



Fire and smoke rise in the Fujairah oil industry zone after debris from an intercepted drone fell in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

TACKLING WAR FALLOUT Govt eyes power rationing to conserve energy

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government is preparing to conserve energy and possibly introduce power cuts and rationing as global fuel supplies remain under stress due to the ongoing Middle East war.

At an emergency meeting at the secretariat yesterday, officials discussed how to maximise the use of existing energy stocks and signalled a shift toward sector-wise rationing of electricity and fuel amid a deepening global energy crisis.

The ministry later issued a set of conservation directives and warned of possible short-term disruptions in power and fuel supply, which could slightly affect electricity generation and fertiliser production, officials said.

However, the ministry stressed that it would exercise "maximum caution" to avoid public suffering during Ramadan.

The government has asked the public to avoid decorative lighting, reduce the use of private vehicles in favour of public transport and use electricity and fuel more efficiently.

Traders and law enforcement agencies have been instructed to ensure that diesel and petrol are not sold in the open market in violation of regulations. District administrations, police and the Border Guard Bangladesh have been asked to intensify efforts to prevent fuel smuggling.

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Country not in danger due to US trade deal Says Khalilur after meeting Paul Kapur

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman has backed the reciprocal trade agreement signed by the interim government with the US on February 9 and said that the major political parties, BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, gave consent to the deal.

"We have not put Bangladesh in any danger by signing the deal. It is not at all in conflict with the 'Bangladesh First' policy," he told journalists after a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs S Paul Kapur at the foreign ministry yesterday.

Kapur arrived in Dhaka on Tuesday night for a two-day visit on the second leg of his Asia tour.

Yesterday, he met Khalilur; State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed; Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Iqbal Hasan

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

War spreads beyond Middle East

At least 87 killed as US submarine sinks Iran warship near Sri Lanka; Tehran chokes off Strait of Hormuz; Iran death toll crosses 1,000

Israel vows to kill Iran's next supreme leader

US lawmakers set to vote on Trump's war powers

Iran postpones state funeral for Khamenei amid strikes

Israel orders southern Lebanon evacuated as campaign expands

EU rallies behind Spain as Trump threatens to halt trade

AGENCIES

More nations were drawn into the widening war in the Middle East yesterday, as a US submarine torpedoed and sank an Iranian warship off the coast of Sri Lanka and Nato air defences intercepted a missile fired from Iran toward Turkish airspace.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards yesterday said they had targeted armed



This frame grab from a video released by the US Department of Defense shows the periscope footage of a US Navy submarine firing on and sinking an Iranian warship in the Indian Ocean. PHOTO: AFP

Iran strikes Iraq as US, Kurds discuss Iran military ops; Russia says US attacked Iran on false pretext

groups hostile to the Islamic republic in the autonomous Kurdish region of neighbouring Iraq, expanding its targets in the region.

Israel launched a new wave of air strikes on the Iranian capital and across Lebanon, where Tehran's proxy Hezbollah said it responded by targeting Israeli sites, including a military base near Tel Aviv.

Iran also claimed it had total control over the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for global energy transit, and where several ships have reportedly been attacked since the start of the war.

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Gulf states weigh response to Iranian strikes

AGENCIES

Gulf states are on the front line of the Middle East's newest war, and they are not happy.

Since the war began on Saturday, "Iran has primarily used ballistic missiles to attack Israel, but has relied on drones to attack Gulf countries", according to the think tanks Institute for the Study of War and the American Enterprise Institute's Critical Threats Project.

Israel's army said late Sunday that it was targeted by more than 50 drones "launched from Iran". The Gulf countries, meanwhile, were on the receiving end of more than 1,000 -- mainly Shahed-136s.

The United Arab Emirates says it has been targeted by more than 800 drones and nearly 200 missiles since the war erupted.

In Saudi Arabia, two drones hit the US embassy on Tuesday, while the massive Ras Tanura refinery on its Gulf coast went into partial shutdown after a strike.

Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Jordan were also targeted.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Staffer kills teacher of Islamic University

OUR CORRESPONDENT, KUSHITIA

A female teacher of Islamic University in Kushitia was stabbed to death allegedly by a staffer yesterday.

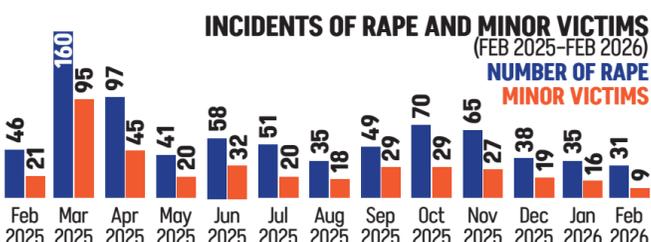
The victim, Asma Sadiya Runa, 40, was an assistant professor and the chairperson of the social welfare department.

Police and the university authorities could not immediately provide details about the motive behind the killing.

Proctor Md Shahinuzzaman said Runa

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REPRESSION OF WOMEN, CHILDREN Protection promised but not delivered



NILIMA JAHAN

When the Women and Children Repression Prevention (Amendment) Ordinance was promulgated in March last year, it was hailed by many as an "iron shield" for women and children in Bangladesh.

By setting a 90-day timeline for trial and redefining consent and age limits, the ordinance raised hopes that the

state was finally serious about ending impunity. It also included provisions for setting up specialised tribunals to deal with child rape cases.

However, one year on, available data tell a sobering story.

In the 13 months till February this year, 776 rape cases were documented by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), a human rights organisation, highlighting the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Focus on energy security Business leaders urge govt during CPD, Star roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Business leaders and experts called on the government to shift focus from conventional infrastructure to urgent energy investment and policy reform to protect the economy and jobs amid an anticipated global energy shock stemming from the war in the Middle East.

"Stop all bridge and culvert projects and invest that money into energy," said AK Azad, managing director of Ha-Meem Group, at a roundtable styled "Looking into

Bangladesh's Development: Priorities for the Newly Elected Government in the Short to Medium Term" organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue and The Daily Star.

The current economic landscape requires a shift in strategy.

Today, thousands of gas connection applications remain stuck in government offices, effectively halting new industrial investments and the arrival of new machinery.

"As of today, the government's borrowing from the banking system stood at 32.19 percent, while private

sector borrowing is 6.1 percent. There is no money for us, or we couldn't take it, as we have no scope to invest due to a lack of gas connection."

The most direct indicator of the economic slowdown is the drop in GDP, which has declined from 4.22 percent in the previous fiscal year to 3.97 percent this year.

This decline is linked to a lack of new investment and decreased collections from VAT, income tax, and customs duties. Furthermore, the government has faced a significant

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Smoke rises after an Israeli strike on Beirut's southern suburbs, as seen from Baabda, Lebanon, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

War spreads beyond Middle East

FROM PAGE 1
Sparked by a massive US-Israeli attack that killed supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the war has seen Iran lash out with missile and drone strikes from Israel across the Gulf and beyond.

Cities like Dubai and Riyadh, which have long taken pride in their safety from the tumult of the region, have been drawn in, with the growing chaos sparing few countries in the region.

Far from the Middle East, a US submarine torpedoed an Iranian warship in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Sri Lanka in an operation dubbed "Quiet Death", US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth announced.

It was the first US sinking of an enemy ship by torpedo since World War II. "Like in that war," Hegseth said, "we are fighting to win."

Sri Lanka's government said it recovered 87 bodies of Iranian sailors and rescued around 30.

Authorities told Al Jazeera the frigate IRIS Dena, located about 40 nautical miles (75km) off Galle in southern Sri Lanka and with around 180 crew members on board, sent out a distress call between 6:00am and 7:00am (00:30 to 01:30 GMT).

The Iranian frigate was returning from having taken part in the 2026 International Fleet Review last month in eastern India's coastal city of Vishakhapatnam.

On another front, a missile launched from Iran was destroyed by Nato's air defence system while heading towards Turkey's airspace, drawing condemnation from Ankara and Nato.

A Turkish official told AFP that Turkey was not the target of the missile, but rather that it had "veered off course" and had been aimed at a base in Cyprus. Turkey said it summoned Iran's ambassador to Ankara to protest the incident.

In the Gulf, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had total control of the crucial Strait of Hormuz, after President Donald Trump had said the US Navy was ready to escort oil tankers through the waterway.

Earlier, the Revolutionary Guards warned ships against entering the strait, and major shipping firms have already suspended transit through the waterway,

with maritime agencies reporting several ships attacked.

In Lebanon, which Hezbollah dragged into the war, Israel expanded its air strikes, targeting the area around the presidential palace and the militant group's south Beirut bastion, killing 11 people, according to Lebanese authorities.

The Israeli military also warned people living south of Lebanon's Litani river – an area of hundreds of square kilometres – to evacuate, saying that the army was "compelled to take military action" against Hezbollah in the area.

Since the start of the fighting, at least 72 people have been killed in Lebanon. It also displaced more than 83,000 people, Lebanese officials said.

Meanwhile, the US embassy in Baghdad yesterday told its nationals to leave Iraq as soon as possible, as explosions were heard around Erbil in the Kurdish region and drones were shot down near Baghdad.

The country's electricity ministry said the entire country had also been affected by a total blackout without specifying the cause.

Earlier, Reuters and CNN reported that Iranian Kurdish militias have consulted with the US in recent days about whether, and how, to attack Iran's security forces in the western part of the country, according to three sources with knowledge of the matter.

The Iranian Kurdish coalition of groups based on the Iran-Iraq border in the semi-autonomous region of Iraqi Kurdistan has been training to mount such an attack in hopes of weakening the country's military. The goal would be to create room for Iranians opposed to the Islamic regime to rise up now that Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and other top officials have been killed, two of the sources said.

A final decision has not yet been made on the operation and its possible timing, they said, adding that the forces are in talks with the US about CIA help to provide weapons.

Iran, meanwhile, announced that the state funeral for Khamenei that had been planned for yesterday had been postponed amid waves of strikes.

Two Iranian sources, speaking on

condition of anonymity, told Reuters that Mojtaba Khamenei, son of Iran's slain supreme leader, was not in Tehran when his father was killed in a strike that destroyed the leader's compound. He is the frontrunner in replacing his father as the new supreme leader, sources said, adding that choosing him would send a signal that hardliners were still firmly in charge.

Israel has already vowed to assassinate any successor to Khamenei.

"Any leader appointed by the Iranian terrorist regime will be an unequivocal target for elimination," said Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia said it intercepted two cruise missiles as well as a drone targeting its huge Ras Tanura refinery, while drones struck near the US consulate in Dubai, starting a fire, and a missile hit the US military base at Al-Udeid in Qatar.

The UAE and Qatar both said they had intercepted drone and missile salvos yesterday, with Abu Dhabi saying it had been targeted by three ballistic missiles and 129 drones, intercepting all but eight drones.

Kuwait has also been struck, with the health ministry announcing the death of an 11-year-old girl killed after she was hit by falling shrapnel.

Thirteen people, seven of them civilians, have been killed in countries around the Gulf since the war began.

The Pentagon has announced the deaths of six US service members since Saturday, four of them in Kuwait. Iran's state media yesterday said at least 1,045 people were killed in five days of war.

Meanwhile, lawmakers in the US Senate were set to begin voting yesterday on a bipartisan war powers resolution aiming to stop the military campaign against Iran. This is the latest effort by Democrats and a few Republicans to rein in Trump's repeated troop deployments, sidelining Congress.

Trump's fellow Republicans hold slim majorities in both the Senate and House of Representatives and have blocked previous efforts for resolutions seeking to curb his war powers.

The House vote on the measure is expected today.

Focus on energy security

FROM PAGE 1
revenue shortfall of Tk 36,000 crore against its target within just a six-month period.

The government's first investment priority should be the energy sector to tackle this crisis, said Azad, who is also the vice-president of the International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh.

The lack of direct energy infrastructure is forcing businesses into extreme measures.

"I run my boiler by taking gas from CNG – I am paying double the price."

To remedy this, he suggested a radical policy change regarding domestic gas usage.

"Cut off my [residential] gas – make it mandatory for me to use LPG at home so that the limited natural gas supply can be diverted to factories that create employment."

Governance failures are particularly evident in the energy sector, specifically regarding Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company.

Titas staff disconnect illegal lines during the day, only for the lines to be reconnected in the evening, he added.

The economic pressure is further compounded by high operating costs. With interest rates at 13 percent and frequent power outages, many businesses are struggling to remain viable.

"I get electricity for six hours and run the other six hours on diesel," Azad said, adding that the high cost of diesel makes production unsustainable.

He said he disagreed with the immediate past governor regarding inflation reduction: it cannot be curbed by raising interest rates alone, as it requires coordinated efforts in revenue collection, employment, VAT, taxation, customs duties and manufacturing.

The fundamental challenge in Bangladesh's power and energy sector stems from its heavy dependence on

imported fuel, said Shaifiquil Alam, lead energy analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA).

About 62 percent of the country's primary energy now comes from imports, a shift that has gradually taken place from around 2010-12 as Bangladesh moved towards an import-dependent energy system.

As a result, the country has become highly vulnerable to disruptions in global energy markets.

Recent developments in global markets illustrate this risk, he said.

Brent crude prices have recently crossed \$81 per barrel, while LNG spot prices have been around \$15.77 per one million British Thermal Units (MMBtu).

If LNG prices rise further, potentially reaching \$20 per MMBtu, it would become increasingly difficult for the government to purchase sufficient LNG from the spot market.

He warned that Bangladesh may soon face renewed pressure from the International Monetary Fund to adjust energy prices as part of the ongoing reform commitments.

However, significant tariff increases could undermine the competitiveness of the country's industries.

Currently, industrial electricity tariffs in Bangladesh are already close to those in Vietnam.

If subsidies were reduced by around 50 percent, retail electricity prices could rise to levels roughly 40 percent higher than those in Vietnam, potentially making Bangladeshi industries less competitive.

Transmission and distribution losses in Bangladesh's power sector stand at about 10.13 percent, compared with the global average of less than 8 percent and around 6 percent in advanced economies.

Bringing these losses closer to the global average could generate savings, he added.

Even after setting up factories,

entrepreneurs must wait years for utility connections, said Showkat Aziz Russell, president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association.

"Even after building a factory, many entrepreneurs have to wait two to four years for electricity or gas connections," he said, adding that such delays deter investment and jobs.

Around 350 garment factories and over 50 textile mills have shut, some despite Tk 1,000 crore investments.

Some factories have closed because they could not secure around Tk 200 crore in financing.

He criticised the loan rescheduling mechanism of banks and urged for refinancing to reopen these factories.

Asaduzzaman, former research director of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, cautioned that the government's 180-day agenda is unfolding at a time of extraordinary global uncertainty, one that could sharply reshape Bangladesh's energy security and economic priorities.

Within days of the new policy timeline being discussed, international developments, particularly heightened instability in the Middle East, have created fresh risks for global energy supply.

For a country like Bangladesh, which remains heavily dependent on imported fuel, any disruption or price shock in energy markets can quickly spill over into inflation, household budgets and industrial competitiveness.

