



BANGLADESH'S REFRIGERATOR INDUSTRY

Eyes Global Expansion

MD ABU TALHA SARKER

Bangladesh's refrigerator industry has undergone a striking transformation over the past decade and a half, evolving from an import-dependent market into a predominantly local manufacturing powerhouse by 2025-26. What was once a sector reliant on foreign brands and imported components has matured into one of the country's most promising industrial segments, with an estimated market size of Tk 7,350 crore.

The industry's expansion has been driven by rapid urbanisation, nationwide electrification, rising per capita income and growing rural penetration. Increasing consumer awareness, improved living standards and the availability of competitively priced locally manufactured models have further accelerated adoption. Today, nearly 60 percent of Bangladeshi households own a refrigerator – a remarkable shift from the situation a decade ago, when penetration rates were significantly lower.

SEE PAGE J2

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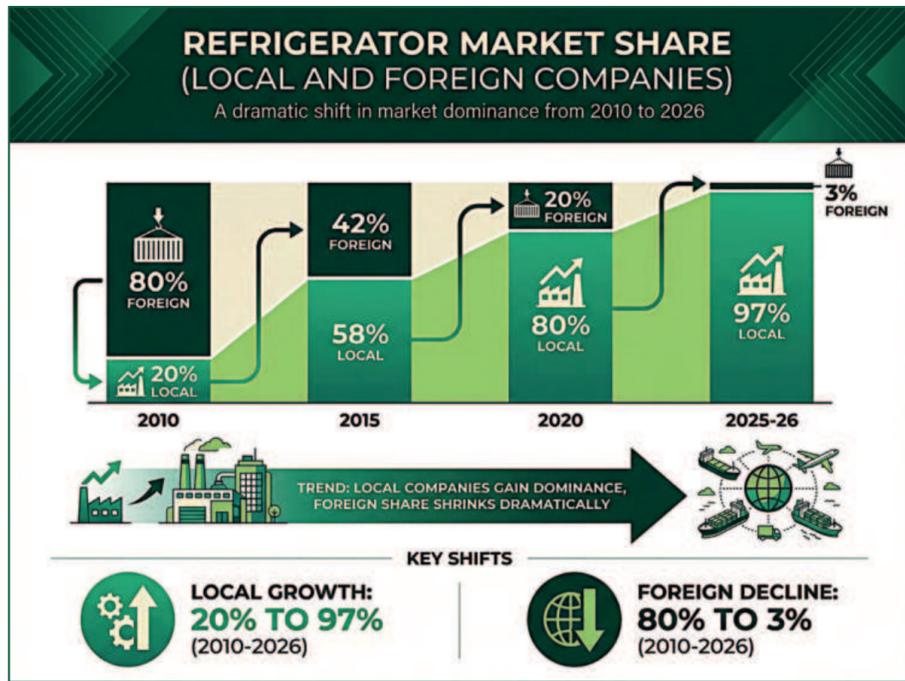
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Bangladesh's Refrigerator Industry Eyes Global Expansion

FROM PAGE J1

In recent years, the sector has maintained around 10 percent annual growth, despite macroeconomic pressures, foreign exchange constraints and inflationary trends. This resilience has positioned it as one of the strongest performers within Bangladesh's broader consumer electronics market.

Local manufacturers now command approximately 97 percent of the domestic refrigerator market, with Walton alone accounting for roughly 75 percent share. Annual manufacturing capacity stands at about four million units, reflecting substantial investment in production facilities and backward integration.

The refrigerator segment represents nearly half of Bangladesh's overall electrical and electronics market, which exceeds \$1 billion (approximately Tk 15,000 crore) annually. In terms of industrial promise and structural depth, it ranks among the country's most dynamic manufacturing sectors after the readymade garments (RMG) industry.

Crucially, installed production capacity now exceeds domestic demand – a milestone that signals both maturity and a new strategic imperative. The next phase of growth must be export-oriented.

A STRUCTURAL SHIFT OVER 15 YEARS

The industry's trajectory over the past decade and a half reveals a profound structural transformation.

In 2010, the market was valued at roughly Tk 2,000 crore. Local component manufacturing was virtually non-existent, and production relied heavily on imported parts and finished products. By 2015, however, the market had expanded to around Tk 3,400 crore. That year marked a turning point: local production accounted for 58 percent of supply, overtaking imports, which fell to 42 percent.

MHM Fairuz, managing director and CEO of Singer Bangladesh Limited, observed: "The industry is now mature and locally dominated, with more than 90 percent of refrigerators produced in Bangladesh. Annual demand is approaching two million units, covering product ranges from 100 litres to 700 litres."

Component localisation has since advanced significantly. Industry insiders indicate that approximately 97.3 percent of Walton's refrigerator components are now manufactured domestically. This deepening of backward integration has reduced foreign exchange dependency, enhanced cost efficiency and strengthened supply chain stability.

Tahsinul Haque, chief business officer of Walton Refrigerator, reflected on the transformation: "Before 2010, there was virtually no local manufacturing base. We began developing domestic production capacity in 2010 and surpassed imports by 2015. Thereafter, we progressively consolidated control over the production value chain. Backward integration has enabled us to lower costs, strengthen quality control, shorten lead times and enhance competitiveness."

Walton's financial performance mirrors this trajectory. The company reported Tk 3.63 billion in profit in the first half (Q1-Q2) of FY2025-26, while sales between January and July 2025 rose 30 percent year-on-year.

Nevertheless, the short-term outlook remains cautious. Fairuz noted: "Last year, the industry experienced no growth, and the current year shows no clear signs of

recovery."

Market indicators suggest that overall sales volumes may remain flat this year, reflecting subdued consumer spending and economic uncertainty.

Md Nurul Afser, deputy managing director of Electro Mart Group, highlighted evolving consumer priorities: "Consumers typically focus on three key factors – reliable food preservation, aesthetic compatibility with their home interior, and sufficient storage capacity for family needs."

He added that brands such as KONKA are responding through improved cooling performance, contemporary design and optimised space management, reflecting rising expectations among Bangladeshi consumers.

FROM DOMESTIC STRENGTH TO EXPORT AMBITION

Over the past 15-16 years, Walton

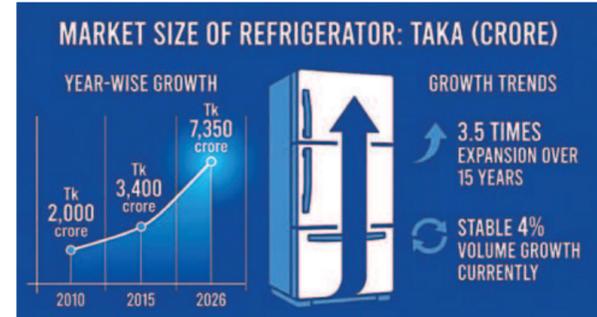
determines performance, durability and efficiency. Local compressor production marked a major step towards technological ownership and self-reliance.

Subsequent acquisition of European compressor brand assets further strengthened Walton's technological roadmap, particularly in inverter and eco-friendly compressor development. This enhanced engineering capability and bolstered international credibility.

Walton's long-term ambition is to become one of the world's leading consumer electronics brands by 2030. Its strategy combines local market adaptation with strict adherence to global engineering standards for safety, reliability and sustainability.

POLICY SUPPORT AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Despite its achievements, the industry faces structural challenges.



has transitioned from a fast-growing domestic brand into a regional exporter of home cooling appliances. The company aims to export more than 500,000 units by 2026, with particular emphasis on energy-efficient and eco-friendly technologies.

"We export refrigerators and components to the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Europe," Haque said. "In 2025, refrigerator exports grew by around 37 percent compared to 2024."

He attributes the company's success to three pillars: manufacturing depth, value-driven innovation and an extensive distribution network supported by after-sales service.

"We were never interested in being merely an assembly-based player. Backward integration has allowed us to control essential components and maintain competitive costs. We prioritise energy efficiency, durability and design diversity, recognising that consumers value reliability and aesthetic integration alongside cooling performance."

Products are also engineered to withstand local conditions, including voltage fluctuations, humidity and heavy daily use, factors that have helped build consumer trust.

TECHNOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP AND COMPRESSOR CAPABILITY

Technological advancement has been central to the industry's rise. Companies such as Singer and Walton now meet the overwhelming majority of domestic demand through local production. The research and development (R&D) investment has enabled the adoption of inverter technology, integration of smart features and improvements in energy efficiency.

A significant milestone came in 2017 with the establishment of domestic compressor manufacturing. As the core component of a refrigeration system, the compressor

A strong dollar has increased the cost of imported raw materials, while potential value-added tax (VAT) adjustments could affect investment decisions. Manufacturers must also continue diversifying into inverter-based, frost-free and smart appliances to remain competitive.

Over 15 years, the refrigerator market has expanded 3.5 times from Tk 2,000 crore in 2010 to Tk 7,350 crore in 2025-26. With volume growth now around 4 percent, exports represent the most viable path for acceleration.

Industry leaders stress the importance of policy coherence. Priorities include competitive export incentives, faster duty drawback processing, simplified bonded warehouse facilities, and the development of a high-value component ecosystem, including semiconductor and electronics clusters. Strong enforcement of quality standards by regulatory authorities is equally vital to prevent substandard imports from distorting the market.

Singer's CEO emphasised the need to remove policy barriers to attract foreign investment, strengthen local component manufacturing and enhance infrastructure, technological capability and skilled manpower.

With production capacity exceeding domestic consumption, export is no longer optional; it is strategic. If supported by stable policies and sustained technological advancement, Bangladesh's refrigerator industry could significantly increase foreign exchange earnings and reduce import dependency, Electro Mart's MD said.

The foundations are robust: expanding capacity, deepening localisation and rising technological sophistication. If aligned effectively, Walton's CBO said, the sector has the potential to emerge as Bangladesh's next major global export pillar after RMG, a testament to the country's advancing industrial capability and economic maturity.



TAHSINUL HAQUE
 Chief Business Officer (CBO)
 Walton Refrigerator



Our goal is to establish ourselves as one of the leading global consumer electronics brands by 2030, and refrigeration is a critical element of that progress. We address global cooling by employing a "local market fit + global standard" model. This approach involves conducting market-specific research on consumer requirements.

WALTON'S Strategic Ascent in Refrigeration

Over the last decade, Walton has grown from a fast-rising local brand into a serious regional exporter in home cooling. From deeper local manufacturing to design-led models and smart features, the company is now positioning itself for global competition.

The Daily Star (TDS): How would you describe Walton's overall growth strategy in the refrigeration sector over the last decade?

Tahsinul Haque (TH): Three interconnected pillars have been the driving force behind our success: manufacturing depth, innovation, and distribution with service. We were not interested in becoming a mere assembly-based player. We enhanced backward integration, which enabled us to maintain competitive costs, reduce lead times, increase quality assurance, and control essential components.

TDS: Tell us about your global outlets and establishments around the world.

TH: Our international presence is expanding as a result of a combination of direct brand development, OEM collaborations, and exports. We export refrigerators and components to a diverse range of destinations, such as the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and Europe. We have achieved around 37 per cent growth in refrigerator exports in 2025 compared to 2024. To expand our networks and relationships,

we also participate in international trade exhibitions, including the Canton Fair.

TDS: Walton is famous for tempered glass-door refrigerators with printed designs. How has the market responded compared to stainless steel or solid-colour models?

TH: Metropolitan households have responded with an abundance of enthusiasm. The refrigerator's appearance is crucial as it is frequently visible in the living or dining areas. Tempered glass is also in demand due to its contemporary appearance, ease of cleaning, and ability to eradicate visible fingerprints, which some customers associate with steel surfaces.

TDS: With AIoT smart refrigerators and "AI Doctor" diagnostics, how do you see Walton refrigeration evolving in the next 3-5 years?

TH: Refrigeration will become service-oriented, interconnected, and predictive. By identifying issues at an earlier stage and providing more precise guidance. Smart features that are combined with genuine durability and service capability, rather than gimmicks, will emerge as the most successful brands in the next 3-5 years. Our objective is to render smart refrigeration both practical and affordable, with a particular emphasis on emerging markets.

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DID YOU KNOW THESE CHILLING FACTS?

ADRIN SARWAR

Refrigerators are much more than just cold boxes. They have some truly bizarre "hidden" features. Here are the most interesting and unknown facts about them:

1. Cars have true refrigerators!

While many cars have "cool boxes" (which just blow cold A/C air into a compartment), several luxury vehicles feature true compressor-based refrigerators that can reach freezing temperatures regardless of the cabin's heat. The Cadillac Escalade has a centre console fridge that can chill six bottles to -5°C. Other models with built-in fridges include the Rolls-Royce Ghost, Bentley Bentayga, Land Rover Defender, and the Toyota Land Cruiser.

2. No more "Death Traps"

Before 1958, refrigerators had mechanical latches. There was a handle to pull them open from outside. Like today, children used to play hide and seek in refrigerator out of curiosity even

then. The issue wasn't with them playing, because the doors were airtight and soundproof, they couldn't escape or be heard getting trapped. This led to the Federal Refrigerator Safety Act of 1956, which mandated that all fridges must be openable from the inside



with a light push. This is why modern fridges use magnetic seals instead of latches.



3. The coldest fridge in space?

Standard refrigerators don't work in space because they rely on gravity to move oil and liquids through the system. NASA and Purdue University recently developed a "Cold Atom Lab" fridge for the International Space Station. It can reach temperatures 100 times colder than the vacuum of space (nearly absolute zero) to study quantum physics.

4. The "Forgotten" features

In the 1940s and 50s, refrigerator design was often more innovative than it is today. Many mid-century GE fridges had "Lazy Susan" shelves that rotated 360 degrees, so you never lost a jar of pickles at the back.

To prove how sturdy their new airtight seals were, the company Frigidaire had a 4-ton elephant stand on top of a refrigerator in 1939 while someone opened and closed the door.

5. Weird tidbits

» The World's Largest Fridge is at the Large Hadron Collider (CERN) in Switzerland. It weighs over 10,000 tons and is used to keep the particle accelerator's magnets at -271°C.

» The Dirtiest Part of fridge is the handle. Studies show fridge handles are one of the top spots for bacteria like E. coli because they are touched constantly but rarely wiped down.

» Haunted Refrigerator Night: Believe it or not, October 30th is officially designated as "Haunted Refrigerator Night," a day meant for cleaning out the "frightening" expired leftovers at the back of the fridge.

BUILT FOR BANGLADESH CONDITIONS: ELECTRO MART LTD.

FARHAN MUSFIQUE

In Bangladesh, heat, humidity and voltage instability make dependable refrigeration a necessity rather than a convenience. Performance is increasingly judged not by basic function but by consistency under real-world conditions.

Against this backdrop, Electro Mart's KONKA refrigerator range reflects a design approach centred on practical household realities. Speaking to The Daily Star, Md. Nurul Afser, Deputy Managing Director of Electro Mart Group, said KONKA's strongest selling refrigerators are concentrated in the 180 to 240 litre segment, particularly models such as KRT-180 and KRT-200, which align with household needs for dependable cooling, low energy use and space-efficient design. These refrigerators typically support storage of daily groceries such as fish, meat and fresh produce while fitting into compact kitchen environments.

For consumers seeking additional flexibility, selected models incorporate smart inverter technology alongside convertible storage modes, digital controls and alerts designed to support evolving usage patterns. Such features are increasingly relevant as households manage busier routines and more diverse food storage needs.

Local operating conditions remain a defining consideration in appliance engineering. KONKA refrigerators are built with wide voltage range compatibility between 120V and 265V, enabling stable compressor performance without external stabilisers and reducing risks linked



to electrical fluctuations. Smart inverter compressor systems further improve efficiency by adjusting cooling output according to demand, supporting quieter operation and lower power

Wide voltage tolerance and efficiency are becoming baseline expectations.

MD. NURUL AFSER
Deputy Managing Director
Electro Mart Group

consumption under typical usage patterns that include frequent door openings. Hygiene and preservation are addressed through food-grade interior materials, anti-fungal door gaskets and humidity-balancing fresh keeping systems designed to maintain produce quality for longer.

After-sales support remains central to buyer confidence. Electro Mart says it supports KONKA customers through 80+ showrooms, a nationwide network of 2,000+ dealers and partners, and 4,500+ trained technicians, backed by a dedicated call centre and the TechBondhu app, with service response targeted within 72 hours.

Environmental considerations are also influencing appliance development. KONKA refrigerators utilise R600 refrigerant alongside energy-saving compressor systems and recyclable materials where feasible, reflecting efforts to reduce lifecycle environmental impact. Md. Nurul Afser emphasised that extending appliance lifespan itself contributes to sustainability by distributing production-related environmental costs over longer periods of use.

As refrigeration technology evolves, efficiency is increasingly defined by adaptability to everyday realities, with modern designs prioritising reliability, responsible energy use and practical convenience for contemporary households.

THREE STATEMENTS OF ELEGANCE

INNOVATION. INTELLIGENCE. LUXURY

Capacity: 524 L
4 Door-Family Innovation

Capacity: 578 L
Side by Side-Luxury Capacity

Capacity: 608 L
T Shape-Smart Urban Cooling

- Digi Touch Display
- Super Cooling Plus
- Fast Ice Making

- AI Inverter
- Door Alarm
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Engineering the FUTURE OF REFRIGERATORS



TAGABUN TAHARIM TITUN

Refrigerators are no longer silent metal boxes; they're intelligent, sustainable hubs at the heart of smart homes. AI, energy-efficient engineering, and connected features are transforming cooling technology worldwide. This revolution extends beyond Europe and East Asia, as now Bangladesh is emerging with homegrown manufacturers and advanced features that compete globally.

SMART FEATURES DRIVE MARKET EVOLUTION

Modern appliances combine AI, connectivity, and energy-efficient engineering to improve food safety, cut electricity use, and offer remote monitoring and predictive maintenance.

1. Intelligent Inverter Technology

Variable-speed compressors replace crude on/off cycles, adjusting cooling to interior load and ambient conditions. The result is better temperature stability, quieter operation, and significant energy savings compared with older compressors.

2. Smart IoT and Connectivity

Internet-connected fridges now offer apps, internal cameras, and remote controls that help users track contents, set modes, and avoid wasted

purchases. Such connectivity also enables over-the-air updates and diagnostic alerts.

3. Advanced Humidity and Temperature Control Triple cooling and separate evaporators create dedicated zones that prevent odour transfer and extend produce life by maintaining optimal humidity and temperature per compartment.

4. Eco-Friendly Refrigerants

Manufacturers are abandoning high-global-warming gases in favour of low-GWP refrigerants like R600a, balancing performance with regulatory compliance in markets such as Europe and North America.

LOCAL BRANDS LEAD THE GLOBAL EXPANSION

Bangladeshi manufacturers have moved from import dependence to competitive exporting. Walton, supported by local R&D and modern facilities, now sells to dozens of countries, while companies such as Electro Mart, Vision, Jamuna and Singer are investing in design, inverter tech, and scale to capture regional demand.

TOP INNOVATIONS REVOLUTIONISING FOOD PRESERVATION

The technological muscle being flexed by modern manufacturers is truly impressive. Beyond the core cooling functions, several specialised features are becoming standard for anyone seeking a high-end experience.

1. Nano Health Care Technology

Ionic-cluster sterilisation reduces bacteria and fungi on food surfaces, enhancing safety for health-conscious buyers.

2. Inverter Turbo Cooling

Turbo modes quickly bring compartments to target temperatures—useful in hot climates or for rapid freezing before events.

3. UVnano Water Dispensing

Integrated UV sanitation keeps dispenser nozzles sterile by periodic ultraviolet exposure, improving drinking-water safety.

Modern refrigerators have evolved into quieter, greener, and smarter household hubs. Through inverter compressors, targeted preservation zones, eco refrigerants, and connectivity, they reduce waste, save energy, and elevate convenience—signalling a new era in domestic appliance design.



SALIM ULLAH SALIM
Director, Marketing
Jamuna Electronics
& Automobiles Ltd.



Innovation is crucial in consumer electronics. Their refrigerators achieve up to 70% energy savings while maintaining optimal food quality. A dedicated R&D team works on technological enhancements and product quality improvements.

From smart features to energy efficiency:

JAMUNA ELECTRONICS

Over the years, Jamuna Refrigerators have established a strong and trusted position among consumers. Through technological excellence, skilled manpower, high-quality raw materials, and production tailored to customer needs. They are offering a diverse range of sizes, designs, and price points to meet the local demands.

