

## Burnt bodies of two teens found in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Police recovered the burnt bodies of two teenagers from separate locations in Gazipur's Sadar and Sreepur upazilas yesterday.

Law enforcers initially suspected that both victims were murdered before their bodies were set on fire.

In Bhabanipur area of Sadar upazila, police recovered the burnt body of Mahub, 14, from bushes behind a litchi garden near a madrasa around 11:00am.

Mahub, a student of the madrasa, lived with his family in the same area.

His father, Sohag Mia, a local factory worker, said Mahub had gone out to offer Taraweeh prayers on Friday night. When he did not return home by 9:00pm, family members searched for him throughout the night. Yesterday morning, locals found his burnt body in the bushes.

Md Tarikul Islam, officer-in-charge of Joydebpur Police Station, said the boy was likely killed before the body was set on fire. "Police are investigating the matter," he added.

In Sreepur upazila, locals spotted the body of an unidentified teenage boy in Shishupalli area of Tepirbari village around 6:30am and informed police.

Sreepur Police Station OC Md Nasir Ahmed said the deceased, aged around 19, was strangled before the body was covered with dried leaves and set on fire to conceal his identity. An investigation is underway, he added.

## Book fair yet

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An employee of Somoy Prokashoni said crowds tend to grow after iftar.

"Many people cannot come during the daytime due to fasting. But after iftar and prayers, the fair becomes livelier," he said.

A total of 38 new books were released at the fair yesterday.

Earlier in the morning, a preliminary round of a children's music competition was held at the fair premises, with 347 participants competing across three categories. Mohammad Azam, director general of Bangla Academy, inaugurated the event. The final round is scheduled for March 7.

Later in the afternoon, a discussion titled "In Remembrance: Ahmed Rafiq" was held at the main stage. Ismail Sadi presented the keynote paper. Professor Mansur Musa chaired the session, while Mustafa Tarikul Ahsan took part in the discussion.

## Ensure justice

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said while the head of government, ministers and MPs enjoy state security facilities, the government has failed to ensure the safety of people's lives and property.

She expressed anger over allegations that police were reluctant to file a case after a child was raped in Rampura and that the victim's family was advised to hush up the incident.

She also alleged that incidents of rape and murder of women and children do not receive due importance in the mainstream media, urging journalists to focus on public interest rather than praising the government.

Marzia Begum, central assistant secretary and a member of the party's shura, presented the 10-point demands.

These include the immediate arrest

of perpetrators and exemplary punishment; ending the culture of impunity; ensuring neutral investigations and transparent trials; investigating police negligence in filing cases and taking departmental action against those responsible; ensuring maximum punishment through speedy trial tribunals; and adopting effective long-term policies to protect women and children.

The speakers also urged the law minister and the home minister to announce a specific timeframe for the trial of such incidents.

Advocate Sabikun Nahar Munni, central secretary for law and human resources of the women's wing, and Jannatul Karim Sweety, assistant secretary of the Dhaka South unit of the women's wing, also spoke.

## Need stronger

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Gomes, general secretary of the Bangladesh Catholic Education Board, also spoke.

State Minister for Education, Primary and Mass Education Bobby Hajjaj unveiled the 12-point agenda on February 19, saying education spending would be raised to 5 percent of GDP in phases and 15-20 percent of total government expenditure allocated to the sector.

The agenda also includes governance reforms, milestone-based project implementation, technical education from the secondary level, exam reforms, research grants and student loan schemes, among others.

The programme was chaired by Ahmed Mushtaque Raza Choudhury, convener of Education Watch. Jyoti F

## Home minister orders

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institution Chhayanaut in Dhaka.

The following evening, the central office of Udichi Shilpigosthi, another cultural organisation, was also attacked and burned.

Outside the Prothom Alo office in the capital's Karwan Bazar, Salahuddin further told reporters, "With the attacks, a message went to the world that fanatic forces were in a strong position in Bangladesh and could attack any media outlet at will. Our image was tarnished, and we were ashamed.

"By ensuring exemplary punishment, we want to send an opposite message to the world — that extremist and fanatic forces cannot hold back the progress of Bangladesh."

He added, "We [the BNP] strongly condemned the attacks when they occurred. But now, as I am in charge of the home ministry, the Prothom Alo family and the community of journalists, writers, intellectuals and litterateurs all have one demand — a proper investigation."

The home minister said the Detective Branch of police is currently probing the incidents and has been instructed to conduct the investigation fairly before submitting the charge sheets within two months. "Our duty is to ensure a fair investigation, while the judiciary will carry out the trials in the cases linked to the attacks."

Salahuddin, who is also a standing committee member of the ruling BNP, sought public cooperation to ensure justice and prevent the recurrence of such heinous acts.