Against this backdrop, Asaduzzaman suggested that energy policy must be approached through two linked lenses: security of supply and management of demand.

The government has to provide around Tk 60,000 crore as subsidy to the energy sector, said Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, the prime minister's adviser to the ministries of finance and planning.

"This amount of subsidy is not sustainable, so we are working on it,"

Govt eyes

FROM PAGE 1
Broader rationing measures could follow, said Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku, the power, energy and mineral resources minister who chaired the meeting.

"Until the supply side is fixed, I have to use what I have in my hand in a prudent manner. We must use what we have sparingly. If people cooperate, it will be possible to overcome this crisis," he told reporters after the meeting.

Tuku described the situation as part of a wider global scramble for fuel.

"When there is a crisis globally, it is not only my problem. Everyone is scrambling to secure supplies."

He acknowledged that the supply chain for importing liquefied natural gas (LNG) has slowed significantly and that Bangladesh is receiving limited response in spot market tenders due to the war.

Diesel sales have risen sharply in border areas due to higher prices in neighbouring countries, prompting rationing at fuel pumps in those regions after discussions with security agencies.

While there has been no load-shedding during shri and itar so far, Tuku indicated that power cuts may become unavoidable if the crisis persists.

"If consumption is controlled, we will be able to run March properly. If committed supplies arrive, the pressure will ease. In fact, the crisis may continue until the Eid holidays. If we can manage demand, it will gradually fall," he added.

Officials said the situation would remain "tolerable" but acknowledged that austerity measures are now central to the government's strategy.

Currently, the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) supplies between 12,000 megawatts (MW) and 13,000 MW electricity.

At least 30 out of the total 143 power plants have not been producing electricity due to either gas or liquid fuel shortage.

The government will reduce gas supply to the power plants and fertiliser industries by up to 200 million cubic feet a day, which may reduce electricity production further.

Gas supply has been reduced from yesterday, according to officials.

As a result, loadshedding has started in parts of the country, though it was below 50MW at the time of filing the report at 9:00pm.

The ministry said it is trying to secure fuel from multiple sources and has taken "all possible measures" to minimise the adverse impact of global developments.

However, it urged citizens to remain patient and cooperate by curbing unnecessary consumption.

Petrobangla chairman Md Erfanul Haque told reporters at his office that they had called international tenders for spot LNG purchase for the last two days, but nobody bid.

There might be two reasons for not getting any bids: all of the suppliers might be sourcing LNG from Qatar, which has now halted production, or the suppliers are waiting for the price to hike further, he said.

Already, the spot market price has hit \$25 per per one million British Thermal Units (MMBtu) from \$10 MMBtu.

According to Petrobangla, Bangladesh is scheduled to receive six LNG cargoes via the Strait of Hormuz for the month of March. Of those, four have been ensured. Two cargoes, which were supposed to anchor on 15th and 18th March, remain uncertain.

"Suppliers have not formally cancelled them, but confirmation is pending," Haque said.

Earlier in the day, Tuku sought support from the US in a meeting with Paul Kapur, the US assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs.

Bangladesh has requested both immediate crisis period support and longer-term cooperation in the energy sector.

"Commitments that were in place are not being honoured. Supplies that were supposed to arrive have stopped."

Kapur said he would discuss the matter with senior officials in Washington DC and inform Dhaka of the outcome, according to Tuku.

Gulf states weigh response

FROM PAGE 1
In targeting the Gulf states, Iran is targeting the Gulf's image as a safe, prosperous hub for travel, tourism and finance, and disrupting the oil and gas industry at its core.

This is a war that the Arab governments didn't want and tried to prevent. The question is whether they'll be drawn into it by what they've called the "treacherous" Iranian attacks.

"All the red lines have already been crossed," said Qatar's foreign ministry spokesman Majed Al Ansari at a press briefing on Tuesday.

"The attacks on our sovereignty are constant," he told journalists.

"There are attacks on infrastructure. There are attacks on our residential areas. And the effects of these attacks are very clear. When it comes to possible retaliation, all options are with our leadership. But we have to make it very clear that attacks like these will not go unanswered and cannot go unanswered."

Mostly, the Iranian missiles are being intercepted across the region, but falling debris has started fires and killed people. Drones that are more easily able to get through air defences often cause minimal damage but still sow chaos that disrupts trade and travel.

That seems to be the Iranian strategy – to raise the stakes for its Arab neighbours in hopes they will increase pressure on the US to end the war.

Analysts say Iran can weaponise the region's vital oil and gas industry –

disrupting that could send shockwaves through the global economy.

That also means Tehran's strategy could backfire. Iran risks pushing Gulf states closer to Washington, even having them join the war effort in some form.

So far, they've refused to let the US use their skies and territory to launch strikes on Iran.

That could change. At some point, they might decide to participate in military operations.

They're not there yet – for now the Arabs are focused on defence. But much depends on how long the war goes on.

Some would be reluctant to appear to be taking Israel's side in the conflict.

What's clear is that Iran's attacks have strengthened unity among the Gulf states.

The six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman – met in emergency session on Sunday to express solidarity and pledge to "take all necessary measures to defend their security and stability and to protect their territories, citizens, and residents, including the option of responding to the aggression."

A senior diplomatic advisor to the Emirati president, Anwar Gargash, has urged Iran to come to its senses.

"Your war is not with your neighbours," he wrote in a post on X. "Return to your surroundings, and deal with your neighbours with reason and responsibility before the circle of isolation and escalation widens."

Protection promised

FROM PAGE 1
persistent gap between legislation and enforcement. Almost half of the victims were minors.

Last month alone saw 183 cases of violence against women and children, according to Bangladesh Mahila Parishad.

Over the last week, at least three rape incidents involving minors were reported. One of them was killed after being raped, and a family member of a survivor was murdered while trying to stop the perpetrators. There was also the shocking murder of a seven-year-old girl, who was found with her throat slit at Sitakunda Eco Park on March 1. Police said that attempts were made to rape her.

Experts say the ordinance cannot serve as a true safeguard while deep structural failures continue to plague the justice system.

The 2025 ordinance clearly defines rape as a non-compoundable offence. Yet, a parallel practice of unlawful village arbitration, or salish, continues to override the law in many cases.

The problem has deepened due to the absence of basic protection mechanisms and a fragmented network of One-Stop Crisis Centres (OCCs), hamstrung by funding and manpower shortages.

A recent incident involving a 15-year-old girl in Narsingdi illustrates the consequences of systemic failure. The girl was abducted and murdered on February 25, two weeks after she had been gang-raped.

When her family members were on their way to the police station after the rape incident, the perpetrators intercepted them and forced them to return home.

Later, a union parishad member "settled" the issue through local arbitration.

As the girl was still being stalked, her father decided to move her to safety. When he was taking her to a relative's house on February 25, they were intercepted on the way. The girl was abducted and then killed.

"This type of settlement directly violates a High Court judgment prohibiting derogatory or demeaning decisions made in the name of fatwa or informal arbitration," said Taposhi Rabeya, deputy director (mediation) at Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST).

"Such settlements are not remedies; they fuel further violence... Had she been able to report to police instead of being forced into a compromise, she would have been alive today," she said.

Fauzia Moslem, president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, shared the same view.

"Justice for rape must be pursued only through the legal process," she said.

CRISIS CENTRES IN CRISIS
Designed as "single-window" support hubs, the OCCs were supposed to be integrated into the regular revenue budget after the expiry of the Multi-Sectoral Programme under the women and children affairs ministry in 2024.

However, that did not happen, hampering the operations of the OCCs. Survivors often complain of a lack of support and limited services.

For example, a Jahangirnagar University student, who was rescued after she had been raped, was taken to the OCC at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on February 24 but was turned away after waiting for nearly two hours.

Kamrun Nahar, a member of the Rape Law Reform Coalition, who assisted the victim in accessing OCC services, said, "The victim arrived at the OCC just before iftar. No responsible official was there. Only a constable was present. Despite her condition, she was told that admission was not possible at that hour."

It took 48 hours for the student to get admitted.

"The promise was to provide all services under one roof. But it is difficult to find anyone after 2:00pm... If a rape incident occurs at midnight, who will serve the victim?" she said.

Several rights campaigners who provide support to rape victims said that staffers at OCCs often view the facilities as forensic units rather than spaces for medical and psychosocial care. By prioritising clinical evidence over essential counselling, the state has allowed a vital support system to lapse into bureaucratic neglect.

FROM MANIFESTO TO MEANINGFUL ACTION

Experts say the 776 cases recorded over the 13 months till February this year demonstrate that tougher laws cannot achieve the desired results without strong determination to strictly enforce them.

"Lawmaking in Bangladesh often becomes an act of populism," said Taposhi, adding that the real test is whether people actually benefit from it.

She said the government must translate its pledges into concrete measures to ensure women's safety and dignity. It should also review and implement the recommendations made by the Women's Affairs Reform Commission.

Fauzia urged the new government to adopt a zero-tolerance policy on violence against women and children with a dedicated taskforce under the home ministry.

She said the necessary measures to protect women and children from violence should be outlined in the government's work plan for the next six months, and the upcoming parliamentary sessions must prioritise substantive action over rhetoric.

"We do not want to live in a society scarred by rape and murder," she said, adding that a humane society requires a fundamental shift in sensitivity towards women.

Maleka Banu, general secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said that although laws have grown stricter, the state has failed to build an effective justice delivery mechanism.

"Exemplary punishment alone is not the solution," she said.

She called for broader social reform – through education and by challenging misogynistic political and religious narratives – to move towards a culture rooted in respect for women.

Staffer kills teacher

FROM PAGE 1
had a feud with Fazlu, an employee of the same department.

Runa had an altercation with Fazlu a few months ago. Later, Fazlu was transferred to the political science department, said the proctor.

Fazlu, a temporary employee, has been working on a daily payment basis for several years, said Shahinuzzaman, who also failed to say the reason for the feud.

Yesterday, an iftar programme was scheduled to be held at the social welfare department.

"We were preparing for the event and madam [Runa] was waiting in her office to join the event," said Mahmud, a fourth-year student of the department.

"Madam's office room is adjacent to our iftar venue. Around 4:10pm, we went to the madam's room to discuss the expenditure of our programme. When we reached there, we saw madam's room was locked from inside and two Ansar members were knocking at the door. But she was not responding."

Mahmud added that at one stage, they broke open the door and found the madam lying bloodied on the floor. In another corner of the room, they saw that Fazlu was trying to slit his own throat.

"Then, we informed the proctorial team." Proctor Shahinuzzaman said that on information, they rushed to the spot and found them lying on the floor.

The two were sent to the 250-bed Kushtia General Hospital, where doctors declared Runa dead.

"Both of them were brought to the hospital around 5:00pm in critical condition. The teacher died shortly afterwards while undergoing treatment. She was stabbed in the throat," said Hossain Imam, a doctor of the hospital.

"The condition of the employee, who sustains stab wounds to his throat, is critical," he said.

This correspondent talked to around 30 people, including teachers, students, family members, and university staffers, to know the reason for the feud between the teacher and the staffer.

Almost all of them said they heard that Fazlu misbehaved with the teacher over his salary and other benefits.

Contacted, Mahmudul Haque Majumdar, assistant superintendent of Kushtia police, said, "We still don't know the motive behind the murder. We are talking to the university authorities and investigating the incident to get details."



A craftsman hand-paints vibrant floral designs on a cream-coloured saree at a store inside the New Market in Dhaka, a popular Eid shopping destination. Depending on the design, each saree is selling for around Tk 1,500 to Tk 6,000. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



PM to launch 'Farmer Card' on Pahela Baishakh

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is expected to formally launch the Farmer Card programme on April 14, marking Pahela Baishakh – the beginning of Bangla New Year 1433, officials said yesterday.

The decision was taken at a review meeting held at the Cabinet Division at the Secretariat in the capital, with the prime minister in the chair.

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'Forgive me if we don't meet again'

Father recounts son's final call before his killing in July uprising at ICT-2

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

A father broke down before the International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday as he recounted his final phone call with his 22-year-old son, Osman Patwari, who sought forgiveness before joining the July uprising in Lakshmipur and said they might never meet again.

Dr Md Abdur Rahman said Osman, a fourth-year student of Chattogram Polytechnic Institute, was at their Lakshmipur home when protests demanding quota reforms spread across the country.

"At around 9:00am on August 4, 2024, my son called and said, 'Abbu, I am going to join the protest today. We may not meet again. Please forgive me,'" Rahman told the tribunal.

Rahman, a village doctor from Raipur in Lakshmipur, testified as the seventh prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case over atrocities during the July uprising against Obaidul Quader and six other Awami League leaders and affiliates.

Rahman said he was in Dhaka when Osman called. He asked his son not to go, warning that the situation was dangerous, but Osman did not listen.

After the call, Rahman phoned his wife, Rehana Akter, and asked why she had allowed their son to leave.

She told him Osman had hugged her, kissed her forehead, and asked her to recite Ayatul Kursi and pray that Allah accepts him as a martyr.

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Govt to compile list of extortionists

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said the government will soon start compiling a list of extortionists, beginning in Dhaka, and take steps to bring them under the law.

While briefing reporters after visiting the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) headquarters, he said he spoke with senior police officers as well as officials from 50 police stations in this regard.

Salahuddin said improving the law and order situation, restoring public confidence, and establishing the rule of law are the government's top priorities, and that the police have a key role to play.

Referring to the previous period, he said the police, like



other institutions, were harmed under what he described as a "fascist" system, and that the government wants to rebuild public trust so that people see police as their friend.

He said he found police officials "determined" and ready to make sacrifices for the country, adding that wrongdoings committed by "some people" under a "fascist regime" had brought blame on the institution as a whole.

Salahuddin said the government wants an institutional system where everyone works within rules and responsibilities, so that no individual-centric system develops.

"There will be no personal,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

'Public hospitals will be free of brokers'

Health minister announces nationwide drive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Sardar Sakhawat Hossain yesterday announced a nationwide campaign to eliminate brokers from government hospitals.

Speaking during a visit to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the minister said no "dalal (broker) syndicate" would be permitted to operate within public facilities.

"This system will be completely closed down and permanently sealed. Patients must receive services directly from hospital staff, with clear guidelines, visible help desks, and accountable officials in



place," he said.

The minister warned that hospital authorities would face administrative action if brokers were found working on their premises.

Law enforcement agencies are expected to carry out regular operations, particularly at large tertiary hospitals in Dhaka and other major cities, where complaints of broker activity are common.

He added that digital systems are being strengthened to reduce manual processes, which he said create opportunities for corruption and irregularities.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

Speakers at a seminar, titled 'Time for Change: Engaging Youth to Transform Unpaid Care Norms', organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation at Dhaka University's Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium yesterday.

Man sent to jail in Sitakunda child murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chattogram court yesterday sent the accused in the killing of a seven-year-old girl in Sitakunda to jail after recording his confessional statement under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Judicial Magistrate-2 Saima Arefin Hema recorded the statement of the accused, Babu Sheikh, 50, after Sitakunda police produced him before the court in connection with the murder and attempted rape case of Jannatun Nayema Ira.

