



DHAKA MONDAY MARCH 9, 2026

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXVI No. 54

FALGUN 24, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

RAMADAN 19, 1447 HJRI

16 PAGES: Tk 15.00

Iran 'capable of six months of intense war': IRGC

Strikes hit Kuwait airport and gov't building, Bahrain desalination unit, US sites in KSA, UAE, Jordan

Bangladeshi among two killed in strike in Saudi Arabia

Four killed in Israeli strike on Beirut hotel

US, Israel weigh sending special forces to seize Iran's uranium

US embassy in Oslo hit by blast, cause unknown

China FM blasts war, urges US to manage ties

US starts using UK bases for 'defensive' Iran operations

Iran picks new leader as war escalates

Chosen candidate yet to be named; Trump, Netanyahu vow to eliminate new leader; black rain falls as Israeli strikes ignite oil fires in Tehran

AGENCIES

Residents in Tehran woke to thick black clouds and blackened rain yesterday after overnight Israeli strikes hit oil storage sites in the Iranian capital, while Iran struck vital infrastructure across the Gulf region, hitting fuel tanks at Kuwait's international airport and damaging a desalination plant in Bahrain.

As fighting escalated on the ninth day of the US-Israeli campaign against Iran, Tehran moved closer to naming a new supreme leader after the killing of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, with every indication suggesting his powerful son Mojtaba could take charge.

Israel's military threatened to kill any replacement for Khamenei, while US President Donald Trump said the war might only end once Iran's military and rulers had been wiped out.

BLACK RAIN IN TEHRAN

Thick, choking black smoke hung over

Tehran yesterday, after strikes on oil storage facilities had lit up the night sky with plumes of orange flame.

Tehran, a city of nearly 10 million people, experienced rainfall that appeared to be mixed with oil following the attacks.

"You can see that the rain, the rainwater, is actually black—also saturated, it appears, with oil," Pleitgen, a CNN correspondent, reported from Tehran.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson, Esmail Baghaei, said the large-scale attack marked a "dangerous new phase" of the conflict and amounted to a war crime. "By targeting fuel depots, the aggressors are releasing hazardous materials and toxic substances into the air, poisoning civilians, devastating the environment, and endangering lives on a massive scale," he wrote on X.

Shortly after the attack, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his government would press on with the

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People stand near a destroyed vehicle as smoke rises in the background after an Israeli strike on Shahrar fuel tanks in Tehran, Iran yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

HADI KILLING Prime accused, associate held in West Bengal

ISPR confirms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India's West Bengal Police Special Task Force (STF) has arrested the prime accused and an alleged associate in the murder of Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi from the border area of Bongaon in the Indian state of West Bengal.



Faisal Karim Masud

The arrestees are Faisal Karim Masud, 37, a resident of Patuakhali, and Alamgir Hossain, 34, from Dhaka, according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

It added that the process to repatriate the arrestees to Bangladesh has already begun.

In a statement last night, the ISPR, quoting the STF, said the arrests were made during an operation in the early yesterday (March 8) following intelligence that two Bangladeshi nationals involved in serious crimes, including murder and extortion, had fled Bangladesh and illegally entered India.

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Crisis exposes fragile energy security

Country only has a running buffer of fuel, no strategic stock

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh's energy security has once again shown its vulnerability amid the ongoing Middle East war, echoing challenges faced during the 2020 Russia-Ukraine conflict, as it relies heavily on timely fuel imports while maintaining only a short-term stock buffer.

At the same time, refining capacity has remained unchanged for 63 years, forcing Bangladesh to import large volumes of refined petroleum products at higher cost.

Data released in early March by the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) shows the country maintains a narrow fuel buffer. During that period, the stock of diesel, which accounts for around 65 percent of total fuel use, fell close to risk levels.

According to BPC, the country has 27 depots, including 11 riverine, nine railhead, and two barge depots, with storage capacity for 624,189 tonnes of diesel, 53,616 tonnes of petrol, and 37,013 tonnes of octane.

Based on average daily demand, these reserves can meet the country's needs for about 35 to 40 days. However, after the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28 and Tehran retaliated, diesel stock briefly fell to levels sufficient for just

FUEL RESERVES

- ➔ Diesel: **1,20,000** tonnes, should last about 14 days
- ➔ Petrol: **14,000** tonnes, enough for 14 days
- ➔ Octane: **22,000** tonnes, should cover 24 days
- ➔ More diesel shipments expected soon

15 days and later dropped further to around 11 days, raising concerns among officials and the public.

With new shipments arriving, diesel reserves rose to about 14 days yesterday, with roughly 1,20,000 tonnes in stock. More deliveries are expected, officials said.

BPC data also shows the country currently has around 14,000 tonnes of petrol, enough

PHOTO ON PAGE 12

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TECH-FACILITATED VIOLENCE Women survivors forced to navigate a flawed system

NILIMA JAHAN

The violence was set in motion not by a weapon but by a smartphone.

Nilufa (not her real name), a 32-year-old entrepreneur and mother of two in Bagerhat, was running a tailoring shop without much trouble until a neighbouring shopkeeper took advantage of their familiarity.

He filmed her through a hole in a washroom door and then unleashed a nightmare of blackmail, demanding "undue favours" for his silence. Gripped by fear of social fallout, Nilufa felt she had no one to turn to. In a desperate bid to protect herself, she isolated herself and pretended to cooperate with her blackmailer.

"I was acting," she recalled, adding that she eventually convinced the blackmailer to share his mobile phone screen with her via a video call to show that the footage was deleted from his smartphone.

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"For women and girls to be safe online, we need to put in place strong and inclusive laws and coordinated response systems, and ensure that tech companies operate responsibly."

ABU SAYED SUMON
UNFPA specialist on gender-based violence

Dhaka stocks log in biggest single-day slide in 6 yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's stock market yesterday recorded its steepest single-day decline in six years amid concerns over energy supply disruptions linked to the escalating conflict in the Middle East.

DSEX, the benchmark index of the country's premier bourse, fell 232 points, or 4.42 percent, to close at 5,008, marking the sharpest single-day fall since March 2020.

In March 2020, investors witnessed three major declines within a span of 10 days as panic gripped investors amid fears over the impact of the global coronavirus pandemic.

Of the traded stocks, the prices of 371 issues declined as investors rushed to sell, while only 10 advanced and the remainder remained unchanged.

"The war is the main reason," said Saiful Islam, president of DSE Brokers Association of Bangladesh.

Initially, investors thought that the conflict would be resolved within a few days.

Now that it has gone on to day 9, investors panicked and sold off their holdings.

Moreover, the war has started to affect people personally via energy shortages.

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India players celebrate with the T20 World Cup trophy after winning the global title of the shortest format of cricket for a record third time following a thrashing 96-run victory against New Zealand in the final at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

India thrash NZ to clinch record 3rd T20WC title

AFP, Ahmedabad

India won a record third T20 World Cup title and became the first team to defend their crown with a 96-run thumping of New Zealand in a lop-sided final on Sunday.

Suryakumar Yadav's India were also the first team to lift the trophy on home soil as over 86,000 fans celebrated at the Narendra Modi Stadium.

England and the West Indies have won two titles each.

India beat both those teams en route to the title, including a clutch victory over the West Indies in their final Super Eights match when defeat would have seen them eliminated.

Sanju Samson's blistering 89 off 46 balls guided the co-hosts to 255-5 and Bumrah starred as New Zealand were bowled out for 159 in 19 overs.

Part-time spinner Abhishek Sharma claimed the final wicket of Jacob Duffy, securing a dominant victory.

Axar Patel struck two early blows, including the dangerous Finn Allen for nine, with his left-arm spin.

Bumrah was again at his mesmerising best, delivering a succession of brilliant slower-ball yorkers to finish with figures of 4-15.

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MY DHAKA



PHOTOS: FAISAL AHMED BHUBON, STAR ARCHIVE

Midnight steaks and old friendships: sehri nights in Dhaka

FAISAL AHMED BHUBON

Ramadan nights in Dhaka are not just about food – they are about friendship, memory, and the joy of gathering.

Ramadan turns the city into a place where sehri is both spiritual and social, a celebration of bonds that endure beyond the meal itself. There is a duality to these nights – faith and festivity, reflection and indulgence. Sehri is not just about preparing for the fast; it has become a ritual of togetherness.

For many, it is a chance to reconnect, share stories, and savour the rare quiet of Dhaka at three in the morning.

Rickshaws rattle through quiet streets, tea stalls glow under single bulbs, and the rush of traffic softens into a hum. However, this lull after iftar fades as soon as Tarawih ends. Dhaka is anything but sleepy, because in this lunar month the midnights are not for rest.

It is the hour when sehri seekers step out, tempted by the smoky aroma of kebabs drifting into the night. People go for all kinds of gourmet delights, from crispy ghee-fried paratha with murg musallam to bowls of hearty soup.

This year, meaty dishes are especially popular with the young crowd.

Steakhouses and grills across the city stay open until dawn, their neon signs shining on sehri seekers.

After weighing several options – Steakout, Meat Theory, Wood House Grill, and Steak & Marrow – we finally settled on Steak & Marrow, drawn by reviews and the lure of its packages.

The welcome was immediate. Staff greeted us warmly, their service polished yet personal. We chose a sehri package priced at BDT 2,400, reduced to BDT 1,600 as a Ramadan discount.

The spread was hearty: a rare-medium steak, rice, salted vegetables, mushrooms and sausage, and a small bun. The steak was tender and flavourful, its char balanced by earthy vegetables and the richness of the sides. Presentation was simple but satisfying – no frills, just honest food meant to be enjoyed in good company.

The day's tiredness vanishes the moment you see your friends or family. The raucous energy inside swells as the food arrives, laughter rising above the

clink of cutlery as we joined that tide of nocturnal diners.

Outside, vendors serve parathas, beef curry, and steaming cups of cha to those who prefer tradition over trend.

But the night was never just about food. Around the table sat four friends bound by more than appetite. We are all former students of Government Laboratory High School, our bond stretching back more than a decade.

Beside me was Tazbeer Masnoon Dip, navigating the corporate world as a merchandising officer. Across the table sat Sakib Shahari, a businessman thriving in Chawkbazar's bag trade. At the far end, Surid Shaharia Zaman, a young entrepreneur, spoke of his start-up, while I am a system engineer at Amber IT.

The laughter, the stories, even the silences between bites – all carried the weight of years. Ramadan has always been a month of reflection, but that night it was also about renewal.

For us, sehri was more than a meal. It

was a reminder that even as life pulls us in different directions – into IT systems, merchandising, business, and start-ups – the ties of friendship remain unbroken.

In the glow of Steak & Marrow's midnight lights, with steak on our plates and memories in our hearts, we celebrated not just Ramadan, but the enduring bond that began in the classrooms of Government Laboratory High School.

SEHRI SPOTS WORTH KNOWING

Durbin Bangla Restaurant, Mohakhali Known for its homestyle Bangla flavours, Durbin Bangla draws late-night crowds with hearty sehri plates. Popular items include beef curry, parathas, and khichuri – served in generous portions at affordable prices. The atmosphere is lively, with families and groups of friends filling the space until just before Fajr.

Abesh Restaurant, Mirpur A rising favourite among Mirpur residents, Abesh offers a mix of traditional and modern sehri dishes. Their handi beef and fried parathas are especially popular, often paired with steaming cups of tea. The restaurant has become a local hub, where young diners gather to enjoy sehri in a more casual, neighbourhood setting.



Women survivors forced to navigate

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The video file, however, had already been copied to multiple devices.

When Nilufa finally refused to meet his demands, the perpetrator sent edited video clips to her husband, framing her as a willing participant. Her husband, blind to the trauma she had endured, beat her up and then divorced her.

Nilufa's ordeal illustrates a burgeoning crisis. The 2024 National Violence Against Women Survey, conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) with the assistance of UNFPA, reveals that 8.3 percent of women in Bangladesh are now targets of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV).

While TFGBV is a cross-cutting issue requiring coordination between law enforcement agencies and health and judicial systems, the state's response has largely been police-centred.

Structural barriers include a limited number of cyber tribunals, low capacity, and a lack of expertise beyond mainstream platforms like Facebook.

These challenges are compounded by fragmented services and weak coordination across health, legal, and judicial systems. While police remain the primary formal contact, survivors demand a multisectoral response.

In Nilufa's case, institutional hurdles were immediate. As Nilufa approached the Bagerhat Sadar Police Station, she was redirected to a court. When police were directed to investigate, the case was assigned to a male officer.

"As a woman, I was deeply unsettled by his [the investigation officer] questions," she recalled, highlighting a common barrier for survivors of digital sexual violence.

Her ordeal began to ease only when she was referred to the Women Help Desk (WHD) of the police station. There, female officers follow a survivor-centered Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) developed through a partnership between UNFPA and Bangladesh Police.

This initiative, launched in Bagerhat and nine other districts in October 2024, replaced ad hoc responses with sensitive, specialised protocols for cyber violence.

"The female officers there were friendly... I could share all the details with them without hesitation," said Nilufa, now back at her tailoring shop after a brief pause, still carrying the weight of her trauma.

Though police intervention

eventually forced the perpetrator to delete the files, he was never detained. The probe is ongoing and the man remains free.

SYSTEMIC SHORTCOMINGS

Under the UNFPA police partnership, 969 police officers (501 women, 468 men) received training in mental health, GBV protocols, and TFGBV technicalities across nine districts last year.

However, these trained officers are sometimes hamstrung by a lack of basic tools.

At Bagerhat Sadar Police Station, the WHD lacks a dedicated computer. This forces survivors to go to nearby markets and narrate their intimate traumas to male computer operators who type out their accounts for a fee.

Rumana Nasrin, a sub-inspector at the station, noted that while female officers provide empathetic initial support, cases are often handed over to male investigation officers who lack specialised TFGBV orientation.

She stressed the need for sensitivity training for investigation officers, especially male ones.

Not only the police, but the judiciary also lags behind in cybercrime-related training. The Judicial Administration Training Institute (JATI) lacks specific programmes for cyber tribunal judges as well as lawyers.

Arunav Chakraborty, a judge of the Khulna Cyber Tribunal, said he did not receive any formal training on cybercrimes after his appointment in August last year.

