions.

This is not just domestic capital circulating locally. International investor participation in Saudi Arabia rose by 65% last year. The appetite for digital transformation is strong and, unlike the more fragmented consumer classes in SEA, the GCC offers concentrated purchasing power and the ability to pay for quality quickly.

The Bangladeshi pivot is already under way

This shift is not theoretical. Look closely at the marquee deals coming out of Dhaka. The capital is increasingly arriving from the Gulf, not Singapore.

The merger between Bangladesh's ShopUp and Saudi Arabia's Sary created a new entity, SILQ, in a deal valued at more than \$100m. More than an acquisition, it signalled a corridor connecting South

Asian supply with Gulf demand.

Pathao, the logistics and ride-hailing company, raised a \$12m pre-series B led by VentureSouq, a GCC-based fund.

Markopolo, an adtech startup, raised \$2m led by Joa Capital, a Saudi venture capital firm.

10 Minute School, one of Bangladesh's largest edtech firms, raised \$2m led by Conjunction Capital in the UAE.

Jatri, the transportation platform, secured investment from Fatima Gobi Ventures, with networks across Pakistan and the GCC.

These are not one-offs. Companies such as MyAlice, Zatiq, and Barikoi are building momentum in the region. There is also talk of further GCC-linked M&A that would deepen this corridor.

Learning from Pakistan: the Gulf as a nearby market

While Bangladesh's founders looked east, Pakistani startups treated the Gulf as a natural extension of their home market and built for it early. Haball (\$52m) and MediQ (\$6m) recently raised significant rounds explicitly for Saudi expansion, backed by regional VCs. COLABS is entering Riyadh with local partners, PostEx (\$7.3m) is scaling across the GCC, and Abhi (\$60m) has established deep UAE partnerships.

They also leveraged an asset Bangladesh shares but often underuses strategically. Large expatriate communities in the Gulf can serve as a practical beachhead for distribution, hiring, partnerships, and early customers. That advantage is much harder to replicate in Southeast Asia.

A door closing in Singapore, a door opening in Riyadh

The claim that "Bangladesh is dead" only holds if you measure success by access to Singapore's old playbook. Founders do not win by insisting on a single route to the capital. They win by following demand.

Saudi Arabia is explicitly pursuing economic diversification under Vision 2030 and is actively courting international startups. The opportunity cost of ignoring the GCC is rising fast. The capital is there, the urgency for digital solutions is real, and the first serious cross-border outcomes are already appearing.

Take a pause chasing a tiger. Look to the Gulf.

Mohidul Alam is a senior investment analyst at Antler. Previously, he worked at VentureSouq, investing across fintech, AI, and marketplace startups.

Views expressed in this article are of the author's own and may not reflect the editorial stance of The Daily Star.

JOBSPOTLIGHT



Jamuna Bank PLC

Security Analyst

Deadline: February 26

Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Information Security, IT, or a related field from a reputed university.

Minimum experience: 2-3 years

BRAC

Manager, Global

Initiatives, BRAC

Global

Deadline: February 28

Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor's degree in Development Studies or Social Science, with prior experience in the development sector in a coordination or support role.

Minimum experience: 5 years



Sheltech (Pvt.) Ltd.

Executive/ Senior

Executive, Sales

Deadline: March 5

Eligibility:

🔗 BBA/ MBA/ Post Graduate/ Major in Marketing from any reputed university with a good academic background.

Minimum experience: 2-6 years



Helen Keller Intl. Bangladesh

Procurement Officer

Deadline: March 9

Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Supply Chain Management, Logistics, or a related discipline from a recognised university.

Minimum experience: 5 years



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



Microsoft targets \$50 bln AI investment across the global south

NEXT STEP DESK

Microsoft said on February 18 that it is on track to invest \$50 billion by the end of the decade to expand access to artificial intelligence (AI) technologies across countries in the "Global South."

According to a recent report by Reuters, the announcement was made at an AI summit in New Delhi, where senior executives from major technology companies met political leaders to discuss the governance and deployment of emerging AI systems.

The term "Global South" is commonly used to describe developing, emerging or lower-income nations, many of them located in the southern hemisphere.