Additional Superintendent of Police (Sitakunda Circle) Sakila Sultana Suchana confirmed the development to The Daily Star.

Police arrested Babu yesterday after the girl died at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), where she was undergoing treatment.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

'My bank info made public with malintent'

Alleges Asif Mahmud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party (NCP) Spokesperson Asif Mahmud yesterday alleged that the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIO) made his confidential bank information public in an official journalists' group with "malicious intentions" to assassinate his character.

He made the allegation at a press briefing at the party's office in Banglamotor yesterday.

Asif claimed that after he announced his candidacy for the Dhaka South City Corporation mayoral election, certain media outlets began spreading "propaganda" against him.

He said BFIO had sought bank account information of 56 individuals, including him, on Tuesday and that the data was confidentially sent to the agency by banks. However, he alleged that BFIO later shared his bank statement separately with a group of journalists.

"This has destroyed citizens' privacy," he said. "Distributing my bank statement separately instead of sharing information on all 56 individuals shows a malicious purpose beyond investigation."

The former interim government adviser said he had already



SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

'Time poverty' holding women, economy back

Say speakers at MJF seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's economic growth is being slowed down by a "time poverty crisis", with women contributing nearly five to seven times more hours than men on unpaid care and domestic work, experts and policymakers said at a seminar yesterday.

Citing the data of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) Time Use Survey 2022, they said despite this massive contribution, women's work remains largely unrecognised, limiting their participation in the formal workforce.

The seminar, titled "Time for Change: Engaging Youth to Transform Unpaid Care Norms", was organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) at Dhaka University's Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium, targeting university students to challenge entrenched gender norms.

Chairing and moderating the opening

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

ICT-1 defers verdict in the Rampura case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday postponed its verdict in a crimes against humanity case involving the killing of two people and the shooting of two others in Rampura during the July 2024 uprising.

The delay followed a prosecution request to submit additional video evidence.

The tribunal had earlier scheduled yesterday for delivering the judgement after concluding witness testimonies and arguments from the defence and prosecution.

Speaking to journalists after the hearing, Chief Prosecutor Aminul Islam said the prosecution had found a video showing accused Chanchal Chandra Sarkar, a former assistant sub-inspector of Rampura police outpost, making an extrajudicial confession. In it, Sarkar

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

Fresh reshuffle in police admin 10 SPs transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday transferred 10 superintendents of police (SPs), appointing new SPs to six districts in a fresh reshuffle of the police administration.

The Ministry of Home Affairs issued the order in a notification signed by Tousif Ahmed, deputy secretary of the Police-1 wing.

Under the order, Bogura, Sylhet, Barishal, Jamalpur, Mymensingh and Khagrachhari received new SPs.

Bogura SP Md Shahadat Hossain was transferred to the Armed Police Battalion (APBn). Khagrachhari SP Mirza Sayem Mahmud was posted as SP of Bogura, while Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Deputy Commissioner Md Mostak Sarkar was appointed SP of Khagrachhari.

Mymensingh SP Md Mizanur Rahman was transferred to the Police Training Centre in Noakhali. DMP Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Kamrul Hasan was appointed SP of Mymensingh.

Sylhet SP Kazi Akhtar Ul Alam was transferred to the APBn, and Jamalpur SP Dr Chowdhury Md Zaber Sadek was posted as SP of Sylhet. DMP Deputy Commissioner Mosammat Farhana Yasmin was appointed SP of Jamalpur.

Barishal SP Farzana Islam was transferred to the Naval Police, while Police Headquarters official AZM Mostafizur Rahman was posted as SP of Barishal.

The reshuffle follows the new government's swearing-in on February 17.

On February 25, DMP Commissioner Sheikh Md Sazzat Ali resigned a day after the appointment of a new inspector general of police.

According to sources, maintaining law and order remains a top priority for the government, particularly in the capital.

Two killed in 'mob attack' over theft

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Two members of the Bede community were killed in a "mob beating" in Louhajang upazila, Munshiganj, early yesterday following allegations of theft.

The deceased were identified as Sagar and Chanarul, both around 30 years old and residents of Goalimandra village.

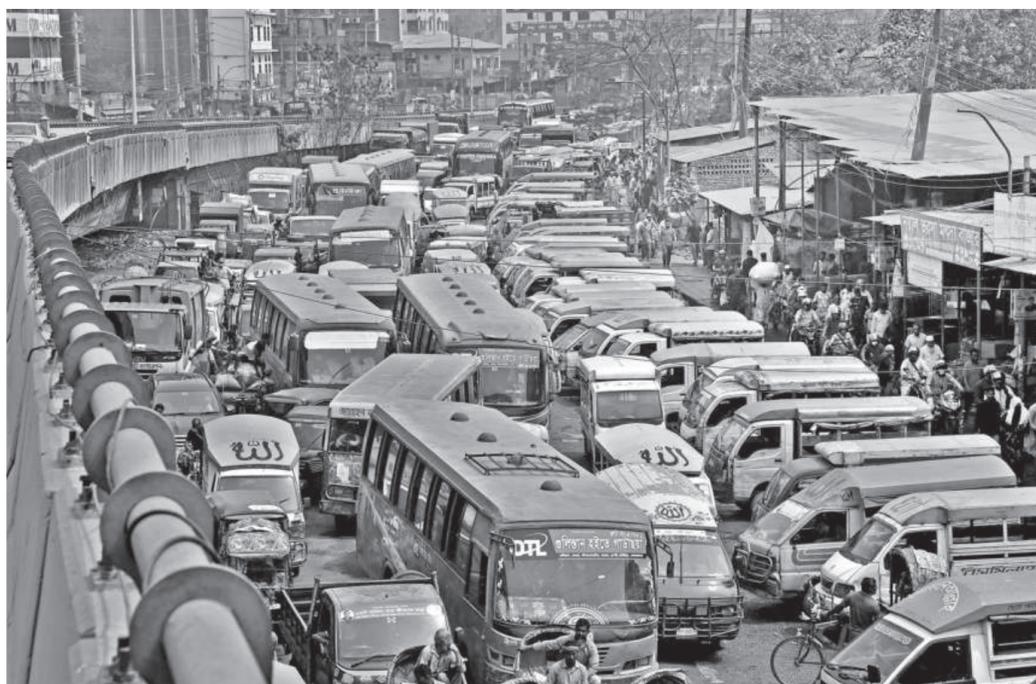
Quoting locals, police said the men were caught by villagers late Tuesday night while allegedly stealing electric wires from the Satgharia Community Clinic in Haldia union.

They were reportedly beaten and confined by a group of people before police were called.

Police arrived at the scene and took the two men to Louhajang Health Complex, where they were pronounced dead by an on-duty doctor, said Louhajang Police Station Officer-in-Charge Monirul Islam.

He added that three people have been detained for questioning in connection with the incident, and legal proceedings are ongoing.

The bodies have been sent to Munshiganj General Hospital for autopsy.



Legunas illegally parked on a road in South Jatrabari occupy much of the carriageway, causing severe congestion amid regular vehicular movement. The photo was taken near the capital's Jatrabari-Gulistan Flyover recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

A govt school without toilet facilities



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Habiganj

Teachers, students, and guardians of Olipur Government Primary School in Shayestaganj upazila of Habiganj have been enduring severe hardship for the past two years due to the absence of toilet facilities.

With no usable toilets on the campus, students are compelled to use facilities in nearby houses, which they described as humiliating, particularly for female students and teachers. The situation has disrupted regular classes, while attendance has reportedly dropped as many children are reluctant to attend school.

The school, located in Brahmandora union, has four female teachers and around 180 students. Although a toilet exists at a nearby mosque, school authorities said it is dilapidated and unfit for use.

The school authorities said construction of a wash block by the Upazila Public Health Engineering Department began two years ago but remains unfinished due to prolonged negligence by contractors.

"We are suffering a lot because there is no toilet. We feel ashamed to go to other people's houses. We want the wash block to be opened immediately," said a student, Jannatul.

Acting headteacher Afia Begum said repeated delays by contractors worsened the situation. "Despite initiatives from education officials, the work has not been completed, and we have been suffering for a long time," she said.

Local human rights activist Bishwajit Paul termed the situation alarming, saying, "It is unacceptable that a government primary school has been operating without toilet facilities for two years."

Shayestaganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Nahid Hossain said he was unaware of the issue. "No teacher informed us earlier. However, the education officer has been instructed to look into the matter seriously and take necessary action," he said.

Put priority on mosquito control, waste, waterlogging

DNCC administrator directs officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation Administrator Saiful Islam Khan yesterday directed officials to prioritise work in three key areas, including strengthening mosquito control activities across the DNCC area.

The other two priorities are improving waste management to build a cleaner city and taking preparations in advance to tackle waterlogging during the upcoming monsoon.

He issued the directives at a meeting with zonal executive officers at Nagar Bhaban.

At the meeting, Saiful said alongside regular activities, all officials must give special attention to mosquito control, waste management and waterlogging prevention to help transform Dhaka into a clean and green city.

He instructed that field supervision be conducted to ensure mosquito control operations are carried out properly three times a day. Authorities must also regularly monitor whether waste is being dumped indiscriminately and whether drains and canals are being cleaned.

Addressing the zonal executive officers, he said they should not remain confined to office work but must be present in the field daily at designated times. They have to identify problems in their respective areas, take steps to resolve them, and ensure DNCC personnel are performing their duties properly.

The administrator also directed that canal and drain cleaning continue regularly. He said proper cleaning would reduce mosquito infestation and help control waterlogging during the monsoon.

He further instructed officials to identify areas likely to face waterlogging, such as Airport Road and Mirpur Road, and take measures in advance.

Eid shopping frenzy grips Chattogram

ARUN BIKASH DEY

With Eid-ul-Fitr drawing closer, Chattogram's shopping malls and traditional markets are buzzing with eager crowds. From the fancy outlets of Nasirabad to the narrow wholesale lanes of Teri Bazar, shoppers are hunting for the perfect festive clothing.

Women's wear, with a high demand for exotic names and intricate designs, remains the primary driver of the early shopping rush. Markets like New Market (Bipani Bitan), Sanmar Ocean City, Bali Arcade, and Afmi Plaza are bustling with buyers.

According to customers and salespeople, styles like Parsi, Sharara, Gharara, Heeramandi, Arabian Cutting, and Agha Noor are dominating the displays.

"I usually buy Pakistani brands, but this time I found something from Delhi Boutique," said Nilufer Akhter, a shopper at one of the port city's malls.

For those looking for variety on a budget, Teri Bazar and the Chattogram Shopping Complex are the go-to destinations. As one of the largest hubs for unstitched fabric, Teri Bazar is crowded with shoppers who prefer custom-made outfits over readymade garments.

"I prefer designing elegant dresses over flashy ones," said Shanta Islam, a university student at New Market.



Meanwhile, others at Gulzar Tower and Lucky Plaza expressed concerns over the price hikes. "Prices are a bit high this year. It's difficult for us ordinary folks to afford such expensive clothes given the current market situation," noted Mohammad Ismail.

Men's shopping is also picking up pace, with panjabi remaining the undisputed first choice for Eid mornings. To beat the heat, cotton panjabis are in high demand.

The legendary Khadi Ghar and Khadi Mahal in Kotwali are witnessing heavy footfall. Here, panjabis are being sold at fixed prices ranging from Tk 800 to Tk 15,000.

"I'm here to buy a panjabi and a matching pajama," said Mahmudul Haque at Khadi Mahal.

Salesmen at Mimi Super Market and Central Plaza reported that women are finishing their shopping early to avoid the last-minute rush.

The response from customers is good so far, said Abu Ahmed, a salesman at Mimi Super Market. "We expect better feedback as Eid day approaches."

Apart from clothing, footwear, cosmetics, and bag stores are also seeing a steady stream of customers.

Man sent to jail

FROM PAGE 3

She was found with her throat slit at Sitakunda Eco Park on Sunday.

Police said the accused is a neighbour of the victim and had prior enmity with her family, which led to the incident.

During primary interrogation, Babu admitted that he had

taken the girl to a hill and attempted to rape her but failed. As she screamed and threatened to disclose the matter to her parent, her throat was slit with a knife.

Labourers found her walking aimlessly, bleeding from her throat, and took her to a health complex. Later, she was admitted to the CMCH

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department
Tangail
E-mail: ee_tan@eedmoe.gov.bd

Memo No. EE/EED/Tangail/7016-SHED/2025-2026/3104

Date: 04.03.2026

e-Tender Notice No. xen/eed/Tangail/7016-SHED/39/2025-2026 (Limited Tendering Method)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following Works Tender.

Sl No.	Tender ID	Name of work	Last selling date & time	Opening date & time
1	1235364	EE-EED-Tangail-7016-SHED-2019-2020-PW-31: Construction of Single Storied Academic Building with 4-Storied Foundation Including Sanitary Water Supply & Electrification Works at Gohailbari Abdul Goni High School Sakhipur Upazila District - Tangail.	29.03.2026 17:00	30.03.2026 12:00
2	1235368	EE-EED-Tangail-7016-SHED-2019-2020-42: Vertical Extension of Existing Academic Building (1st & 2nd Floor) including Sanitary, Water Supply & Electrification Works at Bagerbari Kakrajan High School, Upazila- Sakhipur, District -Tangail.	29.03.2026 17:00	30.03.2026 12:00
3	1235369	EE-EED-Tangail-7016-SHED-2019-2020-43: Construction of Single Storied Academic Building with 4-Storied Foundation Including Sanitary Water Supply & Electrification Works at Bhawra High School, Mirzapur Upazila, District -Tangail.	29.03.2026 17:00	30.03.2026 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in 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 National System Portal have to be deposited, online through any registered bank's branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


Md. Istiaque Iqbal Hemal
Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department, Tangail
Phone: 02997714027

GD-485



North-West Power Generation Company Ltd
ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 & ISO 45001:2018 Certified
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

Office of the Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)
Sirajganj 225 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant (Unit-2)
Soydabad, Sirajganj.

Ref: 27.28.8878.201.07.001.21.48

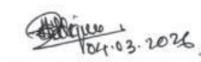
Date: 04/03/2026

e-Tender Notice

The following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd):

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Brief Description of Tender	Publication Date	Last Selling Date & Time	Opening Date
1	1235104	Procurement of STG, ST Transformers, Protection and PCC Room Electrical Equipment's and Spares	26-Feb-2026	29-Mar-2026 16:00 PM	30-Mar-2026

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in 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 (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Help Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


Engr. Md. Abu Zafar Siddique
Plant Manager (Superintending Engineer)
Sirajganj 225 MW CCPP (Unit-2)
NWPGL, Soydabad, Sirajganj.

GD-484

Iran war breaks UN Charter Say UN probe

AGENCIES

An independent United Nations probe investigating rights violations in Iran yesterday condemned attacks by Israel and the US on Iran as well as Tehran's retaliatory strikes across the region, saying they violated the UN Charter.

It also expressed deep shock over a strike that hit the Shajarah Tayyebah girls' school in Minab in southern Iran on Saturday, which killed more than 160 people, mostly schoolgirls aged seven to 12, it said.