About the exhibition, he said it felt like a "living museum".

"They [Prothom Alo] have tried to show how one can rise from the ruins. What we have seen and learned is that communal extremist forces may try to pull back the rope of progress, but history shows they have never succeeded."

Referring to the BNP's election manifesto, he said, "In our manifesto, we said we want an independent media and will ensure full freedom of the media. We also believe in the full independence of the judiciary and will establish that as well."

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman termed the attacks on Prothom Alo and The Daily Star antithetical to a civilised society.

"I had to face questions from the diplomatic community at home and abroad due to this attack. Our heads have bowed down in shame internationally."

He said no government can shirk responsibility for such attacks and that this government will ensure a proper trial and exemplary punishment.

"The attacks on Prothom Alo and The Daily Star were something we had never seen before. It was an

attack on the independent media. Intimidation, arson, destruction of lives and property, and vandalism cannot be part of a civilised society."

Referring to the BNP's mandate, the foreign minister said, "This mandate is the strongest in Bangladesh's history. From the government's side, we will keep our word."

Expressing sympathy for the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star families, he said he hoped they would rebuild their institutions from the rubble and ashes and resume their work as truly independent media in Bangladesh.

Adviser Zahed Ur Rahman said a certain quarter had "manufactured consent" over a long period to carry out the attack. "We have ousted Sheikh Hasina's autocracy and fascism. We will not allow fascism to be re-established here. We did not fight to have newspapers shut down; we fought to build a democratic Bangladesh."

Politicians, writers, journalists, artists and representatives of civil society visited the exhibition yesterday.

During his visit to The Daily Star, the home minister, accompanied by the newspaper's Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, examined the heavily damaged ground, first and second floors before visiting the newsroom.

DMP Acting Commissioner Md Sarwar, Deputy Commissioner (Tejgaon Division) Ibne Mizan, DB Chief Shafiqul Islam, along with other police officials, also visited both newspaper offices.

Following the twin attacks on the two dailies on December 18, two cases were filed — one by Prothom Alo and one by The Daily Star — on December 22. So far, 37 people have been arrested.

The court set March 8 for the probe report in The Daily Star case and March 5 in the Prothom Alo case.

## Woman, teen

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punishment for those responsible.

The OC said the attackers entered the house late at night, killed the elderly woman, and then took the granddaughter away. Her body was later found in the field.

In reply to a query, he said that police were awaiting the autopsy report to determine whether Jamila had been sexually assaulted. "We are investigating the incident and trying to arrest those involved," he said, adding that the process to file a case over the incident was underway.

Pabna's Superintendent of Police, Md Anwar Jahid, along with other senior officers, visited the scene. "Police are working to identify the criminals. The investigation is being conducted from multiple angles," Anwar told journalists.

## Bangla must

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"Language has always functioned both as a tool of oppression and resistance — from the imposition of Urdu in 1952 to the slogans heard in 2024. Words carry the imprint of political realities," she added.

Writer Ahmed Mostafa Kamal offered a more optimistic view, dismissing concerns about the decline of Bangla.

He said the language's resilience lies in its strong oral tradition and vast literary heritage.

"Bangla is not under threat in the way many indigenous languages are. With around 180 million speakers in Bangladesh and millions more in West Bengal and across the diaspora, this language cannot simply be taken away. It is alive and constantly evolving," he said.

The discussion was moderated by Imran Mahfuz.

## PM for faster

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During the meeting, Tarique sought their cooperation in implementing his election manifesto, Rumon added.

Prime Minister's advisers Mirza Abbas, Ismail Zabiullah, Humayun Kabir, Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, Brig Gen (ret'd) ATM Shamsul Islam and Zahedur Rahman were present, along with Principal Secretary ABM Abdus Sattar.

Tarique Rahman assumed office as Prime Minister on February 17. Since then, he has been attending office every Saturday despite the weekly government holiday.

Last Saturday, he worked at the PMO in Tejgaon for the first time.

## 7 held over rape

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Begum, filed a case with Madhabdi Police Station on Thursday night.

Earlier, the girl's father, Ashraf Ali, alleged that Nurul and four to five associates abducted her on her way home and raped her.

"After that, Nur kept stalking my daughter. Feeling insecure, we decided to send her to a safer place," he said, adding that on Wednesday night, he was taking his daughter to a relative's house when Nurul and his associates intercepted them around 10:00pm in Boroitola area and abducted her.

Meanwhile, Ahmed Ali Dewan, who was earlier arrested in the case, was expelled from his position as vice president of Mahishashur union BNP on Friday.

Amena's family claimed they went to Ahmad Ali Dewan, who was a former member of the union parishad, to seek justice

when the rape incident took place.