Microsoft said the planned spending would support infrastructure, cloud capacity and AI deployment in these markets, though it did not provide a detailed breakdown of the investments by country. Last year, Microsoft unveiled \$17.5 billion in AI-related investments in India.

Asha Sharma named new CEO of Microsoft Gaming



IMAGE: MICROSOFT

NEXT STEP DESK

Microsoft has appointed Asha Sharma as the new head of its gaming division, replacing longtime leader Phil Spencer, who is retiring after 38 years at the company, the software giant announced last week.

Sharma, who previously led product development for AI models and services at Microsoft, became Executive Vice President and CEO of Microsoft Gaming. She previously held roles as Chief Operating Officer at Instacart and a Vice President at Meta.

Spencer, who led the division for 12 years and oversaw major acquisitions including Activision Blizzard and ZeniMax, said he made the decision to retire last fall. He will remain in an advisory role through the summer to ensure a smooth transition.

Sharma outlined three priorities for the division: delivering great games, renewing focus on the Xbox console, and shaping the future of play. "We will recommit to our core Xbox fans and players, those who have invested with us for the past 25 years," she said.

The leadership change comes as Microsoft Gaming faces declining revenue, with gaming revenue falling around 9.5% in the December quarter, according to a report by Reuters on the matter. The division also faces competition from Sony's PlayStation and tariff-induced cost pressures.

Nvidia nears \$30 billion investment in OpenAI: report

NEXT STEP DESK

Nvidia is close to finalising a \$30 billion investment in OpenAI as part of a fundraising round seeking more than \$100 billion, according to a recent report by Reuters, which cites a source familiar with the matter. The investment would value the ChatGPT maker at approximately \$830 billion and rank among the largest private capital raises on record, the source said. SoftBank and Amazon are also expected to participate in the round, Reuters has previously reported.

The deal would replace a commitment announced in September under which Nvidia planned to invest up to \$100 billion to support OpenAI's use of its chips



in data centres, the Financial Times reported. An initial \$10 billion investment was planned once a definitive agreement was reached for OpenAI to purchase Nvidia systems, but negotiations took longer than expected, the source said.

OpenAI intends to use much of the new capital to purchase Nvidia's chips, which power the training and deployment of its AI models, according to the source added.

OpenAI targets \$600 billion in compute spend through 2030: report

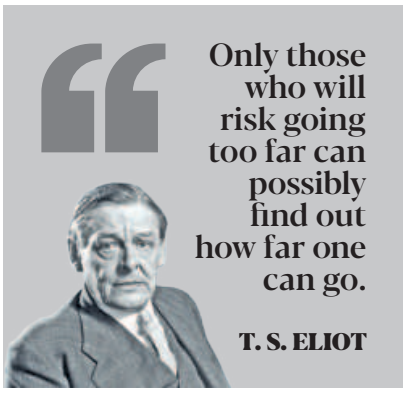
NEXT STEP DESK

OpenAI is planning approximately \$600 billion in total computing expenditure through 2030, as the ChatGPT maker prepares for an initial public offering that could value it at up to \$1 trillion, according to a recent report by Reuters, citing a source familiar with the matter.

The company's 2025 revenue totalled \$13 billion, exceeding its \$10 billion projection, while spending came in at \$8 billion,

under its \$9 billion target, the source said. OpenAI expects more than \$280 billion in total revenue by 2030, split roughly equally between consumer and enterprise units, according to a CNBC report.

The development comes as Nvidia nears a \$30 billion investment in OpenAI as part of a fundraising round seeking more than \$100 billion, which would value the company at about \$830 billion.



Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.

T. S. ELIOT



England's shaky batting face Pakistan spin test

AFP, Pallekele

Pakistan on Monday warned England's inconsistent batting line-up to expect a trial by spin when the teams clash in the T20 World Cup Super Eights.

Pakistan batsman Sahibzada Farhan told reporters that England struggled to 146-9 against Sri Lanka's spinners on Sunday.

Farhan said that England can expect more of the same from Pakistan's spinners when they meet on the same Pallekele ground in Kandy on Tuesday night.

Pakistan desperately need a win after their first match against New Zealand was washed out.

A defeat would put England, who skittled Sri Lanka for 95 to win by 51 runs, through to the semifinals with a game to spare.