Russia and China have been vocal against the attack on Iran, with Russia yesterday accusing the United States of using an imaginary threat from Iran as a pretext to overthrow its constitutional order. It also said Washington's calls for Iranians to seize power from their leaders were cynical and inhumane.

Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday said China is willing to send a special envoy for mediation to the Middle East. The pledge comes after separate phone calls between Wang and his counterparts in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, according to a Foreign Ministry statement.



Policemen inspect destroyed buildings following airstrikes in central Tehran, Iran, yesterday. The US military said it had struck nearly 2,000 targets inside the Islamic republic.

PHOTO: AFP

'No to war'

Spanish PM tells Trump; UK PM vows to keep a 'cool head'

AGENCIES

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez yesterday hit back at US President Donald Trump's criticisms of Madrid's refusal to let US planes use its bases to attack Iran.

"The position of the government of Spain can be summed up in four words: no to war," he said in a televised address, a day after Trump threatened to sever all trade with Spain.

"We will not be complicit in something that is harmful to the world and contrary to our values and interests, simply out of fear of retaliation," he added. The European Union yesterday said it stands in full solidarity with Spain.

Meanwhile, Keir Starmer said Britain would respond to the escalating conflict in the Middle East with a "cool head" after Trump chastised the prime minister for failing to provide sufficient support for his strikes on Iran, reports Reuters.

Britain initially refused to allow its military bases to be used by the US for its assault on Tehran, only tempering that position when Iran attacked its neighbours - allowing UK bases to be used for limited defensive strikes.

Trump responded by castigating Starmer three times, including in the Oval Office on Tuesday where he told reporters "This is not Winston Churchill that we're dealing with".

Country not in danger due to US trade deal

FROM PAGE 1

Mahmud Tuku, and Commerce Minister Khandaker AbdulMuktadir at the Secretariat.

Today, he is scheduled to meet representatives of political parties, including the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and the National Citizen Party.

The foreign minister, during the meeting with Kapur, said it will be difficult for countries like Bangladesh to bear the economic cost if the Middle East war is prolonged.

Khalilur, who was the national security adviser to the interim government, requested that the US make diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict at the earliest.

At the meeting, Kapur underscored the importance of implementing the provisions of the agreement on Reciprocal Trade to foster greater bilateral trade and investment, while Khalilur reiterated the government's commitment to policy continuity, particularly in the economic domain.

THE DEAL

During a post-meeting press briefing, Khalilur was asked if the interim government was under pressure to sign the deal since it was sealed just three days before the election and includes provisions restricting trade deals or purchases from non-market economies, which could mean China.

He responded in the negative and said the deal

needs to be analysed in comparison with those signed by other countries like India, Cambodia, Indonesia and Vietnam with the US.

"We are in a better position if you analyse the language of the deals.... Bangladesh committed to purchasing \$22 billion worth of goods over 15 years

deal was not "suddenly finalised" and that the interim government first began talking to the US in February 2025.

"Initially, Bangladesh received a 20 percent tariff, but Dhaka requested zero reciprocal tariffs on garments made with American cotton or man-made fibre, while the US

effective until notification. "We can exit with a 60 day notice. Therefore, we have not put Bangladesh in any danger."

He said that regarding border measures, Bangladesh has stated that any measures taken will be in accordance with Bangladeshi law.

Kapur, however, was assured that Bangladesh will continue implementation of the agreement.

After the US Supreme Court cancelled the tariffs on different countries imposed by US President Donald Trump, he announced a 15 percent global tariff on February 21, which is also applicable to Bangladesh. Khalilur requested Kapur to lower the tariff from 19 percent.

At the meeting, the two sides also discussed the process of returning irregular Bangladeshis living in the US with dignity and ease.

A diplomatic source said the US wants to repatriate over 4,000 irregular Bangladeshis quickly. Over the last year, about 400 were repatriated.

Kapur expressed satisfaction over the current bilateral relations and hoped they would become stronger and more expansive in the coming days.

He also conveyed his greetings to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on his victory in the polls and expressed satisfaction with the festive atmosphere of the election.



from the US. Compared to a country like India, which received an 18 percent tariff and committed \$500 billion in purchases over five years, Bangladesh's 19 percent tariff is favourable.

"Could you sustain a 37 percent tariff if we did not sign the deal? Compare what we have gained and what others got."

Khalilur added that the

sought more time to finalise the Rules of Origin.

"The US Trade Representative also spoke with the two major political parties, who gave their consent before the election.... We did not sign the deal in the darkness."

The foreign minister said the agreement has both "entry" and "exit" clauses and that it does not become

Strikes on Iran diminishing US stockpiles fast

Say sources; executives from defense contractors plan to meet at White House

REUTERS, Washington

The Trump administration plans to meet with executives from the biggest US defense contractors at the White House on Friday to discuss accelerating weapons production, as the Pentagon works to replenish supplies after strikes on Iran and several other recent military efforts, five people familiar with the plan told Reuters.

Companies including Lockheed Martin and Raytheon parent, along with other key suppliers, have been invited to attend the meeting, the people said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the discussions are private.

The meeting underscores the urgency felt in Washington to shore up weapons stocks after the Iran operation drew heavily on munitions. Since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022 and Israel began military operations in Gaza, the US has drawn down billions of dollars' worth of weapons stockpiles, including artillery systems, ammunition and anti-tank missiles. The conflict in Iran has consumed longer range missiles than those furnished to Kyiv.

At least one of the people said the gathering was expected to center on pressing weapons makers to move faster to boost output.

The first 24 hours of the strikes on Iran alone have seen the US spend \$779 million, according to reports. Lockheed, the Pentagon and White House did not immediately respond to requests for comment. In a social

The first 24 hours of the strikes on Iran alone have seen the US spend \$779 million, according to reports.

media post Monday, Trump said there was a "virtually unlimited supply" of US munitions and that "wars can be fought 'forever,' and very successfully, using just these supplies."

The White House meeting comes as Deputy Defense Secretary Steve Feinberg has been leading Pentagon work in recent days on a supplemental budget request of around \$50 billion that could be released as soon as Friday, one of the people said.



বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ বিদ্যুৎ, জ্বালানি ও খনিজ সম্পদ মন্ত্রণালয়

উদ্ভূত বৈশ্বিক পরিস্থিতি বিবেচনায় পবিত্র রমজান মাস, গ্রীষ্মকাল ও সেচ মৌসুমে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহের লক্ষ্যে পরিমিত ও সাশ্রয়ী বিদ্যুৎ ব্যবহারে সম্মানিত বিদ্যুৎ গ্রাহকগণের প্রতি আহ্বান

- সেচ পাম্পে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ নিশ্চিতের লক্ষ্যে রাত ১১টা থেকে সকাল ৯টা পর্যন্ত সেচ পাম্প চালু রাখুন।
 - বিদ্যুৎ ও জ্বালানির সাশ্রয়ী ব্যবহার নিশ্চিত করার লক্ষ্যে ওয়েট এন্ড ড্রাই পদ্ধতিতে সেচ কাজ সম্পাদন করুন।
 - বিদ্যুৎ সাশ্রয়ে এসি'র তাপমাত্রা ২৫° সেলসিয়াস বা তার উপরে রাখুন।
 - বিদ্যুতের অপচয় রোধকল্পে দোকান, শপিং মল, পেট্রোল পাম্প ও সিএনজি স্টেশনে অতিরিক্ত আলোকসজ্জা পরিহার করুন।
 - দুর্ঘটনা এড়ানোর লক্ষ্যে ছকিং বা অবৈধ বিদ্যুৎ সংযোগ হতে বিরত থাকুন।
 - ইজি বাইক, অটোরিক্সা ইত্যাদিতে অবৈধভাবে চার্জিং করা হতে বিরত থাকুন।
 - পিক আওয়ারে (বিকাল ৫টা থেকে রাত ১১টা) এসি, ওয়েন্ডিং মেশিন, লন্ড্রি, গুভেন/মাইক্রো গুভেন, হিটার, পানির পাম্প, ইঞ্জি, বৈদ্যুতিক বিলবোর্ডসহ অধিক বিদ্যুৎ ব্যবহৃত সরঞ্জামাদির ব্যবহার বন্ধ রাখুন।
 - কোন কারণে বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহে বিঘ্ন ঘটলে ধৈর্য সহকারে অপেক্ষা করুন এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট কর্তৃপক্ষকে অবহিত করুন।
 - বিদ্যুৎ সেবা প্রাপ্তিতে আপনার যেকোন অভিযোগ বা তথ্যের জন্য বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগের হট লাইন নম্বর ১৬৯৯৯ এ যোগাযোগ করুন।
- পবিত্র রমজান মাস, গ্রীষ্মকাল ও সেচ মৌসুমে নিরবচ্ছিন্ন বিদ্যুৎ সুবিধা প্রাপ্ত বা বিদ্যুৎ বিষয়ক যেকোন অভিযোগের জন্য হট লাইন/কন্ট্রোল রুম নম্বর:

সংস্থা/কোম্পানির নাম	অভিযোগ/হট লাইন নম্বর	কন্ট্রোল রুম নম্বর
বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ (কেন্দ্রীয় হটলাইন)	১৬৯৯৯	--
বিউবো	১৬২০০	০১৭০৮-১৪৯৫০২, ০১৭০৮-১৪৯৫০৩
পবিবো	১৬৮৯৯	০২-৮৯০০৫৭৫, ০১৭৯২-৬২৩৪৬৭
ডিপিডিসি	১৬১১৬	--
ডেসকো	১৬১২০	--
নেসকো	১৬৬০৩	--
গুজোপাডিকো	১৬১১৭	০২-৪৭৭৭২৪৪৭২, ০১৭৫৫৫৬৮৭৮১

বিদ্যুৎ সাশ্রয়ে উল্লেখিত কার্যক্রমসমূহ প্রতিপালন করুন এবং দেশের মূল্যবান জাতীয় সম্পদ সংরক্ষণে দায়িত্বশীল ও গৌরবময় ভূমিকা রাখুন।

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER EDUCATION ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT BRAHMANBARIA

Website: eed.brahmanbaria.gov.bd

Invitation for e-Tender

Tender Notice No: 29/e-GP/EED/BRAH/4931(SHED)/2024-25

Date: 04/03/2026

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following packages Tender:

SL No.	Tender ID	Name of Work	Procurement Method	Tender Document Last Selling/ Date & Time	Tender Opening Date & Time
1	1239993	Repair & Renovation works with Vertical Extension at Bangladesh Railway Govt. High School, Akhaura, Brahmanbaria.	NCT (OTM)	31-Mar-2026 10:00	31-Mar-2026 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in 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 (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents of following Package from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's Branches up to the Following Date & Time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department
Brahmanbaria.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Let the ACC work independently

Abrupt resignation of ACC leadership raises questions

In the polite lexicon of bureaucracy, it was termed a voluntary resignation. In the harsher reality of power politics, it was allegedly a forced exit. On Tuesday, Mohammad Abdul Momen, chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission, and his two fellow commissioners abruptly vacated their posts just 15 months into their five-year terms. Momen wryly observed that a new political government "will naturally want to work according to its own manifesto." This sudden exit is still a worrying signal about the trajectory of the new administration, as it raises the possibility of partisan influences.

Under Momen's brief leadership, the ACC was uncharacteristically active. Installed by the interim government in December 2024 to clean up the rot left behind by the ousted Awami League regime, the commission moved with unusual resolve. It targeted a sprawling nexus of oligarchs, politicians, and phantom corporations that had long treated the national exchequer as a private slush fund. The scale of its actions was striking. In 2025 alone, the ACC froze or attached assets worth over Tk 29,300 crore (roughly \$2.5 billion), compared with a paltry Tk 11 crore the year before. It impounded nearly 7,000 acres of land, locked down 1,360 bank accounts holding highly liquid cash, and froze shares in 105 companies worth Tk 8,000 crore. These actions amounted to a systemic dismantling of complex financial laundering operations.

More importantly, the commission pursued figures long considered untouchable. It filed sweeping charges against Mohammed Saiful Alam of S Alam Group for the alleged multi-billion-dollar plundering of Islamic banks. It also pursued former ministers and power-brokers such as Salman F Rahman, uncovering ghost exports and fictitious development funds. For a country whose banking sector has been chronically hollowed out by non-performing loans and crony capitalism, the ACC was performing a form of economic triage.

Momen's departure carries an irony of its own. He was forced into early retirement by the Awami League in 2013 precisely because of his past association with the late BNP leader Khaleda Zia. More than a decade later, he has again been pushed aside, as per sources in the ACC—this time under a different political dispensation. The forced stepping down of an anti-corruption panel just weeks after it took office reveals something about the new leadership's priorities. The rhetoric of reform is easily deployed on the campaign trail; the reality of reform is now beginning to unfold.

It remains to be seen whether the new ACC leadership, whoever that is, can work independently and without government interference. The newly elected government campaigned on a promise to restore the rule of law. We hope it does not mark a depressing return to business as usual. The government must ensure that the state's oversight mechanisms are not treated as mere extensions of the ruling party. Bangladesh's economy lost billions of dollars over the past decade. The bleeding must now be stopped.

Recent BB directives are concerning

They may aid businesses, but can push up bad loans too

The two directives issued by the Bangladesh Bank following the new governor's appointment are concerning, considering the banking sector's recent struggle with non-performing loans (NPLs). One circular relaxed the rules for the renewal of continuous loans, and the other instructed banks to allow special term loan facilities to export-oriented firms to pay their February wages. There are several reasons why these directives, despite being major incentives for the business community, could become problematic.

First, as a policymaking body, BB should not dictate what loans commercial banks provide, to which industries, or under what terms. The terms and purposes of loan facilities that a bank offers should depend on said bank's assessment and relationship with its clients. Besides, working capital loans, mostly used to cover supply bills and wages when cash inflows are tight, are already offered by banks to sound businesses. Export-oriented status alone should not qualify a business for special term loans to pay salaries. One may argue that export-oriented industries received a similar incentive in April 2020 during the Covid pandemic. Although merchandise exports have slumped in recent months, the economy has not yet reached the same emergency state as during the pandemic. So, there is no reason export-oriented industries should need special support to pay wages and salaries now.

The other directive regarding the renewal of continuous loans is also worrisome as it has high potential for misuse. It says banks must start the renewal process of continuous or revolving loans at least two months before expiry, and renewal will still be allowed after expiry, with documentation justifying the delay. The circular issued in June 2025, during the tenure of the previous governor, Ahsan H Mansur, did not allow banks to renew loans after they expired. This meant banks had to review revolving loans well before their expiry, decide if the borrower might fail to repay, and set aside money to cover for any potential losses.

With the rules relaxed by BB under the new governor, banks can delay loan renewals, provide documentation to justify the delay, and postpone setting aside provisions for potential losses. This creates room to conceal weak loans, inflate profits, and understate capital requirements—factors that have contributed to the high percentage of NPLs and the current fragility of the banking sector.

