



JU: a campus awash with colour and life

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Ukrainian missiles strike Belgorod energy sites

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Inside Dana Wyse's pharmacy of desire

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The rice gene bank that feeds Bangladesh

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'Now it's open war'

Says Islamabad as strikes hit Kabul; clashes rage across border; both sides report heavy casualties; world urges calm



Pakistan says **274** Afghan fighters killed; **74** border posts seized



Kabul claims killing **55** Pak soldiers, seizing **19** border posts

Kabul urges dialogue to resolve crisis

AGENCIES

Pakistan bombed government targets in the Afghan capital Kabul and in Kandahar, where its Taliban leadership is based, officials from both countries said yesterday, with Pakistan's defence minister calling the conflict "open war".

The Pakistani air strikes are the first time Islamabad has directly targeted Taliban installations rather than militants allegedly backed by them, a

stark rupture in ties between the Islamic neighbours, once close allies.

The strikes came after the Afghan Taliban announced a major offensive against Pakistani military posts near the border on Thursday night, following air strikes by Pakistan earlier in the week.

The latest attacks follow months of clashes between the two neighbouring nations, despite agreeing to a fragile ceasefire in October.

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CHILDREN'S DAY OUT AT BOI MELA... A Bengal Tiger mascot from the Kaktaria Puppet Theatre makes a sudden appearance on stage and greets children during a puppet show at the children's corner of Amar Ekushey Book Fair. As it was the weekend yesterday, many parents brought their children to the fair in Suhrawardy Udyan.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Contraceptive shortage turns alarming

Many upazilas run out of stock; govt agency to make small procurement to ease crisis

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

An acute shortage of contraceptives has hit the country as more than one-third of the 487 upazilas have run out of all types of government-supplied contraceptives, raising fears of a spike in unwanted or unplanned pregnancies.

The supply crunch, which has persisted since 2020, has turned severe, with condoms — the most widely used contraceptive — going out of stock in 397 upazilas, according to data from the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP).

The DGFP provides five types of contraceptives — condoms, oral pills, intrauterine devices (IUDs), injectables, and implants — free of cost through its field-level workers across the country.

At least 220 upazilas have exhausted their supplies of oral pills, while implants are out of stock in all upazilas, IUDs in 353 upazilas and injectables in 169 upazilas, show DGFP data as of February 22.

Over the past year, the supply of

CONTRACEPTIVE SUPPLY	TYPE	JAN 2019		JAN 2026	
		Supply	Stock	Supply	Stock
	Condom	99.24 lakh	7.54 lakh	7.54 lakh	7.54 lakh
	Oral pill	72.35 lakh	21.96 lakh	21.96 lakh	21.96 lakh
	Injectable	4.82 lakh	4.82 lakh	4.82 lakh	4.82 lakh
	Implant	34,982	2,325	2,325	2,325
	IUD	13,992	3,286	3,286	3,286

SOURCE: DGFP

contraceptives has declined steadily. For instance, condom supply fell to 7.49 lakh in January this year from 53.31 lakh in January last year — a drop of more than 85 percent.

Health and family planning experts warn that the crisis may have serious implications for fertility control, particularly at a time when the country has seen a rise in the total fertility rate (TFR) for the first time in five decades.

Mohammad Mainul Islam, a professor at the Population Science Department of Dhaka University,

said the fall in the contraceptive prevalence rate and the rise in the TFR indicate that the family planning programme is not functioning properly at the grassroots level.

"The disruption in contraceptive supply will directly affect people from the lower quintile, who cannot afford to buy contraceptives from the market. This could drive up unplanned and unwanted pregnancies," he told The Daily Star.

A prolonged supply crunch will lead to a rise in TFR and ultimately

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Quakes outside seismic zones worry experts

Yesterday's 5.4 was biggest among 9 in February

PINAKI ROY

Two earthquakes within 24 hours struck the Khulna region, triggering panic in an area not typically known for seismic activity.