Pakistan would then need to beat Sri Lanka in their final Super Eights match and hope other results go their way to reach the last four.

"What we saw in the Sri Lanka-England game was that the ball was gripping and England struggled against spin," said the in-form opener Farhan on Monday.

"Sri Lanka have one or two spinners but we have five in all so we will give England a tough time on a pitch that looks good and will grip," said Farhan.

Pakistan's spinners have taken 26 wickets in the four matches so far. Their seamers have dismissed only seven batsmen.

History will be against Pakistan as they have never beaten England in three previous Twenty20 World Cup clashes.

Pakistan are likely to bring in spinner Abrar Ahmed in place of seaming all-rounder Faheem Ashraf.

England may name an unchanged side for the fifth match in succession with Liam Dawson, Will Jacks, Adil Rashid and Jacob Bethell providing their spin options.

Sri Lanka and New Zealand are the two other teams in Pakistan and England's Super Eights group. They face each other in Colombo on Wednesday. The top two teams will qualify for the semifinals.



SHORT CORNER

South Africa to host Bangladesh in November

Reigning World Test Championship (WTC) winners South Africa will host Bangladesh for an all-format series, including two Tests in November which are part of the ongoing 2025-27 WTC cycle, Cricket South Africa announced on Monday.

Mohammedan election on March 9

Mohammedan Sporting Club Limited is set to hold its annual general meeting (AGM) and the much-awaited election on March 9 at Dhaka Club Limited, ending a five-year gap since the last polls. A total of 371 members, including three donor members, will cast their votes to elect a 17-member board of directors -- comprising 16 directors and one president.

'No one should become a Test player under these circumstances'

Bangladesh batter Mominul Haque has once again voiced his frustration at being labelled a "Test-only" player -- a tag he believes has consistently deprived him of opportunities in white-ball cricket.

Roadmap laid for 'transparent' sports polls

State Minister for Youth and Sports, Aminul Haque, has indicated that the existing ad hoc committees of various national sports bodies will remain in place until transparent elections are held.

***Read full stories on The Daily Star website*

ICC pre-seeds, surprises unfold

ASHEFAQ-UL-ALAM

Ahead of every major sporting event, analysts, ex-players and fans alike come up with predictions about how the tournament will pan out. Debates rage over which team will get knocked out early, who will proceed to the next phase and, eventually, who will lift the trophy.

Such speculations are usually welcomed as they add colour to the buildup of the tournament. However, the one stakeholder that should never indulge in such guesswork are the organisers themselves because if they begin forecasting their own events, the question of fairness would inevitably arise.

And that's exactly what International Cricket Council (ICC) has done in the 2024 and the ongoing edition of the ICC T20 World Cup with the pre-seeding of the Super Eight.

In both World Cups, 20 teams divided into four groups competed in the first round and the top two teams from each made it to the Super Eights, where they were again split into two groups of four.

In typical ICC fashion, the grouping of the first round was done at random. No draws were held, no official explanation for how it was done was conveyed, only a media release announced four five-team groups with India and Pakistan, like clockwork, grouped together yet again.

While other major sports organisations like FIFA and UEFA have been holding glitzy draw events for decades, where teams are placed in different pots



according to their previous results and stature and get seeded into groups at random, ICC has carried on with its closed door grouping ever since the inaugural ODI World Cup in 1975.

Moreover, ICC has also been guilty of tinkering with the World Cup's structure in every few editions. The first few ODI World Cups had teams divided into multiple groups in the first round, the 1992 edition saw the introduction of the round-robin league system, which was scrapped from the next edition.

The 2019 and 2023 editions saw the return of the round-robin system. However, the marquee event will revert to the multi-group system in the 2027 edition.

The T20 World Cup, similarly, has gone through changes across editions, the latest and the most significant one being the introduction of the pre-seeding system.

Through this system, the ICC, on the basis of T20I rankings, predicted which

eight teams would come out of the first round and declared which group they would compete in the second phase, regardless of whether they finish as group champions or runners-up.

The only way this grouping could be altered is if a weaker team sprung a surprise and eliminated a higher-ranked side. And ironically, it has happened in both editions.