A high quality refrigerator does more than preserve food, it brings convenience and comfort to daily life. It is designed considering affordable prices, superior quality, durability, and products designed for local climate conditions. Beyond regular refrigerators, their range includes advanced intelligent inverter technology models such as smart double-door, T-door, cross-door refrigerators, ice cream freezers, and beverage coolers.

INNOVATION DRIVES SMARTER LIVING

Innovation is crucial in consumer electronics. Their tagline is 'Innovation for Smarter Life.' Their refrigerators achieve up to 70% energy savings while maintaining optimal food quality. A dedicated R&D team works on technological enhancements and product quality improvements. In today's fast-paced life, people prefer appliances that make household chores quicker and easier. Jamuna Electronics' product line includes glass-

door refrigerator models. Their smart refrigerator designs have received positive feedback from consumers.

ADVANCED FEATURES FOR MAXIMUM PERFORMANCE

Jamuna Refrigerators are equipped with Ultra-Micro Foaming Insulation Technology, which maintains precise internal temperatures and keeps food fresh naturally. Key features include:

- » Minimum temperature: -28°C with maximum energy savings
- » 100% food-grade materials, silicone gel-free
- » Eco-friendly R290 & R600a refrigerant
- » Anti-bacterial door gasket
- » 10-12 years compressor warranty
- » Tempered glass shelves with built-in stabilisers
- » 85mm uniform foaming insulation
- » 5-way faster freezing technology

Jamuna refrigerators offers modern smart features such as mobile app notifications (door open alerts), built-in Bluetooth music system, smart Wi-Fi control, digital touch display, temperature control via mobile apps, and intelligent inverter technology. Jamuna refrigerators come with a 10-year warranty, and their nationwide service centres provide easy post-purchase support.

Local Production Fuels Cooling Growth: SINGER



With refrigerator penetration at around 60 percent of households, the category still holds significant room for expansion across urban and semi-urban Bangladesh.

MHM FAIROZ

Managing Director & CEO
Singer Bangladesh Limited



Singer Bangladesh's refrigerator portfolio reflects evolving consumer expectations shaped by household size, climate realities, and growing emphasis on energy efficiency. According to MHM Faiz, Managing Director & CEO of Singer Bangladesh Limited, the category is undergoing a transition driven by product innovation alongside changing perceptions of reliability, local manufacturing, and long-term value. He notes the industry has reached a relatively mature stage and is now largely locally dominated, with more than 90 percent of refrigerators produced within Bangladesh and annual demand approaching two million units across capacities ranging from roughly 100 to 700 litres.

Within Singer's lineup, the strongest demand sits in the mid-capacity segment, typically between 200 and 300 litres, aligned with medium to large households seeking a balance between storage, affordability, and electricity consumption. These models support everyday grocery habits while remaining suitable for apartment living, where kitchen space is often limited.

Product engineering has been shaped by local operating conditions, including voltage fluctuations, high temperatures, humidity, and dense urban

housing. Singer refrigerators incorporate low-voltage-compatible compressors capable of maintaining cooling performance without external stabilisers, alongside cooling systems designed for consistent operation in warmer climates. Moisture-controlled storage and efficient internal layouts further support freshness while addressing urban space constraints.

Energy efficiency remains a defining purchase driver as electricity costs influence household budgets. The use of R600a refrigerant supports faster heat exchange and improved cooling efficiency while consuming less electricity than many older refrigerants. It also has a very low global warming potential and zero ozone depletion impact, making it a more environmentally responsible option. Combined with inverter-based compressors, humidity-balanced crispers, antibacterial door seals, and odour-management features, this contributes to lower energy consumption while supporting hygiene and food preservation, factors increasingly valued beyond basic cooling functionality.

Singer's broader positioning has also evolved during 2024-2025, shifting from a legacy

retailer to a locally manufacturing, globally aligned brand under the Beko ecosystem. Central to this transition is a \$78 million manufacturing facility enabling local production of more than 90 percent of products, supported by immersive concept retail formats and expanded after-sales capabilities. These initiatives, alongside sustained visibility efforts and reported double-digit revenue growth, have reinforced consumer confidence and market presence.

With refrigerator penetration reaching an estimated 60 percent of households nationwide, the category continues to offer expansion potential across emerging urban and semi-urban segments. Looking ahead, Singer positions its refrigerators as a catalyst for broader appliance adoption by combining locally enabled affordability with globally benchmarked cooling technologies and service access.

Industry observers note Bangladesh's ambition to become a regional appliance hub will depend on deeper local component ecosystems, supportive investment policies, infrastructure development, skilled workforce growth, and streamlined export incentives. These factors are expected to shape long-term competitiveness.

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Govt aims to gradually issue 2cr family cards

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

The government is set to launch the pilot phase of its family card programme on March 10 with the ultimate aim of gradually bringing two crore families under monthly cash support.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will formally inaugurate the four-month pilot in 14 upazilas, where eligible families with at least five members will receive Tk 2,500 a month through direct transfers to their mobile wallets or bank accounts.

During the pilot, 6,500 families will be

- Pilot phase in 14 upazilas
- Pilot phase to start on March 10
- 6,500 families to receive benefits
- A family will receive Tk 2,500 a month
- Cards to be issued to mother or female head
- Tk 60,000cr will be needed a year for full implementation



No one will be excluded, and there will be no involvement of intelligence agencies or party elements.

AZM Zahid Hossain, social welfare minister



covered, with the scheme expanding nationwide in phases, according to the draft Family Card Piloting Implementation Guidelines 2026 and the Family Card Policy Paper.

The matter was discussed and the pilot phase was finalised at a cabinet committee meeting chaired by Tarique yesterday.

If fully implemented, the programme, a key election pledge of the BNP, would cost about Tk 5,000 crore a month, roughly Tk 60,000 crore a year. It will potentially become the largest social spending commitment in the country's history. The projected annual allocation would amount to nearly 12 percent of this fiscal year's revenue target.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Thousands of Muslims wait to break their Ramadan fast at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in Dhaka. The mosque committee, Islamic Foundation, and Tablighi Jamaat arrange free iftar for fasting devotees daily throughout the holy month.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

CONTAINER TERMINAL DEAL Safeguard nat'l interest: Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday instructed officials to ensure that all decisions regarding the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) at Chattogram Port serve the national interest.

He gave the directive while presiding over a meeting at the Cabinet Division on the terminal's operations.

The meeting was attended by Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman, and Executive Chairman of the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

2024 ENQUIRY COMMISSION

Evidence found against top military officials, politicians

ZYMA ISLAM

For 17 years, the killing of 74 people, including 57 of the nation's top military officers, during a mutiny at the then BDR headquarters in Palkhona has remained an open wound, clouded by state-led investigations dismissed by critics as a facade of justice.

In 2024, the Ministry of Home Affairs set up a seven-member body to re-examine the findings of the 2009 BDR mutiny commission,

BDR CARNAGE 2009

following widespread criticism of the 2013 mass trial. The inquiry was tasked with uncovering evidence that the previous report may have overlooked due to political interference.

The previous official investigation into the mutiny blamed years of

pent-up anger among ordinary soldiers, who felt their appeals for pay raises and better treatment were ignored. Rampaging troops from the then Bangladesh Rifles (now Border Guard Bangladesh) murdered some of the brightest military officers during the two-day revolt that began in Dhaka's Palkhona on February 25, 2009 and spread across the country.

However, the new body, the National Independent Investigation

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman makes a phone call to police officials of the DMP's Ramna Division after a secretariat employee sought his help in locating his abducted son yesterday. The boy was rescued within an hour of the call.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

PM's call leads to swift rescue of abducted boy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's intervention prompted a swift police operation yesterday to rescue an abducted schoolboy.

The 14-year-old son of Khondkar Shamim Hasan, a darkroom assistant at the Press Information Department under the information ministry, was abducted by criminals from in front of Shantinagar's Popular Diagnostic Centre after he had finished coaching classes around 3:30pm.

According to the family, he was returning home on his bicycle when two men intercepted him and forced him into a nearby abandoned building.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Shamim said the abductors took his son to the seventh floor of a 10-storey under-construction building in the area, beat him, and took his mobile phone.

"They called my wife from my son's phone and demanded Tk 50,000, threatening to beat him further if we failed to pay. When we said we could not afford that amount, they reduced the ransom to Tk 30,000."

Shamim was at the Secretariat when he learned about the abduction. He immediately went to Ramna Police Station. Upon realising that Prime Minister Tarique had not yet left the office, he rushed back to the Secretariat.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8

Ali Hossain Fakir made new IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday appointed Additional Inspector General of Police and Armed Police Battalion chief Md Ali Hossain Fakir as the new Inspector General of Police.



The home ministry announced the appointment in a notification replacing Baharul Alam, who had been serving as IGP on contract since November 20, 2024.

A member of the 15th batch of the Bangladesh Civil Service (Police) cadre, Ali was sent into forced retirement "in the public interest" on November 16, 2022, while serving as the commanding officer

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Talks of contractual secys stir discontent in civil service

BAHARAM KHAN and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

A sense of disgruntlement has taken over the civil administration over discussions to appoint retired officers to top positions in key ministries through contracts.

Following the removal of 13 secretaries on Monday, the public administration ministry is now working on replacing secretaries in another dozen ministries and divisions, while the secretaries of several other ministries may be transferred to lesser important posts but with the same status to make way for the contractual appointments.

The names of at least 8-10 officers who retired several years ago but received retroactive promotions to the rank of secretary during the interim government's tenure are being discussed at various levels of the administration.

Among them, Abdul Khaleq of the 1984 batch; Kamruzzaman, Baki Billah and Touhidul Islam of the 1985 batch; Zakir Hossain Kamal

of the 1986 batch; and Faridul Islam of the 11th batch may be considered for appointment on a contractual basis.

Last night, Manjur Morshed Chowdhury, who had received a retroactive promotion, was made the senior secretary to the home affairs ministry on a one-year contract.

Earlier, the new government appointed ABM Abdus Sattar from the 1982 batch as the principal secretary to the prime minister on a contractual basis.

Those being discussed for contractual appointments have undoubtedly endured difficult times in the past, said an additional secretary awaiting promotion to the post of secretary.

However, through retroactive promotions, they have already received their titles and financial compensation.

"Now, if they occupy the positions that we deserve, the legacy of deprivation will continue.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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SURGE IN MOSQUITOS

Health ministry to test insecticide effectiveness

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Amid a surge in mosquitoes over the past month, the health ministry has initiated a move to check whether the insecticide used to kill mosquitoes is effective.

The health minister and the state minister is expected to visit the storage facilities of the two Dhaka city corporations today, along with experts from the National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM), to examine the efficacy of the insecticides, officials said.

The move came after the health ministry held a meeting with the city corporation and health officials yesterday on ways to control mosquitoes, they said.

Dhaka has seen a surge in Culex mosquitoes over the past month, as both city corporations have failed to adequately eliminate breeding grounds. Many have also questioned the efficacy of the insecticides used to kill mosquitoes.

A rise in mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue often puts pressure on health facilities, and the health ministry therefore emphasises mosquito control and disease prevention to avoid potential strain, officials said.

Jahirul Islam, chief executive officer of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), told The Daily

Star, "Experts will check whether the insecticide used by our workers is effective in killing mosquitoes."

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain will visit the DSCC storage at Sayedabad, while State Minister for Health MA Muhit is set to visit the storage of Dhaka North City Corporation in Mirpur-2 today.

Jahirul said they have also conducted tests of the insecticide after a surge in mosquitoes in the capital, but are yet to get the test result.

Besides, he said, they also formed a ward-level team comprising their officials from different sectors to monitor the ongoing drive to control mosquitoes.

The meeting also discussed other steps the city corporations can take for mosquito control, a top health ministry official said. The meeting also talked about raising public awareness about cleanliness to destroy breeding grounds, he said, wishing not to be named.

The country recorded 413 dengue-related deaths last year, making it the third deadliest on record. Besides 1,02,861, people were hospitalised with dengue last year, which was the second-highest tally recorded in Bangladesh over the past 25 years.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Traders stacking watermelons from Kuakata at Barabazar Kadamtala in Khulna yesterday. Popular for iftar, the fruits were harvested early and are sold for Tk 15,000-Tk 25,000 per 100 pieces, depending on size and quality, at the wholesale market.

Evidence found against top military officials, politicians

FROM PAGE 1

Commission, which submitted its final report in November 2025, contradicts the findings and said the massacre had direct involvement of the then-ruling Awami League leadership. It specifically named lawmaker Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, former defence and security adviser to the prime minister Tarique Ahmed Siddique, and former army chief General Moeen U Ahmed, among others.

The report, submitted to former chief adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, has not been made public, and details of the evidence against the accused have not been disclosed.

The Daily Star has seen the report, which gathered evidence against some of the top civil and military officials as well as politicians.

Meanwhile, on February 23, the newly formed BNP government announced that it would constitute another commission to reinvestigate the incident to ensure justice.

EVIDENCE AGAINST TARIQUE SIDDIQUE, MOEEN U AHMED

In the latest report, the most substantial evidence against Tarique Ahmed Siddique and General Moeen U Ahmed comes from the testimony of Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz Zaman, who was present at the scene on the day of the mutiny.

Waker, then a major and second-in-command of the 17th East Bengal Regiment, arrived at the scene around 10:30am. He positioned troops from the 46th Independent Infantry Brigade near Gate 4 of the BDR headquarters and was prepared to intervene.

According to Lt Gen (ret'd) Abdul Mubeen, then the principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division, he instructed Waker to take position on the rooftop of a building in Dhanmondi near the Pilkhana gate and fire several rocket shells targeting the gate.

Mubeen said Tarique later ordered him not to intervene. Tarique subsequently confronted Mubeen and questioned whether he had the authority to order such a move. Mubeen later became the Chief of army staff.

According to the report, Waker, unable to reach the commander of the 46th Brigade for orders, contacted Major General Tarique Siddique. The report says Tarique bypassed the chain of command and explicitly instructed him not to launch an attack, citing the government's decision to pursue a political resolution.

According to the report, Tarique was alerted to the massacre as early as 9:37am, when Major Md Zaedi Ahsan Habib, who was trapped in the Darbar Hall as the killings unfolded, called him seeking help. Tarique had previously been Zaedi's commanding officer. Zaedi survived and later testified before the Commission.

In his testimony, Maj Gen Rezanur Rahman Khan, additional director general (operations) of RAB, then a colonel, told the Commission that he received news of the mutiny around 9:30am from BDR officers and set out for Pilkhana with his forces.

He said he had already ordered RAB-2, RAB-3 and RAB-10 to proceed to Pilkhana and had authorised them to open fire if necessary.

On the way, Tarique called and instructed him to go instead to the state guest house Jamuna. Upon arrival, the then director general of RAB told him to cancel the order to fire and advised him to contact the appropriate authorities regarding army deployment.

Rezanur said he was also instructed by the then DG of the Special Security Force, Brig Gen Joyanal Abedin, and by Tarique not to intervene. He relayed those instructions to his forces on the ground.

According to his statement, he repeatedly sought permission to enter Pilkhana with RAB personnel but was not approved.

The report further said that on the morning of 27 February, when Brig Gen Abdul Hakim Aziz, then the director of Military Operations (DMO) at the Army Headquarters, entered Pilkhana in an armoured personnel carrier, Tarique allegedly verbally reprimanded him for bringing the vehicle inside.

It also says that on the evening of 25 February 2009, Major General Sultanuzzaman Saleh – then brigadier general at the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) – went to the National Monitoring Centre (NMC) to conduct mobile phone monitoring under Tarique's instruction, bypassing the chain of command.

The Commission noted that because Sultanuzzaman monitored networks for an extended period

46th Independent Infantry Brigade and instead spending critical hours at Jamuna.

Despite reports of officer fatalities by noon, the report says he supported political negotiations and ordered troops to withdraw to a position two miles away, a move that allegedly allowed the attackers to continue the killings and later escape.

EVIDENCE AGAINST TAPOSH AND SHEIKH SELIM

The Commission called Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh a key coordinator of the massacre.

One premise of this accusation is that Taposh had a close acquaintance with some of the sepoys and jawans convicted as primary conspirators of the BDR mutiny.

Sepoy Selim Reza, currently incarcerated, told the Commission that ahead of the 2008 general election, Taposh met several BDR personnel to discuss their grievances. The group was brought to him by Torab Ali, a ward-level Awami League leader in Dhaka.

Torab Ali later died in jail after being accused and convicted in the 2009 BDR carnage case, though he was subsequently acquitted of conspiracy charges.

Another incarcerated BDR member, Nayek Sheikh Shahidur Rahman, who was close to Torab, told the Commission that Torab had described a secret planning meeting at Taposh's residence. He claimed those

maintained command over the rebel factions.

Sepoy Selim Reza (now incarcerated), who was present at the meeting, said that Hasina had promised to make DAD Tawhid the director-general of BDR.

Major Sumon Ahmed of the 4th East Bengal Regiment told the Commission that during the mutiny, he saw Taposh, former police inspector general Nur Mohammed, Nanak, and Mirza Azam enter and exit the BDR HQ several times without hindrance, while others, including the army, were barred. He also said that around 11:30am, he saw Taposh distributing leaflets to the jawans.

Around midnight of the day of the mutiny, Taposh, former home minister Sahara Khatun, and the then IGP held a meeting with the mutinous jawans. Subedar Major Golran, an eyewitness, said Sahara asked the jawans whether they wanted Taposh or Nur Mohammed as director-general.

The events following the mutiny brought further scrutiny to Taposh.

Five military officers who had been on duty during the mutiny, took action against the rebels, or were involved in post-event investigations, were forcibly disappeared, tortured in a joint interrogation cell, and imprisoned for five years through a court-martial.

They were accused of attempting to assassinate Taposh with a remotely controlled bomb on 21 October 2009, outside his law office in Motijheel. The officers named in the case were Major Helal, Capt Rezaul Karim, Capt Khondokar Rajib Hossain, Capt Md Fuad Khan, and Capt Subayel Ibne Rafique.

The Commission noted that all five were at their respective stations on the day of the attack and could not have been involved.

According to the report, Capt Rezaul had fired at rebels during the mutiny and later received a stand-down release for disobeying the army chief's order. Fuad had defied orders to keep the army out, seized weapons from the armoury, and launched a rescue operation into Pilkhana on 26 February to save surviving officers. Subayel had acted similarly, taking arms from the 14th Engineering Brigade to aid the rescue.

Capt Rezaul told the Commission that they were forcibly disappeared and framed to remove them from the investigation and destroy the evidence they had gathered. All five said they were tortured in the "Aynaghar"-famed Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC). Brigadier General Imamul Huda, who headed the court-martial, admitted that the officers appeared physically abused during their hearings.

The initial investigation could not prove the allegations. Yet, after the court-martial, the officers were taken to the AIC, tortured again, and forced to give confessional statements under duress. They told the Commission that Brig Gen Huda threatened them with prolonged torture if they did not sign a blank paper.

The Commission's review of the court-martial proceedings found gross discrepancies, indicating the officers had been deliberately framed.

Govt aims

FROM PAGE 1

The draft, prepared by the social welfare ministry, envisions transforming the family card into a "Universal Social ID Card" for every citizen by 2030, while raising the social security budget to 3 percent of GDP by 2028.

At present, 95 social safety net programmes are run by 23 ministries. The allocation for these programmes in the current fiscal year is Tk 1.26 lakh crore, or 1.87 percent of GDP.

Under the new scheme, cards will be issued in the name of the mother or female head of household. Beneficiaries will be selected using Proxy Means Test (PMT) scoring, a scientific poverty assessment method.

Rural families owning 0.50 acres or less of homestead and cultivable land will be considered eligible, with income and assets also assessed to identify poor and ultra-poor households.

Families will be excluded if any member is a regular government employee or pensioner, owns a commercial licence or large business, or possesses a car or air conditioner.

Priority will be given to the landless, homeless, persons with disabilities, and marginalised communities, including hijra, Bede, and small ethnic groups.

Selection will be carried out by committees formed at the city, upazila, union, municipality, and ward levels.

The programme will be overseen by government officials under a two-tier checking system to minimise errors.

The draft states that existing TCB cards will be integrated into the family card's Dynamic Social Registry. Using the same smart card with OTP verification, beneficiaries will be able to buy essential food items at subsidised prices and, in future, access services such as education stipends and agricultural subsidies.

"The main philosophy of this programme is 'family is the core unit of development, not the individual,'" the guideline notes, adding that fragmentation and weak coordination among the 95 existing programmes have led to duplication, while 22-25 percent of the actual poor remain excluded.

"The aim of this programme is to build a human welfare state by eliminating discrimination," it says.

