

Bangladesh sees messages from Myanmar positively

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh's newly appointed Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman was recently congratulated by Myanmar's Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Than Swe and Chairman of the United League of Arakan (ULA, also known as Arakan Army) Twan Mrat Naing.

The congratulatory message has been seen positively by Dhaka with one senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs telling UNB that the messages from Myanmar and ULA authorities are an extraordinary event and have come in the wake of continued engagement.

This is also the first time the head of the Arakan Army has sent a congratulatory letter to a Bangladesh foreign minister.

"They [Myanmar and Arakan officials] reflect their confidence in the new Bangladesh government in promoting a peaceful resolution of the Rohingya issue through continued dialogue," according to an official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Myanmar Foreign Minister expressed firm commitment to enhancing bilateral relations and strengthening cooperation between

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A schoolboy looks delighted after buying books on the opening day of the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela at Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital yesterday. Despite delays caused by the 13th national elections, the fair is now in full swing. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

After disputes and delays, book fair begins

DIPAN NANDY

After weeks of delays, disputes, and shifting schedules, the Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2026 has finally begun – though in a shorter format that breaks from long-standing tradition.

Organised by the Bangla Academy, the country's largest literary gathering is held annually in memory of the Language Movement martyrs.

Traditionally starting on February 1 and continuing throughout the month, this year's fair was disrupted by political and logistical factors, including the national election and the overlap with Ramadan.

Months of uncertainty saw authorities consider shifting the fair to a regular schedule, sparking backlash from writers, publishers, and readers. Although the decision was later reversed, disagreements over timing persisted until just days before the eventual opening.

The impasse was resolved at the last moment, with authorities confirming full participation from publishers.

Reduced stall fees were introduced to ease financial pressure, ensuring a complete arrangement despite earlier tensions.

This year's edition, however, is one of the shortest in the fair's history. Instead of the usual month-long celebration, the event will run for a significantly shorter period,



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Ready to take to streets if reforms not implemented

Says Nahid Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Chief Whip Nahid Islam yesterday warned that they are prepared to take to the streets if reforms are not implemented in parliament.

Addressing the founding anniversary programme of Jatiya Chhatra Shakti in the capital, Nahid, also NCP convener, said people had expected structural reforms, justice for the July uprising, and an end to economic inequality.

"We want the fall of the old political system. We want a Bangladesh where dictatorship does not return again and again, and where students and ordinary people do not have to sacrifice their lives," he said.

Nahid alleged that political parties were once again misleading the student community after the July uprising, similar to what followed after the 1990s student movement.

"The government is taking a stand against the people on reform, justice, and economic progress," he claimed.

He called for parliament to function as a "reform council," alleging that the ruling party refrained from taking the oath as members of such a council

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'I still don't know who killed my daughter or why'

Family of 5-year-old Roza Moni awaits answers 9 months after her murder

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

In the alleyways of Tejkunipara in the capital's Tejgaon, the laughter of five-year-old Roza Moni has been replaced by a haunting silence.

On May 12 last year, Roza – the youngest among seven siblings – went missing while playing with her younger brother and neighbourhood children outside their rented house.

The next morning, her body was found stuffed inside a sack in a manhole near the Bijoy Sarani flyover, about 20 to 30 yards behind their residence. The body was discovered on a plot where a tin-shed structure was being demolished for a new building.

Now, nine months later, the murder remains unsolved.

"More than nine months have passed, yet I still don't know who killed my daughter or why," said her mother, Shilpi Begum.

"I cannot accept that a child can be abducted in broad daylight, murdered, and dumped, and still no one is arrested. The thought alone breaks my heart."

Before she went missing, Roza had come to her mother in the afternoon asking for lunch. The food was not ready, so Shilpi asked her to wait and return to playing.

About half an hour later, when the cooking was done, Shilpi called for her daughter but received no response.

The family searched the

neighbourhood frantically, but Roza could not be found. Around 5:30pm, announcements were made through loudspeakers across the area.

"She came in for a moment and asked if the rice was ready because she was hungry," Shilpi said. "I told her I would call her when it was done. But when I went to call her, she was gone."



I cannot accept that a child can be abducted in broad daylight, murdered, and dumped, and still no one is arrested. The thought alone breaks my heart.

SHILPI BEGUM
Mother of Roza Moni

Shilpi said her young son had been playing with Roza at the time. "When I asked him where his sister was, he said a man had called her away. The incident happened just yards from our home, but no one noticed; no one knows anything..."

On May 13, the day her body was found, Shilpi filed a murder case

with Tejgaon Police Station against unnamed individuals.

Roza's body had been wrapped in three layers of bags. A rope was tightly wound around her neck.

Tejgaon police first investigated the case. Later, detectives took over. It is now being handled by the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI).

So far, the investigation has made no breakthrough.

"The investigators visit the area, talk to people, and ask if we suspect anyone," Shilpi said. "But we ask them who killed my daughter and why. They have no answers."