Last time, it was the USA who forced their way into the Super Eight, knocking out Pakistan, and this time, it is Zimbabwe, who have eliminated Australia, beaten co-hosts Sri Lanka to march their way into the Super Eights as group champions.

If the USA and Zimbabwe's qualifications were examples of how pre-tournament speculations sometimes get overturned by the spontaneity of a sporting event, the awkward distribution of the teams in the Super Eights exposed why one should avoid predicting what will happen in a tournament solely based on rankings.

Zimbabwe are placed in Group 1, replacing Australia, alongside West Indies, India and South Africa, who also finished at the top of their respective groups.

Meanwhile, all four runners-up -- England, New Zealand, Pakistan and Sri Lanka -- are in Group 2.

This bizarre grouping goes against the conventional norm of handing an advantage to whoever performed better in the first round. Instead, the runners-up are comparatively being rewarded, getting grouped with teams who are comparatively less in-form.

The ICC claims it pre-seeded the Super Eights for logistic reasons, giving fans a heads-up about where their team is likely to play, making it easier to make necessary travel arrangements.

But this decision undermines the very essence of a multi-team tournament -- unpredictability. In trying to control the uncontrollable, ICC has once again struggled to act like a truly global sporting body.

Chivu confident Inter can overturn Bodo deficit

AFP, Milan

Cristian Chivu said Monday that his Inter Milan team can turn around a two-goal deficit against Bodo/Glimt and reach the last 16 of the Champions League.

Inter lost 3-1 in Norway last week and risk joining reigning Italian champions Napoli in being eliminated from Europe's elite club competition.

"We don't have any obligations, only a duty. All we need to do is go out on the pitch and do what we know we can do," Chivu told reporters ahead of Tuesday's clash at the San Siro.

"We have to go out there knowing that if there's a team to turn this around, it's us... We can't lose faith in ourselves or our self-confidence.

"If we want to have any chance of qualifying from the play-offs we need to be the best version of ourselves."

Inter will be without captain Lautaro Martinez in attack, while the availability of key midfielder Hakan Calhanoglu is also uncertain.

The winners of the tie will play either Manchester City or Sporting of Portugal in the last 16 next month.

Bodo/Glimt have had a remarkable debut campaign in the Champions League, sneaking into the knock-out stage with shock victories over Manchester City and Atletico Madrid in their final two league phase matches.



'True cricket lovers' treated to Akbar show

SPORTS REPORTER

Crowds began streaming into the Shaheed Chandu Stadium from the morning, and the strong turnout continued throughout yesterday as Bogura marked the start of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) one-day tournament.

Akbar Ali ensured the spectators were not disappointed, smashing a blazing 111 to power his star-studded North Zone side to a 54-run win over East Zone.

Initially, only two galleries were opened to accommodate fans, as per sources. However, as the steady flow of spectators continued, authorities were compelled to open a third. While national team players such as Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Najmul Hossain Shanto hit fifties but could not carry on for bigger scores, Akbar took his opportunity in front of a near-capacity crowd, notching his



A large crowd turned up at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogura to watch the opening match of the BCL, between North Zone and East Zone, yesterday. (Inset) Akbar Ali of North Zone raises his bat after reaching his century.

PHOTO: BCB

first List A ton.

The right-handed wicketkeeper-batter, who led Bangladesh to the U-19 World Cup title in 2020, described the atmosphere as a rare experience in domestic cricket.

"The whole stadium was 70-80 per cent full in terms of crowd presence," Akbar told The Daily Star. "From the morning, the way the crowd arrived, we aren't used to seeing such scenes in domestic cricket."

"It was a very different experience for us since, except maybe BPL, we don't see such crowds in domestic matches. I think this kind of crowd presence is really good, and we welcome it."

Bogura last hosted international cricket in 2006, staging its only Test match -- between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka -- and its most recent ODI, when the Tigers faced Zimbabwe. More recently, the venue held a Bangladesh U-19s versus

Afghanistan U-19s series, where strong crowd turnout was again a notable feature.

Veteran Mominul Haque, who scored 83 for East Zone, praised the Bogura crowd as well.

"Bogura is a place where people are true cricket lovers. Whenever I've come here -- whether for the Premier League or HP camps -- I've seen that because matches are rarely played here, people turn up whenever they do occur. Having a crowd is very good for the players; it makes for better matches," Mominul said.