According to the Met office, yesterday's 5.4-magnitude quake had its epicentre in Assasuni of Satkhira, 188km southwest of Dhaka. It struck at 1:52pm.

The tremor was felt in several districts, including the capital, and in Kolkata, where people rushed out of homes, offices and schools as buildings shook across the city.

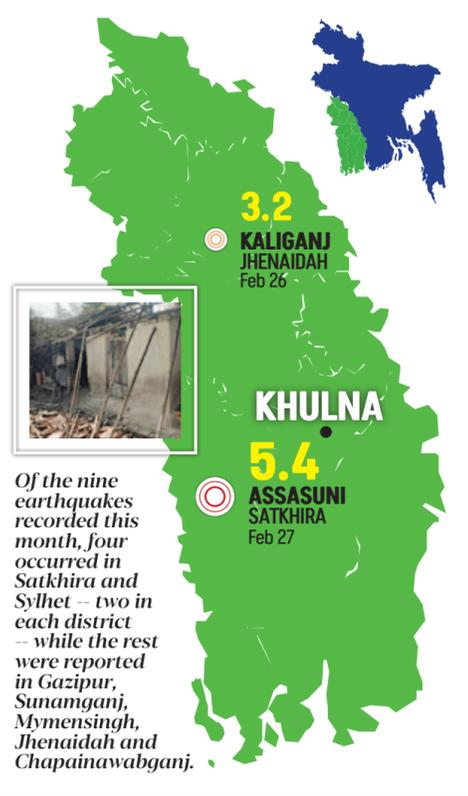
On Thursday, a 3.2-magnitude tremor originated in Kaliganj of Jhenaidah, a neighbouring district of Satkhira.

A total of nine earthquakes struck Bangladesh in the past 27 days, raising concerns among experts and residents.

Nabidul Islam, a resident of Kaliganj upazila in Satkhira, said he was sitting on his sofa when the quake struck.

"At first, I thought my head was spinning. Then I realised the sofa itself was shaking violently. I

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5 held over Narsingdi girl rape, murder

Rights orgs demand justice; protests held at DU, JU

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Five people have been arrested in connection with the abduction and killing of a teenage girl in Madhabdi upazila of Narsingdi, in what police say was an attempt to suppress a rape incident.

The victim's mother, Fahima Begum, filed a case with Madhabdi Police Station on Thursday night, naming nine accused, said Rezaul Karim Mallik, deputy inspector general (DIG) of the Dhaka Range. He spoke to journalists at the police station yesterday noon after visiting the crime scene.

The arrestees are former member of Mahishashur union Ahmad Ali Dewan, 65; his son Imran Dewan, 25; Mohammad Ayub, 40, a cousin of prime accused Nurul; Ebaiddullah, 38; and Abdul Gaffar, 40, of Hossain Bazar area.

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BUZZING WITH ACTIVITY... With Eid approaching, roadside markets for clothes are drawing more and more crowds, especially on the weekends. The photo was taken near Motijheel Ideal School in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BNP moves to unite grassroots ahead of local polls

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

After forming the government, the ruling BNP has shifted its focus to reorganising and strengthening its party structure, placing particular emphasis on preparations for the local government elections.

The party has made it clear that revamping its grassroots organisations is a top priority, as a strong base is essential for resolving internal issues and ensuring success in future polls.

Party leaders said before the national election, a large number of BNP leaders were expelled for defying party directives, and several key party committees were dissolved to address deep-rooted divisions at the grassroots level, which weakened the party structure and affected the unity and overall effectiveness of the party.

Three Standing Committee members said as the BNP looks forward, the challenge is clear: revitalise the party structure, address internal divisions, and strengthen grassroots unity.

Seeking anonymity, a BNP Standing Committee member said, "Without reorganising the party, implementing central party directives becomes extremely difficult. Now, our next priority is the local government polls, so before that, we are focusing on revamping the party and its wings."



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