We warned about a potential conflict of interest when Md Mostaqur Rahman, a garment entrepreneur by profession, was appointed as the central bank governor. These two directives suggest that our concerns may not be unfounded. As the world awaits an impending economic crisis, we expect more cautious and prudent policy decisions from the central bank.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Boston Massacre

On this day in 1770, harassed by a mob, British troops opened fire, killing Crispus Attucks and four others in the Boston Massacre, an event that galvanised anti-British feelings in the lead-up to the American Revolution.

What the govt must do to tackle power and energy crises



Shafiqul Alam is lead energy analyst for Bangladesh at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA).

SHAFIQU ALAM

Having taken office at a critical juncture for Bangladesh, the newly elected BNP government faces some pressing challenges. Among the immediate tasks it needs to deal with is addressing the growing power and energy demands, tackling which will require careful planning and fiscal prudence. Several interrelated issues underscore the situation: rising summer power demand during Ramadan and peak irrigation; the country's heavy import dependency that exposes it to energy supply disruptions and price volatility; the need to address the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) concerns over power and energy subsidies under its \$5.5 billion loan programme; and the imperative to avoid sharp tariff hikes that could undermine the competitiveness of the country's export-oriented apparel industry.

It is in this context that the new government must translate its election manifesto pledge—raising renewable energy capacity from its current 5 percent to 20 percent by 2030—into concrete action, particularly by working towards attracting investors.

Bangladesh generally experiences a surge in peak power demand every summer due to rising temperatures. Last year, however, was an outlier, when the country saw a dip in peak power demand, resulting from lower temperatures in April 2025 compared to April 2024, and 62.9 percent more precipitation than usual in May 2025. In addition, many industries had suspended operations because of financial challenges.

With early signs of an uptick in power demand in January-February this year, Bangladesh will likely require higher generation levels this summer. Research by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) shows that between January 19 and February 18 this year, peak power demand soared up to 6.5 percent compared to the same period last year. With the ongoing irrigation season coinciding with Ramadan, and as temperatures rise further in March, this trend may intensify.

Therefore, the new government

should consider formulating a power supply rationing plan without affecting industries and businesses to safeguard economic activities. With the Bangladesh Power Development Board's (BPDB) payment backlog to private power producers exceeding Tk 25,000 crore, the government also needs to clear dues to avoid massive power supply disruptions.

With growing geopolitical tensions that may result in surging fuel prices in the international market, the government must also work towards developing an ecosystem



FILE ILLUSTRATION: BIPOLOB CHAKROBORTY

that encourages judicious energy use across the country. This could include motivating households, industries and businesses to adopt efficient appliances and working on bringing in behavioural changes among people. To that end, the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA) should plan and execute national awareness-raising campaigns on energy efficiency and conservation. Additionally, rationalising high import duties on components of efficient appliances would help reduce upfront costs and make them affordable. Meanwhile, government offices should work to implement the SREDA-developed benchmark energy consumption standards for different appliances at all levels.

will require the BPDB to raise the average bulk electricity selling price for distribution utilities by more than 25 percent and adjust the retail price. This may adversely affect the country's apparel sector.

For instance, the textile industry, with a sanctioned load of 5MW operating for 12 hours a day, pays roughly Tk 10.935 per kWh, which is around 6.4 percent less than its Vietnamese counterpart. This is calculated based on the peak and off-peak power tariff and demand charge of Bangladeshi industries connected to a 33kV line and peak, off-peak and standard tariffs of Vietnamese industries.

The new government will need to consider a rational adjustment for industry. This is especially relevant for the apparel sector, which accounts

for more than 80 percent of the country's export earnings. Moreover, instead of passing all costs on to the consumers, the government must focus on enhancing energy efficiency and reducing wastage. For instance, by limiting losses due to leakage and pilferage, which amount to more than 7,000 crore cubic feet per annum, Bangladesh may slightly reduce capacity payments by redirecting part of this saved gas to independent power producers (IPPs) operating at lower capacity, thereby reducing the power generation cost.

Besides, the government can refrain from adding new fossil fuel-fired plants and catalyse the uptake of cost-competitive renewable energy that will help limit costs by replacing expensive peaking power plants during the day. In the medium term, it should explore the South Asian region's vast hydro potential, such as in Nepal, building on its 40MW power trade agreement with the nation. Simultaneously, the country could explore the feasibility of exporting surplus power to Nepal during the winter season, when hydropower generation falls.

Unless Bangladesh makes efforts to control power generation costs, price hikes alone will not significantly minimise the subsidy burden.

ATTRACTING RENEWABLE ENERGY INVESTMENT

New investments in the renewable energy sector almost stagnated in 2025 due to a lack of new projects. Prior to this, the sector had roughly attracted investment worth \$238 million per annum on average. The new government's intention to expand renewable energy capacity to 20 percent by 2030 should help accelerate the annual flow of investment by 4.1 times compared to the previous trend. This will necessitate mobilising private and international capital at scale, for which a viable project pipeline is key.

The government must urgently engage with key renewable energy stakeholders, including investors and financiers, to identify and resolve barriers to investment. Unless these concerns are resolved, the renewable energy sector's growth will likely remain sluggish, and the country will fall short of its 2030 goal. Once the government overcomes these initial challenges, it will have scope to manoeuvre the energy and power sector through well-devised plans, backed by funding allocations in the upcoming budget for FY2026-27.

The cost of a comma

Documentation errors are the 'hidden tax' on Bangladesh's exports

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Faiyaz Al Lami is officer of international trade at Commercial Bank of Ceylon PLC.

NAHIAN RAHMAN and FAIAZ AL LAMI

A shipment leaves Chattogram port. The goods arrive on time. The buyer is ready to pay. The exporter waits. Then comes the message no exporter wants to see: documents discrepant. This could be a minor mismatch between the commercial invoice and the letter of credit, or a date formatted incorrectly, or a phrase missing in the bill of lading. Nothing is wrong with the goods or the contract. But the bank cannot release the payment.

In global trade, precision is everything. Behind every export shipment from Bangladesh's garment factories, leather units, pharmaceutical plants, and ceramic workshops is a thick stack of documents—invoices, packing lists, transport documents, certificates—examined strictly under international rules such as the Uniform Customs and Practice for Documentary Credits (UCP 600). Banks do not assess whether the goods are satisfactory; they assess whether the documents comply exactly with what the buyer's bank has stipulated. Even a minor inconsistency can turn a clean transaction into a delayed one.

According to estimates by the International Chamber of Commerce,

a significant share of documentary presentations worldwide contains discrepancies. In some studies, this share accounts for well over half of documentary presentations. While many are eventually resolved, each discrepancy triggers communication cycles among exporters, importers, and banks. Time passes. Cash flow tightens. Uncertainty grows.

For Bangladesh, an export-driven economy, these delays matter more than we often acknowledge.

Our exporters operate in highly competitive markets where margins are thin and payment timelines are critical. A delayed letter of credit settlement can disrupt working capital planning. Salaries must still be paid. Raw materials must still be purchased. Loans must still be serviced. And when funds are tied up because of a documentation mismatch, firms may rely on short-term borrowing, thus increasing their financing costs.

For small and medium-sized exporters, the consequences can be even more impactful. Larger firms often have trained compliance teams and well-established banking relationships. Smaller firms may depend on external agents or limited internal expertise to prepare documents. A single avoidable error can strain relationships with overseas buyers and reduce future orders.

Economists describe these frictions as transaction costs—the hidden expenses beyond production and shipping that influence the true cost of trade. In theory, global

trade is governed by contracts and comparative advantage. In practice, it is governed by paperwork.

The irony is difficult to ignore. We live in a time when consumers can transfer funds across continents within seconds via mobile apps. Yet, much of Bangladesh's export trade still relies on paper-based documents couriered across borders and manually checked line by line. A missing word in a transport document can delay a payment worth hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions, of dollars.

This is not to blame banks for strictness. Documentary trade finance exists precisely because trust must be institutionalised. Buyers and sellers across continents may never meet, so banks step in as neutral intermediaries. Documentary compliance protects all parties from fraud and ambiguity. Here, precision is not a bureaucratic obsession, but rather a necessary risk management mechanism.

But when discrepancy rates are persistently high, the issue becomes systemic rather than incidental.

If Bangladesh is aiming to strengthen its export competitiveness beyond traditional sectors and move up global value chains, efficiency must extend beyond production and logistics to documentation and compliance as well.

First, investment in document literacy is essential. Many discrepancies arise not from negligence but from misunderstanding the detailed requirements embedded

in letters of credit. Structured training programmes for exporters, particularly SMEs, can significantly reduce recurring errors. Second, digital trade documentation deserves more attention. Electronic presentation of documents, digital bills of lading, and automated compliance checks can reduce clerical mistakes and courier delays. While global adoption remains uneven, early movers stand to benefit from faster processing times and lower operational risk. Third, closer coordination among banks, trade bodies, and policymakers could help identify common discrepancy patterns in Bangladesh's export ecosystem. If certain errors recur frequently, targeted guidance and sector-specific support could meaningfully reduce friction.

Finally, exporters themselves may need to treat documentation not as a final administrative step but as an integral part of the trade strategy. In a world where buyers increasingly value reliability and speed, document precision becomes a competitive advantage.

Bangladesh has demonstrated remarkable resilience and growth in exports over the past decades. But sustaining and expanding that success requires attention to details which rarely make it to the headlines. Sometimes, the barrier to timely payment is not the quality of the goods, nor the strength of global demand. It is the cost of a comma. And in a competitive global marketplace, even a comma matters.

How garment makers can manage the Middle East logistics shock



RMG NOTES

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MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

Bangladesh's garment exporters are facing a fresh logistics shock as the escalating Iran crisis is now leading to operational restrictions by ocean carriers and airlines. On March 3, Denmark's shipping and logistics company Maersk confirmed it has suspended all new bookings between the Indian subcontinent, including Bangladesh and the Upper Gulf markets, with immediate effect, citing the "evolving situation" in the Middle East. The suspension covers the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia's Dammam and Jubail.

This move is one of the clearest signs yet that the crisis is now disrupting commercial cargo flows, not just raising risk premiums. At the same time, shipping and insurance markets are reacting to rising threats around the Strait of Hormuz after Iran issued warnings to vessels and multiple ships reported damage in the wider area. Reuters said at least 150 ships were stranded around the strait till Monday, while major marine insurers moved to cancel war risk cover effective from March 5 in parts of the Gulf. This is sharply pushing logistics costs higher.

For Bangladesh's exporters, the crisis splits into two problems. The first is the disruption to direct trade to Gulf destinations, including the UAE, which functions as both a consumer market and a regional distribution hub for apparel. The second is a wider network disruption. Even if a shipment is bound for Europe or North America, carrier rerouting, higher fuel costs, reduced schedule reliability, and container equipment imbalances can still feed into longer lead times and higher costs.

I believe Maersk's wording is important.

It is suspending "new bookings" for the corridor, which means exporters may still be moving previously accepted cargo, but with a higher risk of delays and schedule changes as networks adjust. Maersk also separately flagged restrictions on certain cargo types, including "reefer, dangerous or special cargo acceptance" in and out of multiple Gulf countries, which might affect garment accessory supply chains. Exporters selling into the Gulf should assume that even when a carrier continues to "accept cargo," space may be limited, routing may change at short notice, and surcharges can be introduced with little notice.

However, Bangladesh's biggest apparel volumes head to Europe and the US, not the Gulf. And the Iran crisis arrives amid an already fragile Red Sea. Container lines had been tentatively assessing a return to the Suez Canal corridor, but new security concerns are pushing carriers back towards longer routings around the Cape of Good Hope. *The Wall Street Journal* says the Middle East crisis has significantly delayed the return of container shipping to Suez, reinforcing the industry shift back to diversions around Africa. In practice, that means longer and less predictable transits between Asia and Europe.

For Bangladesh, exporters should plan for possible delays, even where the scheduled transit time is unchanged. When ocean schedules become volatile, brands often push urgent top-ups by air or at least move samples and approvals by air. But air is also being hit. Widespread regional airspace disruption is reported, with key hubs including Dubai and Doha affected, and airlines resuming only

limited operations, including select cargo and moving flights. Bangladeshi exporters that route urgent cargo through Gulf hubs should not assume air capacity is available at normal notice periods or normal prices. Where air freight is unavoidable, exporters may need to secure uplift earlier, accept longer routings, or use alternative hubs outside the most disrupted air corridors.

The crisis is also feeding directly into

costs tend to flow through into carrier fuel mechanisms.

The combined effect is that Bangladeshi exporters may face both higher freight bills and a higher probability of "unplanned" cost items appearing after contracts are signed, including emergency surcharges and insurance-related fees. While our garment exporters cannot control geopolitics, they can prepare and communicate. The most

routings, or revised delivery dates.

As for shipping to Europe, buyers will still judge manufacturers on whether orders arrive on time. But right now, the bigger problem is that shipping times are unpredictable. Manufacturers should allow extra time between finishing production and booking the shipment, especially for ranges where a two- to three-week delay would cause real commercial damage. If the schedule is already tight, manufacturers should start producing the most time-critical styles first, so they are ready earlier. Manufacturers should also talk to their forwarder and carrier representative now, even if they are not shipping this week. They should ask which services are being rerouted, which transshipment hubs are under pressure, and where equipment shortages may emerge. Where possible, they should lock space earlier than usual and confirm cut-off times in writing.

They may also need to revisit commercial terms for surcharges. Some exporters will be able to pass certain surcharges through to the buyer under contract terms. Others will not. Either way, they should get clarity early and document what is agreed. If unsure, take legal advice before relying on *force majeure* or similar clauses. Many problems arise because buyers hear about delays too late. Manufacturers should update buyers early with a clear explanation that this is a fast-moving security and logistics issue, and that carriers are already restricting bookings on certain Middle East corridors.

The shipping industry is reacting in real time. When insurers change cover terms, carriers often respond immediately with new safety rules, booking restrictions, or surcharges. What we are now seeing is how quickly those decisions can hit Bangladesh directly, even when Dhaka is not at the centre of the conflict.

The key point for buyers and manufacturers is that you can't plan logistics around one "normal" route right now. Both parties should plan for different outcomes instead, and should also expect occasional restrictions, last-minute changes in space and services, and ongoing swings in insurance and fuel costs until the situation calms down.



Birds fly near a boat in the Strait of Hormuz amid the US-Israeli conflict with Iran, as seen from Musandam, Oman on March 2, 2026. PHOTO: REUTERS

shipping costs via insurance and security surcharges. Reports suggest war risk insurance is being withdrawn or repriced rapidly, and we are seeing sharp increases in premiums within days as risk assessments change. There are also concerning reports of major insurers cancelling war risk cover in the Gulf starting March 5, with freight rates on some lanes jumping sharply over the weekend. Separately, rising oil prices are critical for apparel logistics because bunker

practical response is to treat the next few weeks as a lead time management exercise.