PILOT PHASE

Briefing reporters after yesterday's meeting, Social Welfare Minister

AZM Zahid Hossain said the pilot phase will be implemented in one ward of each upazila. It will then be expanded in stages to one union and eventually to entire upazilas to ensure universal access.

The 14 upazilas selected for the pilot phase are Banani (Korail, Sattala and Bhashantek slums) and Mirpur/Shah Ali (Oli Miar Tek and Baganbari slums) in Dhaka; Pangsha in Rajbari; Patenga in Chattogram; Banchharampur in Brahmanbaria; Lama in Bandarban; Khalishpur in Khulna; Charfesson in Bhola; Derai in Sunamganj; Bhairab in Kishoreganj; Bogura Sadar in Bogura; Lalpur in Natore; Thakurgaon Sadar in Thakurgaon; and Nawabganj in Dinajpur.

Over Tk 2.10 crore was earmarked for the pilot phase. The cash will be transferred directly to beneficiaries' mobile wallets or bank accounts through the government-to-person (G2P) system.

The first month's cash assistance will be credited to beneficiaries' accounts immediately after the inauguration.

For beneficiary selection, ward-level committees will conduct door-to-door data collection from February 26 to March 2, surveying at least 1,000 families in each selected ward.

After online data entry and PMT scoring, Department of Social Services staff will verify the information on the ground. Final approval is scheduled for March 8 and 9, after which QR coded digital smart family cards will be printed.

Zahid said beneficiary selection would be based strictly on field-level, door-to-door data collection.

"No one will be excluded, and there will be no involvement of intelligence agencies or party elements," he said.

The programme would target three groups: the ultra-poor, the poor, and lower-income families, according to him.

The mother, as head of household, will receive the benefit, Zahid said.

"If a woman becomes economically self-reliant, a family will become self-reliant, and the next generation will also benefit," he said.

As the second half of the fiscal year is already underway, initial funding will come from block allocations by the finance ministry, with plans to incorporate the programme into the regular national budget from the next fiscal year.

Safeguard nat'l interest: Tarique

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun, among others.

Speaking to reporters, Ashik said the prime minister emphasised that any agreement on the NCT must safeguard national interests.

Asked about the recently dissolved interim government's stance on a possible treaty with DP World, he explained, "The position remains that if any agreement can be concluded safeguarding the national interest, only then will it be signed. Such a stance had been expressed during the interim period."

He added that as this was the first day's meeting, it would be premature to draw conclusions.

The prime minister was briefed on the overall operations of the NCT. He, later, provided initial guidance.

Ali Hossain Fakir made new IGP

FROM PAGE 1

of Armed Police Battalion 3 during the then Awami League government.

The interim government reinstated him on August 27, 2024, along with four other officers. In August 2025, he was promoted from deputy inspector general to supernumerary additional inspector general of police.

Ali joined Bangladesh Police in 1995 as an assistant superintendent of police through the 15th BCS examination.

He obtained BCom (Honours) in Management, MCom, and MBA degrees from Dhaka University.

The process to lease out the NCT to a foreign operator began during the Awami League's tenure and continued during the interim government's time, he said.

The interim government aimed to sign a concession agreement with UAE-based DP World to operate the NCT by December last year.

The initiative slowed down following the filing of a writ petition with the High Court, which challenged the legality of the deceased procedure by the interim government.

The Yunus-led government was close to finalising the negotiations with DP World but had to abandon the plan on February 8 following a week-long wildcat strike enforced by the employees and workers of Chattogram port, which brought all port operations to a halt.

Talks of contractual secys stir discontent in civil service

FROM PAGE 1

This is creating new discrimination – we are not seeing a new culture then," he said on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Despite the BNP's election manifesto promising "meritocracy", the government is beginning its journey by making contractual appointments to the most crucial positions, said another additional secretary on the condition of anonymity.

Appointing one person on a contract at the top level blocks the promotion

and career progression of at least two or three talented subordinate officers, leading them to perform their duties half-heartedly, he said.

"Escaping the clutches of the bureaucracy is no easy task – contractual appointments do not align with the public support and positive image with which this new government has started its journey," said Badiur Rahman, a former secretary.

Citing examples of how both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina were

ultimately harmed by relying on contractual appointments in top administrative posts, he said: "The main architects behind the failure of the recent interim government were these contractual secretaries. If this government also chooses officers who retired years ago for contractual roles, then there is nothing more to say."

Although the contractual appointments of the nine secretaries were cancelled on Monday, there are more still in service, such as in the cabinet

division, the public administration ministry and the expatriate welfare and overseas employment ministry.

Meanwhile, the public administration ministry issued notifications yesterday regarding the transfer of two secretaries: Md. Abdur Rahman Tarafder, secretary of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission Secretariat, has been appointed as the secretary to the labour and employment ministry, while Md. Sanwar Jahan Bhuiyan is going the other way.

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Bangladesh at a crossroads following polls

Say speakers at discussion by Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK



BULBUL HASAN, London

Bangladesh now faces a decisive period that will determine whether the latest vote leads to structural reform or reinforces familiar patterns of power, said senior policymakers and analysts at a discussion in London yesterday.

The discussion, titled "Bangladesh: After the Elections", was organised by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK at Westminster Hall.

At the discussion, Baroness Ann Winterton, the UK's

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Unauthorised makeshift shops have spilled onto the main road in Dhaka's Gulistan area, overtaking a pedestrian walkway and worsening traffic congestion in one of the capital's busiest parts. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Tarique seeks action plans from new city administrators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has asked administrators of six newly appointed city corporations to submit action plans within seven days after identifying key problems and crises in their respective cities.

Dhaka South City Corporation Administrator Md Abdus Salam told reporters at the Secretariat yesterday that the instruction came following a meeting with the prime minister after he took charge.

The government had issued a gazette notification on Monday appointing administrators to the six city corporations.

Abdus Salam said the prime minister tasked them with addressing stagnation in city corporations that have long remained without elections. He added that they were instructed to remain vigilant against dengue and give greater emphasis to mosquito control.



Khalilur leaves for KSA today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman is scheduled to leave for Saudi Arabia today, making it his first official foreign trip since his appointment.

Humayun Kabir, adviser to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, will also be part of the visit to attend the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) foreign ministers-level meeting in Jeddah, reports UNB, quoting foreign ministry officials.

The OIC will hold the emergency meeting of the Open-ended Executive Committee at the level of foreign ministers on Thursday at the OIC General Secretariat in Jeddah.

The meeting will discuss the illegal Israeli occupation decisions aimed at promoting settlement, annexation and attempting to impose alleged Israeli sovereignty

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

1,202 'politically motivated' cases to be withdrawn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Home Affairs in a statement yesterday said the government has approved the withdrawal of 1,202 more "politically motivated" cases filed during the tenure of the Awami League government.

The decision comes as part of the government's ongoing move to scrap what it calls "harassment cases" against opposition leaders and activists.

"Approval has been given to withdraw another 1,202 political harassment cases filed against leaders and activists of opposition parties during the 17-year rule of the previous fascist government," the statement said.

Earlier, on February 22, the ministry had approved the withdrawal of 1,006 similar cases.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

17 YEARS OF BDR CARNAGE

139 appeals over death penalty still pending

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Seventeen long years have passed since the BDR carnage, but neither the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government nor Prof Muhammad Yunus-led interim government took any extensive steps to settle the appeals in the Appellate Division, leaving the death penalties of 139 convicts unexecuted.

Asked about the current BNP government's plan on this issue, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman refused to make any comment. "I am not making any comment on anything. Let me settle down a bit first," he told The Daily Star on February 20.

However, Attorney General (in charge) Md Arshadur Rouf told this correspondent on February 20 that the Appellate Division will start hearing the appeals in the BDR mutiny case when the chief justice orders to include the appeals in the list for their hearing and disposal.

The old cases are now being heard and settled in the Appellate Division, he added.

A total of 74 people, including 57 army officials, were killed in the mutiny that took



place in the capital's Pikhana headquarters of the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) on February 25 and 26 in 2009.

The incident of mutiny had left the nation numb, as people stood aghast at the extent of the barbarity perpetrated at the headquarters of the paramilitary force, later renamed Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

A couple of days later, police filed a case with Lalbagh Police Station on various charges, including murder and use of explosives. The case was transferred to New Market Police Station on April 6 that year and

then split into two cases -- one for murder and the other for the use of explosives.

On November 5, 2013, a Dhaka court sentenced 150 BDR members and two civilians to death and jailed 160 others in the murder case. Another 256 people, mostly BDR soldiers, were awarded varying jail terms, and 278 were acquitted.

While disposing of an appeal by the prosecution, the HC in November 2017 reduced the number of individuals sentenced to death to 139, awarded life imprisonment to 185, and sentenced 228 others to various prison terms ranging from one to 13 years.

It also acquitted 283 people and exempted 15 others from the case.

The 35 appeals filed challenging the High Court verdict that confirmed the death sentences of the 139 convicted accused in November 2017 are still pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

It is still uncertain when the victims' wait for justice will come to an end, since the Appellate Division has yet to start hearing the pending appeals.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Zarina Begum applies pesticides in a Boro paddy field at Gangarampur village in Batiaghata, Khulna, as the farmer hopes for a good yield if weather remains favourable. Timely and measured pesticide application prevents insect infestation and boosts production. According to the Department of Agriculture, Khulna, Boro paddy has been planted on 65,778 hectares in the district this year. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Looking forward to working with new Bangladesh PM

Says South Korean president

UNB, Dhaka



President of the Republic of Korea Lee Jae Myung has said he is confident that Bangladesh will continue to achieve sustained economic growth and social prosperity under the leadership of Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

"Korea and Bangladesh have expanded cooperation in various fields, including education and investment, development cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges, based on longstanding friendship and mutual trust," said the

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Portfolios allocated to PM's 10 advisers

5 granted ministerial rank, 5 state minister status

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government issued a gazette notification yesterday, allocating portfolios to 10 advisers appointed to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman with the status of minister and state minister.

According to the gazette, five of them will hold the status of minister and five others state minister.

Among the advisers holding the status of minister, Mirza Abbas Uddin Ahmed, Nazrul Islam Khan, and Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed have been appointed as political advisers, while Ismail Zabyullah has been made adviser to the Ministry of Public Administration, and Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, adviser to the ministries of finance and planning.

Among the advisers holding the status of state minister.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

'Will review Mamun file before action'

Says new ICT chief prosecutor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Newly appointed Chief Prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal Aminul Islam yesterday said he will review the case file before deciding on any legal steps in the case involving former inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun.

Responding to allegations that Mamun was made an approver in exchange for large sums of money, Aminul said he had not yet examined the file and would act if any irregularities were found. "If there is scope for legal action, we will take fresh steps," he told journalists on his first day at the ICT.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

RANGAMATI GENERAL HOSPITAL

Tk 48.5cr expansion lies unused

RIKORS CHAKMA, Rangamati

Rangamati General Hospital's newly constructed building, built to expand its capacity and services, remains unused due to an acute manpower shortage.

Under the government's 4th Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Programme (4th HPNSP), funded by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the Public Works Department constructed the six-storey building at a cost of Tk 48.5 crore.

Construction began in July 2019 and was completed within the stipulated deadline in June 2024. However, the facility was handed over to the Health Department in Rangamati more than a year later, in November 2025.

Equipped with modern operating theatres, ICUs, isolation units, four elevators and facilities to expand the hospital's capacity from 100 to 250 beds, the building remains non-functional as authorities have yet to shift services from the old facility.

"The building has already been handed over to the Health Department upon completion of its construction, and they have taken its possession. However, I have learnt that the hospital authorities could not start services in the new facility yet," said Sharmi Chakma, executive engineer of Rangamati PWD.

"If it remains unused for a prolonged period, the

elevators and other electrical equipment may get damaged," she added.

According to hospital sources, the emergency department, pharmacy, store, ticket counter and related activities will operate on the ground floor of the new building. The second floor will house a 20-bed ICU and isolation unit. The third floor will accommodate a pathological lab, X-ray and MRI facilities, and a kidney dialysis unit. Operation theatres will be on the fourth floor and the post-operative unit on the fifth floor, while the sixth floor will have wards and cabins for patients.

During a visit to the hospital's old 100-bed facility, this correspondent found that the number of admitted patients far exceeded its capacity, with many receiving treatment on floors and in corridors.

Patients said the hospital is the last resort for people from remote areas across the Chattogram Hill Tracts. They said that if the new facility were functional, they could receive better treatment.

Dr Nuyen Khisa, civil surgeon in Rangamati and the hospital superintendent, said services could not be launched in the new building due to a lack of adequate manpower. "We will try to shift some services to the new building on a limited scale within the next few days," he added.



The newly built six-storey extension of Rangamati General Hospital remains unused due to manpower shortage, while patients crowd the old 100-bed facility, many receiving treatment on floors and in corridors.

PHOTO: STAR

Polls to Bogura-6, Sherpur-3 seats on April 9

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday said the by-election in Bogura-6 and the rescheduled election in Sherpur-3 will be held on April 9 simultaneously.

EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed announced the schedule at the commission's headquarters in Dhaka's Agargaon in the afternoon.

Voting will be held from 7:30am till 4:30pm, he also said.

According to the schedule, the deadline for submitting nomination papers for the two constituencies is March 2. Scrutiny by returning officers will continue until March 5. Appeals can be filed between March 6 and 10, with disposal scheduled for March 11. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is March 14, while electoral symbols will be allocated on March 15.

Voting in 299 constituencies was held on February 12, but polling in Sherpur-3 was cancelled following the death of a valid candidate.

Besides, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman -- who secured victory in Bogura-6 and Dhaka-17 in the 13th national parliamentary election -- has formally given up his Bogura-6 parliamentary seat.

Regarding referendum, the EC senior secretary said that Bogura-6 had already undergone one, while Sherpur-3 does not require it.

1,202 'politically motivated'

FROM PAGE 3

Officials said most of these cases were lodged against leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, Hefazat-e-Islam and Gono Odhikar Parishad, among other political groups.

According to the ministry, nearly 5,00,000 people are expected to be relieved from these "harassment cases".

Following the July uprising, the then interim government formed two committees on September

22 last year to review cases filed between January 6, 2009, and August 5, 2024.

The district-level committees, headed by deputy commissioners, were tasked with primary scrutiny, while an inter-ministerial committee led by then law adviser Asif Nazrul was formed to conduct further review.

Political parties were invited to submit applications seeking withdrawal of cases. Based on those petitions, the inter-ministerial committee examined the

applications in 39 meetings and recommended the withdrawal of 23,865 cases in phases.

The home ministry said the process of withdrawing politically motivated cases remains ongoing, signalling that more approvals may follow.

Portfolios

FROM PAGE 3

minister, Humayun Kabir has been assigned to the foreign ministry, disaster management and relief ministry, and civil aviation and tourism ministry, while Brig Gen (ret'd) Shamsul Islam has been assigned the Ministry of Defence.

Dr Jahedur Rahman has been made adviser to policy and strategy issues, while Mahdi Amin has been made adviser to the ministries of education, primary and mass education, expatriates' welfare and overseas employment, and labour and employment.

139 appeals over death penalty

FROM PAGE 3

Besides, the trial court could not even finish recording statements from witnesses in another case filed under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908, in connection with the same incident. Therefore, it cannot be said when the trial proceedings of this case will be finished.

The explosives case, however, has not seen much progress so far.

In July 2010, police submitted the charge sheet in the explosives case to a Dhaka court against 808 people, mostly BDR members. Later, another 26 were included in the charge sheet.

Though trial proceedings in both cases started in August 2011, the explosives case was put on hold so that the murder case could

proceed uninterrupted. The proceedings of the explosives case resumed after a Dhaka court pronounced the verdict in the murder case in November 2013.

Between January 19 and November 20 last year, 316 former BDR members, accused in the explosives case, were released from jail after securing bail from Dhaka Metropolitan Special Tribunal-2.

Of them, 259 had earlier been acquitted by the HC in the murder case, and 57 had already served jail terms ranging from one to 10 years, according to court staffers.

Advocate Md Aminul Islam, chief defence counsel in BDR cases, told The Daily Star that a separate bench of the Appellate Division, comprising at least four

judges, is needed to hold hearings of the appeals in the BDR carnage case.

Currently, there is a shortage of judges on the Appellate Division, and therefore, more time will be needed for disposal of the appeals, he said.

Aminul, who was appointed a chief prosecutor at the International Crimes Tribunal on February 22, also said the explosives case was used by the then Awami League government as a strategy to keep behind bars the accused who were acquitted or had already served their jail terms.

Another defence lawyer, Tasmiah Nuhya Ahmed, recently told this correspondent that the trial proceedings in the explosives case are going on slowly.

Will review Mamun

FROM PAGE 3

On November 17 last year, ICT-1 sentenced deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal to death in a crimes against humanity case, while Mamun, who turned approver, was sentenced to five years in prison.

Aminul said ensuring strict compliance with the law, transparency, and dynamism in tribunal proceedings would be his top priority.

"Reflecting the spirit of the July uprising, we have emphasised expediting proceedings to deliver swift and credible justice," he said, adding that he would also review past judgments and take legal steps if necessary.

"We will target criminals, not innocent people, and

will not use proceedings for political harassment," he added.

Praising his predecessor's performance, Aminul said formal charges had been submitted in 24 cases, with 21 now at the trial stage, while several others remain under investigation. He said any irregularities would be examined.

On restructuring the prosecution team, he said the decision lies with the government.

Regarding corruption allegations raised by a prosecutor, he vowed strict action. "If anyone associated with the tribunal is found corrupt, we will take legal action. We will prove this tribunal is corruption-free and capable of conducting international standard trials," he said.

DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Today is the 53rd death anniversary of Freedom Fighter **Abdur Rob (Boga Mia)** Ex-Member of the Constituent Assembly and President of the Pabna District Awami League.

He is remembered for his Honesty, Sacrifice and dedication for the people and the country. He was always true to his cause and principle which is enviously valued by the people of Pabna and the nation even today.

He died in a tragic car accident on February 25, 1973.

We pray for his departed soul, eternal peace and Jannat.

D-13

বিনা টিকিটকে রেল ভ্রমণ থেকে বিরত থাকুন
দুর্ঘটনা এড়াতে রেলের টিকিট ও যন্ত্রাংশ চুরি রোধে এগিয়ে আসুন

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
সেতু প্রকৌশলী, চট্টগ্রাম এর কার্যালয়
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম
নং-বিই/সিটিজি/ই-জিপি/টেন্ডার নোটিশ/২০২৫-২৬/০৩ তারিখঃ ২৩.০২.২০২৬খ্রিঃ

ই-জিপি টেন্ডার নোটিশ

সেতু প্রকৌশলী, বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, চট্টগ্রাম কর্তৃক National Electronic Government Procurement Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) এ নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা হয়েছেঃ

ক্রমিক নং	ক্রমিক নং	ক্রয়ের ধরণ ও কাজের নাম	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	দরপত্র প্রকাশ, মাইলিং তারিখ ও শেষ সময়
1	1234211, BE/CTG/4111308 /2025-26/03	Works: At GRP Barak Kamalapur: Rehabilitation for 16" x 8" dia, 109'1" depth old deep tubewell at GRP Barak, Kamalapur, Dhaka Pump No. 07.	NCT, OTM	24-Feb-2026 13:00:00, 12-Mar-2026 12:00:00
2	1235127, BE/CTG/3258207/ 2025-26/04	Works: Repairing & repainting of steel structures with other allied works of platform Shed No. 1 (200 feet) & 2 at Ashugonj (ASZ) Railway Station.	NCT, OTM	24-Feb-2026 13:00:00, 12-Mar-2026 12:05:00

এস(২৬) (১৯০)

এম. রিয়াদ ইসলাম
সেতু প্রকৌশলী
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, চট্টগ্রাম
মোবাইল নং-০১৭১১-৬৯১৫৩১
ই-মেইলঃ bee@railway.gov.bd

GD-290

Public Notice

Research Triangle Institute International, LLC, Bangladesh Branch Office

Research Triangle Institute International, LLC, having its address at 11/A, Momtaz Vision, Road-99, Gulshan, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh, hereby gives notice to all agencies, bodies of Government and all those organizations, entities, authorities, persons with any kind of interest in Research Triangle Institute International, LLC, Bangladesh Branch Office that we will close the operation of our Bangladesh Branch Office and all our accounting records from May 31, 2026. In order to complete all the required formalities within the stipulated date, the office closure application and all other required documents are being processed to be submitted to the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) for permission to close the Liaison Office. In case of any query or observation, please contact Mr. Razib Hossain, Representative, of Flat 8D, 380/18/B/2 Kunjaban R/A, East Rampura, Dhaka 1219, Bangladesh, Contact no.: +88 01711-432146

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION (STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
Company Matter No. 117 of 2026

IN THE MATTER OF: An application under section 81(2) of the Companies Act, 1994.