"Then, he arranged a Salish [social arbitration] to settle the issue. But he did not take any action against the rapists. Instead, he advocated for the rapists and shifted the blame on my daughter. He asked us to leave the area by March 1," Fahima told journalists yesterday.

She further alleged, "Ahmad Ali made the decision after taking a Tk 8,000 bribe from the rapists. We were also threatened in many ways to suppress the incident."

Ashraf said, "We rejected the decision and attempted to file a complaint with police. But we were threatened with death."

Ahmed Ali denied mediating any arbitration and said he was not home when the family came to see him that night.

About the allegation, SP Faruk said it was being investigated.

## Pak, Afghan forces

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along the rugged 2,600-km (1,600-mile) frontier.

Diplomatic efforts gathered pace late on Friday as Afghanistan said its foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi, had spoken with Saudi Arabia's Prince Faisal bin Farhan about reducing tensions and keeping diplomatic channels open.

The European Union urged both sides to de-escalate and engage in dialogue, while the United Nations urged an immediate end to hostilities.

Russia urged a return to talks, while China said it was deeply concerned and ready to help ease tensions.

The U.S. State Department said the U.S. supported Pakistan's right to defend itself against attacks by the Taliban.

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Washington did not view Pakistan as the aggressor and that Islamabad was under pressure to address security challenges. Exchanges of fire continued along the border overnight.

Pakistani security sources said an operation dubbed "Ghazab Lil Haq" was

ongoing and that Pakistani forces had destroyed numerous Taliban posts and camps. Reuters could not independently verify the claims.

Both sides have reported heavy losses. Pakistan said 12 of its soldiers and 274 Taliban had been killed, while the Taliban said 13 of its fighters and 110 Pakistani soldiers had died.

Taliban deputy spokesman Hamdullah Fitrat said 52 civilians had been killed and 66 wounded in the Khost and Paktika provinces. Reuters could not verify the figures.

Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said Islamabad's patience had run out and described the fighting as "open war".

Taliban Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani said in a speech that the conflict would be "very costly" and that Afghan forces had not deployed broadly beyond those already engaged.

He said the Taliban had defeated "the world" through "unity and solidarity" and through "great patience and perseverance" rather than superior military power.

## Govt keeps NTMC

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2025, formally abolishing the NTMC and paving the way for a new body named the Centre for Information Support (CIS) to function as the sole interception hub.

Under the ordinance, the CIS would operate under the home ministry but would not be able to initiate interception on its own. It would "only perform interception based on a request received from an authorised agency and approved by a court or review council". The NTMC was to transfer all equipment to the CIS.

Now the ministry letter effectively revives the NTMC for one year.

Earlier, on February 11, a day before the general election, a government committee reviewing surveillance and technology procurement submitted its final report to former chief adviser Muhammad Yunus. The report examined the NTMC's operations and the broader lawful interception framework in Bangladesh.

It found that the NTMC's activities were not governed by a distinct and clear law and that there was no mandatory requirement for judicial approval before intercepting personal communications.

## PM joins Jamaat iftar

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repression, enforced disappearances and killings in the struggle for democracy.

"Today, the people of Bangladesh are looking at all of us, especially political parties, with great expectation and aspiration," Tarique added.

Presiding over the programme, Jamaat Ameer and Leader of the Opposition Shafiqur Rahman said that after what he described as "a prolonged fascist rule", a "revolution" had taken place in the country on "36 July of 24", led by youths.

"We all joined that movement, irrespective of party affiliation."

After a long wait, the election led to the formation of parliament and government, he said, adding that the people now have huge expectations from both.

Jamaat does not want to play a routine or conventional opposition role in the Jatiya Sangsad.

"We want this parliament to be meaningful and the centre of fulfilling all the people's demands. Just as the ruling party must play a responsible role, we also want to play a responsible and constructive role from the opposition."

Referring to past elections, he said the opposition then was ornamental. "Such an opposition cannot bring any good message for any country."

Jamaat would extend full support and cooperation to all reasonable steps taken by the government.

"But if, in our consideration, we see that the government has taken any inappropriate decision

on administrative orders and broad discretionary powers left the scope and conditions of surveillance ambiguous, creating a risk of structural abuse," the report said.

Although "national security" and "public order" were cited as general objectives, the committee found no verifiable documentation explaining how specific targets or situations justified surveillance measures.

"There is no institutional evidence to show whether surveillance was truly necessary or conducted using the least intrusive means. Consequently, it transformed from an exceptional power into a routine practice," the report added.

The NTMC was unable to provide documentation detailing who initiated interceptions, when they were carried out, and on what grounds.

