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Panic buying drains filling stations

Energy minister assures adequate stock, supply; filling station workers 'beat student leader to death' in Jhenaidah



DIESEL SALES
FEBRUARY DAILY AVERAGE: 12,879 tonnes
MARCH 1-4 DAILY AVERAGE: 24,478 tonnes

OCTANE SALES
FEBRUARY DAILY AVERAGE: 1,173 tonnes
MARCH 1-4 DAILY AVERAGE: 2,000 tonnes

PETROL SALES
FEBRUARY DAILY AVERAGE: 1,212 tonnes
MARCH 1-4 DAILY AVERAGE: 2,345 tonnes

ASIFUR RAHMAN and MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Many filling stations across Bangladesh, including Dhaka, Chattogram, and Rajshahi, ran dry yesterday as panic buying continued for a second day amid fears of supply disruption due to

the war in the Middle East. Long queues stretched into the night, with motorists scrambling to secure fuel despite repeated government assurances that reserves remain adequate and prices will not rise this month. Power, Energy and Mineral

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Unable to buy diesel, RMG factories losing steam

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Garment factories in Gazipur are struggling to keep production at full capacity due to a shortage of diesel, as filling stations in the area have stopped supplying fuel in containers over the past two days.

Exporters say many units are losing four to five hours of production daily, raising fears of missing shipment deadlines for international buyers.

The factories rely on diesel to run generators during at least six hours of power cuts by the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board.

Industry leaders say panic buying, triggered by concerns over Middle East tensions, has worsened the shortage.

Rashid Hossaini, Ahamed managing director of Nexus Sweaters

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People weaving through clothing stalls on the pavement at the capital's New Market yesterday as the Eid shopping rush gathers momentum.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

BESSENT HINTS AT LIFTING MORE RUSSIAN OIL SANCTIONS: B4

Balendra Shah unseats former Nepal PM

AFP, Kathmandu

Rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah unseated former Nepal prime minister KP Sharma Oli in his own constituency, Election Commission data showed Saturday, with his party also seemingly headed for a landslide victory nationally.

The 35-year-old's victory over the 74-year-old Marxist leader -- and his rise from city mayor to potential prime minister -- marks one of the most dramatic results in recent Nepali politics.



The high-stakes election on Thursday came six months after deadly protests toppled the government led by Oli, with at least 77 people killed.

The September 2025 youth-led demonstrations, under a loose Gen Z banner, began over a brief social media ban but quickly tapped into broader grievances over corruption and a struggling economy.

Nationwide, Shah's centrist Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) was on track to win a majority in the 275-member House of Representatives, the lower house of parliament, according to early trends issued by the Election Commission, although counting still has far to go.

"Looking at the trend, the Rastriya Swatantra Party has taken the lead in many places and has won several seats,"

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Curtailed, delayed Boi Mela sees sales plummet

DIPAN NANDY and SUKANTA HALDER

On most evenings, the grounds of the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela still reflect the familiar spirit of Bangladesh's literary season -- students browsing poetry collections, families posing for photographs beneath colourful banners, and writers signing newly released books.

But behind the festive atmosphere, this year's fair -- the country's largest literary gathering -- is grappling with a sharp decline in book sales, complaints from publishers over management issues, and concerns about the timing of the event.

Publishers, visitors and organisers say a combination of factors lies behind the slowdown: the fair's delayed start, its overlap with Ramadan, economic pressures on readers, and disagreements over organisational decisions.

Traditionally, the Ekushey Book Fair begins on February 1 and continues throughout the month. This year, however, the schedule was disrupted by



the national election in mid-February. As a result, the fair started on February 26, later than usual, and will continue until March 15, making this edition the shortest in its half-decade history.

The decline in sales has alarmed many within the publishing industry. Publishers say this year their sales have fallen by 40 to 80 percent compared to previous fairs held outside Ramadan.