AND

IN THE MATTER OF: Mohammad Zahurul Islam, son of Mohammad Mokbul Ahmadd, Shareholder, Director and Managing Director, Eerna Limited of House No. 87, Road No. 02, Block-A, Niketon, Gulshan, Dhaka. **Petitioner** -VERSUS-
Eerna Limited of 207/A, West Kafur, Begum Rokeya Sharani Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207 and The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies & Firms, TCB Bhaban (6th Floor), 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. **Respondents**

Notice that an application under section 81(2) of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named Petitioner for condonation of the delay in holding the Annual General Meeting of Eerna Limited for the calendar years 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 and to give necessary direction for holding the said meeting within a reasonable time. Upon hearing of the application on 01.02.2026 the Hon'ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque has been pleased to admit the said application. If you are interested to oppose the said application you may appear before the Hon'ble Court either in person or through an advocate on or before the date fixed for hearing. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary cost.

Advocate Baki Md. Murtuza
Sword Associate Suite No. 309 (2nd Floor),
R.S. Bhaban 120/A, Matijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000. Mollie no. 01946036933

বাংলাদেশ ডেন্টাল কলেজ
BANGLADESH DENTAL COLLEGE
House # 34, Road # 14/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

Application for Employment

Applications are hereby invited from the eligible interested candidates for filling up the following post of Bangladesh Dental College (BDC) under the BMSRI:

Sl. No.	Name of Post
01	Principal

Requirements and Eligibility:

- BM&DC and University rules will be applicable.
- Departmental candidates and candidates currently in service should apply through proper channel.
- Candidates should submit their applications along with a complete CV, photocopies of all relevant certificates/ documents, publications and 2 (two) copies of PP size photographs including NID.
- A pay order (non-refundable) of Tk. 500/= (Five hundred only) from any recognized bank in favour of BDC has to be submitted along with the application.
- The application should be addressed to the Chairman, Governing Body, Bangladesh Dental College, House # 34, Road # 14/A, Dhanmondi R/A, Dhaka-1209 and shall reach on or before 02.00 pm on 18-03-2026.

Chairman
Governing Body
Bangladesh Dental College

Request for Proposal (RFP)

International Labour Organization (ILO) Dhaka invites applications from interested CONSULTANT to support Communications, Visibility, Branding, Photography and Audio-Visual for Reintegration for Migrant Workers Project

The Terms of Reference (ToR) can be downloaded from the **United Nations Global Market Place (UNGM)** at <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/291981>

The deadline for submission of proposal is **Sunday, March 08, 2026, by 04:30 PM (BST time).**

Invitation for Tender
Supplying Brick Chips & Sand

Bangladesh Cricket Board

Ref No.: BCB/Grounds/ T&P / Brick Chips & Sand / 2026/126 Date: 25th February 2026

Sealed Tenders are hereby invited from the experienced & Bonafide Authorized Contractor/ Organization/ Firm for Supplying Brick Chips & Sand Approx. Brick Chips 60,507 Cft & Sand Approx. 6,996 Cft as per terms and conditions stated in the Tender Schedule:

Sl. No.	Organization	Supplying Entity Name	Supply of Brick Chips & Sand
1	Organization	Bangladesh Cricket Board	Chief Executive Officer, BCB
2	Procuring Entity Name	Supply of Brick Chips & Sand	Supply of Brick Chips & Sand
3	Invitation for	BCB designated venues across Bangladesh (List attached with schedule)	Request for Quotation (RFQ)
4	Procuring Entity District	BCB/ Grounds/T&P/ Brick Chips & Sand /2026/126	Bangladesh Cricket Board
5	Invitation Ref:	Request for Quotation (RFQ)	Bangladesh Cricket Board
6	Budget and source of Fund	25/02/2026	12/03/2026 at 10:30 am
7	Tender Publication Date	12/03/2026 at 10:30 am	12/03/2026 at 12:00 pm
8	Tender Last Selling Date	12/03/2026 at 12:30 pm	12/03/2026 at 12:30 pm
9	Tender Submission date and time	Management Office of Bangladesh Cricket Board at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216, Bangladesh.	
10	Tender Opening date and time		
11	Tender Opening date and time		
12	Place of receiving & opening tender		
13	Place / Date / Time of Pre-Tender meeting (Optional)		
14	Scope of Supply	The following is the scope of supply that the tenderers must adhere to and ensure: i) Supply of Brick Chips (Size: 2"-3"- Brick Chips 60,507 cft and Core Sand-Sand 6,996 cft suitable for cricket pitch preparation. ii) Brick Chips must be Number-1 (Pick) and Core Sand must be free from stones, roots and others materials. iii) Transportation and delivery to be made at the designated venues as instructed by the BCB from time to time. iv) Quantity may vary depending on requirements for respective venues.	
15	Eligibility and Qualification of Tenderers	The tenderers must meet the following criteria to be eligible: i) Minimum 3 (three) years of experience in supplying Brick Chips and Sand. ii) Prior experience in supplying materials for sports grounds /cricket grounds (preferred). iii) Possess the capability to deliver the requisite quantity and meet the delivery time-frame. iv) Possess valid business legal documents, i.e., Updated Trade License, valid TIN Certificate, VAT/BIN Registration Certificate and Latest Tax Return Certificate.	
16	Particulars	Location	Tender Security
	Supply of Brick Chips (Size: 2"-3", Number-1 (Pick)) 60507 Cft and Sand (Sand) 6996 Cft for Bangladesh (Venue / Stadium) Quoted value. List is attached in the schedule)	Different Venues across Bangladesh	BDT 2.5% of the Total 2 (Two) Weeks First week-60%, Second week-40%
17	Address of the Official Inviting Tender	Bangladesh Cricket Board, Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216. Phone # +88 028031001-4.	
18	The BCB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason. Further, BCB also reserves the right to cancel the entire tender process and / or modify, add or alter the terms of the document and/ or the conditions for Tender by issuing an addendum(s) at any time prior to the submission of the Tender.		

Chief Executive Officer
Bangladesh Cricket Board
Management Office: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216
Tel: +880 2 8031001-4

পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি
POWER GRID BANGLADESH PLC
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd
স্মারক নং- ২৭.২২.০০০০.৭২৭.০৭.০০২.২৬.৭০৩ তারিখঃ ২৪/০২/২০২৬খ্রিঃ

e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের জিএমডি, রংপুর দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টালে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Reference	Title of Works
1234212	27.21.0000.727.07.002.26.694; Dated: 22.02.2026	Repair & Maintenance of Ansar Barak at Mithapukur Grid Substation under GMD, Power Grid, Rangpur.
1234433	27.21.0000.727.07.002.26.695; Dated: 22/02/2026	Repair And Maintenance of approach road including ramp and beautification at Mithapukur Grid Substation under GMD, Power Grid, Rangpur.
1234120	27.21.0000.727.07.002.26.696; Dated: 22/02/2026	Re-filling of Fire Extinguisher of Different Grid Substation under GMD, Power Grid, Rangpur.

আগ্রহী ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্র অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোঃ শাহজাহান আলী
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, জিএমডি, রংপুর

DRUG LORD'S DEATH Mexico deploys 10,000 troops to end violence

AFP, Guadalajara
Mexico has deployed 10,000 troops to quell clashes sparked by the killing of the country's most-wanted drug lord that claimed dozens of lives, officials said Monday.
Nemesio "El Mencho" Oseguera, leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, was wounded Sunday in a shootout with soldiers in Tapalpa, Jalisco state, and died while being flown to Mexico City.
News of his death triggered spasms of violence, with cartel members blocking roads in 20 states and torching vehicles and businesses.
During the raid on Oseguera and subsequent clashes, at least 27 members of security forces, 46 suspected criminals and one civilian were killed.
A prison break in Jalisco saw 23 people escape when their jail was attacked by "criminal groups".

Putin failed to 'achieve goals' Zelensky marks war anniversary vowing to fight on, with Ukraine's allies divided; war aims not yet achieved: Kremlin

AGENCIES
Ukraine will not betray the sacrifices made by its people in four years of war just to make peace with Russia, President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed yesterday, as divisions among his key allies overshadowed commemorations of the start of the conflict.
European nations had hoped to agree a fresh package of sanctions against Russia as well as a 90 billion euro loan for Ukraine but Hungary, which maintains close ties with Moscow, had on Monday kept up its veto on both.
Hungary and neighbouring Slovakia accuse Kyiv of deliberately blocking Russian oil supplies via the Druzhba pipeline, which Ukraine says it is trying to repair after a Russian strike last month.
Zelensky welcomed dignitaries from Western Europe, including European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, in Kyiv for ceremonies to mark the anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022. But in contrast to previous years, no major Western leaders were expected.
"Putin has not achieved his goals. He has not broken the Ukrainian people. He has not won this war," Zelensky said in a morning address, extending an invitation to US President Donald Trump to come to Kyiv: "Only by visiting Ukraine and seeing our lives



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, First Lady Olena Zelenska, and European leaders visit a makeshift memorial to fallen defenders at Independence Square in Kyiv yesterday.

and struggles with your own eyes ... can you understand what this war is really about."
Russia has not yet achieved all its war aims in Ukraine and will fight on until it does, the Kremlin said yesterday. "The goals haven't been fully achieved yet, which is why the military operation continues," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in response to an AFP question.
Nato chief Mark Rutte warned that Ukraine's Western allies must ramp up "military, financial and humanitarian aid" if Kyiv is to prevail against Russia.
Hundreds of thousands of soldiers on both sides have died or been wounded in Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War Two. Russian forces have also killed tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians and destroyed Ukrainian cities with years of missiles and drone strikes.

Heavy rains flood Gaza tents Israel kills two more Palestinians

AGENCIES
Palestinians across Gaza have woken up to heavy rains that flooded their makeshift tents as they brave the winter with little to no protection.
The enclave was hit by a winter storm late Monday through yesterday – the first since the start of the holy month of Ramadan – with Gaza's civil defence units reporting multiple distress calls overnight.
Meanwhile, Israeli forces continued to kill Palestinians in Gaza in violation of a "ceasefire" reached with Hamas in October.
As the enclave battled the aftermath of the rains, the Israeli military killed two people, including a boy, in northern Gaza's Beit Lahiya area, reports Al Jazeera online.
Rescue teams in Gaza provided emergency assistance to several families whose tents were flooded in the al-Mawasi camp west of Khan Younis in southern Gaza.
Areas west of Gaza City, particularly the Remal neighbourhood and the port area, were also hit hard.
Videos circulating on social media showed flooded tents in Remal, as residents struggled to find solutions to prevent further damage.
More than 600 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks since the United States-brokered "ceasefire" came into effect, according to the Ministry of Health in Gaza.

Thailand's army exchanges fire with Cambodia forces

Bangkok claims truce breach; Phnom Penh denies

AFP, Bangkok
Thailand's army said it exchanged fire with Cambodian forces along their border yesterday, accusing its neighbour of violating a December truce.
Cambodian forces "fired a single 40 mm grenade round" near a Thai patrol in the border province of Sisaket in the morning, prompting return fire, according to a Thai army statement. No Thai personnel were injured, the army said.
"Following the incident, Thai forces responded by firing an M79 (grenade launcher) in the direction from which the shot originated, in accordance with the rules of engagement, as a warning and for self-defence," it added.
Army spokesman Winthai Suvarce said in the statement that "Cambodia's actions violated the ceasefire agreement", which ended three weeks of deadly border clashes in late December.
"Preliminary assessment suggests the incident may have resulted from a rotation of Cambodian troops, with new personnel lacking familiarity with regulations and command control, leading to operational

shortcomings," the statement said.
Cambodia rejected allegations that its military fired on Thai troops patrolling their border, Phnom Penh's information minister told AFP yesterday.
"These claims are entirely false, fabricated and grossly distort the facts with the deliberate intent to mislead public opinion and provoke



tension along the Cambodia-Thailand border," Neth Pheaktra said.
The Thai army, citing a preliminary assessment, said the "incident may have resulted from a rotation of Cambodian troops, with new personnel lacking familiarity with regulations and command control".

The countries' century-old border conflict stems from a dispute over the French colonial-era demarcation of their 800-kilometre (500-mile) frontier.
Under the December truce, Cambodia and Thailand pledged to cease fire, freeze troop movements and cooperate on demining efforts along their border.
But last month, Thailand accused Cambodia of violating the truce, saying cross-border mortar fire wounded a soldier, while Phnom Penh said a "pile of garbage" exploded, injuring two of its own troops.
Since the latest round of heavy fighting, Cambodia has said Thai forces captured several areas in border provinces – contrary to their agreements – and has demanded their withdrawal.
Bangkok has insisted it merely reclaimed land that was part of Thailand and had been occupied by Cambodians for years.
While the two nations agreed in December to stop fighting, they still need to resolve their century-old conflict, stemming from a dispute over the French colonial-era demarcation of their 800-kilometre (500-mile) frontier.



Jailed Pak ex-PM Khan gets eye treatment

AFP, Islamabad
Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan received eye treatment yesterday, according to a hospital statement, although a spokesman for the ex-cricketer star complained he was not allowed to see his personal doctor.
Khan has been in jail since 2023 and was sentenced late last year along with his wife to 17 years on corruption charges they both deny.
The 73-year-old's family and lawyer say that he has lost most of the vision in his right eye.

Venezuelans are welcome to return home

Interim president says after amnesty law passed; Swiss freeze over \$880m of Venezuelan assets

AFP, Caracas
Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodriguez promised Monday that Venezuelans who had left their country would be welcomed back with open arms under a new amnesty law passed last week, following the US ouster of Nicolas Maduro.
"I am telling you: the doors of Venezuela, the arms of the Venezuelan people are open to those who want to return in this process of healing from hatred," she said in a televised address.
Seven million Venezuelans have fled their homeland due to the political and economic crisis and many opposition figures live in exile.
Meanwhile, more than \$880 million of Venezuelan assets have been frozen in Switzerland, the Swiss foreign ministry told AFP on Monday, for the first time providing a figure.

On January 5, a regulation blocking the assets of former Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro entered into force. The measure also concerned his wife and other family members, as well as government ministers.
"As of today, Swiss financial intermediaries have reported a total of 687 million Swiss francs" have been frozen in connection with the regulation, said the foreign ministry, which did not provide a breakdown of assets by owner.
The ministry called the asset freeze a preventative measure.
"It is intended to prevent any capital flight and enable mutual legal assistance between Venezuela and Switzerland," it added. No current members of the Venezuelan government are covered by the regulation, noted the Swiss foreign ministry.





খুলনা এসেনসিয়াল ল্যাটেক্স প্লান্ট

(ইডিসিএল এর একটি অঙ্গ প্রতিষ্ঠান)
মান্ডমডাঙ্গা, গিলাতলা, খুলনা

তালিকাভুক্তি/তালিকাভুক্তি নবায়ন বিজ্ঞপ্তি

খুলনা এসেনসিয়াল ল্যাটেক্স প্লান্ট, মান্ডমডাঙ্গা, গিলাতলা, খুলনা গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একমাত্র কনডম প্রস্তুতকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান। প্রতিষ্ঠানটির প্রয়োজনীয় বিভিন্ন মালামাল সরবরাহ করার জন্য নিম্নলিখিত বিষয়ের সাথে সম্পৃক্ত বাংলাদেশের বিভিন্ন ঠিকাদার, সরবরাহকারী, পণ্য উৎপাদনকারী, সেবাদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান এর নিকট থেকে আগামী ০২ (দুই) বছরের জন্য তালিকাভুক্তকরণ এবং পূর্বে তালিকাভুক্ত প্রতিষ্ঠানের তালিকাভুক্তি নবায়ন করার (ইচ্ছুক প্রতিষ্ঠান) জন্য আবেদনপত্র আহ্বান করছে।

Group A :	Civil Construction work.
Group B :	Repairing & servicing of vehicles.
Group C :	Servicing and supply of electric & electronics materials.
Group D :	Repairing Maintenance & servicing of mechanical equipment and central plant with related equipment.
Group E :	Printing, packaging, stationary & toiletries, office equipment and furniture.

আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে বিস্তারিত বিবরণ সম্বলিত দরপত্র সিডিউল হিসাব বিভাগ, কেইএলপি খুলনা থেকে নগদ ১,৫০০.০০ (এক হাজার পাঁচশত) টাকার বিনিময়ে (অফেরতযোগ্য) আগামী ১১/০৩/২০২৬ইং তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে (সকাল ০৮:০০ ঘটিকা থেকে ০৩:৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত) ক্রয় করতে পারবেন এবং উক্ত দরপত্রসমূহ আগামী ১২/০৩/২০২৬ইং তারিখ বেলা ০১:৪৫ ঘটিকার মধ্যে কেইএলপি খুলনা ক্রয় বিভাগে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার বাজে দাখিল করতে হবে যা ঐদিন বেলা ০২:০০ ঘটিকার সময় খোলা হবে। উল্লেখ্য যে, দরপত্র দাখিলের দিন কোন দরপত্র/সিডিউল বিক্রয় করা হবে না। কেইএলপি কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন অথবা সকল সিডিউল গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিল করার পূর্ণ ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন। আংশিক/অসম্পূর্ণ দরপত্র এবং নির্দিষ্ট সময়ের পর কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।


ইন-চার্জ, ক্রয় বিভাগ
 পক্ষে, ডিজিএম পি (সিসি) এন্ড প্লান্ট ইন-চার্জ

জিডি-৩৮৫



ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন

Dhaka South City Corporation

নগর ভবন, ঢাকা
ফোনঃ ৯৫৫৭২৮০-৮১, ৯৫৫৭২৮৪, ৯৫৫৭২৮৬-৮৯, ৯৫৫৮২৫৫-৫৯, ৯৫৫৮৩৫৭-৬০, www.dscc.gov.bd

আপনার পরিবেশ সুন্দর ও পরিচ্ছন্ন রাখুন
আপনার শিশুকে টিকা দিন
প্রিয়জনকে বই উপহার দিন।

স্মারকঃ ৪৬.২০৭.০০০.২২.০০.২৬১.২০২৬

তারিখঃ ২৪/০২/২০২৬

পুনঃ দরপত্র নোটিশ

বর্জ্য ব্যবস্থাপনা কাজের গতিশীলতা ও মানোন্নয়নের লক্ষ্যে সংগ্রহ সেবা প্রাপ্তির লক্ষ্যে নতুন নিবন্ধন কার্যক্রম গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে। ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন এর আওতাধীন এলাকায় নিয়োজিত ০৪টি ওয়ার্ডের (ওয়ার্ড নং-৬৯, ৭০, ৭২ ও ৭৪) প্রাথমিক বর্জ্য সংগ্রহ সেবা গ্রহণের জন্য আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে নিম্নলিখিত শর্ত অনুসরণপূর্বক আবেদনপত্র ক্রয় ও জমা প্রদানের জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