Exporters can start with mapping exposure by shipping lane rather than by customer. If they supply the Gulf directly, they should identify which orders are on the Maersk-affected corridor, which are already gated in, and which are still in production. They would also be wise to assume that new bookings to the listed Upper Gulf markets may need alternative carriers, alternative

Deregulation, yes, but we also need smart regulation



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SYED AKHTAR MAHMOOD

Let me begin with a story. Several years ago, I attended a workshop in Dhaka where one of the sessions featured a leading businessman of the country. It was an hour-long session in which, during the first 30 minutes, he described what a typical working day looked like for him. Much of his day, he said, was spent not on figuring out how to increase productivity, branch into new products, or explore new export markets. Instead, it was consumed by navigating regulatory hurdles.

His day began with a visit to the tax office to argue over import valuation issues. Then, after a hurried lunch, he had to navigate Dhaka's atrocious traffic to reach the regulator's office for a factory operating licence. Despite building the factory, installing machinery, and training workers, he could not begin operations without the licence. After three months and multiple document submissions, additional requirements kept delaying progress. Frustrated, he questioned why the office had not informed him earlier about the missing documents, highlighting the persistent bureaucratic delays that hinder business development.

There was more he had to endure on a typical day, but the above episode is enough to understand what was on Finance Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury's mind when, in an interview soon after taking office, he talked about Bangladesh becoming "an over-regulated country." He also stated his government's desire for "serious deregulation" and liberalisation.

The idea of removing redundant procedures, simplifying compliance, and eliminating rules that no longer serve a clear purpose should be welcome news for businesses in Bangladesh. Whether local or foreign, large or small, firms consistently raise concerns about the difficulties and delays they face in dealing with regulations. The 2022 Enterprise Survey by the World Bank

indicates that senior management in Bangladeshi firms spend 13.3 percent of their time dealing with the requirements of government regulation, compared to 8.2 percent in lower-middle-income countries (LMICs). It also takes an average of 48.8 days to obtain an import licence, compared to 17.9 days in LMICs.

Being a businessman himself, the minister surely knows where the shoe pinches. When undertaken thoughtfully, deregulation can indeed reduce compliance costs and delays, lower barriers for small and medium enterprises, improve transparency and predictability,

When undertaken thoughtfully, deregulation can indeed reduce compliance costs and delays, lower barriers for small and medium enterprises, improve transparency and predictability, and enhance competitiveness and investment. But that is only one side of the story.

and enhance competitiveness and investment.

But that is only one side of the story. Consider the experience of Uber when it launched its services in Dhaka in 2016. At the time, the rulebooks covered traditional taxis and rental cars but had no provision for app-based ride-sharing. Regulators were uncertain how to classify Uber drivers. Thus, like many other businesses in Bangladesh, Uber operated for a time in a regulatory grey area, tolerated by the authorities while serving customers, until the government introduced the Ride-Sharing Service Guidelines. These guidelines formally

recognised and regulated app-based transport services, integrating them into the legal framework.

Such examples show that entrepreneurs seeking to introduce new ways of doing business often face additional regulatory barriers because regulators are slow to respond to innovation in the economy. For those seeking to deploy new technologies or business models, the problem is not excessive regulation but rather the absence of clear rules. There is also the issue of weak enforcement of sound regulations, which imposes significant burdens on society. Think of a consumer buying food from a market stall with no assurance of safety standards, or a construction project proceeding without proper oversight, putting workers and future occupants at risk.

Finally, businesses face uncertainty because rules are interpreted inconsistently and sometimes changed without warning. A crisis—such as a factory disaster or deaths from food contamination—may prompt the imposition of new regulations. This is understandable; governments must act when in crisis. But hurried regulation often creates confusion. Reflexive or knee-jerk rule-making, adopted without adequate analysis, can undermine credibility, encourage corruption, and discourage investment.

Thus, any deregulation drive from the government should be defined broadly, focusing on more systemic and ambitious reforms to enhance regulatory predictability. It should be a regulatory governance programme, not just a deregulation exercise. Such reform must also rest on a strong institutional foundation. Our regulatory reforms have traditionally been piecemeal, targeting individual processes and procedures. Reform efforts are often seen to begin with urgency and fanfare but eventually fade in the absence of sustained institutional backing. Committees submit reports. Task forces propose changes. Over time, momentum dissipates.

There is a risk that the proposed deregulation will follow a similar path, which will be unfortunate considering how urgent it has become to build a truly modern regulatory regime in Bangladesh.

We need to think about a

permanent institutional mechanism, such as a Regulatory Reform Commission or a Regulatory Reform Unit located in the Prime Minister's Office. This should be a technically competent regulatory governance body tasked with reviewing and streamlining existing rules, promoting regulatory impact assessments for proposed regulations, simplifying compliance procedures, coordinating reforms across ministries, and identifying emerging regulatory needs. It should

also assess the outcomes of reform efforts. Businesses will judge the success of these efforts not by the number of amended laws or digitised procedures, but by tangible results: whether compliance is genuinely easier, predictability has improved, and regulatory effectiveness has strengthened.

Countries as diverse as South Korea and Mexico have established such institutions as they sought to transition from ad hoc regulatory reform efforts to more structured

approaches. In its budget unveiled in February 2025, the Indian government also announced the formation of a similar body.

As I have argued in my writings before, the goal is not necessarily to regulate less. Businesses are not really asking for a regulation-free economy, but a well-regulated one. So, deregulation, yes, but we also need smart regulation and a systematic approach to reform. Ad hoc, piecemeal measures, as in the past, will not take us far.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Project Director
The Project for the Improvement of Equipment for Air Pollution Monitoring
Department of Environment
E/16, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

e-GP Request for Express of Interest (EoI) Notice

No. 22.02.0000.026.14.013.26.28

Date: 03.03.2026

Sl	Proposal ID & Method	Publishing date and Time, Package & Name of Service	REoI Closing Date & Time
1	1231961 SIC	Publishing date and Time : 05.03.2026 & 10 A.M Package : CAMS-S-2 Name of Service : Junior Consultant (Finance/Procurement)	25 March 2026 12:00 pm

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03.03.2026

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Pritom-Mehazabien pair up for Chorki series 'Cactus'

OTT platform Chorki is set to release its original series *Cactus* this Eid-ul-Fitr, with the teaser unveiled on March 4. Directed by Shihab Shaheen, the series stars Pritom Hasan and Mehazabien Chowdhury in the lead roles.

Pritom plays Manasiv, a highly skilled hacker who, despite being imprisoned, is drawn back into cyber operations to help address a national crisis. Mehazabien appears as Anura, a character who becomes involved in the mission and is shown in a new action-oriented avatar.

The series blends technology, thriller and action elements. Written by Shihab Shaheen alongside Al-Amin Hasan Nirjhor, Ador Rahman, Asaduzzaman Abir and Rezwan Kabir, *Cactus* also features Munira Yusuf Meme, Naziba Basher and Salahuddin Lavlu in key roles.



I read the novel 15 times before facing the camera: SABILA NUR

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

After making a grand debut on the silver screens with *Taandob*, Sabila Nur is set to appear in her second film with Tanim Noor's *Bonolota Express*, which will be released this Eid.

The film is based on the novel *Kichukkhon* by acclaimed writer Humayun Ahmed.

Sabila plays Chitra, one of the central roles in the story. Speaking about her preparation, Sabila said, "I've read *Kichukkhon* many times. Initially, I read it multiple times to immerse myself completely in the character. I've read it around fifteen times. I finished reading it before standing in front of the camera."

She added, "Honestly, I never imagined that I would play Chitra. I never even thought that a film would be made based on *Kichukkhon*, or that I would portray this character. However, when I received the offer from the director, I was truly delighted."

When asked about her shooting experience, she said, "It was a

tremendous experience — absolutely wonderful. I would say it was extraordinary."

Regarding acting in a film adapted from a Humayun Ahmed novel, she said, "Humayun Ahmed is a beloved writer for everyone — certainly for me as well. I had read the story long before the film was made. So, acting in a film based on the work of such a distinguished writer is truly remarkable."

Was she nervous? In response, Sabila said, "A little. After all, countless readers have read this novel. Many people are familiar with Chitra and have formed their own impressions of her. So, there was some nervousness about how audiences would receive my portrayal. But above all, I felt immense excitement."

Speaking about her co-stars, she said, "Through *Bonolota Express*, I worked with Sariful Razz on the big screen for the first time. He plays the role of a doctor. It was a good experience working with him. I also acted alongside Mosharraf Karim. The most important thing is that working

with Mosharraf Karim always means learning something — whether about acting or about life."

She continued, "Acting alongside Mosharraf Karim brought a great sense of excitement. More importantly, everyone I worked with became like family."

Regarding her expectations, the actress said, "I'm extremely excited. I believe that audiences will come to watch it. There's a great deal of interest surrounding the film. I'm eager myself — I'm waiting to go to the cinema hall to watch it. The audience will enjoy it. It has emotion, comedy, entertainment and tragedy — everything."

Before the shoot began, she rehearsed for quite some time. On this, she said, "Tanim Noor worked on the project with great care. Once everything was finalised, he arranged rehearsals. We rehearsed for nearly two months."

How much preparation did she take for the character of Chitra? Sabila replied, "I prepared thoroughly. I approached the role accordingly."



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Actors Equity urges members to resolve disputes internally

Actors Equity Bangladesh has warned its members against airing internal disputes on social media or in the press, stating that such actions violate the organisation's code of conduct.

In a statement issued on March 4 and signed by president Azad Abul Kalam and general secretary Rashed Mamun Apu, the guild said any complication or difference of opinion involving its members or affiliated bodies must be reported to the concerned organisation first.

According to the statement, disputes should be resolved through mutual discussion and institutional procedures within the organisation's structure.

The organisation also cautioned that members who violate the code of conduct may face disciplinary action.



WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Poygam'

Sharp wit meets contemporary Dhaka in a lively staging of Anton Chekhov's comic sensibility through *Poygam*. Director Mohsina Akter crafts an intimate satire of ego, misunderstanding, and fragile civility, where laughter gradually reveals uncomfortable truths about pride, loneliness, and human contradiction.



DATE: FRIDAY | MARCH 6, 2026
TIME: 7:45 PM ONWARDS
VENUE: SPARDHA ATELIER, GULSAN 2

NEWS

Prolonged war can hit remittance hard

FROM PAGE 12
warned that the conflict could hurt remittance inflows if it continues for a long time.

He told The Daily Star that Bangladesh's remittance flow could slow down in the long run or even decline temporarily.

Munier explained that rising oil prices and disruptions to trade routes may increase living costs in Gulf countries. For this, migrant workers may have less money left to send home.

"Workers can still use banking or informal channels to send money. The real issue is whether they will have enough income in hand," he said.

He added that workers in informal sectors such as small shops, daily labour, and temporary contracts will suffer the most. If businesses close for security reasons, they will lose income.

Munier stressed that clear communication and coordinated government action are important to prevent panic.

The crisis is also affecting thousands of workers who were scheduled to leave Bangladesh.

Shariful Hasan, associate director

of BRAC's Migration and Youth Programme, said the impact is "multi-dimensional and potentially severe."

He said that outgoing workers invested Tk 3 to 4 lakh to secure overseas jobs. "Many of them are now stuck, and their visas are nearing expiry."

Hasan warned that if they cannot travel soon, their job opportunities may become uncertain. Employers abroad may change their recruitment plans if the conflict continues.

He added that many Bangladeshis in the Middle East work in temporary or informal jobs. Because of instability, they may not be able to work regularly. If their income drops, remittances will drop.

"The impact begins with the individual worker, then affects the family, the district, and eventually the state," Hasan said.

He added that at least 20 to 25 districts in Bangladesh depend heavily on remittance. If the crisis continues, these areas may face economic hardship.

Shariful warned that Bangladesh, as one of the world's top remittance-receiving countries, could face pressure on foreign currency reserves. "If this situation prolongs, the effects

will only deepen."

Talking to this newspaper, Tipu Sultan, former joint secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies and president of Recruiting Agencies Oikya Parishad, said that due to the war in the Middle East, Bangladesh's labour market is going through a serious challenge.

He added that if the conflict lingers, current workers may lose their jobs and opportunities for new workers will shrink. "Naturally, remittance inflow will suffer."

Tipu suggested that the government should talk to Middle Eastern countries, including Saudi Arabia, to extend the duration of Iqama (work permit) and visas for the affected workers.

At an event held recently, PM's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humaiun Kobir said the government considers expatriates its top priority.

"In the current crisis, where there are ticket or visa complications, we will take initiatives."

He assured that the government would take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and welfare of Bangladeshis in the affected countries.

State minister finds land office empty

FROM PAGE 12
other offices to ensure accountability. Siddhirganj Union Assistant Land Officer Nasir Uddin could not be reached for comment.

"As far as I have learned, the state minister visited the office and did not find the officials present — he waited there for quite some time," said Devjani Kar, assistant commissioner (Land) of the Siddhirganj region, who was on half-day leave yesterday.

The deputy commissioner and the upazila nirbahi officer have been informed and would take necessary action, she said.

Meanwhile, the cabinet division on Monday issued a circular directing all government officials and employees to mandatorily remain in their respective offices from 9:00am to 9:40am every working day.

In some cases, officials and employees engage in various official or personal activities on their way to the office such as attending seminars,

workshops and symposiums, participating as guest speakers at training institutes, or visiting banks, hospitals and schools.

As a result, they fail to be present at their offices at the stipulated time.

In this context, to ensure public service delivery and expedite official work, all officials and employees of government, semi-government, autonomous, and semi autonomous institutions have been instructed to remain in their respective office chambers from 9:00am to 9:40am.

The other official programmes must also be arranged so that this time period is not disrupted.

The circular states that under the Government Servants (Regular Attendance) Rules, 2019, and the Secretariat Instructions, 2024, it is mandatory for officials and employees of all government, semi-government and autonomous institutions to attend and leave the office at the prescribed time.

The rule will not apply in the case of teachers and faculty members working at educational or training institutions who are not assigned administrative responsibilities.

The time restriction will also not apply to those performing roster duties at hospitals, prisons, media organisations or security-related institutions.

Members of law enforcement agencies directly engaged in emergency services and field-level duties have also been kept outside the purview of the rule.

Except for providing VVIP or VIP protocol, responding to major sudden accidents, attending highly important meetings with development partners or diplomatic missions and approved official tours, no employee will be allowed to leave the workplace without prior approval from the authorities.

Officials and employees have also been instructed not to leave the office during working hours except for official purposes.

Where is the administration heading?

FROM PAGE 12
to grasp the evolving demands and complexities of governance.

Even officers known to be inclined towards the ruling party now express scepticism about the success of the new government's 180-day plan.

An additional secretary, speaking anonymously, said that once these contractual secretaries take charge, their first priority will be seeking the status of "senior secretary".

"It will take them six months just to understand the ministry's departments, agencies, and projects.... By the time a year passes, they will already be lobbying for another contract extension. Therefore, these types of appointments could be a suicidal decision for the current government."

Another additional secretary, known as a former Chhatra Dal activist and an influential officer, said that frustration is spreading throughout the administration. "Even junior officers are worried. These contractual appointments are harmful not only to our careers but also to the country and to the prime minister himself."

The issue of avoiding contractual appointments is also being discussed in the Administrative Service Association's Facebook group.

A leader of the organisation, preferring anonymity, told this correspondent, "Our promotions are coming up, and those deciding them are themselves contractual appointees. We cannot speak against them. We urge the top levels of government to reconsider these matters."