Similarly, Sheikh Moniruzzaman, a lawyer at the Bagerhat Judge's Court, said that hardly any lawyers in the district have been trained in cybercrime issues, and most of them lack the technical skills to deal with complex digital evidence.

Priya Ahsan Chowdhury, a Supreme Court lawyer, said the legal framework remains weak because forensic evidence remains optional, often forcing courts to rely on screenshots that can easily be manipulated.

She noted that forensic reports must be made mandatory, and judges need to be provided with specialised training.

Emphasising the importance of mental health support for victims, Nusrat Jahan, a programme officer at the Bagerhat One-Stop Crisis Cell (OCC), said that most survivors of digital abuse go straight to police, unaware of the necessity of medical and psychosocial support.

"Victims see this as a purely legal issue even though they suffer from

significant mental distress," she explained.

The Bagerhat OCC is currently understaffed, operating with only Nusrat as a programme officer.

In the absence of a computer operator who records cases, Nusrat must juggle managerial work, case filing, and counselling.

When contacted, Shahela Pervin, deputy director of the Department of Women Affairs (DWA) in Bagerhat, said that while cases over physical violence are common, social stigma keeps many women from reporting online harassment.

"Complaints over such incidents rarely reach us... When they do, we advise survivors to contact police or the 109 helpline."

Since the helpline typically refers cases back to law enforcers, police remain the primary source of redress.

If local police are unable to track anonymous perpetrators, cases are forwarded to the central Police Cyber Support for Women Unit at the Police Headquarters (PHQ) in Dhaka.

Without a streamlined tracking system, these complaints often vanish into an overwhelmed national queue, leaving both local officers and survivors in legal limbo.

AHM Shahadat Hossain, assistant inspector general (Media) at the PHQ, pointed out significant hurdles in obtaining metadata from international tech platforms.

He also clarified that investigative tools are often mislabelled as "intrusive surveillance" by rights groups, though they are essential for identifying offenders.

Cybercrime consultant Gazi Mahfuz Ul Kabir said perpetrators frequently use platforms like Telegram or Terabox to store content, making it difficult for police to remove those.

Experts stress that women and girls must be taught digital literacy, made aware of technology-facilitated crimes, and given clear guidance on where to seek remedy.

"For women and girls to be safe online, we need to put in place strong and inclusive laws and coordinated response systems, and ensure that tech companies operate responsibly," said Abu Sayed Sumon, UNFPA specialist on gender-based violence.

Sustainable multi-sectoral collaboration and shared responsibilities are essential for establishing a violence-free environment. From homes to classrooms to workplaces, whole-of-society action is needed to end digital violence against women and girls, he added.

Dhaka stocks log in biggest single-day

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Those who weren't affected by the Ukraine war have been affected this time, he said.

"Maybe it is an overreaction. But it is also true that loadshedding has started already in March. If the energy price rise, every product will be affected and thus inflation. It will have an impact on the overall economy, so investors reacted negatively," he added.

The market plunged as geopolitical tensions unsettled investors, said SM Galibur Rahman, head of research

and strategic planning at Shanta Securities.

"Investors opted for caution amid heightened geopolitical risks and concerns over potential fuel shortages across the country," he added.

Meanwhile, the Shariah-compliant index DSES dropped 35 points, or 3.36 percent, to 1,013, while the DS30, the blue-chip index, shed 91.53 points, or 4.55 percent, to 1,919.

Stocks have been on a downward trajectory in recent days amid persistent sell-offs, with the DSEX earlier losing 208 points.

Iran picks new leader as war escalates

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assault and strike Iran's rulers "without mercy".

"We have an organised plan with many surprises to destabilise the regime and enable change," he said in a video statement. "We have many more targets."

Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One that he was not interested in negotiating an end to the conflict that has sent energy prices skyward, hurt business and snarled global travel.

"At some point, I don't think there will be anybody left maybe to say, 'We surrender,'" Trump said.

IRAN STRIKES GULF STATES, BANGLADESHI KILLED

Two people were killed and 12 injured after a projectile fell on a residential location in Saudi Arabia's Al-Kharj city yesterday, the Saudi Civil Defence said.

The two people killed were of Indian and Bangladeshi nationalities, it added in a post on X.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said earlier in the day that they targeted radar systems in locations including Saudi's Al-Kharj.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards also said they had launched missiles towards the Israeli cities of Tel Aviv and Beersheba, as well as an airbase in Jordan.

AFP journalists heard blasts over Tel Aviv after the army identified new missiles from Iran.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said the country's forces can fight an "intense war" for six months, with a spokesman saying more advanced missiles would be used in the coming days.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain also reported Iranian drone attacks on Saturday and early yesterday, with a huge fire engulfing a government

office block in Kuwait.

Kuwait's interior ministry said two of its officers were killed "while performing duties", while the UAE said four migrant workers had died in Iranian attacks there so far.

Showing the intensity of the offensive, the UAE said air defence teams had knocked out 16 ballistic missiles and 113 drones fired towards the Gulf state yesterday. One missile fell in the sea, and four drones hit the country's territories.

Bahrain said yesterday that an Iranian drone attack had caused "material damage" to a desalination plant, though the country's electricity and water authority said the strike had not disrupted water supplies.

It was the first time an Arab country has said Iran targeted a desalination facility during the conflict. On Saturday, Iran said a US attack had struck a freshwater desalination plant on its Qeshm Island, disrupting water supplies in 30 villages, calling it "a dangerous move with grave consequences".

Saudi Arabia has told Tehran that continued Iranian attacks on the kingdom and its energy sector could push Riyadh to respond in kind, people familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Lebanon has also been pulled into the conflict after the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah launched rockets and drones into Israel last week, with nearly 400 people killed by Israel over the past week, the health ministry said.

Israel killed at least four people when it struck a hotel in central Beirut yesterday, saying it had targeted Iranian commanders operating in the city – the first such strike on the heart of the Lebanese capital – amid heavy bombardment of the southern suburbs and the country's south and east.

No Independence Day illuminations this year

Univs to close today; govt says decisions made to conserve energy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided against illuminating installations across the country on Independence Day this year as part of austerity measures to avert a potential fuel crisis amid the ongoing Middle East war, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said yesterday.

To support the effort, all public and private universities have been asked to begin Eid holidays from today, ahead of schedule.

"Traditionally, we arrange illumination on Independence and National Day. But this time, considering the current situation and to prevent any fuel crisis, we have decided there will be no illumination nationwide," Salahuddin told reporters at the home ministry after separate meetings on Eid-ul-Fitr, Independence Day, and the March 25 Genocide Day.

The meetings focused on law and order during

Several institutions, including Barishal University and Comilla University, began holidays yesterday, while Dhaka University, Bangladesh Agricultural University, and Jahangirnagar University will now close earlier than planned.

Eid, smooth travel for holidaymakers, and security for national programmes on March 25 and 26.

Salahuddin said the government would observe both days with due gravity, while the home ministry would oversee all security arrangements.

On Eid preparations, the minister said the government has taken precautionary steps to prevent the usual disruptions before the holiday.

Meanwhile, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has instructed universities to remain closed until the end of their scheduled Eid holidays, in line with the energy conservation drive.

Several institutions, including Barishal University and Comilla University, began holidays yesterday, while Dhaka University, Bangladesh Agricultural University, and Jahangirnagar University will now close earlier than planned.

The education ministry has also asked institutions to follow 11 energy-saving guidelines during the period, including maximising natural daylight, halving the use of electric lights, setting air conditioners at 25°C or higher, minimising decorative lighting, and limiting vehicle use.

Following last week's losses, the key index has now shed 359 points, or 6.42 percent, according to DSE data.

"Energy is a key input for factories, and investors fear that the intensifying Iran conflict could disrupt fuel supply," said a market analyst, requesting anonymity.

Such disruptions could hamper production at listed companies, he added.

The Chittagong Stock Exchange also declined. CASPI, the port city bourse's main index, fell 419 points, or 2.83 percent, to 14,405.

IRAN CHOOSES NEW LEADER

The clerical body charged with choosing Iran's next supreme leader could meet as soon as yesterday to name a successor to Khamenei, who was killed in an attack early in the conflict, Iranian media reported.

A majority consensus over the successor has been reached, said Assembly of Experts member Ayatollah Mohammad Mehdi Mirbaqeri, according to the Mehr news agency.

Two Iranian sources told Reuters last week that the clear favourite was Khamenei's son, Mojtaba Khamenei, who amassed power under his father as a senior figure in the security forces and the vast business empire they control. Choosing him would signal that hardliners remain firmly in charge.

Trump has justified the biggest US military operation in the Middle East since the 2003 invasion of Iraq by saying Tehran posed an imminent threat to the United States, without providing evidence. He has also said Iran was too close to being able to build a nuclear weapon.

The US and Israel have discussed sending special forces into Iran to secure its stockpile of highly enriched uranium at a later stage of the war, Axios reported, citing four people with knowledge of the discussions.

Asked on Saturday about sending ground troops to secure nuclear sites, Trump said it was something they could do "later on."

The US Israeli attacks have killed at least 1,332 Iranian civilians and wounded thousands, according to Iran's UN ambassador, Amir Sa'ed Iravani.

Iranian attacks have killed 10 people in Israel. At least six US service members have been killed, with Iran saying yesterday it had struck US bases in Kuwait. Israel said yesterday that two of its soldiers were killed in southern Lebanon.

President calls for effective steps to ensure women's safety

UNB, Dhaka

President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday called for effective and strict measures to prevent violence against women and address emerging challenges such as online defamation and cyberbullying targeting women.

"Women and girls must not become victims of neglect, abuse or discrimination. We want to build a livable Bangladesh where every woman can be in a safe environment, become self-reliant and have opportunities to lead and where every girl has equal chances to dream and realise those dreams," he said.

He made the remarks while addressing a programme marking International Women's Day 2026 and the conferring of "Shreshtha Adanya Nari" awards at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka.

Shahabuddin said acid violence in Bangladesh had once been brought under control through firm political commitment and strict legal measures.

He said in 2002 the government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia enacted laws to control acid use and acid attacks and ensured speedy trials

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PHOTO: UNB

President Mohammed Shahabuddin hands over the 'Shreshtha Adanya Nari' award to Barrister Zaima Rahman, who accepted it on behalf of her late grandmother, former prime minister Khaleda Zia, in recognition of her contributions to women's education and the advancement of democracy. The award was presented at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium on the occasion of International Women's Day yesterday.

'Visible on the street, not in policymaking'

Speakers stress more women representation in reform efforts at MJF event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite their pivotal role in national movements and the recent July uprising, women in Bangladesh remain excluded from decision-making and denied equal citizenship, speakers said at a town hall meeting yesterday.

The event, titled "Her Voice, Her Rights," was organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) at its office in Mirpur, Dhaka, to mark International Women's Day. It focused on the marginalisation of women and girls from the national reform process.

"Equal rights with dignity for everyone were at the heart of our fight for independence," said Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, in her welcome remarks.

She noted that although women have repeatedly demonstrated courage during moments of national change, they remain largely absent from positions of power.

Stressing that rights must apply equally to those on the margins, Shaheen Anam called for strict enforcement of laws and greater institutional accountability.

She also referred to the Beijing Conference as a landmark whose commitments remain relevant today, urging young people to defend the rights of girls.

"Girls' rights cannot be treated as a secondary issue; they must remain central to any serious national commitment to justice, democracy and equality," she said.

Wasiur Rahman Tonmoy, MJF's lead for youth engagement and social cohesion, said despite women's visible participation in the July uprising, they remain severely under-represented in ongoing reform efforts.

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Equal rights with dignity for everyone were at the heart of our fight for independence.

SHAHEEN ANAM
Executive director of MJF

Same fields, same labour, never the same pay

Despite rising participation in agriculture, rural women remain caught in a cycle of unequal wages

MOSTAFA SHABUJ and MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Every day, life starts for Nurnahar Begum before sunrise in Rajosh village of Gobindaganj upazila in Gaibandha.

Alongside household chores, she spends long hours threshing crops at farmers' homes and working in nearby fields during the harvest season.

Yet, despite doing the same work as men, she earns barely half their wages.

"We get half the wages of men for the same work," said the 38-year-old labourer.

Women workers typically earn Tk 8,000 to Tk 9,000 a month, while male labourers receive Tk 20,000 to Tk 22,000, she added.

Her experience is far from unique. Thousands of women farm labourers across the region face the same disparity.

On March 2, Rosina Kisku, 25, and Dipali Kisku, 20 – two Santal women – were seen planting paddy seedlings in Rajabirat village of Gobindaganj.

Their work involved lifting bundles of seedlings and transplanting them across waterlogged fields. For this labour-intensive job, women earn Tk 500 a day, while men receive Tk 700.

"It feels painful to receive less for the same work," Dipali said. "But if we demand equal pay, we may lose



PHOTO: STAR

our jobs."

Despite the wage disparity, women's participation in agriculture has grown significantly over the past decade, largely driven by economic necessity and the migration of men to non-farm jobs.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), women's labour force participation increased from 24 percent in 2000 to 36 percent in 2010, peaking at 42.8

percent in 2022 before falling to 38.40 percent in 2024.

A report by the interim government's Women's Affairs Reform Commission says much of the increase in women's employment over the past decade has come from agriculture.

Citing BBS data, the report notes that women's participation in agriculture rose sharply from 46

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Amend RTI Act before passing ordinance

Seeks Right to Information Forum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Right to Information (RTI) Forum yesterday demanded the immediate formation of Information Commission and further amendments to the Right to Information Act, 2009, saying the recent amendment ordinance should not be passed in parliament in its current form.

"It is a world record that despite a legal obligation, the Information Commission remained unformed for one and a half years," said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Iftekhharuzzaman at a press conference in the capital's TIB office.

He urged the government to form the commission without delay and appoint qualified, experienced and independent individuals capable of working beyond partisan influence.

The remarks came at a press conference titled "Immediate Formation of the Information Commission and Necessary Amendments to the RTI Act, 2009," organised by the RTI Forum.

Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam, also convener of the RTI Forum, said civil society organisations had repeatedly proposed reforms through consultations, but many of those recommendations were not reflected in the recently issued amendment ordinance.

"We do not want the ordinance to be passed in its current form in the parliament session starting March 12.