The ground will now hold a special place in Akbar's memory after his first List A hundred. Like the venue itself, he has often been overlooked by selectors, even as many of his U-19 teammates have progressed to the national side.

"Things that happen for the first time are always special. Even in the Premier League, I often don't get many overs when I come in to bat. I remember an innings of 89 when the overs ran out. I've missed a few opportunities before. This time, once I crossed 70, I told myself that since I had time in hand, I should make it count," Akbar said.



PHOTO: AFP

Arsenal's Swedish striker Viktor Gyokeres (C) celebrates with Martin Odegaard and Noni Madueke after scoring his second goal in a 4-1 thrashing of Tottenham Hotspur in Premier League's North London derby on Sunday. The big win took the Gunners five points clear of defending champions Manchester City, who have a game in hand.



President to convene first session of 13th JS on Mar 12

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 13th Jatiya Sangsad will go into its maiden session on March 12. The sitting will begin at 11:00am on the day, according to a press release issued by the parliament secretariat yesterday.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin has convened the parliament session by exercising the power vested upon him under article 72(1) of the constitution.

Earlier on February 21, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed had mentioned that the government wanted the parliament session to begin on March 12.

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman has already been elected as the Leader of the House in the 13th Jatiya Sangsad, while Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman has been elected as the Leader of the Opposition.

According to the constitution, the president must convene the first

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Workers put the finishing touches to stalls for the Amar Ekushey Book Fair at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday. This year's Boi Mela will begin on February 26 and continue until March 15. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

13 secretaries removed in major admin shake-up

BAHARAM KHAN and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

A major shake-up has taken place in the top tier of the public administration.

Yesterday, thirteen secretaries, including the secretary to the Prime Minister's Office, were removed from their posts. As of 10:45pm, when this report was filed, no official notifications regarding the new appointments to the vacant posts were released.

Eight of them were appointed on a contractual basis by the interim government.

The secretaries whose contracts were cancelled are SM Akmal Hossain, Mokhes-ur-Rahman, and Kaiyum Ara Begum, who were members of the Planning Commission as senior secretary; Saidur Rahman of the Health Services Division, Shish Haider Chowdhury of the Information and Communication Technology Division, Siddique Zobair, director general of the National Academy for Planning and Development; Mohammad Yusuf, chairman of the Land Appeal Board; and Mumtaz Ahmed, secretary of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

Besides, the contract of Sharifa Khan, the alternate executive director of the World Bank, was cancelled. Her appointment was made during the Awami League tenure.

Meanwhile, three other secretaries, who were promoted during the interim government, have been attached to the public administration ministry.

The ministry officials said the cancellation of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Gas blast during sehri leaves family shattered

One dead, eight seriously burnt in Ctg's Halishahar



ARUN BIKASH DEY and FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

The dining table of a second-floor flat in Halima Manjil was still set with dishes and leftovers from sehri when a sudden explosion tore through the apartment in Halishahar, Chattogram, early yesterday.

Md Suman, who had returned from Portugal just two weeks back, was sitting with his brothers Shakhawat and Shipon at the table waiting for Fajr prayers when the blast, reportedly caused by a gas leak, occurred around 4:30am.

Halima Manjil is located at House 18, Road 1, Block H of the Halishahar Residential Area.

Nine members of the family were home at the time, and all were injured in the fiery explosion, with burn injuries ranging from 25 to 100 percent.

Among them, Suman's wife, Pakhi, 35; Shakhawat, 50; and his wife, Nur Jahan Begum Rani, 40, suffered full-body burns, said doctors.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Iran vows 'ferocious response'

Report says Tehran ready for nuclear concessions amid Trump's 'limited strikes' threat

AGENCIES

Iran yesterday said that a US attack of any scale would spur the Islamic republic to respond "ferociously", after President Donald Trump said he was considering limited strikes against the country.

The United States has built up forces in the Middle East to pile pressure on Iran to make a deal at negotiations due to restart on Thursday, with Trump weighing a limited strike if no agreement is

its inherent right of self-defence ferociously, so that's what we would do," ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei said at a briefing in Tehran attended by an AFP journalist.