On March 1, the government appointed Munshi Alauddin Al Azad as the secretary of the religious affairs ministry on a one-year contract. He has never worked in this ministry before and has been away from the regular administration for 17 years.

Meanwhile, 69-year-old Rafiqul I Mohamed has been appointed as the secretary of the agriculture ministry, and 66-year-old Kamruzzaman Chowdhury as the secretary of the Health Services Division.

Additionally, it is reported that Abdul Khaleq, the newly appointed 65-year-old secretary for the Secondary and Higher Education Division, has never held any position in this ministry before.

Under section 49 of the Public Service Act 2018, the government can appoint retired officers on a contractual basis. However, it is the tradition to prioritise an officer's specialised skills and expertise in the relevant field.

Are we seeing this reflected in these appointments? Does this data align with the government's declared 180-day target?

Asked about the issue, former NBR secretary and chairman Badiur Rahman told The Daily Star that the interim government "failed by relying on contractual appointments and retrospective promotions".

"If this government follows the same path with the same category of officers, what else can we say?"

A former Cabinet secretary, preferring anonymity, remarked that the prime minister, being a first-time MP as well as the head of the government, does not appear to have appointed the right people to guide him. "Even before forming the government, he has been confined within a specific circle. Based on my observations of administrative appointments so far, that still seems to be the case."

The frequent contractual appointments to key secretary positions have led to a surge of retired officers at the secretariat. On Wednesday, several groups of former officers met with the public administration adviser, state minister, and senior secretary.

Observing the situation, an official told The Daily Star that while there was a rush for retrospective promotions during the interim government, there is now intense lobbying for appointments as secretaries and senior secretaries in important ministries.

"Even some who served as secretaries briefly during the Awami League regime are now claiming to be 'deprived' in order to lobby for contractual positions."

Another official noted that while some competent officers were promoted retrospectively by the interim government, many unqualified and corrupt officers also received such benefits.

"If the highest levels of the government do not stop this, it is hard to say what will happen to the administration."

Allen fires NZ into final

FROM PAGE 12
Earlier, spinners Rachin Ravindra and Cole McConchie took two wickets each to restrict South Africa to 169-8 after New Zealand elected to field first.

The 2024 runners-up South Africa, led by Aiden Markram, had been unbeaten in seven matches but slumped to 77-5 before Marco Jansen hit an unbeaten 55 to give the total some respect.

"We knew obviously how good South Africa are... so, to put on a performance like that in a crunch game is obviously pretty pleasing," said New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner.

PM makes 8 state ministers' roles more focused

FROM PAGE 12
and children's affairs ministry.

Nurul Huq Nur has been assigned to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment. He was also in charge of the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Bobby Hajaj has been appointed as the state minister for the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. Previously, he also held responsibility for the Secondary and Higher Education Division.

'Dramatic change' in ant nests

FROM PAGE 12
signature of ants.

Researchers exposed ants from six species for nearly 20 minutes to an ozone concentration of 100 parts per billion, a level often measured in polluted areas during the summer, and returned them to their colonies.

In five of the six species, the ozone-exposed ants were targeted with aggression by their nestmates.

The findings indicate that even slight increases in ozone pollution can degrade key molecules that ants use to recognise each other and thereby negatively impact numerous species.

ESSAY

FROM WHISPERS TO ROARS: The changing voice of women's fiction

From Wollstonecraft's rights to Kang's rebellions, women's writing has moved the battle from the public sphere to the private body



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

NAZMUN AFRAD SHEETOL

I've always been fascinated by what stories can tell us about the inner lives (what men like to call the private sphere) of women throughout history. As I took a little dive into women's fiction from the last few centuries, what struck me most was the dramatic shift in what female authors said—or could say. It was like the difference between a whispered conversation in a drawing room and a roar in an empty space. This piece explores the literary works of female authors who moved from writing about social rights to exploring private desires,

hunger, and the body.

The early feminist writers' battle was for a place in the world, in education, legal rights, and being seen as human beings. Their writings desired recognition and equal footing in society. Moving into the 21st century, the conversation has turned inwards and downwards, into the body itself. Contemporary novels don't just ask for a room of one's own; they boldly explore what a woman does in that room alone—her hunger, desire for intimacy, and often other taboos. This is the journey from the societal to the carnal.

The first wave of feminism can be

dated from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s, beginning with the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention and culminating in the 19th Amendment in 1920 in the United States. This wave primarily focused on securing fundamental rights for women, including property rights, education, and most notably, the right to vote, which we call suffrage. The earliest work of feminist texts is considered to be Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), who is considered the pioneer of feminism, or what we know today as 'liberal feminism'. If you still have not figured it out, Mary Wollstonecraft

was the mother of Mary Shelley, who wrote the famous Gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818). The earliest works here couldn't tackle bodily desire head-on because the social price was too high. Instead, they masterfully laid the groundwork by arguing for a woman's right to a mind and the foundation of a self. Wollstonecraft's work is pioneering literature. Her argument was revolutionary yet practical: giving women a proper education will make them capable partners in life and society. While she doesn't talk about physical desire explicitly, her manifesto is about desire in a broader sense, which is hunger for knowledge, purpose, and a life beyond the separate spheres. By insisting women were rational beings, she was quietly challenging the idea that they were merely bodies designed for reproduction and pleasure.

Jane Austen, in her book *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), is a sharp critique of a system that forced women to marry for security, not love, in Regency England. Austen's genius was her subtlety. Elizabeth Bennet's desire is for intellectual and emotional compatibility; her rejection of Mr. Collins and initial rejection of Darcy are considered acts of profound boldness—a radical idea at the time. Even the disastrous little sister Lydia Bennet shows a different side. Her "desire" is reckless and physical, leading to scandal. Austen uses her as a warning of what happens when a woman's hunger for excitement isn't approved by society's strict rules. The message was clear: a woman's personal desires, even misguided ones, had immense power to disrupt the entire social order.

Virginia Woolf's seminal essay work *A Room of One's Own* (1929) acts as a crucial bridge between the two eras. She made the direct link between material reality and creative freedom. The "room" is both literal and metaphorical. It represents the financial independence and the private space a woman needs to think, create, and explore her inner world. She moved the conversation from

"we need rights" to "we need a space to be creative, to be our full, complex selves." She opened the door for the next generation to walk through and start exploring what those 'selves' truly wanted.

This foundational need for a room—a sanctuary for the self—found a powerful and poignant echo in the Bengali literary world through the work of Selina Hossain. In her landmark novel *Onnobhubon* (1987), she builds an entire inner universe for her protagonist, Moyna. The universe is set against the strictures of rural Bangladeshi society. Moyna's battle is not for the vote or property rights, but for what can be termed the suffrage of the soul: the right to her own intellectual passions, profound emotional attachments, and a unique way of seeing the world. Her fierce intelligence and emotional depth chart a "hunger" that is entirely her own—a craving for knowledge and self-expression that defines her interiority. *Onnobhubon* carefully details the work of building an "inner room" brick by brick, long before one might own a physical door. Selina Hossain, like Virginia Woolf, moved the story inward, proving that the space to nurture a complex and desiring self was the essential next frontier to intellectual freedom.

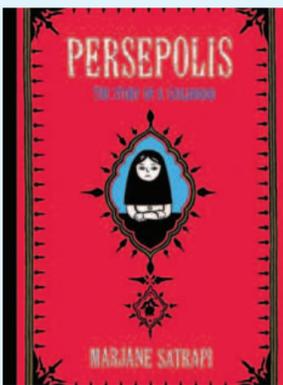
With that inner space claimed in literature, however tentatively, the stage was set for the contemporary exploration of what fills it. The authors of the 21st century did not just walk through Woolf's door; they began to document, with terrifying and glorious detail, exactly what a woman does in that room alone.

This is an excerpt. Read the full essay on *The Daily Star* and *Star Books and Literature's* websites.

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THE SHELF

7 graphic novels to read on International Women's Day



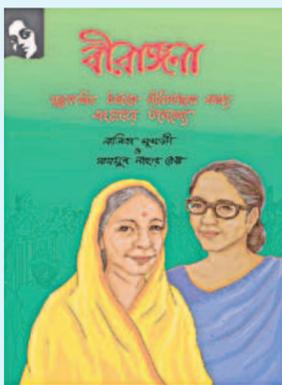
TIASHA IDRAK, SABRINA SAZZAD

Graphic novels or comics are a unique medium where art and literary prowess converge through both prose and imagery and bring them to life, thus giving the space for authors and artists to illustrate their stories. Sometimes these stories directly critique patriarchy, and feature feminist themes; sometimes they simply offer a mirror and the chance to reflect on women's everyday struggles.

This International Women's Day, we feature author-artists who choose to tell the stories of everyday women—their dreams, obstacles, and their constant battle with patriarchy and how deeply it is woven into the fibre of our society.

Persepolis
Marjane Satrapi
Pantheon Books, 2000

An autobiographical graphic novel, *Persepolis* recounts the story of Marjane throughout her life as she grows up against the backdrop of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. With evocative black and white comic strips, Satrapi's story illustrates gender discrimination and the loss of women's autonomy under patriarchal rule. Her struggle for autonomy amid the political crisis in Iran, and later the exclusion, the loneliness she faces in Europe



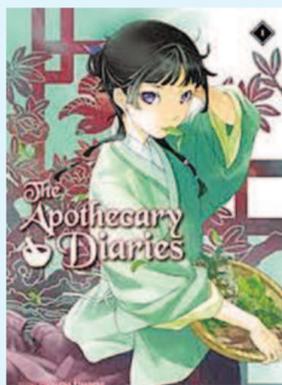
as an immigrant illustrates her experiences in a manner that feels universal.

Birangona: Towards Ethical Testimonies of Sexual Violence During Conflict
Nayanika Mookharjee, Najmun Nahar Keya
Nokta, 2019

When Labony, a school student needs to complete an assignment on her family's memories of the Liberation War of 1971, she hears of her grandmother, Rehana's account of sexual violence during the war. Her grandmother recounts the horrifying ordeal and the stories of the Birangonas slowly unfold. This graphic novel is written in accessible format centring conversations around representing the stories and experiences of the Birangona women with empathy and nuance.

The Apothecary Diaries
Natsu Hyuga, Touko Shino and Minoki Kurata (Illustrator)
MontShogakukan, 2017

Based on the light novels by Natsu Hyuga, *The Apothecary Diaries* has two versions of the graphic novel series; one by Touko Shinou, another by Nekokurage. The Japanese graphic novels are set in a fictional country based on Imperial China, as the story follows Maomao a sharpwitted young woman working



as an apothecary in the redlight district. Her life changes forever when she is kidnapped and sold to the imperial palace as an indentured servant. The story has a cast full of compelling characters, especially the women, both in the inner palace and the ones in the redlight district. The story does not shy away from showing how the reality of these women are essentially the same despite the class differences. This is a story about women who quietly challenge the limitations imposed on them.

Movements and Moments: Indigenous Feminisms in The Global South
Sonja Eismann, Maya, Ingo Schöningh
Drawn and Quarterly, 2022

An intersectional feminist comic anthology with beautiful art-styles centring the stories of indigenous women, *Movements and Moments* shares a glimpse into the resistance and histories across many cultures from Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, India, Nepal, Peru, and Thailand. It spotlights struggles often faced by indigenous communities across the globe, particularly with accounts of sexual violence, colonialism, and the art of resistance by recounting stories of women who led mass movements of the global south in order to protect their lands, culture,



and economic freedom.

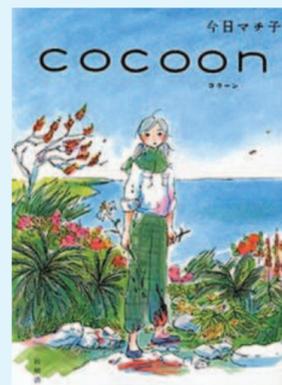
Grass
Keum Suk Gendry-Kim
Drawn & Quarterly, 2019

Grass is a Korean graphic novel created by Keum Suk Gendry-Kim that portrays the true story of a Korean comfort woman as it documents the horrors that women face in war. The anti-war story recounts the experiences of "Granny" Ok-seon Lee, who was forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese Imperial Army during WWII. The term "comfort women" itself is controversial because of how the language only reflects the perspective of the Japanese military and not the victims (many of whom were minors), which the author mentions in the story.

Grass shows historical events that lead up to the war, all from a child's perspective while showing the everyday lives of Korean civilians under the Japanese occupation. It shows how patriarchal societies deprive girls from education, how families, when facing starvation, abandon their daughters to fate worse than death, and the cost of war.

Cocoon
Machiko Kyou
Akita Shoten, 2009

Cocoon is a story of war, told



through the eyes of a young girl. It is a heartbreaking chronicle of loss and resilience in the face of devastation. Based on the true story of the Himeyuri (Lily) Corps of student nurses in WWII, this Japanese graphic novel by Machiko Kyou follows San, who attends a prestigious boarding school for Girls in Okinawa. However, her regular life is disrupted when she, along with other students are recruited to help the war effort as assistant nurses.

The actual Himeyuri Corps were a group of young girls and their teachers, conscripted into the war effort as a nursing unit in 1945 by the Imperial Japanese Army. Just like the real Himeyuri Corps, San and her classmates are assured safe during an easily won battle, only to be used and deceived, eventually abandoned. San herself is excited to serve their country as a nurse, thinking she'll be helping the wounded in a hospital—only to be sent to the frontlines. As bombs fall from the sky, San and her peers are stuck working in the caves of a field hospital, facing carnage, abuse, sexual violence, starvation and death.

There is an uncanniness through which we see brutality, hunger and death in the book, especially since it is told from the perspective of a teenager; where the horrors of war and matters of friendship and girlhood coexist, and yet a strange

separation between the two is felt. The minimal dialogue and simple artstyle does not minimise the brutality; rather, it amplifies it. An animated movie based on the story was released in 2025.

Talk To My Back
Murasaki Yamada
Garō, 1981

Set in the 1980s, this graphic novel explores the dreams and realities of Chiharu, a housewife and her relationship with both her family members and herself. Yamada is one of the first authors to use comics as a way to address domesticity and womanhood in a realistic, critical way. The graphic novel shows how the erasure of personhood happens to women within nuclear families and how they toil in domestic labour without any appreciation.

Sabrina Sazzad is pursuing a Bachelor of Social Science in Economics and adoring her cat. Reach her at sabrinassazzad07@gmail.com.

Tiasha Idrak is drowning in a swamp of her own thoughts at the moment. She writes and daydreams, the latter is more applicable most of the time. She is still trying to come up with a proper author's bio. Tell her to stop procrastinating at tiashaidrak27@gmail.com.



Ritu Porna Chakma poses in front of the iconic Sydney Opera House yesterday as the Bangladesh star and her teammates enjoyed a well-earned break following their spirited Women's Asian Cup debut against holders China on Tuesday. Ritu and company return to action against another tournament favourites, North Korea, on Friday. PHOTO: FACEBOOK

History beckons India as England seek 'PERFECT GAME'

AGENCIES

India, bidding to become the first team to successfully defend the ICC T20 World Cup title, face an England side hoping to play a "perfect game" in their semifinal at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium today.