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'He was hiding, not forcibly disappeared'

Defence counsel alleges at ICT-1; Arman rejects claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A defence lawyer yesterday questioned whether the International Crimes Tribunal should continue relying on rules introduced during what he described as a "fascist" government while cross-examining a prosecution witness in a case over alleged enforced disappearance and torture.

Lawyer Aminul Ghani Titto raised the issue before ICT-1 while representing seven former Rab officials, who are on trial over allegations of enforced disappearance and torture at the force's Taskforce for Interrogation (TFI) cell.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

3RD TERMINAL DEADLOCK

Japanese team, CAAB may resume talks on March 11

RASHIDUL HASAN

A Japanese delegation is scheduled to visit Dhaka on March 11 to resume the talks with the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) over the operation of the Dhaka airport's third terminal.

The discussions are expected to break the current deadlock in negotiations between CAAB and the Japanese consortium comprising Japan Airport Terminal Company, Sumitomo Corporation, Sojitz, and Narita International Airport Corporation.

"Talks between the CAAB and the Japanese technical team over operation of the third terminal will be held on March 11 at the foreign

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

NCP launches women's platform 'Nari Shakti'

STAR REPORT

The National Citizen Party (NCP) yesterday launched a women's platform, "Nari Shakti," aimed at addressing issues related to women's rights, dignity, security, and empowerment.

NCP Convener and Opposition Chief Whip Nahid Islam made the announcement at a programme at the Dhaka Reporters Unity. The launch coincided with International Women's Day.

Nahid introduced a three-member leadership committee for the platform, which will expand to 41 members.

Monira Sharmin, joint convener of the NCP central committee, was named convener, while Dr Mahmuda Alam Mitu will serve as member secretary and Nusrat Tabassum as chief organiser of Nari Shakti.

Monira was elected general secretary of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

LAND WANTED



Pubali Bank PLC., the largest Private Commercial Bank in Bangladesh is looking for a **commercial unhindered plot/Land** in the prime location of **Tejgaon area & Gulshan Area** for construction of **corporate office Complex / Head Office building or newly constructed commercial building/ the building of under construction (total floor area above 2 lacs sft.)** for Pubali Bank PLC.

Actual owner/owners (who are interested to sell) are requested to collect the proforma from under mentioned Division / office and submit/drop all the photocopies of deeds & documents relating to the ownership of the plot/Land or newly constructed building/ the building of under construction along with a forwarding letter in the tender Box of Purchase Committee kept at **12th floor, Head Office, Dhaka by 11.00AM on 08 April 2026** or before positively. Offers will be opened on **08 April 2026 at 11.30 AM** in presence of available participants.

Pubali Bank PLC. reserves the right to accept partly or fully of any offer or reject any or all offers without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Md. Kamruzzaman
General Manager & Division Head
Establishment & General Services Division
Pubali Bank PLC.
Head Office, 26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka 1000
Mobile No. 01324412802



পুভালী ব্যাংক পাবলিসি
PUBALI BANK PLC.

He was hiding, not forcibly

FROM PAGE 3
 The remark came after prosecutors objected to Titto's attempt to highlight inconsistencies between the testimony of prosecution witness Mir Ahmed Bin Quasem Arman and the statement he had earlier given to the investigation officer.

Arman, now a lawmaker, had himself been detained for eight years at a secret interrogation facility run by Rab's TFI during the government of Sheikh Hasina.

During cross-examination, Titto sought to question the witness about differences between his tribunal testimony and the statement he previously gave to investigators.

Prosecutors opposed the move, citing a ruling by the Appellate Division that restricts defence lawyers from using such contradictions during cross-examination in crimes against humanity trials.

Challenging the restriction, Titto asked whether the defence should remain bound by a judgement delivered during what he termed a "fascist rule".

"We call that government fascist, and it is said that that government controlled the judiciary. Are we still going to sit wearing the crown of a fascist?" he told the three-member tribunal led by Chairman Justice Md Golam Mortuza

Mozumder. During the cross-examination, the defence also claimed that no law enforcement personnel searched Arman's rented residence or abducted him on August 4, 2016, as alleged.

He further argued that neither Rab nor any other agency had forcibly disappeared Arman and suggested that he had gone into hiding.

Barrister Arman rejected the defence claims.

Earlier, while testifying before the tribunal, he gave a detailed account of his eight-year confinement in the "Aynaghar", a secret detention facility allegedly linked to the TFI cell operated under Rab.

Health minister slams dirty conditions at mental hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain expressed strong dissatisfaction after witnessing dirty conditions and various irregularities while on a surprise visit to the National Institute of Mental Health and Hospital in the capital yesterday.

He noted the presence of cockroaches and bedbugs, and an overall unhygienic environment, seeing dirty hospital beds. The authorities could not provide him with the number of doctors who were absent or had arrived late.

Accompanied by MA Muhit, state minister for the health ministry, Husain continued surprise visits to various health facilities to ensure the timely presence of doctors and health workers.

A long queue of attendants was delayed from receiving their patient slips as the printer's toner had run out.

The minister could then be heard telling the hospital director, "Why didn't you buy it [toner] if you were informed yesterday?"

Patient's attendants complained to them about dirty beds showing blood stains from bedbugs and the large presence of cockroaches.

Later, the minister told reporters, "Even the chief management here cannot say how many doctors are absent. They also do not keep track of whether doctors are arriving late."

"That is why we have said that next week we will come again on any day around 7:45am and stand here. We will physically check how many doctors are present and how many are absent," he added.

Hospital Director Prof Mahbubur Rahman told reporters that he could not immediately provide the number of absent doctors as he has to collect it from the biometric register.

Replying to another question, he said they blocked the bill for the pest control contractor due to poor service.

The minister already spoke with the contractor, he added.

Settle July Charter issues politically, not in court

Speakers urge BNP at dialogue in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political leaders and civil society members yesterday criticised ruling party lawmakers for not taking oath as members of the Constitution Reform Assembly, saying it disregarded the referendum mandate.

They were speaking at a dialogue, titled "Constitutional Recognition of July and Citizen Expectations for the New Parliament," organised by the Referendum Implementation Citizen Forum at the CIRDP auditorium in the capital.

At the event, National Citizen Party MP Akhter Hossen said under the July Charter, MPs are supposed to take oath as members of the Constitutional Reform Assembly immediately after taking their oath as MPs, but the BNP violated the law by not doing so.

"The decision of the people through referendums and popular uprisings is stronger than any law," he said.

He alleged that BNP had promised before the election to implement the July Charter, but later backed away from the commitment.

He warned that another movement like the July uprising could emerge if the people's mandate is ignored.

Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said the issue cannot be resolved strictly through constitutional interpretation, noting that the previous government came to power through a popular uprising

rather than constitutional procedures.

He said the presidential order had already received public approval through the referendum, making it a political decision that should not be challenged through judicial intervention.

He also warned that not taking the second oath could create complications for the BNP and harm its future.

Rastro Songskar Andolan Chairman Hasnat Qayyum said involving the courts in the referendum and the July Charter was a mistake, arguing that political settlements should be resolved through political processes rather than judicial intervention.

Saying Sheikh Hasina had relied on the courts over the caretaker government issue and eventually paid a heavy political price, he expressed hope that the current government would not repeat the same mistake.

Advocate Shishir Monir said the judiciary's involvement in political matters had not produced positive outcomes in the past and was unlikely to do so in the future.

He said the July uprising did not occur within the framework of the constitution, adding that if examined strictly from a constitutional perspective, both the interim government and the current government could be declared illegal by the court.

AB Party President Mojibur Rahman

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Japanese team, CAAB may resume

FROM PAGE 3

Air Commodore Abu Sayeed Mehboob Khan, member of CAAB, told The Daily Star on Saturday.

Earlier on February 22, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at a high-level meeting at the Cabinet Division instructed officials concerned of CAAB to sit with the Japanese delegation to settle the issue within this month, said CAAB sources.

Aviation experts warned that prolonged delays in finalising an operator could increase costs as warranties on installed equipment would expire and could

undercut the strategic benefits of the project.

CAAB and the Japanese consortium could not reach a consensus to ink an agreement over differences regarding operating expenditure and revenue earnings from the terminal.

"We argued that the operating expenditure is less than the estimation submitted by the Japanese delegation," said a top CAAB official engaged in the discussion.

"Another big difference between the two sides is revenue earning. Their [Japanese delegation] estimation for revenue earnings from the third terminal is much less than ours," the official also

said, wishing anonymity.

"If the Japanese delegation maintains the same standing, then we have nothing to say, but if they offer something new, then we have an option to discuss," said Air Commodore Mehboob Khan.

Earlier, despite repeated efforts by the interim government, the third terminal could not be opened, following failure to reach a decision on ground handling and operational issues, besides some technical flaws in the terminal building.

The terminal was previously inaugurated through a "soft opening" in October 2023.



Chittagong University
Chittagong

Ref. No. HEAT-11006-CU/2025-2026 Date: ০৮/০৩/২০২৬

e-Tender Notice

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP portal System and no offline/hard copied will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). e-Tenders are invited in e-GP portal system by the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, University of Chittagong for the procurement of following items:

Sl. No.	APP ID, Tender ID, Package No. (through OTM)	Package Description	Online Tender Notice Publication date	Online Tender Closing/Opening date
1	1240186, APP-11009-goods-G3	Physical Services: 1. Whole genome sequencing, sequence annotation and training. 2. Short DNA sequencing.	12-Mar-2026 13:41:00	13-Apr-2026 13:41:00
2	1241160, APP-11009-goods-NS-2	Supply of chemicals and laboratory consumables	12-Mar-2026 13:41:00	13-Apr-2026 13:41:00

e-Tender details can be downloaded from as stated above on e-GP system for purpose. The fees for the e-Tender documents from the e-GP system must be deposited online through any registered bank. e-Tenders will be accepted within the date and time stated and accepted tenders will be opened online immediately.

Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP portal system and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

০৮/০৩/২০২৬
 Mohammad Monirul Islam
 Professor,
 Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
 &
 Sub-project Manager (SPM)
 HEAT-11009-CU ATF Sub-project. GD-524



চট্টগ্রাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
চট্টগ্রাম

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০৩/২০২৬ তারিখঃ ০৮-০৩-২০২৬

নিম্নে বর্ণিত বেতন ফেল এবং বৃত্তি মোতাবেক প্রবেশ অন্যান্য জাতীয় চট্টগ্রাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের নিম্নোক্ত পদে নিয়োগের জন্য বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে নির্ধারিত ফরমে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:

ক্রমিক নং	পদের নাম	অধিদপ্তর	পদের সংখ্যা	জাতীয় বেতন ফেল-২০১৫
১	সেফটি অফিসার	Institutional Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC)	০১ (একটি) স্থায়ী	৯ম গ্রেড

প্রয়োজনীয় যোগ্যতা:
 শিক্ষাজীবনে তৃতীয় শ্রেণি/বিভাগ ব্যতিরিক্ত স্নাতক স্তরের স্নাতক ডিগ্রি পাশ হতে হবে। পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট (পি.পি.এ ২০০৬, ২০১০ PPR ২০০৯ এবং সর্বশেষ পরিবর্তনসহ) এবং ডাটা, টায়্প ও কম্পিউটার (M.S. Word, M.S. Excel, Power Point, Email) সম্পর্কে সম্যক ধারণা রাখতে হবে। (দুই) বছর আই.কিউ.এ.সি.তে কাজ করার বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে। নিয়োগের শর্ত পূরণ সাপেক্ষে বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের আবেদনকারী হওয়া থেকে পারে। অনার্স/স্নাতক ডিগ্রিতে প্রথম শ্রেণি/বিভাগ প্রার্থীর ক্ষেত্রে অভিজ্ঞতা শিথিলযোগ্য। ছয় মাসের অস্থায়ী প্রতিবেদন, তিন মাসের আর্থিক প্রতিবেদন প্রদানের অভিজ্ঞতা প্রার্থীর অতিরিক্ত যোগ্যতা হিসেবে বিবেচিত হবে।

উক্ত পদে নিয়োগ পেলে সর্বপ্রথম কর্মকর্তাকে এ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে প্রথম যোগদানের পর অত্র ০২ (দুই) বছর চাকরি করতে হবে এবং যোগদানের সময় এ মর্মে একটি অঙ্গীকারনামা প্রদান করতে হবে। উক্ত সময়ের মধ্যে সর্বপ্রথম কর্মকর্তার কোনো চাকরির আবেদন অন্য কোন প্রতিষ্ঠানে ফেরাস্ত করা হবে না।

বাঞ্ছিতভাবে যোগাযোগ করে প্রকিউরমেন্ট অফিস হতে অথবা চট্টগ্রাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ওয়েবসাইট <http://www.cu.ac.bd> হতে ডাউনলোড করে দরখাস্তের নির্ধারিত ফরম সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। উপরিস্থিত পদের জন্য ০৮ (আট) সেট দরখাস্ত আবেদনীর ২৯-০৩-২০২৬ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে (সকাল ৯.০০টা হতে বেলা ৩.০০মি. পর্যন্ত) গৃহীত হবে।

বাংলাদেশের আর্থিক/জনতা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড এর কোন শাখা হতে প্রকিউরমেন্ট, চট্টগ্রাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের এর অন্তর্গত আর্থিক/জনতা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড, চট্টগ্রাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় শাখা, চট্টগ্রাম ব্যাংক এর দরখাস্ত ফি বাবদ ৬ ৫০০/- (পাঁচশত) টাকার ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/চেক-অর্থীর (অফেন্ডারযোগ্য) ও প্রার্থীকে সম্পূর্ণভাবে পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ০৩ (তিন) কপি সত্যায়িত ছবি দরখাস্তের মূল সেটের সাথে এবং মার্কিনীটসহ সফল শিক্ষাপত্র যোগ্যতা, অভিজ্ঞতা ও নাগরিকত্ব সার্টিফিকেটের সত্যায়িত কপি দরখাস্তের প্রত্যেক সেটের সাথে অথবা ই-ইলেকট্রনিক্সের নিকট নির্ধারিত তারিখের মধ্যে পৌঁছাতে হবে।