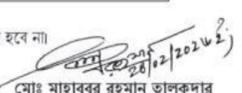
ক) প্রয়োজ্য শর্তাবলীঃ

- আবেদনপত্র ক্রয় ও জমা প্রদান কার্যক্রম অনলাইনে সম্পন্ন করতে হবে। ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের নগর ভবন ও আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয় থেকে সরাসরি আবেদনপত্র ক্রয়/বিক্রয় এবং জমা প্রদান করা যাবে না।
- আবেদনপত্র ক্রয়ের জন্য ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের চলতি হিসাব নং-২০০০১৭৮৩৯, সোনালী ব্যাংক, নগর ভবন শাখায় ১০,০০০/- (টাকা দশ হাজার মাত্র) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য) জমা প্রদান করে ব্যাংক রশিদ সংগ্রহ করতে হবে।
- ওয়েবসাইট <https://dscc.gov.bd> হতে নিবন্ধন আবেদনপত্র ও প্রয়োজ্য শর্তাবলী/TOR (Terms of Reference) ডাউনলোড পূর্বক উল্লিখিত নির্দেশনা অনুযায়ী আবেদনপত্র যথাযথভাবে পূরণ করতে হবে। এক্ষেত্রে আবেদনপত্রের সাথে চাহিদাকৃত কারিগরি প্রস্তাব ও আর্থিক প্রস্তাবের অনুকূলে প্রয়োজ্য সকল ডকুমেন্টস দাখিল করতে হবে।
- নিবন্ধনের জন্য আর্থিক প্রস্তাবে উক্ত মূল্যের সমপরিমাণ অর্থ মেয়র/প্রশাসক, ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের অনুকূলে পে-অর্ডারটি (মূলকপি) প্রধান বর্জ্য ব্যবস্থাপনা কর্মকর্তার দপ্তর, নগর ভবন, চাদসিক বারবর জমা প্রদান করতে হবে। এক্ষেত্রে পে-অর্ডারটির স্ক্যান কপি অনলাইনে জমা প্রদান করতে হবে।
- কারিগরি প্রস্তাব তথা 'ফরম-ই' এর সাথে কারিগরি প্রস্তাব মূল্যায়ন সংক্রান্ত প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্যাদি সংলগ্ন আকারে আবেদনপত্রের সাথে সংযুক্ত করতে হবে।
- স্বাক্ষরিত আর্থিক প্রস্তাব তথা 'ফরম-ঈ' এর সাথে সংলগ্ন আকারে আবেদনপত্র ক্রয়ের ব্যাংক রশিদ এবং নিবন্ধন মূল্যের পে-অর্ডার জমা প্রদানের রশিদ জমা প্রদান করতে হবে। অন্যথায় আর্থিক প্রস্তাব গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।
- কারিগরি প্রস্তাব ও আর্থিক প্রস্তাব পৃথকভাবে সংযুক্ত করে ই-মেইলসমূহে cwmo@dscc.gov.bd, administrator@dscc.gov.bd, ceo@dscc.gov.bd প্রেরণ করতে হবে।
- ইতিমধ্যে যে সকল প্রতিষ্ঠান আবেদনপত্র ক্রয় মূল্য ও নিবন্ধন মূল্য জমা প্রদান করেছেন, তাদের পুনরায় আবেদনপত্র ক্রয় মূল্য ও নিবন্ধন মূল্য জমা প্রদানের প্রয়োজন নেই। এক্ষেত্রে শুধুমাত্র নিবন্ধন ফরম পূরণসহ চাহিত তথ্যাদি দাখিল করতে হবে।

খ) আবেদনপত্র ক্রয় ও জমা প্রদানের সময় নিম্নে উল্লেখ করা হলোঃ

আবেদনপত্র ক্রয়ের তারিখ ও সময়	আবেদনপত্র জমা প্রদানের তারিখ ও সময়
তারিখঃ ২৪/০২/২০২৬ইং হতে ০২/০৩/২০২৬ইং	তারিখঃ ০২/০৩/২০২৬ইং
সময়ঃ বিকাল ৪:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত	সময়ঃ বিকাল ৫:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত

বিশেষ দ্রষ্টব্যঃ নোটিশে উল্লিখিত সময়ের পরে কোন আবেদনপত্র ক্রয় ও জমা প্রদান গ্রহণযোগ্য বিবেচিত হবে না।


মোঃ মাহাবুবুর রহমান তালুকদার
 এয়ার কমডোর
 প্রধান বর্জ্য ব্যবস্থাপনা কর্মকর্তা
 বর্জ্য ব্যবস্থাপনা বিভাগ
 ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন
 ফোনঃ ০২২৩৩৫০৩৭৫

ডিএসসিসি/পিআরডি/১৮৭/২০২৫-২৬

GD-388

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Meta's unforgivable inaction

A shameful failure to protect independent journalism

The stark revelation that the grievous attacks on *The Daily Star* and *Prothom Alo* as well as two cultural institutions, Chhayanaut and Udichi, were fuelled by false narratives circulating on social media for days in plain sight of both the interim government and Meta, the owner of Facebook, is shocking and unacceptable. A joint study by *The Daily Star* and Dismislab, which analysed 3,064 Facebook posts published between December 13 and 19, found a clear link between online incitement and the violence directed at the media and cultural institutions.

The evidence indicates that neither law enforcement agencies nor Meta acted in time to halt the spread of some of the most virulent hate speech and inciting content—material that remained visible for hours and days and even included live-streamed acts of violence accompanied by calls for others to join. The night-long attacks, along with calls for further violence that persisted even afterwards, exposed glaring weaknesses in Meta's monitoring and response systems in detecting and removing content posing imminent threats to life and property.

Even more troubling is the claim by the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) that its repeated requests to deactivate accounts inciting and mobilising violence did not receive timely responses. According to the BTRC, it reported 165 pieces of content to Facebook between midnight on December 18 and the evening of December 19, requesting their removal in the interest of public safety.

This episode represents a glaring failure by Meta to enforce its own policies on violence and incitement as outlined in its Community Standards. As a result, some self-styled influencers, including those operating from thousands of miles away, have been able to exploit social media platforms, particularly Facebook, to disseminate misinformation, propagate hate-filled narratives, organise mobs and direct violence against independent media and liberal voices and institutions. Their incitement led to arson attacks on the media houses, destruction of valuable documents, and attempts to burn alive 29 journalists and employees at *The Daily Star*. Meta and other social media companies must take responsibility for the misuse of their platforms and be held accountable for failing to enforce their own standards.

Recent legal proceedings against Meta and its CEO in the United States and several Western countries for failing to curb online harm are developments that our government should closely follow. These cases may offer pathways to holding big technology companies accountable and ensuring public safety. We also express deep indignation at the failure of the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus to prevent these attacks.

Following the attacks, a Facebook post by the then press secretary to the chief adviser even acknowledged the state's failure to act but did not explain what prevented a timely and proper response. Was there negligence within the interim administration? Why did it fail even to issue a clear condemnation of the attacks? It is deeply regrettable that a government born out of an uprising against autocracy now bears a lasting stain on its record for failing to prevent one of the most serious attacks on institutions rooted in independent journalism in Bangladesh.

Refrain from partisan acts

Appointing BNP leaders as city administrators is problematic

The appointment of BNP leaders as administrators in six city corporations within a week of the Tarique Rahman government taking office sends an uneasy signal. The government's reported justification—that political appointees will help expedite civic services—appears somewhat forced, especially in light of LGRD Minister and BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir's recent statement.

Soon after his appointment on February 18, the LGRD minister said local government elections would be held as soon as possible. If that is the case, there is little reason as to why the interim government-appointed administrators could not have continued with their duties. While it is true that local government services have suffered tremendously during the 18 months of interim administration, the circumstances surrounding these new appointments must be considered.

After the fall of the Awami League government—long criticised for partisan appointments and other questionable practices—on August 5, 2024, the interim government removed the mayors of city corporations, district councils, upazila parishads and municipalities, replacing them with government officials. This move was reportedly necessary as most elected representatives had either fled or been arrested. Many officials were required to carry out administrative duties in addition to their existing responsibilities, and therefore often remained less accessible to local communities. These factors, combined with the fact that government officials are not directly answerable to constituents, created gaps in the delivery of civic services at the local levels. As a result, citizens are now eagerly awaiting the return of elected representatives to the local government bodies.

The Election Commission is reportedly waiting for a parliamentary decision on the ordinance issued by the interim government that abolished the use of party symbols in local body elections. Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmani Masud, on February 2, said once the decision is made, the two city corporation elections can be held. The 13th parliament is set to convene on March 12. Then there are the reserve seat election, the by-election of Bogura-6 constituency and the poll for Sherpur-3, all of which the EC hopes to complete before April 14. In other words, the EC should be able to hold the city government elections within three to four months. Then why rush to make such political appointments? The BNP government's decision to appoint party leaders to the city administrators' positions shows that it could not rise above party interest. We urge the government to refrain from such partisan acts and make more inclusive democratic decisions.

Climate actions need less talk, more work

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Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman is executive chairman at the PPRC.

NAMIRA SHAMEEM and HOSSAIN ZILLUR RAHMAN

At a recent climate *adda* hosted by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), participants including COP30 returnees, local youth climate activists, researchers, engineers, and policy thinkers gathered to reflect on the COP experience and draw lessons on how climate engagement can be meaningfully taken forward. What emerged from the discussion was neither cynicism nor grand wisdom, but a healthy dose of clarity.

Participants of the Belem COP convening spoke of a sense of impasse that masked a crisis of language and power, and of a negotiation landscape increasingly shaped by ambiguity. Wealthy nations continue to dilute commitments through carefully crafted language. "Phase out" becomes "transition away." Timelines become "pathways." Responsibilities become "shared aspirations."

The COP28 Dubai declaration's reference to transitioning away from fossil fuels was welcomed globally. But without binding mechanisms and clarity on financing, such phrases risk becoming diplomatic poetry. The questions remain: how will funds be mobilised? Who will pay? And under what accountability structure?

Bangladesh, despite being one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, still struggles with consistent representation in these global rooms. Its delegations often lack institutional memory due to bureaucratic turnover. Critical thematic areas such as gender, just transition, and sexual and reproductive health rights frequently lack specialised negotiators. That weakens our ability to shape definitions before they are finalised. At the same time, fossil fuel lobbyists—numbering in the thousands at recent summits—continue to influence outcomes. If COP processes are to succeed, a support constituency hitherto less in focus for Global South activists must become central to engagement—namely, the citizenry of developed countries. Without domestic political pressure in the Global North, international climate agreements will continue to stall.

Looking domestically, there is progress, but it is episodic and fragmented. The whole has yet to become greater than the sum of its parts. But we must acknowledge that Bangladesh is not standing still. Youth engagement has increased markedly in recent years. Climate discussions have also entered school curricula. Media coverage has expanded. Solar expansion is visible. Local innovation is happening. Yet, something remains disconnected. Policies exist in abundance, as do strategies, frameworks, action plans, and adaptation blueprints. But

implementation continues to lag. Communities often see seminars, but not solutions. The gap between "bags of documents" and lived experience persists.

Another crucial missing element is data. Participants in the climate *adda* spoke candidly about the lack of reliable, standardised climate data repositories. In some cases, data are apparently manipulated to strengthen funding appeals. While this may bring short-term relief, it erodes scientific credibility in global negotiations. A country that cannot present transparent, validated evidence weakens its moral and technical standing. If climate justice is our demand, data integrity must be our discipline.

There is another problem, too: the tokenistic inclusion of youth. Bangladesh frequently celebrates youth participation, but effective inclusion remains uneven. Climate-vulnerable youth—particularly those from coastal belts, char areas, and agrarian communities—are often absent from

frameworks, rather than in parallel spaces.

The second priority concerns solutions and innovation. The discourse must pivot from problem-recitation to solution-scaling. Bangladesh already hosts grassroots adaptive practices: climate-resilient agriculture, floating cultivation, localised construction innovations, etc. But they remain scattered. As one participant observed, many grassroots communities have adapted ingeniously, but there is no systematic consolidation of these practices. Pilot, document, evaluate, scale—that must become the model.

The third priority relates to governance and transparency. Climate finance is flowing globally, but fund utilisation remains opaque. Greenwashing is under increasing scrutiny. The *adda* participants proposed mechanisms such as dedicating a percentage of corporate social responsibility funds to structured climate risk pools. Governance systems must ensure that resources

to strategy. Advocacy must move beyond statements and hashtags to link knowledge with policy pathways. It must connect with civil society actors in the Global North to create transnational pressure. It must also translate technical climate debates into electoral issues within Bangladesh.

The discussion challenged the conventional framing of climate vulnerability. Bangladesh's climate discourse often centres almost exclusively on coastal and char regions. Yet, vulnerable inland locations and our expanding urban centres constitute a new climate vulnerability map. Air quality, heat stress, and waterlogging—these must enter the climate conversation. Climate resilience is not only about embankments; it is also about urban governance, agricultural systems, labour transitions, and educational reform.

The PPRC *adda* resisted simplistic binaries. The private sector is often treated solely as a polluter or adversary.



FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

'A lesson emerging from COP participation is that for advocacy to deliver results, it must be married to strategy.'

reach communities efficiently and transparently. Multiple youth platforms exist, yet coordination is limited. Collaboration is episodic rather than institutionalised.

The *adda* highlighted an important shift in thinking: youth engagement must move from participation to co-design. Young climate leaders do not simply want seats at the table; they want roles in shaping funding models, piloting innovations, and designing accountability frameworks.

While the discussion was informal in spirit, there was surprising consensus on several interlinked priorities for the country going forward. The first is partnership and collaboration. The youth present in the room brought forward an important conclusion: horizontal linkages between organisations must replace siloed activism. Universities, think tanks, grassroots groups, engineers, agricultural innovators, and policy advocates must operate within shared

policy rooms. Urban-based advocacy networks sometimes operate in silos.

The fourth priority is capacity-building. Leadership development cannot remain confined to conference circuits. Technical skills—data management, climate modelling, resilient engineering—must reach vulnerable districts. Bureaucratic reshuffles often derail institutional continuity; capacity must therefore be distributed, not centralised.

Data and knowledge infrastructure are also central if climate engagement is to gain serious traction. A standardised, validated climate data network, potentially community-based, holds great promise. It is not enough just to produce data; evidence must be untampered, accessible, and policy-relevant. Without credible data, both domestic policy and international negotiating positions get weakened.

A lesson emerging from COP participation is that for advocacy to deliver results, it must be married

to strategy. Advocacy must move beyond statements and hashtags to link knowledge with policy pathways. It must connect with civil society actors in the Global North to create transnational pressure. It must also translate technical climate debates into electoral issues within Bangladesh.

Perhaps the most important ingredient of the solution is commitment—to produce "schools of practice" rather than merely convening talk shops. A new generation of climate-literate youth, unwilling to accept symbolic inclusion, represents a potential force for shifting the country from reactive vulnerability to proactive resilience. Whether the global climate architecture remains fragmented, regional coordination weak, international finance politically entangled, or domestic implementation constrained by bureaucratic inertia, it is crucial to empower young people to co-design climate actions grounded in lived realities. We cannot allow the next COP communiqué to become just another document in the bag.

Think twice before forcing a third language on school students



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BENZIR AHAMMED SHAWON

The education ministry, under the new government, has recently introduced a 12-point reform plan to update the national curriculum. It contains a few recommendations worth noting. Raising the education budget to five percent of GDP, for instance, is a commendable and long-overdue move. However, the agenda also reveals a concerning dilemma in terms of its priorities. For instance, it makes learning a third language compulsory at the secondary level.

Now, learning a new language is undeniably a positive thing. It can help students connect to the world better and even widen their scope of employment to include non-English-speaking countries. But cramming a third language into the national curriculum is a puzzling move considering our current educational crisis. For one, it is a massive cognitive burden on students who are currently struggling to master even their mother tongue. A study by the National Academy for Primary

Education shows that a staggering 79 percent of third-graders lack basic skills in reading, writing, and understanding Bangla. Furthermore, over 42 percent of the population has reading skills below the fifth-grade level.

So making it compulsory for students to memorise the vocabulary of another foreign language beyond English may only worsen the culture of rote memorisation, which this government has explicitly promised to eliminate.

Furthermore, the idea that children must learn foreign languages in school to be globally competitive is also outdated. If the goal is workplace communication, targeted language courses for adults are sufficient enough. According to one study, even a one-week intensive course significantly boosts an adult's focus and executive function. So, once they identify a real career need for it, an adult can easily pick up a specific language in a focused six-month course.

In contrast, the complex thinking required for problem-solving and cultural empathy (skills that most students lack) cannot be crammed into a six-month corporate seminar. Artistic thinking, too, is a massive, compounding learning process that must be nurtured throughout a child's entire upbringing. Making art and music optional while making third language classes compulsory could eventually affect us as a nation.

Bangladesh is fast approaching the middle-income trap. Our industrial backbone, the readymade garments sector, makes up over 80 percent of our exports but remains stuck in basic manufacturing models. Foreign buyers hold all the creative and pricing power, leaving our factories to compete solely on cheap labour. In order to capture real value and increase profit margins, we should transition to designing our own products. But this is impossible to do without a workforce trained in aesthetic principles, spatial reasoning, and industrial design. Our nationwide "design deficit" ensures that we remain the executors of foreign ideas rather than the creators of our own.

Beyond the economy, art education on a national level is vital for raising better citizens and improving our Human Development Index. Cultural and creative industries drive sustainable growth and empower populations. Arts education can also

improve academic writing and boost compassion for others. Furthermore, music and art are vital components for ensuring good mental health.

When we systematically deprive a population of aesthetic education, we create a nationwide culture of "artlessness." This deficit shows up brutally in our physical environments. We see it in the messy sprawl of our megacities, where poor urban planning ruins the visual identity of our infrastructure and turns them into concrete jungles of chaos. Civic aesthetics—that is, the moral duty to keep shared spaces clean, follow traffic laws, and behave cordially—is not a natural trait, and is best taught through the humanities and arts. Societies that take aesthetics seriously usually produce citizens who view public pollution as a personal, even moral, failure.

Knowing a foreign language is a valuable asset for the modern worker, but it is largely a practical tool. Art, music, literature, and design, however, are the soil from which civilisation, innovation, and empathy grow. If the government truly wants education to be a nation-building project, it must resolve this flaw in its agenda. Policymakers need to recognise that an appreciation for beauty, a talent for original design, and a compassionate civic outlook are not elite privileges. They are the mass prerequisites for a prosperous and peaceful Bangladesh.

Make ICT policy a priority, not a side show



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ZARIF FAIAZ

In the first days of a new government, it is always the immediate anxieties that set the tone. People want to know whether the streets will be calmer, whether corruption will loosen its grip, or whether the price of essentials will hold steady. Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has already addressed these concerns. However, the government's real challenge in the long term will be to prove that its ministerial portfolios are fit to withstand the test of time, and few matter more than the ICT portfolio, which feels sidelined in high-level conversations about growth, reforms, and good governance.

Tech policies are no longer a side project on the global stage. Today, they increasingly determine how economies compete, how states protect critical systems, how businesses handle data, and how safely citizens can speak and organise online. Countries that treat this brief as an afterthought do not get to opt out; they simply end up living under rules written elsewhere.

Yet our tech governance has too often followed a familiar script: heavy compliance burdens, weak incentives for risk-taking, and a preference for control over capability. Public benefit has remained limited because the state has consistently failed to build the institutional competence that a fast-moving, high-stakes sector demands. The digital economy has grown nonetheless, driven by entrepreneurs and firms operating despite policy rather than because of it.

In a fast-moving policy landscape, delay is often punished. By the time a state realises a law is unworkable, or that a regulatory approach has fallen behind, the world may have already moved on. Standards shift, supply chains relocate, platforms change their enforcement, and what once looked manageable becomes expensive to repair. Bangladesh has already paid some of that price in the past.

Enforcement of regulatory frameworks such as the Digital Security Act, 2018 and the Cyber Security Act, 2023 has repeatedly attracted controversy, while reports of data leaks and breaches have periodically jolted the public. These episodes make headlines, then fade, which points to a deeper problem—a troubling approach to tech policy that seems more comfortable asserting authority than



FILE VISUAL: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

'A credible, modern ICT portfolio would prioritise three things at once: operational security, legal clarity, and public legitimacy.'

building competence, more inclined towards restrictive law than enforceable standards, and more willing to treat the ICT portfolio as a political instrument rather than a governance discipline.

What is striking here is how often the scale of harm is underestimated. Digital systems sit inside everyday routines, so the consequences of database leaks are not abstract; they are felt in real life. When digital laws are loosely drafted or unpredictably enforced, the impact is felt through fear, self-censorship, and a loss of trust in institutions. The effects also travel

beyond borders, shaping how Bangladesh is judged by investors, platforms, partners, and the wider world.

The interim government's attempt to undo years of damage in the digital policy sector often risked reproducing the same weaknesses. Rights groups repeatedly urged the administration to stop fast-tracking sweeping digital ordinances and to adopt transparent, inclusive, realistic and evidence-

ups, telecom operators, universities, civil society, diaspora networks, and the engineers who actually build systems. If consultation is reduced to a box-ticking exercise, policy will again be captured by incumbents, blindsided by technical realities, or rejected by the public.

What's needed instead is the boring, discipline-building work: publishing draft laws well ahead of passage, responding to critiques in time, clearly explaining which

What's needed is enforceable standards, clearer accountability, and independent oversight that gives citizens and investors the confidence that security policy is not a euphemism for control.

A credible, modern ICT portfolio would prioritise three things at once: operational security, legal clarity, and public legitimacy. That requires an enforceable data protection regime suited to a services economy, alongside serious investment in government-wide security standards, incident response capacity, and basic digital hygiene training for officials. It also requires recognising that cybersecurity is not a single ministry's project. It is a whole-of-government discipline, with clear audit requirements, procurement rules, and consequences for negligence.