The teams are meeting in the last four of the tournament for the third time in a row, with one victory apiece, and the winners went on to lift the trophy on each occasion.

In 2022, England crushed India by 10 wickets in Adelaide and beat Pakistan in the Melbourne final. Two years ago, India won in Guyana by a similarly dominant 68 runs before downing South Africa in Barbados.

India went undefeated in 2024, but this time around, they suffered a defeat against South Africa in the Super Eight stage before responding well with victories over Zimbabwe and West Indies.

India's top order has struggled at the tournament with opener Abhishek Sharma, the top-ranked batter in the format, managing only 80 runs in six matches with three ducks to his name.

Sanju Samson's unbeaten 97 in their win over West Indies was a welcome boost, however, and India boast explosive firepower in the middle order with skipper Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube.

There are fewer concerns over the hosts' bowling unit led by top-ranked leg spinner Varun Chakravarthy and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, though the fielding needs to improve after 13 dropped catches.

India's bowling coach Morne Morkel agreed

India had not put together a flawless display in the tournament yet, but said that did not matter.

"It's not about how you get to the semifinals. It's about the next two games, how we're going to play there," Morne told reporters in Mumbai after India's final training session before the semifinal.

The Indian team had another training session on Tuesday night, which was pushed back by an hour to ensure it did not coincide with a lunar eclipse, which is considered unlucky in the country.

Meanwhile, twice champions England will be confident of causing an upset having found form following a sketchy start to the tournament.

All-rounder Will Jacks has scored 191 runs down the order and captured seven wickets to earn four player-of-the-match awards, and captain Harry Brook, Tom Banton and Sam Curran have all made useful contributions with the bat.

"If there's ever a time we want to play our perfect game, it's probably Thursday night," Curran told reporters on Tuesday.

"We've all been chipping in at different times but we know in T20 cricket it probably just takes a couple of our guys to come good with bat and ball."

Former captain Jos Buttler has struggled badly, however, making only 62 runs in seven matches, and his opening partner Phil Salt also looks short of confidence. England spinners Adil Rashid, Liam Dawson and Jacks will look to disrupt India's rhythm, particularly at the Wankhede, where the shorter boundaries and a turning track could prove to be decisive.

98 DAYS TO GO



The man who died standing

On July 17, 1994, at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Roberto Baggio stood at the centre of one of football's most poignant images. Having carried Italy through a turbulent World Cup – scoring decisive goals against Nigeria, Spain and Bulgaria – the injured playmaker entered the final against Brazil as both hope and doubt. After 120 goalless minutes, the match went to penalties. With Italy trailing, Baggio needed to score the final kick. Instead, his shot flew over the crossbar. While Brazil celebrated, Baggio remained still – hands on hips, head bowed.

** Read full story on The Daily Star's website

'Mile decision taken two months ago'

SPORTS REPORTER

Many were surprised to see goalkeeper Mile Akter in Bangladesh's starting XI for their AFC Women's Asian Cup opener against nine-time champions China on Tuesday, as experienced Rupna Chakma was left on the bench.

But the move, team officials revealed, had been planned well in advance.

The tall shot-stopper justified the decision of coach Peter Butler with an impressive display that helped Bangladesh avoid a heavier defeat, even though they eventually lost 2-0 to the reigning champions.

"We started our plan regarding Mile at least two months ago. After discussing the matter with the head coach, we decided to start her against China," said goalkeeping coach Masud Ahmed after Wednesday's recovery session.

Masud said they had been working specifically on how to use Mile's height against China's strengths.

"During the domestic league and national team training sessions, we worked on China's strong points and how we could utilise Mile's height. She has proved that she is capable of playing at this level," he said.

Mile herself admitted she had known beforehand that she would get the nod against China and prepared accordingly. "I knew I would play against China. I understood it during the domestic league matches."



Pakistan exclude Babar for Bangladesh ODIs

AGENCIES

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced a 15-member squad for the upcoming three-match ODI series against Bangladesh, scheduled from March 11 to 15.

The most notable exclusion from the squad is former captain Babar Azam. In the most recent ODI series, Babar scored a ton, underlining his form in the 50-over format. However, he struggled during the T20 World Cup, managing only 91 runs in six matches at a strike rate of 112.34.

All three ODIs will be played at the Shere Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

PAKISTAN SQUAD:

Shaheen Shah Afridi (captain), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Faisal Akram, Haris Rauf, Hussain Talat, Maaz Sadaqat, Mohammad Rizwan (wicketkeeper), Mohammad Wasim Jr, Muhammad Ghazi Ghorri (wicketkeeper), Saad Masood, Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Ali Agha and Shamyl Hussain.

Built for sports, used for markets

MIRZA SHAKIL

In the heart of Bhuapur Upazila, Tangail, the Sheikh Russel Mini Stadium stands as a silent monument to unfulfilled promises.

Built with hope and public money at a cost of 41 lakh taka, the stadium was meant to inspire the youth of the area and nurture the dreams of aspiring athletes.

Instead, in its derelict state, it has become perhaps the best example of why the new State Minister for Youth and Sports, Aminul Haque, pledged to focus on open playgrounds rather than closed-door infrastructures to create a new sports environment for tomorrow's Bangladesh.

The stadium construction tender was held in 2017, and two joint venture companies – Akhtar Enterprise and Four Sight Company, a Dhaka-based contractor – were awarded the project.

Even before completion in 2019, cracks appeared in the pavilion building, raising concerns about construction quality. Despite these issues, the stadium was handed over to authorities, yet it has remained largely unused.

Sports enthusiasts allege that not a single

shape athletes now hosts cattle trading.

During a recent visit, a disheartening picture emerged. The playing field was riddled with potholes. Gallery benches were buried under dirt and weeds. Rain had eroded the soil and damaged the palisades.

Cows and goats roamed freely, and waste lay scattered, robbing the stadium of its beauty. The building's lining was falling off, the public toilet was in disrepair, and even

Sports Association, Md. Ratan, echoed these concerns. Since the construction of the stadium next to Shialkol Hat, he said, there have been repeated complaints about irregularities, and despite informing authorities multiple times, no effective action has been taken.

The residents believe that if swift steps are taken to convert the mini stadium into a vibrant sports centre, it could play a



the goalposts stood broken and neglected. Local footballer and college student Saiful Islam said: "There is a stadium near our house, but we have not been able to use it. We want to practice football, but the field is full of potholes."

Former player and sports organiser Aktaruzzaman Khan added: "I tried to hold tournaments here, but local influential figures barred me. Now drug sellers and addicts use the stadium at night, and the local administration seems unaware."

Well-known player Tanjinur Rahman Islam questioned why such a large amount of public money was spent if the facility would not serve its purpose.

Former General Secretary of the Upazila

vital role in steering local youth away from mobile phones, drugs, and crime.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md. Mahbub Hasan stated that he will discuss the matter with concerned officials and take necessary measures.

The National Sports Council has built sports structures across the country, recognising the importance of infrastructure and modern facilities to compete internationally. Yet, what is the value of concrete structures without proper utilisation?

Many stadiums host only a few national programs each year and remain unused the rest of the time – soulless bodies without activity.



day of sports has been held there in almost six years. Instead, the stadium witnesses a different scene every Saturday.

A bustling market fills the grounds, where cows, goats, and furniture are bought and sold. The field that was supposed to

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Allen fires NZ into final

AFP, Kolkata

New Zealand's Finn Allen blasted the fastest century in T20 World Cup history in Kolkata yesterday as his side hammered South Africa by nine wickets to reach the final.

Chasing 170 to win the first semifinal, Allen hit an unbeaten 100 off just 33 balls, to obliterate the previous mark of 47 balls by Chris Gayle, as New Zealand raced home with 7.1 overs to spare.

Allen went on a rampage as he finished with two fours, two sixes and a four off successive balls to hit the winning runs and reach his hundred with a roar of delight at Eden Gardens.

Tim Seifert hit 58 in a 117-run opening stand with Allen off just 9.1 overs to set up the victory romp. Seifert hit two sixes and seven fours while Allen bludgeoned eight sixes and 10 fours in a brutal display of controlled power hitting.

"I think it's easy for me when Timmy's (Seifert) going like that, I can kind of just watch and then hit it when it's in my area and just try and give him the strike," said Allen.

New Zealand will play either India or England in Sunday's final in Ahmedabad.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



Rachin Ravindra moves in to embrace opener Finn Allen, who blazed a scintillating 100 not out off just 33 balls -- the fastest century in T20 World Cup history -- to guide New Zealand to a nine-wicket demolition of South Africa at Eden Gardens in Kolkata yesterday and book their place in the final.

PHOTO: REUTERS

SURPRISE VISIT State minister finds land office empty

Cabinet div orders officials to be in office from 9:00am to 9:40am

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Kayser Kamal, the state minister for land, yesterday expressed dissatisfaction after finding officials absent during a surprise visit to the Siddhirganj Union Land Office in Narayanganj.

The minister arrived at the office around 9:00am. Although the main gate was open, the rooms of officials and staff were locked, reports our correspondent from the spot.

Kayser waited outside for nearly half an hour before officials began arriving after being informed of his presence.

Several service seekers were also seen waiting for land-related services.

In a video circulating among reporters, officials were seen facing questions over what the minister termed "irresponsible conduct".

When asked about the delay, some reportedly gave inconsistent answers.

Terming the incident "undesirable", Kayser told journalists: "Those who neglect their duties will face necessary action. A government elected by the people must work for the people. Irregularities and corruption will not be tolerated."

Similar surprise inspections would be carried out at

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

CONTRACTUAL APPOINTMENTS

Where is the administration heading?

BAHARAM KHAN

When the newly elected government assumed office, expectations were high that the civil administration would undergo a genuine restructuring -- different from the reshuffles of recent years.

Officials in the secretariat, the nerve centre of the bureaucracy, anticipated that contractual appointees from the interim government would be phased out, making way for regular cadre officers to reclaim their positions.

ANALYSIS

However, the opposite scenario is unfolding.

Contractual appointees from the interim period, including the Cabinet secretary and the secretaries for Public Administration, Land, and Expatriates' Welfare, have remained in place.

More strikingly, the BNP-led government has yet to grant any regular promotions at the secretary level. On the contrary, it has extended the practice of contractual appointments for many key posts, including those of principal secretary and home secretary.

This week, four former officers were appointed to key positions at various ministries, including the local government ministry. All of them are over 65 years of age. One of them, Shahidul Hassan, is 75 years old. He was appointed as the secretary to the Local Government Division.

This continuation of contractual appointments has caused deep frustration among career officers aspiring to top administrative roles.

Many argue that those brought in on contract have been detached from the mainstream bureaucracy for 10 to 15 years, leaving them unfamiliar with its current dynamics. As a result, they fear the pace of administration may slow down, with contractual appointees struggling

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Prolonged war can hit remittance hard

MD ABBAS and RASHIDUL HASAN

The cancellation of 222 flights and suspension of six Middle Eastern routes over the past five days is likely to put a heavy burden on Bangladesh's labour market and the economy.

The disruption began on February 28 after several Gulf countries closed their airspace due to the ongoing security situation following US and Israeli air strikes on Iran and Iran's retaliatory attacks.

Authorities said 176 flights were cancelled at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka and 46 at Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram. The affected destinations include Dammam, Doha, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Kuwait.

Even if each flight carried 250 passengers, more than 55,000 travellers had been directly affected. The actual number is likely higher. Thousands of migrant workers are now uncertain about when they will be able to return to their workplaces.

WORKERS IN FEAR
Bangladesh's overseas labour market depends heavily on the Middle East. According to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training, over 1.13 million workers went abroad in 2025. Of them, 67 percent or 754,369 workers are in Saudi Arabia.

Qatar is the second largest destination, followed by Singapore, Kuwait, the Maldives, the United Arab Emirates, and Jordan.

Because of the war, many Gulf countries, including Qatar, Kuwait, and the UAE, have slowed or temporarily stopped certain activities. As a result, migrant workers are facing uncertainty.

A Bangladeshi worker in Kuwait said, "We are living in fear. Most companies have kept their

work stopped. Many who went to Bangladesh on holiday are now unsure if they can return because of airspace closures."

He added that he is worried that if the situation continues, he will not be able to send money home. "God knows what will happen to my family if the war lingers."

Other affected countries' migrants also shared similar concerns.

Workers can still use banking or informal channels to send money. The real issue is whether they will have enough income in hand.

Migration expert Asif Munier



So far, one Bangladeshi has been killed in the UAE and another in Bahrain. Four Bangladeshis were injured in Kuwait and three in Bahrain.

REMITTANCE AT RISK
Remittances and garment exports are the two main pillars of Bangladesh's economy. Even during global crises, remittances help maintain foreign currency reserves and support rural families.

In 2025, Bangladesh received \$32.8 billion in remittances, the highest amount in a single year, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

However, migration expert Asif Munier

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

'Dramatic change' in ant nests due to air pollution

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Ants exposed to air pollution face aggression from their own nestmates, according to a new study that sheds more light on the harmful effects of human activity on ecology.

Ants recognise their nestmates from molecules produced by their glands and one set of these compounds, called alkenes, is crucial for the



colony's unique odour.

These compounds, with carbon-carbon double bonds, are picked up by ants immediately after hatching and tend to degrade on exposure to some chemicals.

When two ants come in contact, they compare each other's smell with the respective odour of their colony.

If they recognise the odour, they are regarded as nestmates and treated kindly. If the odour profiles do not match, they tend to become more aggressive towards each other.

The new study tested whether increasing the levels of ozone, a chemical known to degrade alkenes, in the atmosphere altered the odour

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

PM makes 8 state ministers' roles more focused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has made changes in the allocation of responsibilities among eight state ministers, reducing their previously multiple portfolios to a single ministry or department.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman issued the directive to ensure more focused administration, said a notification of the Cabinet Division yesterday.

Sultan Salahuddin Tuku has been assigned solely to the fisheries and livestock ministry. He previously held the portfolios of agriculture, fisheries and livestock, and food.

Shariful Alam has been given the charge of only the Ministry of Textiles and Jute. Before, he was in charge of three ministries -- commerce, industries, and textiles and jute.

Habibur Rashid has been assigned to the Ministry of Railways and the Road Transport and Highways Division. Earlier, he held portfolios of the road transport and bridges, railways, and shipping ministries.

Rajib Ahsan, who served as state minister for road transport and bridges, railways, and shipping, has now been assigned only to the Ministry of Shipping and the Bridges Division.

Zonayed Saki has been made the state minister for planning. He was previously responsible for the finance and planning portfolios.

Farzana Sharmin has been given charge of the social welfare ministry. She previously also managed the women

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



A carriage being repaired at the Pahartoli workshop of Bangladesh Railway. Workers at the workshop are spending a busy time making carriages ready for use during the Eid rush.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Every \$10 oil price rise could add \$80m to monthly bill

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SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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16 | 06 | 5:00 | 6:05
17 | 07 | 4:59 | 6:06