ফি ব্যতিরেকে কিংবা উপরে বর্ণিত ব্যাংক বাস্তব অন্য কোন ব্যাংকে প্রবেশ ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/চেক-অর্থীর গ্রাহক দরখাস্ত, বিজ্ঞপ্তির শর্ত পূরণ না করলে সে দরখাস্ত, বিজ্ঞপ্তির যোগ্যতা অনুযায়ী প্রয়োজনীয় ডিগ্রি পরীক্ষায় Appeared প্রার্থীর পেশকৃত দরখাস্ত, নির্ধারিত শেষ তারিখের পরে গ্রাহক দরখাস্ত, ডাকযোগ্য/কৃত্রিমের সার্ভিস ইত্যাদির মাধ্যমে প্রেরিত কোন দরখাস্ত নির্ধারিত শেষ তারিখের মধ্যে পাওয়া না গেলে সে দরখাস্ত সরাসরি খারিজ বলে গণ্য হবে।

প্রার্থী তাঁর আবেদনে কোনো অর্জিত শিক্ষাপত্র যোগ্যতা/প্রশিক্ষণ ইত্যাদি বিষয় যোগদান করে থাকলে এবং পরবর্তীতে নিয়োগপ্রাপ্ত হলে এ সকল শিক্ষাপত্র যোগ্যতা তাঁর চাকরি জীবনে কোনো পেনাল্টি/নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে গণনা করা হবে না।

চাকরিরত প্রার্থীসকলে অপর্যায় যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে। বিশেষ ক্ষেত্রে অতিরিক্ত পরিপূর্ণ এক সেট দরখাস্ত যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে প্রেরণ করে নির্ধারিত সংখ্যক দরখাস্ত (ব্যাংক ড্রাফট ও সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ সফল কাগজ/ডকুমেন্ট) অফিস হিসেবে যথাযথমতে দাখিল করতে হবে।

নির্ধারিত প্রার্থীদের মাসিক মূল বেতন নির্ধারণের ক্ষেত্রে কোন প্রতিষ্ঠানের এল.পি.সি. গ্রহণ করা হবে না।

০৮/০৩/২০২৬
 প্রফেসর ড. মোহাম্মদ সাইফুল ইসলাম
 প্রকিউরমেন্ট (সহকারী)
 চট্টগ্রাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
 ফোন নং: ০৩২৩৩৪৪০৯৬৬-৯৪, ০৩৩৪৪৪০৯৬৯-৯১, গ্রহণ-৪২০১ GD-525

President calls

FROM PAGE 3

and tough administrative actions, which brought acid terrorism close to zero. "The example could serve as a model in efforts to prevent violence against women."

"Foundation for women's political and economic empowerment was laid by the proclaimer of independence late President Ziaur Rahman, who established the first Women Affairs cell in the President's Secretariat in 1976. Later, a separate Ministry of Women's Affairs was formed in 1978, which was later transformed into the present Ministry of Women and Children Affairs during Khaleda Zia's tenure," he said.

He also said Khaleda Zia's government introduced compulsory primary education and free education for girls up to

class XII. Stipends for girls were also introduced to boost female education, a programme widely praised internationally and recognised by the World Bank and other organisations as a successful model for the developing world, he added.

Congratulating the recipients of the "Shreshtha Adama Nari" awards, the President said their achievements serve as inspiration for society.

The President handed over awards to six women for their outstanding contributions.

Barrister Zaima Rahman, granddaughter of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, received the award on behalf Khaleda Zia for her contributions to women's education and the advancement of democracy.

NCP launches women

FROM PAGE 3

Dhaka University's Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall Sangsad in 2019; Nusrat was a frontline coordinator of the anti-discrimination student movement at DU; and Dr Mahmuda Mitu treated injured protesters during the July uprising.

While explaining the rationale behind the initiative, Nahid said, "We initially thought women's issues could be addressed through the party's main organisational structure. However, after a year of experience, we realised that a separate platform focusing on women's issues is necessary."

"Nari Shakti

represents the vision of a discrimination free society for women we sought to establish through the July mass uprising," Nahid said.

He noted that women from NCP, its affiliated organisations and outside the party would be able to join the platform.

A discussion marking International Women's Day was also held at the event. Former interim government adviser Farida Akhtar spoke alongside Sabikun Nahar Munni of Jamaat-e-Islami's central women's wing, The Daily Star's senior reporter Zyma Islam and Ducus leader Fatima Tasnim Zuma, among others.

3 ex-leaders of DU dorms

FROM PAGE 12

15 unidentified individuals, gathered in front of Gate 1 of the National Museum in Shahbagh.

At the time, the accused chanted slogans using loudspeakers and tried to resume activities of the banned organisation, according to case details.

They also obstructed police from performing their duties and attempted to snatch Shoikot from police custody, the case

statement said.

At that time, a group of students, led by Ducus representatives AB Zubair and Musaddiq Ali Ibne Mohammad, held Mamun and Emi and handed them over to the police.

Following the incident, police filed a case under the Anti-Terrorism Act with Shahbagh Police Station yesterday.

Earlier in the day, while briefing reporters after separate law and order

meetings ahead of Eid and Independence Day, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed was asked about reports of activists of a banned organisation attempting to stage programmes.

He said organisations facing restrictions under the Anti-Terrorism Act may from time to time announce political activities, but police would deal with any such isolated visible incidents.



পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি
POWER GRID BANGLADESH PLC
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd
 ফোন নং- ২৭.২১.৭৫০৭.৬৯১.০২.০০১.২৬.১৫৭ তারিখঃ ০৮/০৩/২০২৬খ্রিঃ

e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের জিএমডি, নোয়াখালী দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টালে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Title of Works	Last date & time of document selling	Last date & time of security submission
1226335	Supply, Installation, Testing and commissioning of 132/33 KV 48/64 MVA Transformer T-3 including Installation a New 132 KV diameter, 132 KV and 33 KV Control and protection panel, RTCC Panel etc. as per approved design and drawing at 132/33 KV Ramgonj Grid substation for upgrading Capacity under GMD, Power Grid, Noakhali.	24-Mar-2026 at 15:00	25-Mar-2026 at 11:30
1235807	Cleaning work including control room, toilet, parking, stairs, lobby and sentry post of Ramgonj 132/33KV Grid S/S under GMD Noakhali, Power Grid.	17-Mar-2026 at 15:00	18-Mar-2026 at 11:30
1235882	Repair and maintenance works of different types of tower leg maintenance, coloring and numbering of 132KV Chowmuhani-Desh Energy Line under Ramgonj Grid Sub Station of GMD-Noakhali, Power Grid.	23-Mar-2026 at 15:00	24-Mar-2026 at 11:30
1201146	Supply and installation of 03 (three) units of 05-ton (60,000 BTU/HR) capacity Air Coolers for the 132 KV AIS Control Room of the Chowmuhani 230/132/33 KV Grid Substation under GMD-Noakhali.	30-Mar-2026 at 15:00	31-Mar-2026 at 11:30
1238871	Regarding the supply of tools and equipment on urgent basis for use at Ramgonj 132/33KV Grid Sub-station under GMD, Power Grid, Noakhali.	29-Mar-2026 at 15:30	30-Mar-2026 at 11:30
1236675	Proposal for installation works a new main gate of Chowmuhani 230/132/33KV Grid Substation under GMD Noakhali, Power Grid.	31-Mar-2026 at 15:30	01-Apr-2026 at 11:30
1236587	Tower Protection & Muffling of 132KV Feni-Chaundagram Transmission line of 2 Nos Tower (446 & 447), 132KV Feni-Baraiyarhat Transmission line of 2 Nos Tower (531 & 532) and 230KV BSRM-Cumilla (North) Transmission line of 2 Nos Tower (233 & 235) Total 06(Six) Nos Tower at Feni 132/33KV Grid Sub-Station under GMD-Noakhali, Power Grid.	01-Apr-2026 at 15:00	02-Apr-2026 at 11:30
1236392	Construction work of a Tin Shed in the existing open store at FENI Grid Substation under GMD Noakhali, Power Grid.	30-Mar-2026 at 15:00	31-Mar-2026 at 11:30

আগ্রহী ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোঃ আব্দুল হালিম
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, জিএমডি, নোয়াখালী



Trust Bank PLC.
A Bank for Financial Inclusion

Head Office, Shadhinata Tower, Bir Srestha Shaheed Jahangir Gate, Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka-1206

TENDER NOTICE

1. Sealed tender is hereby invited by Trust Bank PLC. from bonafide tenderers/suppliers/firms for following tender:
Item-1: Procurement of 100 Units of Desktop PC for the year 2026-2027 of Trust Bank PLC.
Item-2: Procurement of ISO 27001:2022 Consultancy and Implementation with Certification.

2. Interested bidders may collect Tender schedule after depositing tender schedule fee from Trust Bank PLC., Purchase & Procurement Department, Head Office, Shadhinata Tower (Level # 05), Bir Srestha Shaheed Jahangir Gate, Dhaka Cantonment, Dhaka.

Note: TBL reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders, in part or full.

Purchase & Procurement Department

SIGNAL JAMMING

1,000 ships at times lost GPS in Middle East

AFP, Washington

The global positioning system (GPS) capabilities of cargo ships, oil tankers and other vessels stuck in the Middle East because of the widening war are likely worse than those in your cell phone.

Experts say this deficiency explains why since the start of US-Israeli strikes, the jamming of satellite navigation signals has left about 1,000 ships in the Gulf and the Gulf of Oman unable to determine their location, either momentarily or continuously.

Dimitris Ampatzidis, a risk and compliance analyst for the energy market intelligence firm Kpler, said the number represents about half of the vessels in the area. The vast majority of those ships are located off the UAE and Oman.

SPOOFING

Jamming a GPS signal is "not that complicated," said Katherine Dunn, the author of an upcoming book of the history of GPS, "Little Blue Dot." All one needs is "another radio transmitter that can broadcast on the same frequency, but louder," she said, which creates "a wall of mush." Spoofing is more sophisticated -- and more dangerous, affecting a ship's Automatic Identification System, or AIS.



DEFENSIVE JAMMING

Signal jamming is undoubtedly being used both offensively and defensively. Gulf states are directing their systems towards their own shores to ward off Iran's satellite-guided Shahed drones -- at the cost, deemed acceptable, of disrupting their own lives.

Israel did the same thing in 2024, as did Iran after its 12 days of conflict with Israel last year. "Even if their own air traffic or maritime traffic or their delivery drivers or their dating apps are affected by GPS jamming and spoofing, they'll do it, just like Israel did. Israel did it for a year in 2024," Todd Humphreys, an engineering professor at the University of Texas at Austin, told AFP. For air and sea navigation, start-ups are developing alternative technologies using Earth's magnetic field or inertial navigation. But for ships today, navigating without a GPS is still far in the future.



In this photo obtained from Iran's ISNA news agency yesterday, rescue workers carry the body of a victim after a strike on a building in Tehran's Enghelab Square. PHOTO: AFP

Turkey warns of Iran civil war plot

Reports say US plans to arm Kurds to infiltrate Iran

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey's foreign minister advised Saturday against efforts to cause a civil war inside Iran, while warning Tehran after Nato intercepted a Turkey-bound ballistic missile launched from Iran this week.

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said any effort to stir up a civil war inside Iran in a bid to bring about regime change would be a "historic" mistake.

"We are against all scenarios that aim to instigate a civil war in Iran, that target ethnic or religious fault lines," Fidan told journalists in Istanbul. "This is the most dangerous scenario," he added.

He was speaking after reports

that Washington was looking to arm Kurdish guerrillas to infiltrate Iran, with US President Donald Trump expressing support for such an offensive.

However, Trump said Saturday that "We're not looking to the Kurds going in".

"We're very friendly with the Kurds, as you know, but we don't want to make the war any more complex than it already is," he told reporters in a briefing aboard Air Force One. Fidan said he had raised the matter with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who had denied any American involvement in such an effort.

"They stated they are not

involved in such an effort and have no such intention," Fidan said after the pair spoke on Wednesday.

He pointed the finger instead at Israel's "strategy of using Kurdish groups in the region as proxies".

Such a move would raise hackles in Turkey, which has fought a decades-long bloody conflict with the Kurdish militant group PKK, which it is now seeking to end.

"We are openly warning everyone... against this scenario," Fidan said. "This will not only lead to more suffering and loss of life for innocent civilians in Iran, but it will also cause millions to be displaced and flee to neighbouring countries and beyond," he added.

Nepal's centrist RSP party poised for landslide

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's centrist RSP party of rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah had secured a majority in the direct parliamentary elections, partial official results showed yesterday, and was heading for a landslide according to official trends.



The 35-year-old's Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) was also leading in the proportional representation vote, according to results declared and election commission trends.

Shah himself had on Saturday defeated the veteran four-time prime minister KP Sharma Oli -- whose Marxist-led government was ousted in the violence last year -- in his own seat.

India thrash NZ

FROM PAGE 1

Opener Tim Seifert hit 52 off 26 balls but his departure in the ninth over off struggling spinner Varun Chakravarty effectively ended the Black Caps' slim hopes.

Wickets kept tumbling and Bumrah struck with successive deliveries to bring up a hat-trick ball which was just about negotiated by Lockie Ferguson.

Skipper Mitchell Santner hit 43 but was never going to be able to prevent New Zealand from slipping to their second T20 World Cup final loss after they went down to Australia in 2021.

India exorcised the ghosts of the past at the same venue from when they were shocked by Australia in the 2023 ODI World Cup final.

Govt revises rules

FROM PAGE 12

Four officials from the Cabinet Division and the Ministry of Public Administration expressed frustration over the move.

"Taking a controversial decision just to justify an error is unwise," one of them said.

Another official added, "Amending the rules instead of correcting the mistake will set a bad precedent."

Asked for comment,

Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Gani said the government has the authority to take such decisions.

Responding to a question on whether amending the rules instead of correcting the mistake could be controversial, Gani said, "There is no room for controversy here. The government decided to allow the award in a different category after 25 years for exceptional contributions."

Prime accused

FROM PAGE 1

"An operation was conducted, and during the intervening night of March 7-8, 2026, the two Bangladeshi nationals -- Rahul alias Faisal Karim Masud and Alamgir Hossain -- were detained from Bongaon," the statement said.

According to the STF, the suspects are accused of murdering Bangladeshi political activist Osman Hadi before fleeing the country.

Investigators said the two allegedly entered Indian territory illegally through the Meghalaya border, travelled through several locations in India, and eventually reached Bongaon in West Bengal while attempting to return to Bangladesh.