Previous governments had a habit of announcing the future in slogans while leaving the present untouched. This government should resist that temptation, particularly on emerging technologies such as AI. A national launch of "AI revolution" may generate headlines; it will not, on its own, generate trust or capability.

Any good policy should take inspiration from global best practice. But that should not mean copying just about any foreign model. Bangladesh's context is its own. It is densely populated, overwhelmingly young, anchored by a major garments export sector, increasingly shaped by a growing start-up ecosystem, and still recovering politically from a tumultuous period. The point here is to understand the trade-offs embedded in global models of tech governance and to build a Bangladeshi approach that is realistic, grounded, enforceable and credible.

The most important cultural change, however, must be internal. Digital capacity across the country remains uneven, so there is no alternative to sustained training, proper incentives, and real accountability. Officials responsible for sensitive systems must grasp the basics of cyber hygiene—phishing awareness, access controls, credential management, data minimisation—because ignorance or lack of awareness can easily lead to leaks, outages, and national embarrassment.

None of this transformation will be easy. That is precisely why the ICT portfolio is one of the most difficult jobs in government. It sits at the intersection of commerce and sovereignty, growth and rights, security and openness. Bangladesh cannot afford to treat it as just a platform for announcements, optics, and slogans. The priority must be the hard governance of the infrastructure and rules that increasingly determine national power.

The warnings from our past missteps are written in plain sight. The question for Tarique Rahman's government is whether it reads them as history, or as a manual.

Jahanara's case and the need for athlete protection



Badrul Hassan
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BADRUL HASSAN

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) has finally found Manjurul Islam guilty in the sexual harassment case involving women's team cricketer Jahanara Alam. However, the outcome still raises a troubling question about justice in Bangladeshi sports. The complaint was formally lodged in 2022, but the board acted in February 2026, following an order by the High Court. Manjurul had already been outside any BCB contract since June 2025. The delayed finding arrives after institutional inaction has already imposed real costs on the complainant.

The consequences for Jahanara came in the form of years of uncertainty, reputational damage, psychological strain, and lost professional opportunities. Notably, the decisive movement followed only after the High Court reprimanded BCB and directed it to treat the allegation seriously. Without the judicial intervention, it is doubtful the case would have progressed at all. The episode exposes a structural safeguarding risk: delayed institutional action shifts the cost of inaction onto the complainant rather than the system responsible for protection.

Sport is often portrayed as a realm of discipline, merit, and national pride. Yet it is also shaped by sharp power imbalances—between administrators and athletes, coaches and players, and selectors and aspirants. When unchecked, these imbalances can enable abuse, silence, and retaliation.

Over the past decade in Bangladesh, allegations of sexual harassment and abuse of authority have surfaced repeatedly in cricket, football, shooting and tennis at the national level, often marked by delayed or contested responses and, at times, judicial or administrative intervention. Taken together, these cases reveal a structural failure to meet

legal duties already recognised under Bangladeshi law.

The High Court's intervention in Jahanara's case—seeking the BCB's explanation and questioning its actions—was critical. Jahanara is a visible symbol of women's cricket in Bangladesh. The story of an athlete of her stature signals to younger players that even established figures struggle to obtain credible redress. The court's scrutiny also affirmed that safeguarding failures in sport are not internal matters; they engage legal obligation and public accountability.

This position aligns with Bangladesh's legal framework. Constitutional guarantees of equality and dignity establish a clear baseline: organisations cannot treat harassment as peripheral. The High Court's 2009 sexual-harassment directives require complaint committees, defined procedures, and protection from retaliation—expectations directly relevant to federations, academies, clubs, and camps. The Labour Act, 2006, reinforces duties to ensure safe and non-discriminatory environments wherever institutional control exists.

Where criminal conduct arises, the Penal Code, 1860, provides the basis for the prosecution of sexual offences. In addition, the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, 2000, establishes specific criminal liability and procedural protections in cases of sexual violence and abuse against women and minors. Governance authority rests with the National Sports Council under the National Sports Council Act 2018. Policy direction is also strengthening: last month, the government approved the draft Prevention of Sexual Harassment at the Workplace and Educational Institutions Ordinance 2026, alongside the Domestic Violence

Prevention Ordinance 2026, reinforcing that protection from harassment is an enforceable right and institutional responsibility.

Women's football faced a public reckoning when national players accused head coach Peter Butler of abusive conduct and humiliation. Players described fear and professional consequences for speaking out. The episode showed how vulnerable athletes are when complaint pathways appear tied to those controlling selection and careers. Even a perceived lack of independence undermines safeguarding credibility.

The National Sports Council last month removed GM Haider Sajjad as joint secretary of the Bangladesh Shooting Sports Federation following allegations of harassment and mental abuse by female shooters. The removal demonstrated that authorities can act, but also showed how safeguarding responses still depend on discretionary intervention rather than predictable procedures that athletes can rely on.

Tennis exposed another dimension in 2019 when a Bangladesh Tennis Federation official, Golam Morshed, was suspended after allegations of sexually harassing a juvenile player. The victim filed a case against the general secretary, Golam Morshed. The case highlighted child-safeguarding risks in sport, where young athletes depend heavily on coaches and officials for access, travel, and advancement. Protection in such contexts must be institutional and immediate, not informal.

An even more concerning gap remains. These cases involve elite athletes and visible institutions. We know little about what girls face at district teams, school programmes, academies, and local clubs, where oversight is weaker and power imbalances sharper. If safeguarding struggles at the national level, risks at the grassroots level are likely greater and less reported.

FIFA and the ICC frame safeguarding as governance, requiring codes of conduct, education, accessible reporting, independent process and proportionate sanctions. The Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) framework similarly emphasises zero tolerance, prohibition of exploitative relationships,

safe reporting channels, and protection from retaliation—principles directly applicable to sport.

Meaningful reform requires moving beyond ad hoc responses. Federations must operationalise safeguarding policies aligned with the law and ensure they function in practice. Reporting mechanisms must be independent of coaching and selection hierarchies; investigations must be time-bound and survivor-centred; retaliation protection must be enforced. Training on conduct and legal duty should be mandatory and embedded in licensing and accreditation.

To move from a culture of personality-driven choices to one of institutional safety, the National Sports Council should make legal recognition and government funding strictly dependent on a federation's proven commitment to safeguarding.

A new government is now in office, and the sports portfolio includes former national football captain Md Aminul Haque, now serving as the state minister for the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Having lived the realities of sporting hierarchies, he is uniquely positioned to ensure that athletes are protected with dignity and security. Leadership in sport governance is measured not only by victories or facilities, but by whether those representing the country are safe from abuse of power. This is therefore a moment for Aminul to translate personal legacy into institutional protection by ensuring credible, accessible, and enforced safeguarding systems across sporting bodies.

Ultimately, sports spectators in Bangladesh want to see authorities treat allegations seriously and act promptly. Confidence depends on visible, reliable procedures that anyone—an athlete, a staff member, or a trainee—can access without fear. Sporting institutions should therefore adopt digitised, independently monitored safeguarding systems in which complaints can be lodged securely, tracked transparently, and resolved within defined timelines. Such mechanisms would signal that athlete protection is treated with the same seriousness as competition integrity. Accountability in sport is owed not only to athletes but to the public that sustains it.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
1 Drag participant
7 "Troy" star
11 New York lake
12 In — (lined up)
13 Add yeast to
14 Rake
15 Titled women
16 Book category
17 Place for a coin
18 Outlaw
19 Continental coin
21 Cart puller
22 Make the biosphere suitable for humans
25 Sandy color
26 Small statue
27 Bare
29 Ordeal
33 Michael of Monty Python
34 Back biter
35 They may be inflated
36 Geisha garb
37 For fear that
38 Sulking
39 Refinery rocks
40 Casual eateries
- DOWN**
1 Cargo spots
2 Basketball's Shaquille
3 Spanish "I love you"
4 Rosie, for one
5 Lyric poems
6 Dapper fellow
7 Kitchen gadget
8 Cell feature
9 Resort business
10 Suit fabrics
16 Blunders
18 Deception
20 City-based
22 Colorful bird
23 Surround
24 Padded footstool
25 Elvis's birthplace
28 Shopping aids
30 Skip the ceremony
31 More rational
32 Easy gaiters
34 Skimpy skirt
36 Young one



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

C	O	H	A	N	A	C	H	E	D
A	R	E	N	A	S	E	E	D	Y
P	I	N	T	S	A	L	L	I	N
P	O	R	T	S	I	N	E	T	A
E	L	Y	I	N	A	N	O	M	
R	E	F	U	E	L	A	F	R	O
A	L	E	E	B	L	E	E	P	S
E	E	L	L	O	U	L	O	T	
R	A	D	I	R	S	D	U	O	
A	S	I	A	N	I	N	I	N	K
T	E	N	S	E	V	I	N	C	E
E	D	G	A	R	E	A	G	E	R

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PHOTOS: AISHWARYA RAIHAN

Art within reach unfolds in 'ONE SQUARE STORIES'

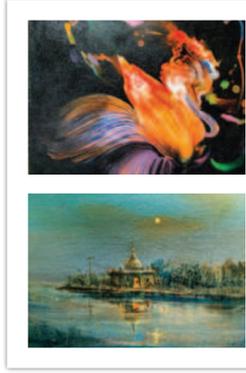
AISHWARYA RAIHAN

On February 14, 2026, Bhumi Gallery in Lalmatia inaugurated **One Square Stories**, a group exhibition by 20 Bangladeshi artists that centres on accessibility in art. Built around the idea that art should not remain a luxury confined to the urban upper class, the exhibition presents works created on one-square-foot canvases; compact in size, economical in medium, yet rich in detail and expression.

Art and culture, the exhibition suggests, should be part of everyone's life. At the same time, artists deserve recognition and fair reward for their skill. Through its modest format, **One Square Stories** attempts to bridge these two sentiments, offering works that are both attainable and thoughtfully crafted.

Eminent artist Professor Emeritus Rafiqun Nabi attended

the opening as chief guest, while Akhter Mahmud Rana, adviser of United Group, was present as special guest. Artists Professor Nisar Hossain and Mohammad Eunus, along with Bhumi Gallery founder Saifur Rahman Lenin, delivered speeches before the exhibition formally opened.



The participating artists are Mohammad Eunus, Jamal Ahmed, Ranjit Das, Ahmed Shamsuddoha, Kanak Champa Chakma, Mohammad Iqbal, Mahmudur Rahman Dipon, Shailla Akhter, Azmeer Hossain, Sadek Ahmed, Kamruzzoha, Abdus Sattar Toufiq, M M Maksud Biplob, Abdullah Al Bashir, Shahid Kazi, Monjur Rashid, Nazmul Haque Bappy, Azmol, and Jayanta Mondal.

During the visit to the gallery, paintings in shades of ultramarine immediately drew attention. The style was distinct

yet familiar enough to recognise Azmeer Hossain's bright blue works. Nearby were delicate paintings of birds and nature, identifiable as Kamruzzoha's. On the opposite wall hung Shahid Kazi's thick, textured sunflowers rendered in dry strokes. Jayanta Mondal's paintings captivated with their ethereal quality, while Sadek Ahmed's architectural works evoked nostalgia. Mohammad Iqbal created comforting abstract pieces using Japanese washi tapes. Jamal Ahmed and Kanak Champa Chakma portrayed rural

Bangladesh, while M M Maksud Biplob painted prominent urban locations of Dhaka. Azmol Hosen depicted the Sundarbans in bold brushstrokes, producing a raw, photographic effect.

Ranjit Das and Shailla Akhter presented vibrant portraits. Mohammad Eunus, Mahmudur Rahman Dipon, and Abdus Sattar Toufiq conveyed varied emotions through abstract forms. Ahmed Shamsuddoha's hyperrealistic hibiscus flowers stood out for their meticulous detail. Monjur Rashid, Nazmul Haque Bappy, and Kamal Uddin explored floral subjects in distinct styles, while Abdullah Al Bashir's sparrow feeding its young inside a wall niche added a tender note.

In essence, the exhibition reflects Mies van der Rohe's philosophy of "less is more". Bhumi Gallery will host **One Square Stories** until March 14, 2026.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'The Hive and the Hymn'

An interdisciplinary gathering tracing the fragile poetry of the Sundarbans, this programme bridges research, performance, and memory. Centring Moul honey collectors, the exhibition reveals fragile traditions shaped by danger, devotion, and cohabitation along one of the world's most contested forests.

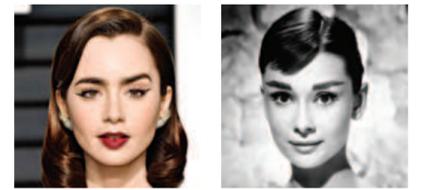
DATE: MONDAY - THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 23 - 26, 2026

TIME: 10:00AM - 8:30PM

VENUE: BRITISH COUNCIL AUDITORIUM, DHAKA



Lily Collins to star as Audrey Hepburn in 'Breakfast at Tiffany's' project



Actress Lily Collins is set to portray screen legend Audrey Hepburn in a new film about the making of **Breakfast at Tiffany's**, the 1961 romantic comedy widely regarded as Hepburn's most iconic role.

Collins, 36, confirmed the news on Instagram on February 23, saying the project has been nearly a decade in development. She described herself as 'honoured and ecstatic' to take on the role.

The film will be written by Alena Smith, known for Apple TV's **Dickinson**, and is based on Sam Wasson's book **Fifth Avenue, 5 A.M.: Audrey Hepburn, Breakfast at Tiffany's and the Dawn of the Modern Woman**. The book explores the film's production, cultural impact, and figures such as Truman Capote, Edith Head and director Blake Edwards.

NEWS

Death toll now 3 as expat dies

FROM PAGE 12
the institute.

Earlier in the day, Sumon's nephew Md Shawon, 16, died around 7:00am. He had been on life support since Monday evening, his uncle Md Jamsheer told The Daily Star.

On Monday afternoon, Sumon's sister-in-law Nur Jahan Begum Rani, 40, died while being transferred from Chattogram to Dhaka.

Nine members of the family, including Sumon, were referred to the burn institute from Chattogram Medical College Hospital on Monday afternoon for advanced treatment following the blast.

Sumon, an expatriate based in Poland, had returned to Bangladesh to

spend Ramadan and Eid with his family.

He had travelled from Cumilla to his brother's house in Chattogram for a nasal surgery.

Sumon was resting at the house after the surgery and was scheduled to return to Cumilla on February 27, said his cousin Muhammad Milon.

He had a return ticket to Portugal booked for after Eid, but the accident destroyed the future of the entire family.

Describing his last conversation with Sumon, Milon said he visited him in the morning when Sumon asked for water, saying he could not take the pain anymore, before asking about his wife and children.

Sumon's wife Pakhi Akter, 31, is currently fighting for her life with 100 percent burns. Their two children, Anas, 8, and Ayesha, 4, are also in critical condition.

Heartbreaking scenes were witnessed at the burn unit corridors yesterday.

Pakhi's mother Monowara Begum broke down in tears, saying her daughter tries to speak but cannot due to her swollen face.

The two children, both suffered 25 percent burn and are in the intensive care unit, were crying for their mother, Monowara said.

Family members said the explosion occurred at dawn on Monday.

After having Sehri, Sumon and his two brothers, Sakhawat and Shipon, were

sitting in the dining room with their families, waiting for the Fajr azan.

The blast ripped through the flat just moments before the prayer call while the children were in the bedroom.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Sardar Md Shakhawat Hossain Bakul visited the victims at the burn institute yesterday and assured the families that the government is ensuring the best possible treatment for the injured.

Meanwhile, in a separate incident, four members of a family, including a toddler, suffered burn injuries in an explosion caused by a gas line leakage in Daudkandi upazila of Cumilla early yesterday.

The injured -- Monowara, 60, Zill Haque, 37, Umme Humayra, 30, and Hurram, 2 -- were rushed to the emergency department of the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery around 6:00am.

Confirming the matter, Residential Surgeon Shawon said Monowara suffered 2 percent burns, Zill Haque 54 percent, Umme Humayra 65 percent and Hurram 6 percent burns.

The accident occurred as the gas connection was illegal. Although the line was disconnected earlier, they reconnected it unlawfully, probably just yesterday, said Amlan Dutta, manager (Gouripur branch) of Bakhkrabad Gas Distribution Company.

Top US general warns

FROM PAGE 12
to use lethal force if necessary, his spokeswoman said yesterday.

Washington has deployed a massive military force to the Middle East, sending two aircraft carriers as well as more than a dozen other ships, a large number of warplanes and other assets to the region.

The USS Gerald R Ford, the world's largest aircraft carrier, has reached the US naval base of Souda Bay on Crete, en route to joining the massive military build-up in the Middle East.

The ground forces of Iran's Revolutionary Guards held military drills on the country's southern coast, state TV reported yesterday.

Meanwhile, Iran's government spokeswoman said yesterday that students have a right to protest but must "understand the red lines", in the first official reaction to renewed anti-government rallies on campuses.

University students kicked off a new semester with gatherings over the weekend in which they revived slogans from

nationwide protests against the country's clerical leadership that peaked in January and were met by a deadly crackdown.

"Sacred things and the flag are two examples of these red lines that we must protect and not cross or deviate from, even at the height of anger," government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said.

She added that Iran's students "have wounds in their hearts and have seen scenes that may upset and anger them; this anger is understandable".

'We thought she was dead'

FROM PAGE 12
daughter Liza Akter said at a programme yesterday.

After 2021, all communication stopped.

Two years later, the family filed a written complaint with the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training. Still, there was no trace of her. "We slowly prepared ourselves for the worst. As the years passed, we lost all hope."

Yesterday, Rizia was handed over to her family at a formal programme at BRAC's Migration Welfare Centre in Uttara, where Liza shared how her mother finally made it back home.

"We thought she was no more. We accepted that she might be dead."

But around 4:45pm on February 12, a Saudi Airlines flight landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. Among the passengers was a woman who could not properly say her name. She could not tell anyone where she lived, nor was she carrying any documents.

Warrant Officer Mahub Alam of Civil Aviation Security said, "Her physical and mental conditions were unstable. She could not

provide any address or family information. We immediately handed her over to BRAC for safe shelter."

For nearly two weeks, BRAC tried to identify her. Her photos and details were shared with media outlets and on social platforms. Finally, the Police Bureau of Investigation collected her fingerprints and matched them with national ID records.

They confirmed she was Rizia Begum from Mandannagar village in Barlekha, Moulvibazar. They contacted her family and visited the village to verify the identification.

For 13 long days, her children remained in a state of anticipation and disbelief.

Yesterday, when Rizia finally stood before her family at the BRAC centre, there were no dramatic words, no emotional speech. Only tears. "When we saw her, we could not recognise her face... The torture changed her completely. And she says nothing," Liza said, holding back her sobs.

Rizia remained silent. At the same event, another Saudi returnee, introduced as Rima Akter (pseudonym), trembled as she described her

ordeal.

Rima lost her parents in childhood and grew up in an orphanage. Later, she worked as a domestic worker in Dhaka, married, and had two children. When her husband died, she decided to go abroad in July 2024 to support them.

But upon reaching Saudi Arabia, Rima was sold four times. "Each time, I was physically and sexually abused... At one point, I was handed over to the police. That is when I learned I was pregnant."

Now six months pregnant, Rima was sent back to Dhaka on February 9 -- not with justice, but with trauma.

Airport Armed Police later transferred her to BRAC for shelter and medical care, while her two children are living with relatives.

Officials present at the programme acknowledged the challenges.

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's Migration Programme and Youth Platform, proposed establishing a formal support structure at the airport to assist abused migrant returnees.

He said the deeper problem is systemic.

"Women return mentally broken, abused, sometimes pregnant. But there is no formal SOP at the airport to support them... The traffickers remain powerful. The victims return to uncertainty."

He called for a structured state mechanism at airports to immediately assist abused migrant workers. "These incidents deeply pain us. We cannot allow women to leave with hope and return in silence."

PBI's Additional Deputy Inspector General Enayet Hossain Mannan said, "This is the first time PBI identified a distressed female migrant worker using fingerprint data. We will continue to stand beside victims and take action against trafficking networks."

Among others present at the programme were Superintendent of Police of the Airport Armed Police Battalion Mohammad Mozammel Haque; Assistant Superintendent of Police Rakibul Hasan Bhuinya; In-charge of the Expatriates' Welfare Desk at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport Shariful Islam; and Civil Aviation Security Officer Mahub Alam.

Speaking to The Daily Star about female migrant workers' abuse, especially in Saudi Arabia, State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Md Nurul Haque, said, "Previously, there was no formal MoU with Saudi Arabia, but the last government signed one. So now we can raise workers' rights issues more formally and strongly. Protecting female workers from harassment is on our priority list."