The committee also noted that although the roles of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, the NTMC and relevant ministries were interconnected, most actions relied on verbal or informal instructions rather than formal written orders.

or step, we will first draw attention to it, and then offer cooperation."

If the government accepts the suggestions, the opposition will be grateful and the nation will benefit.

"If the government does not accept our advice, we will perform the role of the opposition. We will stand in favour of national rights and call upon the nation to stand with us."

Expressing hope that the BNP government would turn the parliament into a vehicle for moving the country forward, Shafiqur said no vehicle runs on one wheel.

"At least two wheels are needed. If the ruling party is the front wheel, the opposition will be the rear wheel," he said, adding that Jamaat sought coordination and mutual respect in the path ahead.

The Jatiya Sangsad will be the centre for resolving the country's problems.

"We will collectively try to remove the black laws that still remain in our constitution."

Shafiqur recalled the late Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in a crime against humanity case. He questioned the trials of other Jamaat leaders during the Awami League tenure.

After his speech, Mamunul Haque of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, part of the Jamaat-led 11-party alliance, conducted a prayer, while the programme was moderated by Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, the chief of Jamaat's Central Publicity & Media Department.

## 253 incidents

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In 57 post-election incidents, five people, including a child, were killed and 311 others injured.

MSF also reported that 40 leaders and activists of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations were arrested in February in different cases.

Regarding violence against women and children, MSF said 253 incidents were recorded in February, four fewer than in the previous month. The incidents include 33 rapes, 12 gang rapes, and five incidents of rape followed by murder. Among the rape survivors were six adolescent girls and women with disabilities.

The MSF report also said six Bangladeshi nationals were tortured by Indian citizens in the presence of India's Border Security Force (BSF) personnel. A Bangladeshi fishing boat, along with 28 fishermen, was detained from the Bay of Bengal by the Indian Coast Guard.

A child from Teknaf, who had been critically injured by gunfire from across the Myanmar border last month, died while undergoing treatment.

Separately, five fishermen were detained along with their trawler by Myanmar's armed group Arakan Army, in the Naf River in Teknaf, Cox's Bazar.

MSF stressed for effective accountability, impartial investigations and preventive measures to control the situation.

## NCP eyes stronger grassroots

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prepare for the upcoming local government elections.

He was speaking at the party's founding anniversary programme at Abahani Sports Ground in Dhanmondi.

"The country has emerged from fascist rule; now the goal is to fully establish democracy. Our movement to implement the necessary reforms, the July Charter, and the referendum verdict will continue," he added.

He said this year's founding anniversary theme is: "The country will move on a new path — no return to fascism; revolution, alternative and reconstruction."

Nahid said alternative leadership had emerged from the strength of the revolution to build a new Bangladesh. The NCP would remain vocal in

demanding justice for those involved in genocide, enforced disappearances and killings, he added.

On the party's ideological foundations, he said movements such as the 2013 Hefazat-e-Islam agitation, the 2018 quota reform and safe roads movements, anti-VAT protests, the Palkhana massacre, and continued student protests against discrimination shaped the political context from which the party emerged.

Although the NCP was formally founded on February 28, 2025, its roots lie in the July uprising, he said.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed congratulated the NCP leadership and activists, saying the party represented new hope in politics.

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Mia

Golam Parwar said public support for the 11-party alliance was encouraging and pledged efforts toward national reconstruction.

A three-minute and 45-second documentary highlighting the party's journey — from the July uprising to its participation in national elections — was screened at the event.

Among others present were Road Transport and Bridges, Railways and Shipping Minister Sheikh Rabiul Alam; poet and thinker Farhad Mazhar; AB Party Chairman Mujibur Rahman Manju; NCP Member Secretary and Rangpur-4 MP Akhter Hossain; Chief Organiser (northern region) Sarjis Alam; Chief Organiser (southern region) Hasnat Abdullah; spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan; and leaders from central and district units.

## 403 students died by suicide

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while 23 percent were attributed to resentment or emotional turmoil.

The data also show that schoolchildren accounted for the highest number of suicides, making up 47.4 percent of the total.

Aachol Foundation described this figure as particularly alarming, noting that school-going children are usually at the early stage of adolescence, a period marked by heightened emotional and psychological vulnerability.

At the college level, 92 students died by suicide, representing 22.8 percent of the total.

authorities to introduce mental health services and screening in all educational institutions.

It recommended training teachers and peers to identify signs of stress, depression, or anxiety among students.

It also called for awareness campaigns in the media, posters, and social platforms to reduce stigma surrounding suicide and mental health.

In addition, it suggested psychosocial training for primary school teachers and regular mental health awareness programmes in schools to strengthen connections between students and parents.