Investigation Officer Nagendra Kumar Das, an inspector of the Dhaka North unit of PBI, said, "We received the case docket last September. We have interrogated several people."

"We have not yet found any clues regarding the killing. But we are working, considering multiple aspects," he added.

Roza's father, Nure Alam, speaking from Malaysia, believes the killing may be linked to a land dispute in their ancestral village in Raipura, Narsingdi.

He said he purchased land in 2022, which led to conflict with local influential people. Although the dispute was formally settled, tensions remained.

"After the government changed in 2024, the same people vandalised our house in the village. Out of fear, we left and moved to

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Key accused held over killing of schoolgirl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested the prime accused in the killing of a ninth-grader in the capital's Kathalbagan area and recovered the knife allegedly used in the murder.

The arrestee was detained around 10:10am during a drive in the Kathalbagan area, said Masud Alam, deputy commissioner of Ramna Division, at a press conference at the DMP Media Centre.

The victim is Shahriar Sharmin Binti, 14.

According to police, the incident occurred around 9:30pm on February 25 in the Charakghata Paka Road area of Hazaribagh. The accused allegedly attacked Binti with a sharp weapon, leaving her critically injured.

Binti was declared dead at DMCH around 10:20pm. Following the incident, the victim's father, Md Billal Hossain, filed a murder case with Hazaribagh Police Station.

When asked about the motive, the DC, quoting the accused, said the two studied at the same school and had developed a romantic relationship. Recently, Binti had been avoiding him and expressed her unwillingness to continue the relationship, which allegedly enraged the accused and led him to stab her.

PM set to reside in Jamuna

PWD to get it ready within days after Yunus leaves

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is set to move into the state guest house Jamuna, which has been selected as his official residence due to security considerations and its proximity to the Secretariat.

Jamuna is located on Hare Road in the capital. The Government Housing Directorate on Wednesday completed the allocation of residences to newly appointed ministers and state ministers.

Currently, Prof Muhammad Yunus, chief adviser of the recently dissolved interim government, resides at Jamuna. According to the Government Housing Directorate under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, he is expected to vacate the residence by February 27.

Contacted, Md Khalequezzaman Choudhury, chief engineer of the Public Works Department, said no official letter has yet been received, but preparations will begin once the residence is vacated.

He said minor renovation work will be carried out in line with the prime minister's preferences. "The extent and duration of the renovation will depend on the actual requirements. After inspection, we will prepare it as instructed. At this moment, no major renovation appears necessary," he said.

The PWD will ensure the residence is ready for official programmes. "If the prime minister later instructs us to undertake further work, we will do so," he added.

According to the chief engineer, Jamuna can be made ready within 8-10 days after it is vacated.

During the interim government's tenure, alternative residences were considered near the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban and in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. However, due to time constraints and other factors, those options were not pursued further, according to sources at the public works ministry.

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ASK slams police directive on re-arrest after bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) yesterday expressed concern over a reported police directive instructing field officers to re-arrest leaders and activists of a banned political party in other cases after they secure bail.

In a statement, ASK said media reports indicated that officials at the Rajshahi Range of the Bangladesh Police had issued a written instruction allowing individuals released on bail to be "shown arrested" in separate cases, depending on the circumstances, including their perceived capacity to reorganise the party.

The rights body said such measures, if implemented, would contravene the rule of law and fundamental rights.

According to the reports cited by ASK, the directive stated that individuals freed on bail could be shown arrested again based on their "capacity to strengthen or reorganise the party."

The rights group questioned the legal basis and accountability framework under which such instructions were issued, saying this remained unclear.

However, re-arresting individuals in a planned manner based on presumption or with the intent to harass would be contrary to legal and democratic norms, it added.

ASK said citizens are entitled to liberty, justice, and equal protection of the law. While legal action is warranted where allegations exist, no authority may use the law to harass individuals for ulterior motives, it added.

ASK demanded disclosure of the legal basis of the directive, a review of related orders and procedures, and steps to ensure compliance with constitutional and international human rights standards.



A permanent structure named 'Uttar Begunbari Barir Malik Society' and several makeshift encroachments have completely blocked a pedestrian walkway in Dhaka's Begunbari area. As a result, pedestrians are forced to walk on the road amid traffic. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

100 arrested in overnight drive at Mohammadpur and Adabor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 100 individuals were detained in Dhaka's Mohammadpur and Adabor during a four-hour special drive from Wednesday night as police intensified action against teen gangs, extortionists and criminal groups.

The drive, led by the Tejgaon Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, began at 10:00pm and continued until around 2:00am.

Tejgaon Division Deputy Commissioner Ibne Mizan said the operation aimed to curb the growing activities of teenage gangs, extortionists, and criminal syndicates in Mohammadpur and Adabor.

Referring to Ramadan and the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr, he said police want to ensure that no criminal or organised group can take advantage of the period.

"From areas under the Mohammadpur and Adabor police stations combined, we detained close to 100 criminals of different levels. Our operation will continue," he added.

Police said those detained were taken to the respective police stations in connection with various offences.