The STF said the operation was carried out based on intelligence shared by Bangladesh's defence intelligence authorities. During preliminary interrogation, Faisal, also known as Rahul, reportedly confessed that he and Alamgir were involved in Hadi's killing, investigators said.

Indian authorities have registered a case in

connection with the arrests. The suspects were produced before a court and remanded in police custody, while further investigation is underway, the statement added.

Citing various sources, the ISPR also said the newly appointed director general of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence recently visited India and urged Indian authorities to arrest those involved in the Hadi murder and facilitate their return to Bangladesh.

Following the request and based on specific intelligence, Indian authorities were able to detain the two suspects, the source said. Meanwhile, Inqilab Moncho last night brought out a procession at Dhaka University demanding justice for Hadi. The march was held after an iftar programme at the Teacher-Student Centre on the university campus.

The procession started from TSC, through the Shahbagh intersection, and ended the rally at the Raju Sculpture. Contacted by The Daily Star, the platform's Dhaka University convener, Fatima Tasnim Juma, said they demand the disclosure

of the main perpetrator behind the killing.

She added that the platform's next programme will be announced after discussions with law enforcement agencies.

Hadi, who was also an independent aspirant for the Dhaka-8 constituency, was shot in Dhaka's Paltan area on December 12 last year. He died on December 18 while undergoing treatment in Singapore.

On December 14, Inqilab Moncho Member Secretary Abdullah Al Jaber filed an attempted murder case with Paltan Model Police Station against Faisal and several unnamed individuals. The case later became a murder case after Hadi's death.

Earlier, at a press briefing on December 28, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Additional Commissioner SN Nazrul Islam said Faisal and Alamgir had crossed into India's Meghalaya state with the help of local associates. However, India's Meghalaya Police and the Border Security Force at the time rejected the claim.

On January 6 this year, DB Inspector Faisal Ahmed, the investigation officer of the case, submitted a charge sheet against the prime

accused, four of his family members, and 12 others.

In the charge sheet, the IO said analysis of the accused persons' political affiliations and Hadi's political statements suggested the killing stemmed from political rivalry.

The charge sheet also mentioned that Faisal and his associates infiltrated Hadi's election campaign as part of a pre-planned effort to disrupt the upcoming 13th parliamentary election and create fear among voters.

But on January 15, Jaber filed a petition with the court, rejecting the probe report submitted by the DB. The same day, the court directed the Criminal Investigation Department to conduct further investigation after accepting a no-confidence petition against the DB's probe report.

On February 26, a Dhaka court asked the CID to submit a probe report by March 11. Dhaka Additional Metropolitan Magistrate Jashita Islam passed the order after the CID failed to submit the report on the scheduled date, said a court sub-inspector.

Crisis exposes fragile energy security

FROM PAGE 1

for about 14 days, and 22,000 tonnes of octane, sufficient for around 24 days.

Despite delays in scheduled arrivals, officials say supply remains manageable. Under BPC's March import plan, Bangladesh is set to receive 2,00,000 tonnes of crude oil, 3,74,000 tonnes of diesel, 25,000 tonnes of octane, and 45,000 tonnes of jet fuel.

Energy experts said the current stock is essentially an "operational buffer", meaning that if shipments were halted, the country would have around two weeks of routine supply before fuel-dependent activities begin to face disruption.

Officials added that agreements with oil refineries will ensure fuel supplies through June. Although some shipments have been slightly delayed, deliveries continue, and citizens have been advised to follow daily fuel caps per vehicle to ensure equitable access.

The government has launched mobile

drives across the country and deployed additional police at refuelling stations.

In Dhaka, drives were held at 13 filling stations yesterday. Six of them had no supply during the day. Three of them resumed sales in the evening after oil trucks arrived.

The power, energy and mineral resources ministry has also asked district administrations to monitor filling stations across the country.

"It is being observed that some petrol pumps and filling stations are selling fuel above the government set price, stockpiling supplies for profit, or diverting fuel to the open market," the ministry said in a letter.

BPC has also written to the home ministry seeking additional police patrols at filling stations to maintain order amid rising demand.

"Various incidents involving disputes between customers and station staff have been reported during the current period," the letter

said. Officials said the temporary shortages seen over the weekend were mainly due to a sudden surge in demand, but the situation has been stabilising since depots resumed fuel releases yesterday.

Experts noted that Bangladesh still lacks a formal strategic fuel reserve, and even a modest emergency stockpile could strengthen the country's ability to withstand global supply disruptions.

Prof M Tamim, an energy expert and vice-chancellor of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), suggested building an additional reserve equivalent to 15 days of fuel consumption to guard against volatility.

He mentioned that despite significant investments in energy infrastructure over the past decade, Bangladesh continues to operate with limited refining capacity and thin reserves.

The country's only

refinery, Eastern Refinery, built in 1963, can process about 1.5 million tonnes of crude oil annually, while Bangladesh imports 7-8 million tonnes of various petroleum products each year.

Key decisions

FROM PAGE 12

"People have the right to know all information, whether it is right or wrong, motivated, in the interest of the state or against it," he said.

Calling on the authorities to review the matter, he added: "I request the state and the government to consider how logical this removal is."

Asked for examples, Ittekkharuzzaman said decisions related to the Prime Minister's Office and the Chief Adviser's Office were among those no longer available online.

"Many of those decisions and information have been removed and cannot be found," he said.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তা কার্যালয়
চট্টগ্রাম দক্ষিণ বন বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম

"দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি"

এতদ্বারা সর্বসাধারণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, নীলাম/দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০২/রাজব অব ২০২৫-২০২৬ তাং- ১৩/০৮/২০২৫ খ্রি.এর ধারাবাহিকতায় অত্র বন বিভাগের বিভিন্ন রেঞ্জের জমকৃত/খড়পড়া/বিভাগীয় পর্যায়ে আহরিত বিক্রয়যোগ্য বনজন্তুব্যের লটসমূহ আগামী ০৭/০৮/২০২৬ খ্রি. তারিখে দরপত্রের মাধ্যমে বিক্রয় করা হবে। দরপত্র বাস্তব একই তারিখে বিকাল ৩.০ ঘটিকায় দরপত্রদাতাদের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি উপস্থিত থাকে) খোলা হবে। অত্রই ক্ষেত্র/প্রতিষ্ঠানকে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে জাতীয় বিষয়াদি জেনে নেওয়ার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো। উল্লেখ্য যে, দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি এর শর্তাবলী সংগ্রহ করার অনুরোধ করা হলো।

ক্র/নং	দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ ও সময়	দরপত্র যে সকল স্থানে গ্রহণ করা হবে।	বনজন্তুব্যের অবস্থান
০১	০৭/০৮/২০২৬ খ্রি. সকাল ১০.০ ঘটিকা হতে শুরু করে বেলা-২.০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত	১। বন সুরক্ষকের কার্যালয়, চট্টগ্রাম অঞ্চল। ২। জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, চট্টগ্রাম জেলা। ৩। বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়, চট্টগ্রাম দক্ষিণ বন বিভাগ।	কালুরঘাট ডিপো, রাঙেনিয়া, চুলতি, দোহাজারী, খুলশিয়া, পটিয়া, পদ্মুয়া, কালীপুর, বারবাকিয়া, জলদী, মাদারী, এবং শহর রেঞ্জ [চট্টগ্রাম দক্ষিণ বন বিভাগের রেঞ্জ ও বিট এলাকা]।

মোহাম্মদ সোহেল রানা
পরিচিতি নং ১৩২০৯
উপবন সুরক্ষক
বিভাগীয় বন কর্মকর্তা
চট্টগ্রাম দক্ষিণ বন বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Inspector General
Bangladesh Police
Police Headquarters, Dhaka

Corrigendum of International Tender Notice

Memo No-44.01.0000.058.07.019.25/272 Date: 08/03/2026

Invitation for International Tender Notice Published in different national dailies as per Invitation tender ref No-44.01.0000.058.07.019.25/05(2025-2026) Date: 02/02/2026 for procurement of **7.62x51 mm Cartridge** in FY 2025-2026 is hereby amended as follows:

Particular Information	Published	Revised
Tender last selling date	15 March 2026	15 April 2026
Tender closing date and time	16 March 2026 at 12.00 hrs	16 April 2026 at 12.00 hrs
Tender opening date and time (Technical offer only)	16 March 2026 at 12.30 hrs	16 April 2026 at 12.30 hrs

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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Iran war calls for prudence at home

We must be cautious and frugal to weather any economic disruptions

The US-Israel war on Iran may be playing out far from Bangladesh's border, but it is certainly on our economic horizon. Like many other countries, Bangladesh is already reeling from its immediate impacts, including a surge in oil prices, disruption of a major trade route, and the cancellation of hundreds of flights. However, it is the mid- and long-term aftermath that we must prepare for. And that calls for prudent monetary and fiscal choices at the policymaking level, while individuals must remain frugal without succumbing to panic.

The biggest concerns, understandably, lie with fossil fuels—oil and gas. According to officials, the country still has adequate fuel stocks as expected of normal times. However, Bangladesh may have to pay higher fuel prices in the mid-term even if the war is short-lived, as prices are unlikely to fall anytime soon. Moreover, the virtual closure of the Strait of Hormuz has caused disruptions in global supply chains that will not be resolved immediately, leading to increased logistics and transportation expenses for exports—in other words, reduced export earnings. Both of these factors would place additional pressure on our foreign exchange reserves.

Furthermore, the war in the Middle East could reduce remittance flows that, over the last one and a half years, had increased to help strengthen reserves. The suspension of some ongoing projects in the Middle East may result in the temporary layoff of migrant workers, including Bangladeshis. In addition, due to flight cancellations, thousands of our migrants have had to stay back, unable to return to or reach their overseas workplaces. These factors are likely to translate into lower remittance inflows in the mid- to long run.

To keep the economic wheel turning, the first instinct might be to pay for costly imports using forex reserves, as the Awami League government did in the past. However, experts suggest that Bangladesh should avoid such a strategy and instead explore alternatives, including negotiating deferred payment arrangements with oil exporters, seeking financing from the Islamic Development Bank for fuel imports, and finding alternative fuel sources. The government should also pursue faster disbursement of previously promised loans from multilateral lenders. Indeed, countries of the Global South, which often bear the greatest brunt of global economic crises, could collectively come up with creative strategies to face the imminent economic whirlwind.

The government must also heed economists' advice not to cut the policy rate or pass on higher energy prices directly to consumers. A lower policy rate may boost investment but it would also push up the already high inflation rate. At the same time, to keep agricultural production running smoothly, the government should look for alternative sources of fertiliser imports. So far, the decisions taken by the government have demonstrated reasonable caution and restraint. However, at the individual level, the public must also practise frugality and voluntarily reduce energy consumption. The government alone cannot weather the difficult times ahead; citizens must understand the war's impact and support national resilience in their own way.

Female joblessness rate is quite worrying

Remove barriers for women to join the workforce

While Bangladesh has made remarkable strides in expanding women's access to education, it is concerning that many female graduates still struggle to find suitable employment. Universities and colleges now produce more female graduates than ever, reflecting decades of progress in girls' schooling and higher education. But this achievement has not translated into equal opportunities in the labour market.

According to government data, women accounted for 47 percent of all public university graduates in 2023, up from just 14 percent in 1973. Yet the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' Labour Force Survey (LFS) 2024 shows unemployment among female graduates at 20.39 percent, compared with 11.31 percent for men. The disparity is even sharper among those aged 15 to 29, where 34 percent of women are unemployed, against 26 percent of men. These figures expose a widening gap between educational progress and economic participation.

The problem is further compounded by a mismatch between available jobs and the expectations or qualifications of highly educated job seekers. Beyond the shortage of employment, social and institutional barriers continue to limit women's participation. Safety concerns, long commutes, rigid working hours, and limited housing options often discourage women from pursuing certain jobs. The labour market remains segmented along gender lines, with women concentrated in a narrow set of sectors such as education and healthcare, where growth is limited. Even when women enter the workforce, advancement remains constrained: only about 6.2 percent of managerial positions are held by women, showing that educational gains have yet to translate into equal representation in high-skill and decision-making roles.

Inadequate childcare facilities, inflexible working arrangements, and the absence of family-friendly policies often push women out of the workforce, particularly during motherhood. A BRAC survey found that around 75 percent of women leave work primarily due to family responsibilities and motherhood, and many struggle to return. Entrepreneurship is often offered as an alternative, but women frequently face bureaucratic hurdles, limited access to finance, and inadequate market support.

When educated women are excluded from the workforce, the country loses vital human capital, and decades of progress in women's empowerment are undermined. Economic growth and productivity also falter when half the population cannot fully contribute. Tackling this challenge demands coordinated reforms to create meaningful employment opportunities for women, alongside inclusive workplaces offering childcare support, flexible hours, and stronger protections against discrimination.

Keep politics out of school textbooks



Wasim Bin Habib
is planning editor at The Daily Star.

WASIM BIN HABIB

Few aspects shape a nation's future as profoundly as what it teaches its children. That is why Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon's pledge to revise textbooks with the help of "high-quality experts," and without any party consideration, carries particular significance. It is a welcome declaration. But it also raises an important question: can Bangladesh finally reform its school curriculum without political interference and majoritarian or far-right pressures?

If we are honest with ourselves, we must acknowledge that our education system has undergone repeated changes and experiments over the past two decades. With nearly every change of government, the curriculum has been revisited—not always out of pedagogical necessity, but often to serve ideological or partisan priorities. The content of schoolbooks, particularly in history and literature, has been revised, reframed and, at times, rewritten. The result has been confusion, inconsistency, and generations of students growing up exposed to shifting narratives and experimental systems.

Both the Awami League and the BNP, during their respective past tenures, revised the content of school textbooks. Those changes often drew criticism from educationists and public intellectuals of the time. In 2017, the Awami League government introduced sweeping textbook revisions, removing essays and poems by progressive writers. Critics argued that those revisions were made to accommodate the demands of Hefajat-e-Islam. Whether viewed as compromise or concession, the move was widely perceived as political rather than pedagogical. There was also criticism that history books placed overwhelming emphasis on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's role in the 1971 Liberation War, with comparatively limited

mention of other key figures.