He added that, if necessary, the government will reconsider sending female workers to places where abuse is frequent. "For example, many women are going to Jordan, where there are fewer such allegations compared to Saudi Arabia."

The state minister, however, said that since they have just taken responsibility, they will need some time to implement everything properly.

Meanwhile, for families like Rizia's and Rima's, survival itself has become the only relief -- even as justice remains distant.

"She does not speak anymore," Liza said softly. "But at least she is alive."



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Looking forward

FROM PAGE 3
South Korean President in a message to Prime Minister Tarique.

President Lee said he looks forward to working with the prime minister of Bangladesh to further strengthen the ties between the two countries.

He extended his heartfelt congratulations to Tarique on his journey as the prime

minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, following his election with the strong support of the people of Bangladesh. "Please accept, Excellency, my best wishes for your success and for the continued prosperity of the People's Republic of Bangladesh," according to the message shared by the South Korean Embassy in Dhaka yesterday.

Khalilur leaves

FROM PAGE 3
on the occupied West Bank.

Khalilur and Humayun are also likely to have bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the OIC meeting with Saudi counterparts, officials said.

Earlier, Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Dr Abdullah Zaler H bin Abiyah was the first to call on PM Tarique Rahman as well as Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman on Sunday.

Meanwhile, UAE Ambassador to Bangladesh Abdulla Ali AlHmoudi yesterday made a courtesy call on the foreign minister, when they discussed signing the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and strengthening cooperation between the two countries in trade, energy, infrastructure, and PPP projects.

Khalilur emphasised Bangladesh's commitment, under the "Bangladesh First" policy, to elevating bilateral relations to a comprehensive strategic and economic partnership, while appreciating the UAE for hosting around 1.2 million Bangladeshi expatriates.

He also requested the UAE to reopen labour visas and facilitate greater mobility, including business and transit visas.

The UAE envoy also paid a courtesy call on State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam.

Moreover, during a meeting with SAARC Secretary General Golam Sarwar, the foreign minister

reaffirmed Bangladesh's support, commitment and readiness to strengthen and revitalise the SAARC process through proactive initiatives.

He recalled late president Ziaur Rahman's idea and proposal for regional cooperation in South Asia in the early 1980s to promote people's welfare, improve quality of life, and strengthen collective self-reliance in the region.

CHINESE ENVOY MEETS FAKHRUL, MILON, HAJJAJ
Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen yesterday separately called on LGRD Minister Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon and State Minister for Education Bobby Hajjaj at the Secretariat.

The Chinese envoy discussed cooperation in the areas of local governance and infrastructure development with Fakhrul to achieve fresh outcomes in the Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership, said a statement from the Chinese embassy.

During the meeting with Milon and Hajjaj, the Chinese envoy reaffirmed China's strong support for Bangladesh's educational advancement and expressed China's willingness to share reform experiences with Bangladesh.

Milon and Hajjaj called upon China for strengthened educational exchanges, enhanced institutional cooperation, and contribution to further development.



A pall of dust hangs over the under-construction Sylhet-Dhaka highway in front of South Surma Police Station, as traffic crawls through clouds of construction residue. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

DU students protest assault on fellow

FROM PAGE 12

Meanwhile, four police personnel were withdrawn from duties yesterday amid protests by DU students demanding the removal of Masud Alam, deputy commissioner of the Ramna division, in connection with the incident.

At the demonstration, Nayem questioned how drug syndicates could continue their activities at Suhrawardy Udyan even though the Shahbagh Police Station is nearby.

"Because I'm a Dhaka University student, people have gathered here today [Tuesday] after I was attacked. But if it were an ordinary citizen, there would not have been so much media coverage or such a large gathering," Nayem said.

He added that DU students would continue their tradition of struggle

to uphold the democratic rights of citizens in the country.

During the demonstration, the students demanded an end to what they termed "unwarranted policing" on campus and across the city, immediate legal action against those involved in the assault, and the formation of an investigation committee in line with the law to probe the incident.

The students left the police station premises in the afternoon, following a meeting between Additional Deputy Commissioner Asaduzzaman and the protesters' representatives.

After the meeting, Nayem told reporters that they demanded a formal statement from the police authorities be issued within 24 hours.

"We demanded the

removal of Masud Alam. We will observe the authorities' step regarding this demand."

A video clip that went viral shows that while Nayem was speaking to DC Masud, who was leading the drive, a policeman grabbed him from behind and began beating him up with a stick until he fell to the ground.

Contacted, Masud said, "He was arguing from the beginning and refused to allow a search." The police officer added that they attempted to search him because they found him in a "specific location".

Asked about his detention, Masud said that although no narcotics were found on him, police recovered items used for processing narcotics.

At a press briefing at Madhur Canteen, a group of Anthropology Department students, under the banner

of "Anthropology Against Repression," demanded an official public apology from the Shahbagh Police Station.

Their demands include formation of a probe committee within 24 hours and the suspension of DC Masud from duty during the probe.

They threatened tougher programmes if the authorities fail to take steps within the stipulated time.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, Dhaka University unit, held a human chain in front of the Raju Memorial Sculpture and expressed solidarity with the protesting students.

In another development, Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducusu) issued a statement, denouncing the police attack on the DU student and the journalists.

"Attacking unarmed

people without any specific reason is clearly a human rights violation," reads the statement.

Protesting the incident, Gonotantrik Chhatra Jote, a coalition of seven left-leaning student organisations, held a protest rally on the campus.

Regarding the withdrawal, DC Masud told The Daily Star that the four officers involved in the incident were withdrawn, and procedures for taking departmental action against them were underway.

"We are trying to identify two to three more personnel who used excessive force," he said.

He, however, did not disclose the names or ranks of the withdrawn officers.

The police action came after multiple video clips of the incident went viral on social media, triggering widespread criticism.

PM's call

FROM PAGE 1

As the PM's motorcade was about to leave the premises, Shamim attempted to approach him but was stopped by security personnel. He explained the urgency of the situation and was then allowed to speak.

"The prime minister was surrounded by many people. But hearing the urgency in my voice, he asked me to tell him everything," Shamim said, adding that Tarique then immediately instructed Deputy Commissioner of Ramna Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Masud Alam, and ordered that the boy be rescued as soon as possible.

"Within an hour, police rescued my son from an abandoned building."

Masud told this newspaper that Tarique had called and directed him to take immediate action.

Following the call, police launched a drive and, within about an hour, rescued the boy from the seventh floor of an abandoned building adjacent to Popular Diagnostic Centre in Shantinagar. However, when the criminals sensed police presence, they fled the area," Masud said.

The child was later handed over to his family, he said, adding that no one has been arrested yet in this connection.

New US tariffs

FROM PAGE 12

"Net-net we still think the effective tariff rate will fall this year and that the world post SCOTUS will see lower tariffs than the pre SCOTUS world," its analysts said, using the acronym for the Supreme Court of the US.

Despite the fact that a 10 percent tariff is less punitive than had been expected, traders cited uncertainty about the trade outlook as one reason why European shares opened lower yesterday.

The new tariffs took effect at midnight, while collection of the tariffs annulled by the Supreme Court was halted. They had ranged from 10 percent to as much as 50 percent.

Bangladesh at a crossroads

FROM PAGE 3

he added, on whether the trade envoy to Bangladesh, said stronger UK-Bangladesh trade ties would depend on governance, regulatory reform and stability, especially as the country prepares to graduate from Least Developed Country status.

She said investor confidence requires sound financial regulation, reduced bureaucracy and improved law and order.

Chairing the session, Apsana Begum, MP for Poplar and Limehouse, said the session aimed to examine what the election outcome means for the future of Bangladesh and the key challenges ahead, noting strong interest in the country's trajectory within the UK Parliament.

Abida Islam, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK, said it was the first peaceful and genuinely competitive election in 32 years, with a turnout of 59.44 percent among more than 127 million registered voters.

She noted the introduction of postal voting for expatriates, with 750,000 overseas Bangladeshis registered, including many in the UK. Nearly 69 percent of voters also approved the July Charter reform package in a referendum.

Calling it a "fresh start" and a "second republic", Adiba said the government had begun work on structural reforms, including proposals for term limits for the prime minister and measures to rebalance executive authority.

Dr Chietigi Bajpae, senior research fellow for South Asia at Chatham House, described the election as largely peaceful and predictable, but questioned whether it marked a real break from the country's polarised political past.

He said the credibility of the transition would depend on implementing the July Charter reforms, including restoring a caretaker government system for overseeing elections and creating an upper house.

Much would depend,

he added, on whether the government is willing to curb some of its own powers.

Dr Sohela Nazneen, research fellow at the Institute of Development Studies, said holding a peaceful election was only the first step.

She stressed that the new parliament, expected to act as a constituent assembly for constitutional changes, must ensure inclusivity and restraint.

Only seven women were directly elected, she noted, adding that women were largely absent from high-level reform negotiations.

"This parliament is going to play a crucial role, and you're not even there in terms of having a seat at the table," she said.

She also described the online campaign environment for female candidates as "toxic" and marked by harassment and coordinated character assassinations.

Abida responded that Bangladesh's civil society remains vibrant and that people are freely expressing their concerns.

During the question-and-answer session, audience members raised issues of foreign relations and accountability.

Dr Bajpae said it would not be sustainable for Bangladesh and India to endure a prolonged period of strained ties, given their shared border and economic interdependence.

Abida said early signals from New Delhi were positive and that Dhaka would pursue a foreign policy based on sovereignty and mutual respect.

On justice and institutional reform, Abida said the new government had taken initial legal steps and that clearer direction would emerge in the coming months.

The discussion reflected cautious optimism.

While the election delivered a strong mandate, speakers said the real test will be whether it leads to lasting institutional change, balanced governance and broader political inclusion.

Govt likely to appoint 61 zilla parishad admins

FROM PAGE 12

The ministry is now reviewing the relevant laws and preparing a list of potential candidates for consideration. After completing the legal review and finalising the proposed list, a formal announcement is likely to be made, subject to the government's approval, said the officials.

According to ministry insiders, the review process includes examining provisions of the Local Government (Zilla Parishad) Act and related rules to ensure that any appointment is legally sound and administratively defensible.

Seeking anonymity, an LGRD ministry officer said, "No final directive has been issued yet. We have made

all necessary preparations regarding the relevant laws and regulations; if the government desires, a notification will be issued in the shortest possible time."

The official added that after completing groundwork at the administration level, the matter was then sent to a policy-level decision.

Ministry sources said LGRD Minister Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir recently met Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to discuss the option of appointing zilla parishad administrators, and the meeting was described as productive.

After the July uprising, most local government representatives

into hiding, disrupting institutional operations and prompting the government to introduce alternative administrative arrangements.

Officials said the absence of elected chairmen and members in many districts created operational gaps, particularly in project supervision, budget utilisation, and coordination with central ministries.

On August 18, 2024, the interim government appointed administrators to 61 zilla parishads.

In eight zilla parishads, additional divisional commissioners (general) were given the charge as administrators, and in 53 zilla parishads, the respective

deputy commissioners were assigned the responsibility.

The three Chittagong Hill Tracts districts – Rangamati, Khagrachhari, and Bandarban – are governed by a special law. The Zilla Parishad Act does not apply to the districts.

Local government elections were held on a non-partisan basis before 2015, when the AL government amended the law to allow polls to be held under party symbols.

The BNP initially participated in several local government polls, but widespread allegations of rigging and vote grabbing emerged. Subsequently, the party gradually began boycotting the elections.

BNP sources said

normally those who did not get party nominations in the national election may be given first priority for such appointments.

They said many of the leaders are active in grassroots activities

despite being denied nominations in the polls, and the party leadership views them as capable of handling administrative responsibilities.

They added that giving them priority will also help maintain internal balance and morale within the party, particularly among leaders who have worked for years but could not secure any tickets for running polls.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Directorate General of Drug Administration

Aushad Bhavan, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212.

www.dgda.gov.bd

Memo No: DGDA/Tender/2025-26/ 329

Invitation For Tender (OTM) e-Tender Notice No: 01 (2025-26)

Date: 24/02/26

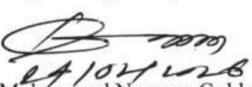
E-Tender is invited to the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of the following goods:

SL No	Tender ID and package no.	Description of package	Tender/Proposal Publication Date and Time	Last selling Date and Time	Closing/Opening Date and Time
01	dgda/accounts-03/Rev/procure/2022-23/GR-05	Goods Supply for Desktop Computer, color Printer, and laser Printer (B/W)	24-02-2026 10:00	11-03-2026 12:00	11-03-2026 15:00
02	dgda/accounts-03/Rev/procure/2022-23/GR-06	Goods Supply for Furniture (Spl. Mobile Rack for physical archive)	24-02-2026 10:00	08-03-2026 12:00	08-03-2026 15:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders 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 (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any branch of the banks registered in the e-GP system.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) and from the e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


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LAW OPINION

Navigating questions revolving the July Charter and constitutional reforms

KAZI LATIFUR REZA

In Bangladesh's constitutional history, the 'July Charter' and the issuance of the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order, 2025 (hereinafter referred to as the 'Order') are not mere administrative measures. They bring forth three fundamental questions at once: the source of state power, the legitimacy of constitutional change, and the legal recognition of the sovereign will of the people. With the public endorsement of the Charter through a 'Yes' vote in the referendum, the matter has now moved beyond a political commitment to the level of a national and legal obligation. The

Indeed, Article 93 of the Constitution empowers the President to promulgate Ordinances only when Parliament is not in session. Yet the Order claims legitimacy beyond the traditional Ordinance framework, deriving authority from the sovereign will of the people as derived from July uprising. The Court may, therefore, question whether the President can issue an order that transforms Members of Parliament into members of a 'Constitution Reform Council' and imposes a time-bound obligation to amend the Constitution. The core debate will be whether this constitutes an administrative mechanism within the constitutional framework or represents a new exercise

But if it is accepted as a transitional legal framework, it may receive constitutional protection.

There may also arise a debate owing to the implications of the terms 'Order' and 'Act'. Although Article 152 includes 'order' within the definition of law, an executive order does not carry the same status as a parliamentary statute. Proposals such as a bicameral legislature, proportional representation, or decentralisation are not merely procedural reforms; they are structural transformations of the State. The question is whether such fundamental changes can be initiated through an order, or is a full legislative process indispensable. If the court finds the Order lawful yet insufficient for such a structural reform, the entire process may become entangled in legal complexity at a much early stage.

The procedure for constitutional amendment is an even more fundamental. Articles 142 and 142(1A), as reinstated by the High Court Division in the 15th Amendment case, provide the recognised methods for amendment through Parliament. Transforming Parliament into a 'Constitution Reform Council' via executive order is not merely administrative rearrangement it may be viewed as bypassing the constitutional amendment framework itself. To amend the Constitution, one must use the doors within it—breaking in through a window is inconsistent with constitutional propriety. If the Court does not prioritise procedural purity, future governments may be encouraged to take constitutional shortcuts 'in the name of the people', risking constitutional anarchy.

The third and most sensitive issue concerns the Basic Structure Doctrine.

If the character of Parliament, separation of powers, or democratic framework is fundamentally altered, the Court may ask whether the very spirit of the Constitution is being undermined. Popular support may exert moral pressure but that does not automatically remove constitutional limits. Comparative jurisprudence supports this view.

Bangladesh's judicial tradition has also recognised this doctrine, interpreting elements such as unicameralism, democracy, judicial independence, and separation of powers as possible parts of the basic structure. Yet, with the repeal of Article 7B, the amendment rigidity has somewhat relaxed. Thus, if the people clearly endorse bicameralism or PR through referendum, can the court reject that will on basic structure grounds? Here arises the tension between judicial authority and popular sovereignty. Is the court's role to protect the Constitution, or to recognise the people's power of reconstruction?

This debate is not new. In India's Kesavananda Bharati case, the Basic Structure Doctrine was established in the context of questioning the limits of Parliament's amending power. In Nepal, after mass movements, the judiciary adopted a transformative interpretation during constitutional rewriting. In South Africa, during the post-apartheid constitution-making process, popular participation and referendum created moral pressure on the judiciary. These comparative experiences show that in moments of deep reform, courts that cling solely to technical interpretation may clash with political reality.

Thus emerges the classic debate of judicial review versus popular sovereignty. Experiences from Nepal and South Africa suggest that in transformative moments, courts may adopt an evolutionary rather than rigidly conservative interpretation. A constitution is not an immutable inscription in stone but a living reflection of the people's aspirations. It is submitted that elevating the referendum verdict above the Basic Structure Doctrine may, therefore, be the true realisation of democratic justice.

The fourth issue concerns the 180-day deadline. While time limits may accelerate reform, they raise concerns about constitutional stability. If reform is not completed within the prescribed period, questioning Parliament's

legitimacy could endanger state continuity. A constitution is not a project to be completed on schedule; it is the state's foundational compact. Excessive haste may undermine deliberation, consensus, and public participation. Legally, such a timeframe should be viewed as directory rather than mandatory. Preserving the quality of reform is more vital than meeting a deadline.

From a comparative view, while the Indian Supreme Court in Kesavananda case restrained Parliament, it did not confront a direct popular mandate. In South Africa, the court acted as a certifier of the new constitution, bridging judicial authority and popular aspiration. Should a similar question arise in Bangladesh, the judiciary may need to assume a comparable role. If reforms are inclusive and transparent, the author believes, courts should adopt a transformative jurisprudence rather than mechanical interpretation.

Furthermore, with the ruling party taking oath, matter of implementation of the July Charter arises, and new political and legal complexities may emerge as well. One may argue that the referendum's victory elevates the Order from a political document to a legal framework. Taking an oath under the Charter would signify a constitutional undertaking to abide by the framework, supported by a referendum. If the Charter were to be implemented, older political reservations will lose legal force. If disagreement arises, Court may introduce further complexity. However, political dissent remains possible through proposing amendments within the constituent body, arguing for modifications of specific clauses, or attempting future repeal or revision. Thus, oath-taking means accepting the framework but not surrendering dissent.

Ultimately, the central question remains: will legal challenges obstruct reform, or will the referendum verdict prevail? The issue is less 'law versus politics' than 'law and politics' in coordination. If litigated, in author's opinion, judges must look beyond literal interpretation, considering context, popular will, and the evolving character of the Constitution. Indeed, a constitution is not a museum artifact; it is a living document.

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VISUAL: BIPOB CHAKROBORTY

question, however, is whether this obligation will survive constitutional scrutiny in the future.

Questions regarding the limits of presidential power are inevitable. The Constitution grants the President authority to promulgate Ordinances under specific conditions. However, it does not authorise the issuance of a new type of executive order drawing legitimacy from 'revolutionary will' or a 'sovereign popular verdict.' Therefore, such an order may easily be challenged as ultra vires. In a democracy, while popularity may be the source of power, the Constitution determines the manner of its exercise. That popularity can never serve as a license to breach constitutional limits is the essence of constitutional governance.

of 'constituent power' outside of it.

The first legal challenge in this process is whether an executive order can form the basis of fundamental constitutional reform. Article 93 authorises only Ordinances, which must subsequently be approved by Parliament. However, the 'July Implementation Order' claims a higher legal foundation—not in any specific constitutional provision, but in the doctrine of revolutionary legality. Should the matter reach the Court, the judiciary would need to determine whether the President is merely a preserver of the Constitution or, in moments of crisis, may act as a bearer of the people's constituent power. Thus, if it is treated as an ordinary administrative order, the reform process may falter at the outset.

Ultimately, the central question remains: will legal challenges obstruct reform, or will the referendum verdict prevail? The issue is less 'law versus politics' than 'law and politics' in coordination.

Although the repeal of Article 7B led some to believe that no barrier remains to altering the Constitution's fundamental structure, the doctrine now exists as a judicial principle rather than merely a textual restriction.

RIGHTS WATCH

The chain of oppression of our tea-workers

UMMA USWATUN RAFIA

Despite being part of a BDT 3500 crore industry, tea workers in Bangladesh face unsustainable wages, horrendous living conditions, and structural marginalisation. The history of the repression of tea workers in Bengal stretches dates far beyond the colonial era. From the echoes of the Mulluk Cholo uprising to the present day, tea workers have endured a persistent cycle of exploitation, inhumane labour, and systemic neglect.