The two countries concluded a second round of indirect talks in Switzerland on Tuesday under Omani mediation.

Further talks, confirmed by Iran and Oman but not by the United States, are scheduled for Thursday.

The European Union, which has been sidelined in mediation

"It is true that Iran is at its weakest point that they have been. We should be really using this time to find a diplomatic solution."

Iran's clerical authorities have faced recent steep challenges, including a wave of mass protests that peaked in January, last year's 12-day war with Israel, and the weakening of Iran's regional proxies.

Iran has, however, insisted only discussions on the country's nuclear programme are on the table



- India tells citizens to leave Iran
- Next round of talks expected on Thursday
- Report say Tehran may open up its lucrative oil, gas sectors to US

reached.

Yesterday, Iran's foreign ministry reiterated that any strike, even a limited one, "would be regarded as an act of aggression. Period".

"And any state would react to an act of aggression as part of

on Iran, called for a diplomatic solution ahead of the talks.

"We don't need another war in this region. We already have a lot," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said ahead of a meeting of EU foreign ministers.

at mediated talks. The West believes the programme is aimed at making a bomb, which Tehran denies.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi is leading the negotiations for Iran, while the United States is

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Four hacked to death in Narail

At least 7 houses torched; 6 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Four people, including a father and his son, were hacked to death in a pre-dawn attack in Borkula village under Shingasholpur Union of Narail Sadar upazila yesterday.



The deceased were identified as Khalil Sheikh, 70; his son Tahajjat Sheikh, 41; Ferdous Hossain, 40; and Osikur Fakir, 36.

According to police, the killings occurred around 5:00am and stemmed from a long-standing rivalry and disputes over local dominance between two factions.

Narail Superintendent of Police Mohammad Al Mamun Shikder said at least seven to eight houses were set on fire during the violence. At least six people were also injured.

Police and local sources said a long-standing rivalry between supporters of former Shingasholpur Union chairman Khayruzzaman Khayer Molla and a group led by Khalil Sheikh had led to repeated clashes in the area. About a decade ago, following one such clash, some people from Tarapur village, including Khalil Sheikh, moved to neighbouring Borkula village.

However, the rivalry reportedly continued despite the relocation.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Labour ministry adopts 180-day action plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Labour and Employment has adopted a 22-point action plan to be implemented within 180 days, in line with the BNP government's election manifesto.

The plan was finalised yesterday at a workshop held in the ministry at the Bangladesh Secretariat.

At the event, Labour and Employment Minister Ariful Haque Chowdhury directed officials to submit weekly progress reports on the implementation of the manifesto and ensure close monitoring.

As part of the plan, the ministry set March 31, 2026, as the deadline to turn the Bangladesh Labour Ordinance, 2025, into law and to complete the recruitment of 122 recommended inspectors for the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE).

Labour rules under the existing labour law, laws to prevent child and forced labour, and the formation of a National Social Dialogue Forum are scheduled to be completed by June 30, 2026.

The ministry also set July 15, 2026, as the deadline to introduce digital trade union registration. It plans to launch employment exchanges at the district and upazila levels and update the national employment survey by July 30. Ensuring the implementation of minimum wages in hotels and restaurants has been set for completion by June 30.

Other measures include forming anti-harassment committees in all RMG factories, declaring minimum wages in the tannery and iron foundry sectors, and providing financial assistance to workers through welfare funds.



Shimron Hetmyer starred with a blistering 85 off 34 balls as West Indies piled up 254-6 – the second-highest total in T20 World Cup history – and sealed a 107-run win over Zimbabwe in a Super Eight clash in Mumbai yesterday. Gudakesh Motie claimed 4-28 and Akeal Hosein took 3-28 as Zimbabwe were bundled out for 147 in 17.4 overs.

PHOTO: AFP

Human rights are under assault globally: UN chief

P7

HASANAH ISLAMIC BANKING
البنكية الإسلامية
Prime Bank

PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 24

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:11 12:45 4:30 6:00 7:30
JAMAAT 5:21 1:15 4:45 6:10 8:00
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING				
RAMADAN	FEB	SEHRI	IFTAR	
6	24		6:00	
7	25	5:08	6:01	
8	26	5:07	6:01	