Five years later, in 2022, the Awami League government rolled out a new curriculum up to the secondary level. It promised a shift from rote learning to competency-based education, emphasising creativity and critical thinking. The reforms included removing exams for up to Class 3, scrapping public exams before secondary school, and abolishing the division of students into science, humanities, and business studies streams in Classes 9 and 10.



FILE ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

Introduced in phases, the initiative was bold and ambitious on paper. Yet its rollout was rushed. Teacher training was insufficient, assessment methods were unclear, and many schools struggled to adapt. Confusion reigned in many classrooms, while parents voiced concern. This new curriculum, however, could not survive the political upheaval of 2024.

Following the student-led mass uprising that led to the fall of the Awami League government, the interim administration under Dr Muhammad Yunus declared the curriculum impractical and unimplementable,

initiating yet another overhaul. Decisions were made to revise textbooks at all levels. The three academic streams were reinstated, and the evaluation system reverted to the framework of the National Curriculum 2012. Symbolic changes accompanied structural ones. The message from former prime minister Sheikh Hasina was removed from the back covers of most textbooks and replaced with graffiti created during the July-August 2024 movement. Content related to the student-led July uprising and the mass uprising of 1990 was incorporated into secondary-level textbooks, alongside references to the contributions of national leaders like Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Tajuddin Ahmad, and late president Ziaur Rahman. At the same time, some historical content, including Bangabandhu's March 7 speech, was removed from most textbooks.

Thus, students were once again

compelled to adjust to new textbooks, revised syllabi, and altered assessment systems. Within little more than a decade, learners have experienced multiple structural shifts in how they are taught and evaluated. Even more troubling is the effect on their historical understanding: when textbook narratives change with political tides, students are left with fragmented—and sometimes contradictory—accounts of their own past.

The new government now has an opportunity to break this cycle. Its promise to keep party considerations

Strengthening research in science and engineering in the post-LDC era



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A.S.M.A. HASEEB

Bangladesh is on its way to graduate from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status. However, to become a prosperous nation, it must adopt new strategies for accelerated economic growth. Conventional factors of production cannot provide the required growth rate to achieve the targets. Postgraduate education affects Total Factor Productivity (TFP), the portion of economic growth driven by technological innovation. Bangladesh needs to adopt a growth strategy powered by technological innovation, and to become a technology innovator, this nation needs a critical mass of talent in science and engineering trained at the postgraduate level.

Undergraduate education primarily focuses on disseminating knowledge to students. But postgraduate education involves creating new knowledge through research and disseminating advanced knowledge. Postgraduate students research at the frontiers of knowledge. They write theses that contain newly created knowledge that can lead to innovation. The benefits of postgraduate education are manifold. It prepares professionals to adopt, adapt, and assimilate advanced technology, manage high-tech projects, and develop national policies. Master's and PhD graduates, while working on their theses, can concentrate on problems of national interest and generate indigenous solutions. For Bangladesh to become

a "technology producer" rather than a "technology consumer", it should depend on postgraduate education as a primary mechanism.

Higher PhD density represents the depth of the talent base and the intellectual capability of a country. Intense knowledge-based economies like Switzerland and Nordic countries have a PhD density of over 10,000 per million. Other advanced countries—the US, UK, Germany—have PhD densities of 3,500-6,000. The PhD density in countries like China, India, and Brazil is 200-1,000. In countries with high PhD density, the degree holders work not only in laboratories but also in areas like policymaking, management and marketing, in the public and private sectors. This helps raise the IQ of the entire economy. Countries like China, Malaysia and Vietnam have set targets to increase their PhD density.

At this juncture, the new government should establish a strong postgraduate education and research base in science and engineering. To achieve this, the government should convert a few top-performing universities into research universities, which will put emphasis on postgraduate education and research as the primary objective, and act as national problem-solving hubs. The government should establish them with clear mandates, set key performance indicators, provide them with incentives and adequate funds to

build a strong research infrastructure.

Research universities must focus on research topics related to the vital needs of the critical sectors of the national economy. For example, topics for postgraduate research can be on circular economy centred around garments and textiles, development of active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) for our pharmaceutical sector, creation of our own Bangla GPT, precision agriculture, climate change mitigation technologies, etc.

Universities must target the highest global academic standards, while finding solutions to national problems. There must not be any compromise on quality for the sake of quantity. Strict quality control measures, regular monitoring, and provision of appointments of international experts as PhD examiners must be in place. Quality issues must be fixed at the initial stage, which is critical to sustaining quality and ensuring ethical practice.

The success of converting postgraduate research into innovative solutions crucially depends on effective industry-academia collaboration. In the context of postgraduate education, industry should share its problems with academics so that these can be adopted as research topics for master's and PhD theses. The university should initiate innovative industry-focused postgraduate programmes, like industrial PhD and industrial master's degrees. Qualified industry experts can become co-supervisors or expert members of thesis committees. The synergy between academia and industry must be facilitated by the government.

We must attract meritorious students into postgraduate programmes with adequate incentives. The nation must create the right environment where these highly qualified professionals can

contribute to nation-building. There are many ways postgraduate degree holders can be fruitfully employed. Our industry should employ these high-calibre professionals to innovate and contribute to their growth. Big business groups should create sections like R&D, design, policy, which will be manned by PhD graduates. If done properly, this will reduce our dependence on foreign professionals in the long run. A higher number of qualified postgraduates can boost the confidence of investors and attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The government must play a supportive role by providing the industry with adequate incentives, like tax holidays.

The government should also employ PhD-level professionals in increasing numbers in schemes like specialised scientific civil services and integrated advisory cadres. By doing so it can transform administration into knowledge-driven governance. Variations of such schemes exist in advanced economies like the US, the EU, etc. Government agencies with technical functions must recruit postgraduate degree holders, particularly PhD graduates in science and engineering.

As Bangladesh graduates from the LDC status, it must adopt technological innovation as a vital economic growth strategy. To achieve this, Bangladesh needs a critical mass of talent. Master's and PhD students in science and engineering will research national problems and generate indigenous solutions, leading to technological innovation. Increasing the number of well-trained postgraduates is a strategic necessity, not a luxury, to maintain economic momentum. The nation must create the right environment in which these highly qualified professionals can be meaningfully employed to contribute to nation-building.

MIDDLE EAST SHIPPING RISK

The insurance chokepoint Bangladesh cannot ignore



Shafquat Rabbee is a Bangladeshi-American geopolitical columnist and the founder of the news platform Centrist Nation.

SHAFQUAT RABBEЕ

When drones began striking energy infrastructure across the Persian Gulf, most observers focused on the missiles. But what actually stopped the ships was not the weapons—it was the insurance paperwork. Within days of the Iran conflict intensifying, several of the world's largest maritime insurers issued notices cancelling war risk coverage for vessels operating in the Persian Gulf and Iranian waters. Even though the Strait of Hormuz remained physically open, its effective closure was enforced not by warships but by actuaries.

For Bangladesh, a small open economy whose survival depends largely on imported energy and exported garments, this episode should register as a five-alarm warning requiring immediate policy attention.

The global shipping system is not held together by naval power or diplomatic goodwill. It is held together by insurance. Without proper insurance coverage, including war risk and political risk coverage, vessels cannot enter ports. Banks refuse to finance cargo, while charter contracts become void. Ship owners, operators, and crews will simply not sail.

Globally, maritime insurance is largely provided by 12 insurers' clubs, mostly operating out of London and other Western financial centres. Major protection and indemnity (P&I) clubs—including NorthStandard, the London P&I Club, and the American Club—recently issued formal notices withdrawing war risk provisions from owners' fixed premium P&I coverage and charterers' comprehensive shipowners' liability policies for vessels trading in Iranian waters and the broader Persian Gulf.

The numbers illustrate the scale of what disappeared. Energy analysts at JPMorgan estimated that approximately 329 vessels were operating in the Gulf at the time of the cancellations, collectively requiring roughly \$352 billion in maximum insurance coverage.



Tankers are seen off the coast of the Fujairah as Iran vows to close the Strait of Hormuz, amid the US-Israel conflict with Iran, in Fujairah, UAE on March 3, 2026. FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

That protection vanished in three days.

No military operation could have disrupted maritime commerce so swiftly, so cleanly, and so legally.

Washington grasped the nature of the crisis faster than most. The Trump administration moved quickly to deploy the US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) to provide political risk insurance for shipping operations tied to the Persian Gulf. At the same time, President Donald Trump announced that the US Navy would escort tankers through the Strait of Hormuz if necessary—an acknowledgment that physical security and financial protection must operate together. Provide naval escorts without restoring

insurance coverage, and the ships will still not sail. This dual intervention reflected a sophisticated understanding of how modern trade actually functions.

The US is not alone in maintaining such mechanisms. Britain operates a war risk reinsurance scheme that allows private insurers to continue issuing policies by transferring catastrophic wartime risks to the government.

The Gulf crisis has already inflicted measurable damage. Qatar's decision to halt LNG production forced Bangladesh onto the spot LNG market at significantly elevated prices, placing pressure on the forex reserves and contributing to domestic inflation. Energy price shocks of this kind ripple quickly through an economy with limited fiscal buffers. Yet, the insurance dimension of the crisis has received relatively little attention in Dhaka's policy circles.

If war-risk insurance were to disappear from the trade routes connecting Bangladesh to its energy suppliers in the Gulf—or to its export markets in Europe and North America—the disruption would not be gradual. It would be sudden, severe, and extremely difficult to mitigate through conventional monetary or fiscal policy. No central bank rate adjustment can compensate for ships that will simply not sail.

Bangladesh, therefore, needs to develop sovereign maritime reinsurance capacity, and it should begin doing so now while the lessons of the Hormuz disruption remain fresh.

The architecture need not be complex. The country does not need to replace global P&I clubs or underwrite the entire Gulf shipping market. What it needs is a targeted government-backed backstop: a facility capable of providing excess-of-loss reinsurance support or sovereign guarantees that allow war-risk coverage to remain available for vessels serving critical Bangladeshi trade routes when commercial markets withdraw.

This is essentially the British model, applied to a different scale and context. London does not assume that private insurers will always remain willing to cover wartime risks; it has built a public backstop precisely because it knows they will not. Bangladesh should apply the same realism.

A parallel avenue worth exploring is the creation of a regional maritime insurance consortium among geopolitically non-aligned Asian states. Countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Indonesia, for instance, share the same structural vulnerability: they depend on the same shipping corridors, face the same geopolitical risks, and possess no independent capacity to stabilise insurance markets when Western underwriters withdraw. A pooled sovereign reinsurance mechanism

would allow these economies to collectively provide the financial guarantees that none could provide alone.

Several practical steps could be pursued immediately. First, open formal dialogue with major maritime P&I clubs to understand what sovereign guarantee or premium stabilisation mechanisms might look like. Second, explore whether Bangladesh-linked shipping could access political risk insurance through the US DFC, a mechanism specifically designed for crisis environments. Third, design a domestic sovereign war risk reinsurance facility, even if a modest one, that could be activated quickly during geopolitical crises. And fourth, initiate diplomatic outreach to like-minded Asian economies to explore the formation of a regional maritime insurance pool.

The logic for initiating diplomatic outreach is straightforward: a consortium of non-aligned nations providing mutual maritime insurance backstops would reduce collective dependency on Western financial institutions whose policies may be shaped by geopolitical pressures.

Most discussions of geopolitical threats to global trade focus on military dangers: naval blockades, missile attacks, or the seizure of vessels. These threats are real, but the framework is incomplete. The financial infrastructure of trade—insurance, clearing systems, correspondent banking, and credit facilities—is equally vulnerable and, in some ways, easier to weaponise. Financial disruptions leave fewer fingerprints and generate far less international backlash than firing missiles. Countries that understand this will invest in sovereign capacity across the full spectrum of financial infrastructure, not just military defence. But countries that don't may repeatedly find themselves blindsided, not by the weapons they feared but by the paperwork they ignored.

The Strait of Hormuz remains open today. But the next time a crisis erupts—in the Red Sea, the South China Sea, or elsewhere—the decisive question will again be the one that paralysed shipping in the Gulf this year: not whether ships can sail, but whether they are insured to do so. Bangladesh should have an answer ready.

Balancing the scales begins with being seen



Dr Nira Rahman is an academic at the University of Melbourne, exploring identity, equity, and inclusive, partnership-driven pedagogy in higher education.

NIRA RAHMAN

Late at night, when the house is quiet, I often return to my work. Lecture slides wait unfinished on my laptop. A half-written conference abstract sits on the screen, abandoned earlier when I stepped away to cook dinner. Between answering emails, preparing for the next class, and completing writing tasks, I check in with my daughter, who is now a young adult navigating her own demanding world. It is in these quiet pauses that reflection finds its way in.

One such pause came recently when I opened an invitation in my inbox marking the International Women's Day celebration. This year's theme calls on us to "balance the scales." It is a powerful image with fairness restored, equilibrium achieved. Yet, the longer I sit with this metaphor, the more I find myself questioning it.

What if the scales we are trying to balance were never designed for us in the first place?

The language of balance often suggests a simple equation: work on one side, family on the other. Adjust carefully, and equality will follow. But the lived reality of many working women has not been so straightforward.

Growing up, I watched my mother, a high school teacher, balancing her professional commitments with the everyday labour of sustaining a household and raising a family. She carried her classroom responsibilities into the evening, grading papers with dinner simmering on the stove, or at the dining table after dinner was done. What I rarely saw was time for herself. There was no moment to step back and check whether the scale was balanced.

Across generations, women have learnt to carry these invisible weights without question and often without recognition, a reality long documented in research on women's unpaid labour and the second shift. For women living in diaspora, that labour often multiplies. Diaspora life

is not simply about movement across borders but a continuous negotiation of identity across cultures, values, and expectations. As a Bangalee-Australian woman, my life unfolds within this space of translation between the cultural inheritance of home and the intellectual traditions of Western academia.

Balancing these worlds has been both a privilege and a challenge. It has meant acting as a bridge between worlds, explaining one cultural logic to another while celebrating both. In this space of negotiation, identity itself becomes a balancing act, shaped not only by work and family but also by cultural translation, emotional care, and representation.

Emotional labour, cultural negotiation, caregiving, representation—these forms of work rarely appear in policy documents, performance metrics, or institutional dashboards. Yet, they shape the everyday realities of countless women navigating professional and personal worlds. They are the unseen forces behind the appearance of balance.

Motherhood added yet another layer to this balancing act.