According to Mazharul Islam, chief executive officer of Anyapokash, the sales at this year's book fair are

"horribly bad". "The turnout is much lower than we had anticipated; it is even worse than our estimates. We did not imagine it would be this bad when we proposed holding the fair after Ramadan," he told The Daily Star on Friday.

Mazharul explained that during the holy month of Ramadan, people do not find the time to buy books as they must balance office hours with iftar and subsequent preparations for Taraweeh prayers. He also pointed out

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India eye historic title defence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A sea of blue will turn up in the stands of the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad today with hopes of seeing India's coronation when they take on New Zealand in the final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, at the same place where the echoes of a heartbreak from three years ago still linger.

The match, which will culminate the 20-team tournament co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, will begin at 7:30pm Bangladesh time.

Defending champions India started the tournament as favourites and barring the lone hiccup against South Africa in the Super Eights, they have marched their way into the final.

Suryakumar Yadav's men are now just one win away from becoming the first team to defend the T20 World Cup title, the only team to win the tournament in home soil and also become the first team in history to win three ICC events in senior men's



INDIA VS SRI LANKA 2026

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Family Card pilot to cover 40,000 households

RAJAUJ KARIM BYRON

At least 40,000 families will receive Family Cards in the pilot phase over the next four months, which will cost about Tk 39 crore.

Starting from March 10, 10,000 families will be provided the cards each month, according to the Family Card Piloting Implementation Guideline, 2026. Each family with the card will receive Tk 2,500 every month.

Some Tk 39 crore has been set aside from the block allocation from this fiscal year's revised budget, a finance ministry official told The Daily Star.

Of this, Tk 25.15 crore will be required for the allowance, while the remaining fund will be used for the beneficiary selection process, he added.

According to the guideline, Tk 4.8 crore will be used for field survey, Tk 5.08 crore for smart card and other related purchases.

In the first phase, 50 types of information on 320,000 families of 14 wards will be collected to assess their eligibility. For this task, 560 supervisors will be appointed, each receiving Tk 5,000.

By June, data collection will be completed and 40,000 beneficiaries will be selected.

The 14 upazilas selected for the pilot phase are Banani (Korail, Sattala and Bhashantek slums) and Mirpur/Shah Ali (Oli Miar Tek and Baganbari slums) in Dhaka; Pangsha in Rajbari; Patenga in Chattogram; Banchharampur in Brahmanbaria; Lama in Bandarban; Khalishpur in Khulna; Charfesson in Bhola; Derai in Sunamganj; Bhairab in Kishoreganj; Bogura Sadar in Bogura; Lalpur in Natore; Thakurgaon Sadar in Thakurgaon; and Nawabganj in Dinajpur.

The government's ultimate objective is to gradually bring two crore families under monthly cash support, as per the guideline.

When fully implemented, the programme, a key

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India says it will push ahead with Russian oil imports

B4

HASANAH ISLAMIC BANKING
البنكية الاسلامي
Prime Bank

PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 8

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-01	12-45	4-30	6-06	7-30
JAMAAT 5-11	1-15	4-45	6-16	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MAR	SEHRI	IFTAR
18	8		6:06
19	9	4:57	6:07
20	10	4:57	6:07



The Mayor Anisul Huq Road in Tejgaon remains choked by illegally parked lorries, eating up more than half the road's width. This persistent problem has plagued this road for years. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

TRICKED INTO WAR Bangladeshi POW in Ukraine wants to return home

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

A Bangladeshi man, reportedly captured by Ukrainian forces, has made a desperate appeal to return home, saying he wants to go back to Bangladesh and no longer remain with the Russian side after what he claims was a deceptive recruitment process.

The appeal appeared in a video posted on a Telegram channel on March 3.

In the video, the man says he first went to Russia to work for a company and spent four months there before other Bangladeshis approached him with an offer to work as a security guard.

He says he accepted the offer without knowing it involved the Russian military, and pleaded to be brought back, saying "I want to go back to Bangladesh".

"Please help me get back to Bangladesh through my embassy. I appeal to you to help me return home. I do not



IMAGE: VIDEO GRAB

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO



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