Tea gardens in Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Habiganj and the Northern regions collectively form an industry worth crore annually, making Bangladesh the 64th-largest tea exporter. However, the daily wages of tea workers are Tk 178, which is barely sufficient to secure one meal, let alone

If we firstly look at our law, the Bangladesh Labour Act 2006, we will find that it formally guarantees tea workers minimum wages, provident fund, and certain welfare benefits. Specifically, the Act provides for a Tea Plantation Workers' Provident Fund and for employer contributions. The Bangladesh Tea Workers' Welfare Fund Act 2016 establishes a government-supervised welfare fund and management board to provide financial assistance and social-welfare grants, such as death, disability, education, medical, and family-support benefits to tea workers and their dependents. However, in reality, instead of effective labour protection, workers of the tea industry experience violations such as the absence of appointment letters and identity documentation despite the requirement under the Labour Act.



gardens and sanction violators is equally necessary. Besides, socio-economic and community welfare reform through offering a secure land tenure to the employers for their homes and cultivation plots may end the dependency cycle.

Indeed, each proposal will face budgetary constraints, employer resistance, and political indifference. Critics argue that increased labour costs could render some gardens uncompetitive internationally, or that enforcement will remain weak without political will. However, these shortcomings are pale in comparison to the profits made by tea plantation owners and the moral costs of maintaining a labour system that treats human beings as expendable units of production.

If anything, exploitative labour conditions can be challenged through a collective reading of Articles 14, 15 and 32 of the Constitution, alongside Dr. Mohiuddin Farooque v Bangladesh (1996), where the Appellate Division interpreted the right to life to include environmental and livelihood protections. This, in turn, can be interpreted to extend to be a safeguard against substandard living conditions and structural dependency perpetrated in tea estates. In neighbouring India, the Supreme Court in People's Union for Democratic Rights v Union of India (1982) held that payment below the minimum wage constitutes forced labour. How long before Bangladesh follows suit?

The writer studies law at the Department of Law, University of Dhaka.

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feed a family. Despite the vast workforce of 300,000 workers, of which 75% are women, their socio-economic status stands in stark contrast to the value they produce, evident from the fact that 74% of the tea workers live below the poverty line. Needless to say, a change to this condition is imperative.

Despite the great promises of the law, the reality is far grimmer. First, tea workers are subjected to legal discrimination and labour rights violations. For instance, per section 115 of the Labour Act, they have discriminatory leave provisions, as unlike most other sectors, they are

explicitly excluded from paid casual leave or equitable earned leave, which goes on to institutionalise the inferior status of the tea workers within the same legal framework. Second, tea workers become dependent on housing provided by tea plantation owners and an employment structure which is coercive in nature. Essentially, many workers reside on employer-owned land without ownership rights. Moreover, section 32 of the Labour Act requires workers to vacate employer accommodation upon termination. This creates a coercive dynamic resembling bonded labour. The net effect of all these is that legal rights exist solely in the abstract. Unfortunately, their enforcement is undermined by weak

monitoring and the socio-economic dependency of workers.

Tea-producing regions like Assam and West Bengal have attempted to institute minimum wage boards, profit-sharing rules and social welfare mechanisms. They offer models for statutory welfare schemes, and wage indexing to inflation. For Bangladesh, concrete steps need to be taken. Legal reform through amending labour laws to eliminate discriminatory provisions targeting tea workers is a must, and it is important to explicitly incorporate enforceable standards for wages and other rights. Similarly, institutional and enforcement reform through empowering labour courts that are accessible and equipped to monitor tea

SPORT

What to WATCH

T Sports
T20 World Cup
Sri Lanka vs New Zealand
Live from 7:30 pm
Sony Sport 1,2,5
Champions League

Atalanta vs Dortmund
Live from 11:45 pm
Live from 2:00 am (Thursday):
PSG vs Monaco
Real Madrid vs Benfica
Juventus vs Galatasaray



Now or never for Sri Lanka

Co-hosts Sri Lanka are staring at a potential Super Eights exit when they face New Zealand in the T20 World Cup in Colombo today. The Lankans have endured a mixed campaign -- a thumping win over Australia followed by defeats to Zimbabwe and England. A heavy 51-run loss to England has left them with no margin for error. Another setback against the resilient Black Caps would all but end their tournament. New Zealand, meanwhile, come in after their Super Eights clash against Pakistan was washed out.

HEAD-TO-HEAD: The sides have met 28 times in T20Is. New Zealand lead with 16 wins to Sri Lanka's nine, while two matches ended in ties and one in no result.

T20 WORLD CUPS: Sri Lanka edge the Black Caps with three wins in six meetings. New Zealand have two, while the other ended in a tie before Sri Lanka won the one-over eliminator.

IN SRI LANKA: The Black Caps lead 5-3 in 10 meetings, with one tie and one no result.

LAST MEETING: In December 2024, New Zealand beat Sri Lanka 2-1 in a three-match T20I series at home.

AT R. PREMADASA STADIUM: Sri Lanka lost both previous T20Is against New Zealand here, back in 2009.

VENUE TREND: The average first-innings total at the Premadasa in this tournament is 173 (five completed games).



PATHUM NISSANKA: He has scored 246 runs, averaging 27.33 at a strike rate of 120 against New Zealand, while Kusal Mendis has 314 runs at 132.48, averaging 26.16 in 12 matches.

MITCHELL SANTNER: The New Zealand skipper has taken 14 wickets at an average of 6.38 in 11 matches against Sri Lanka.

SCORING RATE: Across four completed games, New Zealand are striking at 10.37 runs per over -- the best in the tournament. Sri Lanka are fifth at 8.92.

BOWLING CONTRAST: Despite their batting dominance, New Zealand rank bottom for wickets taken (14 in four games). Sri Lanka have 30 in five matches, while India lead the chart with 41.

Bangladesh in strong group in Women's T20WC

STAR SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh have been drawn in a strong Group 2 at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup alongside heavyweights Australia, India, South Africa as well as Pakistan and Netherlands. The Tigresses face a demanding schedule, beginning with the Netherlands on June 14 at Edgbaston before taking on contenders in successive matches. Bangladesh meet Australia at Headingley on June 17 and India at Old Trafford on June 25, alongside fixtures against Pakistan and South Africa. Regular participants in recent editions of the tournament, Bangladesh will be aiming to build on their growing experience at the global stage and challenge higher-ranked opponents in what promises to be a highly competitive group.

GROUPS

Group 1: Australia, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Netherlands

Group 2: West Indies, England, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Scotland

BANGLADESH'S FIXTURES

Date	Match	Venue
June 14	vs Netherlands	Edgbaston
June 17	vs Australia	Headingley
June 20	vs Pakistan	Hampshire Bowl
June 25	vs India	Old Trafford
June 28	vs South Africa	Lord's

District and women's football in focus

SPORTS REPORTER

Newly appointed state minister for youth and sports, Aminul Haque, has emphasised the revival of district football leagues and the expansion of regional competitions for women, calling them crucial for the overall development of the sport in Bangladesh.

"We have observed for many years that district-level leagues are often neglected... we want to make district leagues a permanent fixture," Aminul said at a meeting with the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) executive committee, in the presence of BFF president Tabitha Awal, at the National Sports Council conference room yesterday.

"For our female players, we shouldn't just look at international matches; we need to focus on the regions from which these talented girls emerge," he said, adding that plans include developing high-quality coaches in every district and handing over three stadiums -- Kamalapur, Sylhet and Chittagong -- to support training and competitions.

The footballer-turned politician further announced that both men's and women's national players will be brought under a structured, government-backed pay scale.

'Great opportunity to get the show on road'

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Peter Butler will treat today's closed-door friendly against A-League side Western Sydney Wanderers FC in Sydney as a final rehearsal before committing to his tactical blueprint for the upcoming AFC Women's Asian Cup.

"We have the opportunity to actually look at the girls tomorrow [today] in two 45-minute games," Butler said in a video message released by the Bangladesh Football Federation.

The fixture assumes added significance given the scale of what lies ahead. Led by Afeida Khandokar, Bangladesh open their campaign against nine-time champions China on March 3 -- their first appearance at the continental showpiece and the country's first since 1980.

At Valentine Sports Park, under brooding skies yesterday, Afeida and her teammates completed their fourth training session with an emphasis on tactical flexibility and sharper ball progression. Butler, still shaping the side in his image, has pushed for greater attacking intent without entirely sacrificing structure.

"The girls have worked really, really well. I can't fault their efforts," said the Bangladesh coach, who guided the team to their second SAFF Women's Championship title in 2024 before passing the Asian Cup qualifying tournament with flying colours in the following year.



"They are an honest bunch of girls, and the work rate they've put in has been great. It's a good environment to train; the pitches out there are outstanding, though it's a little bit open to the public."

Bangladesh have not played an international since the tri-nation cup at the National Stadium in Dhaka in early December, leaving a three-month competitive gap before their biggest-ever assignment. Butler's attempt to instil a more proactive style delivered encouraging returns during July's qualifying campaign in Myanmar, yet vulnerabilities resurfaced in October when Thailand scored eight times across two friendlies.

Stronger opposition now awaits, and the warm-up match offers a controlled setting to test variations in shape and personnel before the stakes rise considerably.

"I'll sit and go through the team tonight. I've just worked on a couple of options, bearing in mind whether we play a 3-4-3 or a 3-5-2 or a 4-3-3 -- it's all subjective."

"I have to say, the girls' attitude has been excellent. I just really believe it's a great opportunity for them to get the show on the road. I'm looking at it as a training-ground game in a lovely environment. And more importantly, it gives the players great competition for places, young and old."

ASIAN GAMES QUALIFIERS Axe falls on seniors as BHF cuts squad to 26

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) on Tuesday reduced the preliminary squad of the national hockey team from 36 players to 26 for the Men's Asian Games qualifiers, leaving out several experienced names.

Among the senior players dropped were Farhad Ahmed Shitul, Moinul Islam Koushik, Nayeem Uddin, Arshad Hossain and Mahabub Hossain.

The team has been training since February 5 under the guidance of coaches Mohammad Ashiquzzaman and Hedayatul Islam Razib for the competition.

Although the official reasons for the exclusions were not disclosed, a source said there had been a proposal from the federation to allow the senior players a farewell opportunity in recognition of their long service.

However, the coaching staff reportedly declined the idea, focusing instead on shaping a squad that fits their preferred playing style.

When contacted, Ashiquzzaman did not respond.

The nine-team qualifiers will be held in Oman from March 28 to April 5. Six teams will earn spots in the 12-team hockey competition at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games, scheduled for September 19 to October 8.

Several senior players like Pushkor Khisha MIMO and Abed Uddin retained their places alongside several U-21 players, signaling a transition phase for the national side.

A chaotic Bernabeu return awaits Mourinho

AGENCIES

Jose Mourinho has not set foot in the Santiago Bernabeu since leaving Real Madrid in 2013, but his Champions League homecoming with Benfica on Wednesday has become far more complicated than initially anticipated.

Mourinho will not be allowed to sit in the dugout for the play-off second leg after being sent off during his team's 1-0 defeat in the first leg in Lisbon last week.

The 63-year-old also faced criticism for controversial remarks following alleged racial abuse directed at Madrid star Vinicius Junior by Benfica midfielder Gianluca Prestianni.

The Argentine will miss the second leg after UEFA provisionally suspended him for one match while an investigation into the incident continues.

All of it sets the stage for what is expected to be a charged reception at the Bernabeu. With tensions still high following the alleged abuse of Vinicius, Benfica are likely to encounter a hostile environment, and Mourinho -- despite his past success at the club -- may not be spared either. The Portuguese coach remains a divisive figure among sections of the Madrid support, and the events surrounding the first leg have only intensified scrutiny ahead of his return. Mourinho, who won a LaLiga title with



Los Blancos during his three-year tenure, left a significant mark on the Spanish giants during a period of intense rivalry with Barcelona and a dressing room split between supporters and detractors.

Madrid president Florentino Perez is known to admire the Portuguese coach, and speculation persists that Mourinho could return next season to replace Alvaro Arbeloa if the current campaign ends poorly. However, the atmosphere surrounding this tie -- and the manner in which it unfolds -- may inevitably influence how such discussions are viewed.

Arbeloa -- one of Mourinho's disciples during his time in charge of the 15-time European champions -- faces his biggest test

yet since replacing Xabi Alonso in January, as Benfica travel to the Spanish capital.

Mourinho was dismissed in the first leg for vociferous complaints from the touchline, but he insists preparations for the high-intensity return leg are in place.

"I (won't be) sitting on the bench, I can't go to the dressing room, I can't communicate with the team," he said. "It's hard for me, but my teammates and my assistants are there -- they'll do their job."

The first leg was overshadowed by Prestianni's alleged racial slur aimed at Vinicius.

UEFA's decision to suspend the Benfica midfielder for one game has eased some of the tension ahead of the return fixture, although he could face a ban of at least 10 matches if European football's governing body finds him guilty of racial abuse.

Vinicius received support from teammates, including Kylian Mbappe and Trent Alexander-Arnold. However, Mourinho described Vinicius' goal celebration as disrespectful and questioned why such incidents continue to occur around the Brazilian.

Prestianni has denied racially abusing Vinicius, but with the controversy still unfolding, the second leg will inevitably be played under its shadow as Madrid aim to avoid a humiliating early exit and secure their place in the last 16.



PSG forward Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and midfielder Kang-in Lee appear to be in a relaxed mood ahead of their second-leg Champions League playoff tie against Monaco at home on Wednesday. However, Luis Enrique's side will be wary of Monaco, who were two goals up in the first leg before the Ligue 1 leaders fought back to secure a 3-2 win and take a slender one-goal advantage into the return leg.



Govt likely to appoint 61 zilla parishad admins

BAHARAM KHAN and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The government is considering the appointment of administrators to the zilla parishads of 61 districts to oversee the activities of the local government bodies until elected representatives assume office.

Officials familiar with the discussions said the proposed move is part of a broader effort to stabilise local government institutions and strengthen administrative stability.

The matter came up when officials of the local government and rural development (LGRD) ministry held a high-level meeting yesterday.

After appointing administrators to six city corporations, including Dhaka north and south, the BNP-led government has now turned its attention to zilla parishads, although LGRD ministry officials said talks on appointing administrators to the parishads remain at a very preliminary stage.

Sources said the issue of local
SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



In preparation for Eid sales, workers hang semai (vermicelli) for drying at a factory on Rajakhali street in Chaktai, Chattogram, yesterday. Semai, a traditional dish for celebrating Eid, is priced at Tk 1,200-Tk 1,500 per 35kg basket at local wholesale markets.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

DU students protest assault on fellow

Demand removal of DMP DC Masud; 4 cops withdrawn



DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University students yesterday staged a protest in front of Shahbagh Police Station, demanding justice for the police assault on a DU student during an anti-narcotic drive at Suhrawardy Udyan.

They demonstrated from 1:00pm to 2:00pm. Later, a delegation of protesters held a meeting with a top police official.

During the drive on Monday night, Nayem Uddin, a student of DU's anthropology department, also the convener of Biplabi Chhatra Jubo Andolon's Dhaka Metropolitan unit, and two journalists were assaulted by police.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

'We thought she was dead'

Migrant returnee Rizia Begum's family recounts ordeal at BRAC handover programme

MD ABBAS

For 13 days, three children waited anxiously to see their mother again, after first enduring the disbelief that she was even alive.

Earlier, their wait was of a different kind – spent beside a silent phone that never rang.

Rizia Begum had left Bangladesh for Saudi Arabia in 2019 through a local broker and a Dhaka-based recruiting agency. Like thousands of women every year, she went to work as a domestic helper,



Rizia Begum's family holds her as they cry together after she was finally handed over to them at the BRAC centre yesterday.

PHOTO: BRAC

hoping to secure a better future for her children.

But the abuse began almost as soon as she reached the Middle Eastern country.

"From the beginning, she faced physical torture from her employer.... We informed the broker and the agency many times. Nothing changed," her

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

New US tariffs come in at lower 10% rate

REUTERS

The United States imposed a new tariff yesterday of 10 percent on all goods not covered by exemptions, the US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said, the rate first announced by President Donald Trump on Friday rather than the 15 percent he promised a day later.

Reacting to the US Supreme Court ruling that threw out tariffs it deemed were illegally justified on grounds of an emergency, Trump initially announced a new temporary global tariff of 10 percent. He said on Saturday he would increase it to 15 percent.

But in a notice described as intended to "provide guidance regarding the February 20, 2026 Presidential Proclamation," CBP said that, aside from products covered by exemptions, imports would "be subject to an additional ad valorem rate of 10%."

The move added to confusion surrounding US trade policy, with no explanation offered in the notice for why the lower rate had been used. The Financial Times quoted a White House official as saying the increase up to 15 percent would come later. Reuters could not immediately confirm this.

"Remember that Trump is delivering the State of the Union address tonight, so it's possible we might get a better sense of the next steps on tariffs," Deutsche Bank said in a note.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8

Top US general warns of Iran strike risks

Trump rejects media claims; White House insists diplomacy is first option

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump on Monday evening denied reports that the top US military officer had flagged the risks of a major operation against Iran, saying Washington would "easily" beat Tehran in any war.

US media reported that General Dan Caine, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, had warned of various risks associated with strikes against Iran

so, he will be leading the pack."

The Washington Post said Caine had expressed concern at the White House and Pentagon that munition shortages and a lack of allied support could increase danger to US personnel.

And the Wall Street Journal said both the top general and other Pentagon officials have warned of risks such as US and allied casualties as well as the danger of US air defences being depleted if its forces strike Iran, reports AFP.

- Pentagon officials warn of casualties, air defence risks
- Iran's Revolutionary Guards hold drills on southern coast
- Students must respect 'red lines' after protests: Iran

including a long-term entanglement.

But Trump said on his Truth Social network that it was "100 percent incorrect" that Caine was "against us going to war with Iran."

"General Caine, like all of us, would like not to see War but, if a decision is made on going against Iran at a Military level, it is his opinion that it will be something easily won," Trump wrote.

"He has not spoken of not doing Iran, or even the fake limited strikes that I have been reading about, he only knows one thing, how to WIN and, if he is told to do

The Axios news outlet meanwhile said Caine had warned of the United States "becoming entangled in a prolonged conflict."

Trump's roving negotiator Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner had also been urging the president to hold off attacks and give diplomacy a chance, Axios said.

The US president however accused the media outlets of writing "incorrectly, and purposefully so."

Trump's first option with Tehran is always diplomacy but he is willing

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

Tokyo urges defence pact continuity, Dhaka cautious

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan yesterday urged Bangladesh's new government to honour the defence agreement it signed with the previous interim administration.

The matter was raised during a courtesy call by Japanese Ambassador Saida Shinichi on Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman at the ministry.

Talks covered the pact on the transfer of defence equipment and technology, signed on February 3, as well as the recruitment of skilled Bangladeshi workers to Japan, broader bilateral ties, Indo-Pacific developments, and ongoing strategic cooperation projects, including the Matarbari development initiative.

Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kabir, who attended the meeting, later told journalists the government would review the agreement carefully before making a final decision.

"We will examine it and decide accordingly. If it aligns with our interests, it may continue. If not, it will be reconsidered," he said. "We need to see what the interim government has left for us before making any determination."

Ambassador Saida said he had conveyed Japan's expectation that implementation of the agreement would proceed smoothly. He also reiterated Tokyo's interest in supporting the recruitment of skilled workers from Bangladesh.

HALISHAHAR BLAST Death toll now 3 as expat dies

4 of a family burned in Cumilla explosion



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The death toll from the gas line explosion in a flat in Chattogram's Halishahar rose to three as an expatriate, who had returned home to celebrate Eid, succumbed to his injuries at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka yesterday.

Samir Ahmed Sumon, 40, died around 12:00pm while undergoing treatment at the institute's high dependency unit. He had suffered 40 percent burns and severe airway injuries, said Shawon Bin Rahman, residential surgeon at

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Skipper Harry Brook embraces Will Jacks after smashing his maiden T20I century, helping England become the first team to book a semifinal spot in the T20 World Cup following a thrilling two-wicket win over Pakistan in their Super Eight fixture in Pallekele yesterday. Brook's 51-ball 100 saw England chase down the 165-run target with five balls to spare. Pakistan, meanwhile, will now have to hope for other results to go their way and also beat Sri Lanka in their final Super Eight game to qualify for the semifinals.

PHOTO: AFP

Fruit imports face curbs despite dollar relief

B1

HASANAH ISLAMI BANKING
البنكية الاسلامي
Prime Bank

PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 25

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-11	12-45	4-30	6-01	7-30
JAMAAT 5-21	1-15	4-45	6-11	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	FEB	SEHRI	IFTAR
7	25	6:01	6:01
8	26	5:07	6:01
9	27	5:06	6:02