Being both a mother and an academic means living within a delicate choreography of time, care, ambition, guilt, and hope. The intellectual world rewards productivity and focus, while parenting demands emotional presence and flexibility. Neither role exists independently of the other. Looking back on the years of raising my daughter while building an academic career, I often ask myself difficult questions: were we ever truly taught how to balance these scales? Were we equipped with the language to recognise the invisible labour they involve? Were we given tools to protect our physical and mental well-being while navigating multiple expectations?

Too often, the answer is no. Our societies celebrate women's resilience while quietly depending

on it. We praise women for doing it all without asking what it costs them. Yet, education systems rarely prepare young people, especially young women, for the realities of navigating identity, work, culture, and well-being. This is where my role as an educator becomes deeply personal.

Education is not only about transmitting knowledge but shaping how people understand themselves and their place in the world. Classrooms are filled with diverse lives and stories that often remain unseen. When these experiences remain invisible, education flattens human complexity.

But when students are invited to reflect on who they are, what they bring, and how their identities shape their perspectives, something powerful happens. The classroom shifts from a space of information to a space of recognition. And that is where balancing the scales truly begins: not by asking individuals to carry more weight, but by acknowledging the weight that already exists.

Recognition is powerful, but it is only the beginning. If education is where the scales begin to shift, it must also be where students learn how to question the structures that keep them uneven. If education is to contribute meaningfully to gender equity, we must equip young people with more than professional competencies. We must equip them with the intellectual courage to question inequality, the empathy to listen across differences, and the confidence to claim their own voices. This requires education that is identity-affirming, culturally responsive, and inclusive. Education that recognises diversity not as a challenge to manage but as a source of insight and knowledge.

When a student realises that the many strands of their identity—like culture, language, gender, history—are not barriers to success but sources of insight and lived knowledge, the scale shifts slightly. When a young woman learns to articulate her perspective with confidence, the scale shifts again. When institutions recognise that knowledge itself is enriched by lived experience, the shift becomes structural.

These shifts may seem small in isolation, but together they reshape the conditions under which balance becomes possible. If we are serious

about balancing the scales, we must begin by seeing people fully—the invisible labour, cultural complexity, and emotional work women so often carry—and translating that recognition into action.

One practical step is embedding reflection on identity and belonging within education. Schools and universities should create spaces where students can examine how culture, gender, and social expectations shape their experiences of learning and work, fostering the self-awareness and resilience needed for a complex world.

Equally important is integrating well-being into our understanding of success. Balancing the scales cannot simply mean doing more. It must also mean caring for physical and mental

health. Because the truth is this: the scale will not balance itself.

For too long, women have been asked to adjust their lives to fit systems that were never designed with them in mind. Balancing the scales is not about becoming stronger women or proving that we can do it all. The real task is to build educational, professional and social systems that finally learn to see women in the fullness of their identities and experiences.

Identity is never a single weight neatly placed on a scale. It is a constellation of histories, cultures, responsibilities, and aspirations that shape how we move through the world. For many women, particularly those navigating multiple cultures,

roles, and expectations, that weight has long remained layered and largely unseen.

Balancing the scales, therefore, cannot simply mean asking women to manage more. It must begin with recognising what has too often been invisible: the emotional labour, the cultural translation, the quiet negotiations that sustain families, workplaces, and communities. Only when these realities are acknowledged can the promise of balance begin to mean something real. Balancing the scales begins with ensuring that women, in the fullness of their identities and experiences, are finally seen. Education is where that shift must begin.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Inspector General
Bangladesh Police
Police Headquarters, Dhaka

Invitation for e-Tender

Memo No-44.01.0000.453.07.016.26/582 Date: 08 March 2026.

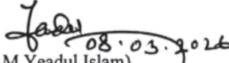
For the financial year 2025-2026, e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following items-

SL	Name of items	Tender ID No	Tender Notice Publication Date & Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
1.	Gear for Tactical Rappelling (Special case) (Harness, Ropes and Bags)	1242643	09-Mar-2026 12:00	25-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 (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


 (A H M Yeadul Islam)
 BP-7907109032
 AIG (Equipment)
 For Inspector General
 Bangladesh Police
 Police Headquarters, Dhaka.
 Tel:-9585304, FAX-9585304
 E-mail: aige_t@police.gov.bd

GD-522

Bubly to make singing debut on 'Ityadi'

The long-running TV programme 'Ityadi' has become a cherished Eid tradition in Bangladesh. Each edition of the show is known for its creative concepts and distinctive performances.

This Eid, actress Shobnom Bubly will appear as a singer, performing alongside popular contemporary musician Imran Mahmudul.

Although Bubly is not a professional singer, she has performed the song impressively alongside Imran. Best known for her acting career, this will mark Bubly's first time singing on television.

The Eid special will air on BTv the night after Eid, following the 8:00pm Bangla news bulletin. Produced by Fagun Audio Vision, the programme is written, directed and presented by Hanif Sanket.



Women's greatest strength is their solidarity: REEKITA NONDINE SHIMU

SHARMIN JOYA

Her acting journey has been slow and steady, yet profoundly impactful. Beginning her silver screen career with a filmmaker like Tareque Masud in *Runway* was nothing short of a dream come true for Reekita Nondine Shimu.

Shimu earned the National Film Award for Best Actress in 2023 for her portrayal of a headstrong, independent woman in *Shimu*, also known as *Made in Bangladesh*, directed by Rubaiyat Hossain. She also bagged the Best Actress Award at the Saint-Jean-de-Luz International Film Festival in France.

Shimu was also featured in *Once Upon a Time in Calcutta*, directed by Aditya Vikram Sengupta, which had its world premiere at the prestigious Venice Film Festival.

Alongside her flourishing acting career, Shimu has always sought ways to contribute positively to society. Through her roles — such as portraying female garment workers in *Under Construction* — she discovered a deeper sense of responsibility. "While performing, I realised that my work could be more than just acting; it could inspire, empower, and send positive energy to society," she says.

Last year, Shimu found her next step when she learned about IWPg's (International Women's Peace Group) Peace Leadership programme in South Korea. The organisation stands in solidarity with women around the world to build a sustainable world of peace through solidarity, education, and international cooperation.

She reached out with her profile, and the response was immediate. "They welcomed me with open arms. They said, 'It's a huge deal for us to have an artiste from Bangladesh joining our mission.' I felt truly seen and encouraged," she recalls. She also mentioned that she is the first actress from Bangladesh to be



PHOTO: JOYEETA TRISHA | OUTFIT: THE MUSLIN

involved in the initiative. "Previously, women from other sectors and professions, including the arts, have joined the initiative; however, they confirmed that, as an actress, I am the first one."

The experience, she says, was transformative. "Through virtual sessions, I met participants from all over the world — people with different perspectives, cultures, and experiences. Sharing our thoughts and listening to theirs made me realise that I am not alone in this work. There is a whole global community committed to peace, and I am part of it."

Apart from that, Shimu has worked on Rubaiyat Hossain's upcoming project, *The Difficult Bride*, sharing the screen with Azmeri Haque Badhan, Zaineen Karim and Sunerah Binte Kamal.

The film received a prestigious grant of €80,000 — approximately Tk 11.6 million — as a winner of the Fondazione Prada Film Fund at the 76th edition of

the Berlin International Film Festival, alongside 13 other films from around the world. This marks the second time the project has secured funding from one of the world's most renowned film platforms.

In 2022, the film received €50,000 at the 37th session of the World Cinema Fund.

"Working with Rubaiyat *Apu* as a woman, an artiste, and an actor has been an immense honour and a true joy for me. The way she helps an actor immerse themselves in their character is genuinely remarkable. She always encourages us to discover the character from within ourselves."

"I firmly believe that women's solidarity is our greatest strength. When we listen to each other's stories and stand by one another, our voices become stronger. As artistes, we have a powerful way to express our thoughts through cinema — a medium that allows us to connect with the world and share these experiences."



Afran Nisho starrer 'Domm' unveils first look

The first look of the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr film *Domm* has been unveiled, offering a glimpse into a tense survival story. The 54-second teaser, released on social media on March 8, reveals the looks of Afran Nisho, Chanchal Chowdhury and Puja Chery.

Set against a mountainous landscape at sunrise, the teaser shows Afran Nisho appearing exhausted and anxious, while Puja Chery and Chanchal Chowdhury react with fear and uncertainty.

Directed by Redoan Rony, the film stars Nisho as Shahjahan Islam Noor. Produced by SVF Alpha-i and Chorki, *Domm*, tagged "Until the Last Breath", is based on true events and is scheduled for release this Eid.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?



'The Handloom Tradition of Bangladesh'

Threads of heritage take centre stage as a week-long exhibition and fair celebrates Bangladesh's storied handloom legacy. From intricate Jamdani to revived Muslin traditions, the showcase honours master weavers, living craft knowledge, and the enduring artistry of cloth that has shaped the country's cultural identity.

DATE: MARCH 8-16, 2026
TIME: 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM
VENUE: BENGAL SHILPALAY, DHANMONDI

NEWS

Country's legal framework

FROM PAGE 12
a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, post-divorce maintenance for Muslim women, and divorce rights for Hindu women.

GBV: OUTDATED LAWS AND GAPS
The study found that Bangladesh's criminal justice system often fails to prosecute sexual violence, highlighting urgent reform needs in laws on rape, sexual offences, dowry-related violence, and domestic abuse.

Serious flaws were identified in the legal definition of rape under Section 375 of the Penal Code, creating four major barriers for survivors.

The law's narrow definition of penetration recognises only penile-vaginal intercourse, excluding assaults involving objects or other body parts.

Ambiguity around consent forces courts to rely on outdated stereotypes, often requiring proof of physical resistance rather than the absence of willing agreement. Child brides remain vulnerable, as forcible intercourse with a married girl over 13 is not considered rape, despite the statutory age of consent being 16.

Section 9 of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act (WCRPA) 2000 exempts husbands from rape charges, leaving child victims without recourse and undermining Bangladesh's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

While the 2022 repeal of Section 155(4) of the Evidence Act was a significant step, the study warns its impact remains limited. Because the repeal applies strictly to the narrow definition of rape in the Penal Code, survivors of other sexual offences can still face character assassination in court.

Furthermore, both the Penal Code and WCRPA assume perpetrators are male and victims female, leaving men and transgender persons, including members of the Hijra community, structurally unrecognised and unprotected as victims of sexual violence.

Other laws on sexual assault and harassment also remain vague. Sections 354 and 509 of the Penal Code criminalise acts that "outrage a woman's modesty", but the colonial-era language and intent requirement allow victim-blaming and leave many forms of harassment unaddressed.

High Court guidelines issued in 2009 define sexual harassment and require complaint committees in workplaces and schools, but the lack of legal enforcement leaves survivors with little practical protection.

The study called for amendments to the definition of rape, criminalisation of sexual abuse of child brides, revision of sexual assault and torture provisions, and formal inclusion of sexual harassment in law.

Meanwhile, the Dowry Prohibition Act 2018's technical language complicates prosecutions, while treating both giver and receiver equally ignores social pressures on brides' families.

The study recommends simplifying the law and revising penalties.

Domestic violence protections also remain inadequate, particularly for divorced women. The study calls for expanding definitions in the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, introducing criminal sanctions, and criminalising deaths or injuries resulting from abuse.

LABOUR LAWS LEAVE WOMEN VULNERABLE
Bangladesh's labour laws also reveal serious gaps in protections for women, particularly regarding sexual harassment, maternity leave, and childcare.

Sexual harassment at work remains largely unaddressed. The Labour Act 2006 penalises vaguely defined indecent behaviour with minimal fines or prison terms, and cases are rare due to fear of retaliation and court backlogs.

The 2022 Labour Rules amendments introduced prevention committees and broadened the definition of harassment, but compliance is not mandatory, sanctions are absent, and protections apply only to women, excluding other gender identities.

The study recommends a standalone law covering all workers, aligned with ILO Convention 190.

Maternity protections remain limited to eight weeks before and after childbirth, with no provision for medical complications, falling short of ILO standards recommending 14-18 weeks.

Amendments on miscarriage leave and revised wage calculations may reduce benefits for some workers. Childcare facilities are mandated only in large workplaces, and breastfeeding breaks are not legally required.

More than 85 percent of women work in the unregulated informal sector, including domestic workers, leaving them especially vulnerable.

The study calls for comprehensive workplace harassment laws, extended maternity leave, mandatory breastfeeding facilities, removal of hazardous work restrictions, and

inclusion of informal workers, in line with ILO Conventions 183, 189, and 190.

CITIZENSHIP, PROPERTY AND MARRIAGE LAWS
The study also highlighted discrimination embedded in personal laws tied to religion, lineage, and community.

Women cannot pass citizenship to foreign spouses, while men can. Property policies such as the Agricultural Khas Land Settlement Policy discriminate against widowed or divorced women by requiring "working sons" to qualify.

Family laws under Muslim, Hindu, and Christian codes continue to disadvantage women. Hindu marriage law allows child marriage and often disregards consent, while widow remarriage can lead to loss of property.

The study proposes amendments to the Special Marriage Act, post-divorce maintenance for Muslim women, divorce rights for Hindu women, and removal of discriminatory provisions in citizenship and trust laws.

Amending 19 laws and introducing four new ones is more than a legislative checklist; it is a test of political will.

Until the government moves beyond symbolic gestures to concrete legal reform, "equality before the law" will remain a hollow promise for those seeking protection in a system that still prioritises technicalities over justice, the study says.

Five envoys

FROM PAGE 12
favouring Awami League".

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman was present with him; both had flown to London to attend the 26th Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting.

Abida, a diplomat from the 15th batch, was appointed high commissioner to the UK on January 27, 2025. She previously served as Bangladesh's ambassador to Mexico and South Korea, and as deputy high commissioner in Kolkata.

The four contractual ambassadors were appointed by the interim government.

Mahfuzul Haque is a former secretary while Mainul Islam a former inspector general of police.

Mushfiqul Fazal Ansarey is a journalist who lived in the US and frequently briefed the US State Department and UN on BNP repression and rights violations under the Awami League.

Nazmul Islam is an academic who taught at a university in Turkey before being appointed to the Maldives post.

Edible oil prices surge

FROM PAGE 12
The refiners are supplying soybean oil in limited quantities to the market, said Anwar Hossain, a Khatunganj-based wholesaler trader.

