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A controversial decision
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A game with three sides at play
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More families turn to TCB as poverty deepens

SUKANTA HALDER and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

At 2:12pm, a Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) truck was parked by the roadside under Kazipara Metro Station in Dhaka.

Two long queues stretched beside it, mostly women from fixed- and low-income families waiting patiently to buy essential food items at subsidised prices.

Under the TCB Truck Sales programme, each customer can buy up to two litres of soybean oil at Tk 115 per litre, two kilograms of lentils at Tk 70 per kilogram, one kilogram of sugar at Tk 80, one kilogram of chickpeas at Tk 60, and half a kilogram of dates at Tk 80 – all for Tk 550 – from TCB trucks.

In the kitchen markets, the same items combined would cost around Tk 950. For many, the Tk 400 savings means the difference between coping and going hungry.

Sitting on a rickshaw near the queue was 40-year-old Nasir Khan, crutches leaning against the side of the vehicle and his left leg wrapped in plaster. He once earned his living driving a rickshawvan carrying waste. Around four months ago, the van overturned and crushed his leg. He has been unemployed since.

He came with his wife, Mahinur Begum, who works as a domestic helper in three households and earns Tk 9,000 a month. With two school-going daughters and no income from him since the accident, the family has been struggling.

Nasir said, "It's really impossible for us to live like this with two daughters in school. If I get this TCB package, it will be slightly helpful."

Mahinur repeatedly tried to get the attention of TCB officials, asking if her sick husband could receive the package without standing in the long queue. Considering Nasir's physical condition, officials handed them the package after half an hour.

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People jostle for their spots at the front of a queue to buy essential commodities at subsidised rates from a truck of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh in Dhaka's Fakirapool.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Govt okays waiver of farm loans of up to Tk 10,000



The prime minister presiding over the cabinet meeting.

PHOTO: PID

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the first formal cabinet meeting yesterday, the government approved a proposal to waive agricultural loans of up to Tk 10,000, including interest, as part of the ruling BNP's election pledge.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at the Secretariat.

The waiver will apply to loans taken in the grain, crop, fisheries and livestock sectors, in line with the government's election manifesto, Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Ghani told reporters after the meeting.

According to the BNP election manifesto, the government will pay on behalf of farmers a year's instalments of microloans taken from Microcredit Registered Authority-registered non-government organisations.

As of February 25, farmers owe approximately Tk 1,550 crore, including interest, to banks, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

The main objective of the initiative is to ensure social security for poor

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New BB chief signals rate cuts to spur growth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's newly appointed central bank governor has signalled a potential shift towards monetary easing, marking a sharp departure from his predecessor's hawkish stance, as he seeks to revive sluggish economic growth and support the private sector.

Md Mostaqur Rahman, the first business figure in the country's history to helm the Bangladesh Bank, took office yesterday. He replaces the widely respected economist Ahsan H Mansur, whose tenure was defined by a strict focus on taming inflation over fostering growth.

The prospect of a repo rate cut by the new governor is expected to be warmly received by the business community. Mansur's uncompromising stance on interest rates had made him increasingly unpopular in corporate circles, as he held the benchmark policy rate at 10 percent for more than 16 months.



NEW GOVERNOR'S FOCUS

Maintain economic stability, accelerate growth, create jobs

Reopen factories closed for 18 months

Control inflation, strengthen BB governance

Despite the prolonged monetary tightening cycle, success in containing consumer prices was limited. Inflation stayed above 8.5 percent in January, largely driven by food prices.

Business groups previously said high interest rates drove up borrowing costs and stifled commercial investment. The impact was evident by December 2025, when private sector credit growth slumped to just 6.10 percent, its lowest level in recent years.

Signalling a clear shift in strategy, Mostaqur indicated his primary focus will be on economic expansion and job creation. Bangladesh's economy expanded by merely 3.49 percent in the

2024-25 fiscal year – the slowest pace since the 2020 pandemic – dragged down by weak performances in the agriculture and services sectors.

"The interim government has steered the

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Lobbying heats up for reserved seats

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and MAMUNUR RASHID

Preparations have intensified within the ruling BNP and Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami over nominations for the reserved women's seats in the 13th national parliament as both parties step up internal consultations ahead of the final allocation.

Inside the BNP, lobbying has begun for nominations to the reserved women's seats, with Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal leaders and several former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists emerging as early frontrunners.

In contrast, Jamaat has moved more formally, with its women's wing preparing a preliminary list of 15 to 16 names and forwarding it to the party's central executive council.

Many seekers prepared detailed profiles highlighting their role in past movements and struggles, loyalty to the party and organisational experience. They have begun sending those to the party's policymaking level.

On the other hand, Jamaat is assessing potential nominees from its women's central committee to determine who can play an effective role in the parliament and meet public expectations, while professional women, including teachers, physicians and lawyers may also be considered.

No formal decision has yet been taken to prepare the list at the party's highest policymaking level regarding the reserved women's seats, The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

Nominations are unlikely to be finalised before Eid as the party is still in a preparatory phase, said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

"Most of our responsible leaders are engaged in various professions. While preparing and scrutinising the primary list of candidates, we have taken into account

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Teenager 'abducted', murdered in Narsingdi

Family alleges rape before killing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Police yesterday recovered the body of a teenage girl from a crop field in Narsingdi's Madhabdi upazila.

The deceased, Amena Akter, 15, was a garment worker and a resident of Bilpar area. She lived with her parents in a rented house in Darikandi.

Narsingdi Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Sujon Chandra Sarker said the body was recovered around her neck.

The victim's parents alleged that she was killed by a group of stalkers who had gang-raped her around two weeks ago.

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A farmer carries potatoes from a field at Boplar Beel in Rajshahi's Mohanpur upazila yesterday. The yield has been exceptionally good in the area this season, resulting in poor prices for growers. They are selling for Tk 7.5 to Tk 8 per kg. Retailers in different parts of the district are charging Tk 12 to Tk 15 for a kg.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

India, Israel to boost defence cooperation

Modi says as both nations agree to work on free trade deal

India, Israel agree 'no place for terrorism' in world: Modi

Israel, India are 'bent on innovation': Netanyahu

AGENCIES

India and Israel will pursue joint development, production and transfer of technology in defence, as well as work on a free trade agreement, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday.

He said that both countries agreed there was "no place for terrorism in the world" as the Indian PM wrapped up a two-day visit aimed at strengthening ties with Israel.

"India and Israel are clear that there is no place for terrorism in the world, in any form... We will oppose it shoulder to shoulder. We will always oppose it in the future," Modi said at a press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem.

"Humanity must never become a victim of conflict," he added. Modi also spoke of future cooperation between

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