The impact is already being felt at the retail level. In Chattogram city, the price of loose soybean oil has increased by about Tk 7 per kg over the past four days to Tk 200-202 and loose palm oil prices by around Tk 6 per kg to about Tk 172.

Over in Khulna district, bottled soybean oil has become increasingly difficult to find and the prices have increased accordingly: a five-litre bottle that previously cost Tk 990 is now selling for about Tk 1,060, a one-litre bottle that previously sold for Tk 183 is now Tk 195.

Supplies from companies have dropped sharply in recent weeks, according to traders.

Family Card brings hope to families in slums

FROM PAGE 12
The pilot phase over the next four months, which will cost about Tk 39 crore.

In Dhaka's Sattala slum, the 30-year-old Shiuli Akter, a single mother of three, is equally excited.

To make ends meet, she works in different households from morning to night.

"With this money, I will at least be able to buy some better food for my children — just thinking about that makes me happy," said Shiuli, who rushed to fill out the form when announcements were made in the area.

Not everyone, however, was able to apply. For those without national ID card, mobile number or mobile financial services account, the assistance remains out of reach.

Nearly one-third the women in Bhashantek slum was unable to sign up for these reasons, according to local Jubo Dol leader Mosharrar Sardar.

Motaleb Hossain, assistant head teacher of Moonlight High School, a kindergarten school in Korail slum, said they had spent the last week helping poor families, especially women-headed households, fill out the six-page form. Four days were

It is the same situation over in Barishal, according to Mahatab Akon, a grocery shop owner in the city.

Contacted, Md Hasan, general manager of public relations for Meghna Group of Industries that sells the 'Fresh' brand oil, said the supply remains stable and there is no cause for concern.

"We maintain sufficient reserves to ensure continuous market availability," he told the reporter.

City Group, another major edible oil importer and processor, echoed the same.

"We are providing the same amount daily as usual, and reports on the supply are being submitted to the commerce ministry and various government agencies," said Biswajit Saha, director for corporate and regulatory affairs at City Group.

However, the government should look into why this situation is occurring in the retail market. The issue lies in the lack of sufficient vehicles to transport supplies outside Dhaka, mainly due to diesel issues, he said.

Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktedir acknowledged that shortages may be occurring at the marginal or retail level in some areas.

The government will strengthen monitoring by the Directorate of National Consumers' Rights Protection and encourage local administrations to be more active.

"Hopefully, the situation will improve within the next two to three days."

[Our Khulna correspondent Dipankar Roy and Barisal correspondent Sushanta Ghosh contributed to this report]

spent filling out forms, followed by three days correcting errors.

Officials and field-level workers from the Social Welfare Department were involved in the process. For families with up to five members, one card was issued in the name of the woman heading the household. In some cases, families with six or more members received two cards.

There is a lot of information that has to be entered in the form: national ID numbers, parents' information, husband's information, nominee, names of family members, their ID or birth registration numbers, assets, household furniture, annual income and whose mobile number is being used.

Many women in the slum did not have their own mobile phone numbers. Some used the numbers of their husbands, brothers or children. Later, many opened new bKash accounts and returned to have the forms corrected.

According to him, the work was completed on Friday. But even on Saturday and Sunday, people kept coming, saying they had been left out. Some had been in their villages, some lacked the required documents, and some had only birth registration certificates, which were not accepted

in place of national ID cards.

"We worked day and night so that everyone could apply. There were loudspeaker announcements for two days, and we also went from house to house. This is a pilot project. The first four months will show how it works," Motaleb said.

During a visit to Korail's TNT field yesterday between 10:30am and noon, preparations were underway for the programme's inauguration event scheduled for March 10. There was visible excitement among residents.

Many women said they had not seen such a transparent process in a long time, where no money was demanded and even mistakes in the forms were later corrected after applicants were called back.

The 14 upazilas selected for the pilot phase included Banani (Korail, Sattala and Bhashantek slums) and Mirpur/Shah Ali (Oli Miar Tek and Baganbari slums) in Dhaka, among other districts.

The pilot phase, which will cost the state Tk 39 crore, will last for four months and 40,000 families will be selected.

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

Same fields, same labour, never the same pay

FROM PAGE 3
percent in 2000 to 78 percent in 2022 before falling to 56 percent in 2024.

Currently, around 3.08 crore people are engaged in agricultural activities – including fisheries, livestock, and forestry – with women accounting for 1.72 crore of the workforce.

Even as women take on a larger share of farm work, the persistent wage gap continues to undermine their economic empowerment and influence in household decision-making.

Since February, potato harvesting has been in full swing across the northern districts.

Visits to Bogura, Joypurhat, and Gaibandha found thousands of women working alongside men in the fields. Yet the wage gap remains stark.

Female labourers earn Tk 300 to Tk 350 a day for harvesting potatoes, compared to Tk 700-Tk 800 for men.

Male farmers often justify the disparity by arguing that men work longer hours or perform heavier tasks.

Abdul Hamid, 42, a farmer from Rajosh village who hired 15 women and 10 men for harvesting, said, "During Ramadan, women leave by 3:30pm for household chores, while men work from 7:00am until evening."

For women labourers, however, the pay gap feels deeply unfair.

Data from the Gaibandha District

Statistics Office show there are 68,345 female labourers in the district, of whom 63,952 work in agriculture. The average daily wage for women is Tk 350, compared to Tk 500 for men.

In Bogura, 1,56,876 women are employed in agriculture, earning Tk 400 a day, while men earn Tk 600.

The BBS Labour Force Survey 2024 also highlights the disparity: rural women working in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry earn an average monthly income of Tk 8,301, compared with Tk 12,354 for men.

Riktu Prasad, general secretary of the Gaibandha branch of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said while women in formal offices may receive equal pay, rural women often work twice as hard for half the wages.

The relatively low cost of female labour is one reason for the increase in women's participation in agriculture, she added.

"Equal status and wages cannot be ensured without a broader social movement involving all organisations, not just women's rights groups," she said.

In Bogura's rice and major husking mills, many women work alongside men drying and boiling paddy, but still earn significantly less.

Helena Begum, 45, who works at a rice mill in Adamdighi upazila, said she earns Tk 200 a day plus a few kilogrammes of broken rice.

In contrast, Rashidul Islam, a male worker at another mill, said he earns Tk 1,000 a day during peak season and Tk 500 in the off-season.

Layek Ali, president of Bangladesh Auto and Major Husking Mill Owners Association, said the number of women working in husking mills has fallen from around 2,00,000-2,50,000 in the past to 20,000-25,000 due to the rise of automated rice mills.

On wage discrimination, he said women are often hired on a contractual basis, and the absence of a fixed minimum daily wage allows disparities to persist.

"If a daily wage is officially declared, the gap between men and women will narrow," he said.

Sharmin Neelormi, a professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University, said, "Men's participation in agriculture has been declining over the years, and although women's overall participation in the sector has also fallen slightly, the trend is different for the 15-29 age group."

"For women in this age band, participation has actually increased." She said the trend raises concerns about the quality of jobs young women are entering.

"This age group is crucial for a country seeking to benefit from its demographic dividend. But if young women continue to move into low-remunerative, low-

skill jobs, the question is, where will the demographic dividend come from?" she said.

Neelormi added that the wage gap between men and women in agriculture has narrowed somewhat in recent years, partly due to increasing mechanisation.

"When machines such as threshers are used, the operator – whether male or female – tends to receive similar pay. As manual labour declines with the adoption of technology, the wage gap gradually narrows," she said.

"However, unskilled labour remains dominant in the sector, which is why the wage gap has not disappeared entirely," she said.

She also cautioned that mechanisation could introduce new inequalities.

"Women generally have less capacity to invest in technology, which means their share in ownership of such assets is likely to remain lower," she added.

In a study, Prof Sadika Haque of agricultural economics at Bangladesh Agricultural University said the increased share of women in the labour force does not necessarily mean gender equality or real empowerment.

Although women have legal land rights, they often cannot exercise control over property due to prevailing social norms and attitudes, she said.

"It is necessary to ensure women's access to and control over resources," she added.

Amend RTI Act before passing ordinance

FROM PAGE 3
We want further consultation so that the amendments we proposed are incorporated," she said.

Shaheen also called for the immediate formation of the Information Commission, saying its prolonged absence had created a serious gap in citizens' access to information.

She added that appointments to the commission must be transparent and based on competence and independence.

Shaheen also said women's access to information remained weak and should be made easier.

Ittekkharuzzaman said Bangladesh had made little progress in implementing the RTI law over the past 16 years under an authoritarian system that kept the commission ineffective.

He said the interim government also failed to set a better example and left the commission

uninformed despite having the opportunity to strengthen transparency in governance.

Referring to past appointments, he said many commissioners had spent their professional lives keeping information secret, which undermined the purpose of the institution. "If the leadership of the commission itself is influenced by partisan considerations, it becomes difficult to expect an environment where the right to information can be effectively practised," he said.

He also said the law should be amended to bring the private sector and political parties under its scope.

He added that the status and benefits of commissioners should be fixed by law, with the chief information commissioner equivalent to the Appellate Division and other commissioners equivalent to the High Court Division.

MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman said the Information Commission had remained absent since the July-August political changes, leaving more than 1,000 complaints pending.

He said the amendment ordinance introduced only limited changes, although some provisions strengthened the law. However, several key proposals remained unaddressed. These included adding "note sheet" to the definition of information, reviewing Section 7 of the law, and bringing local government bodies, private entities operating under government contracts or licences, and political parties registered with the Election Commission under the law's scope.

He also proposed introducing a time-bound process for appointing commissioners so that vacant posts in the Information Commission are filled within a specified period.

Replying to a question,

he said the RTI Forum wants a representative nominated by the forum to be included in the search committee for appointing commissioners.

Nagorik Uddyog Chief Executive Zakir Hossain proposed that major government projects hold public hearings every six months so that citizens, journalists and other stakeholders could review progress and raise questions.

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies Executive Director Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed said private sector entities receiving government incentives, loans, or other benefits funded by taxpayers should also be brought under the RTI law.

Sujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said the right to information is vital for a democratic state and that political parties should be brought under the law so that citizens can access information about their finances and operations.

Visible on the street, not in policymaking

FROM PAGE 3
women and girls. According to figures he shared, 2,808 incidents of violence were recorded in 2025, including 786 cases of rape or gang rape.

The data also showed that 72 percent of ever-married women have experienced intimate partner violence, while between 63 and 78 percent face online harassment.

With around 51 percent of girls married before the age of 18 and only seven women directly elected to parliament, Tonmoy stressed the urgent need for a citizens' platform where marginalised voices can directly engage in discussions on rights and institutional reform.

Banasree Mitra Neogi, director of rights and governance programmes at MJF, said the country's struggle for independence was fundamentally a fight for rights, voice and dignity.

She urged citizens to move beyond merely asking questions and instead examine whether genuine equity is being achieved.

Emphasising the deeper meaning of rights, she called for greater public awareness of how these

rights are denied in everyday life and insisted that both social and institutional barriers to equality must be challenged.

Dr Ainoon Naher, professor of anthropology at Jahangirnagar University, said the fight for equality cannot be limited to legal provisions or age thresholds alone.

"Child marriage, rape, and discrimination are deeply rooted in patriarchy. Society as a whole must move together to challenge regressive norms," she said.

Echoing this concern, Jinat Ara Haque, chief executive of WE CAN Bangladesh, said girls must be raised to believe their futures extend beyond early marriage.

She stressed that dignity and personal agency should come before social pressure.

Advocate Susmita Chakma, a human rights activist from Rangamati, said child marriage and violence have worsened in many areas over the past two years.

She noted that legal awareness remains weak at the grassroots level, while lengthy and complex legal

procedures in rape cases continue to hinder justice, particularly for indigenous women seeking equal treatment under the law.

Khandaker Jahurul Alam, executive director of CSID, spoke about the discrimination faced by women with disabilities.

He said they are often treated as symbolic figures rather than rights-holders and face exclusion from public spaces as well as vulnerability to harmful practices such as dowry-related abuse and abandonment.

The town hall meeting also served as a civic platform for representatives from Dalit communities,

Settle July Charter

FROM PAGE 4
Monju called for a political compromise to resolve the current crisis.

He noted that Bangladesh's political history shows governments elected with large majorities often face strong public backlash and are forced to step down before completing their terms.

Photographer Shahidul

ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and gender-diverse groups.

Participants described what they termed the "layered realities" of exclusion, citing the humiliation faced by transgender people and the lack of effective legal protection for women in remote areas such as Khagrachhari and Rangamati.

The session concluded with a call from MJF for International Women's Day to move beyond symbolic observance and toward the concrete implementation of laws and meaningful inclusion of women in public decision-making.

Alam said the referendum verdict should be respected in the interest of democracy.

The government should accept the result, he said, warning that ignoring the people's mandate would undermine democratic principles.

The programme was moderated by Fahim Masrur, co-coordinator of the forum.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Finance
Financial Institutions Division
Commercial Bank Branch
(www.fid.gov.bd)



Sammilito Islami Bank PLC.

(A Shariah-Based State-Owned Commercial Bank)

No. 53.00.0000.312.11.0002.25-117

Date: 08-03-2026

Appointment of Managing Director / Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO) for Sammilito Islami Bank PLC.

Sammilito Islami Bank PLC Bangladesh's largest and newly constituted state-owned Islamic bank has been established to strengthen financial inclusion, support socio-economic development, and deliver modern Shariah-compliant banking services nationwide. With a focus on good governance, technology adoption, financial stability, and strong Shariah adherence, the Bank seeks a visionary and highly competent leader for the post of **Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer (MD/CEO)**.

1. Educational Qualifications

- Postgraduation or Master's degree preferably in Economics, Finance, Accounting, Banking, Management or Business Administration from any recognized university.
- Additional qualifications such as CFA, FCA, CMA, CPA, ACCA, AIBB, and internationally recognized Islamic finance certifications (e.g., CIPA, CSAA) will be considered added advantages.
- No third division/class/equivalent grade at any stage of academic life.

2. Duties and Responsibilities

The MD/CEO shall serve as the chief executive of the institution and will lead the transformation of **Sammilito Islami Bank PLC**. Responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

Strategic & Institutional Leadership

- Formulate and execute the bank's medium and long-term Shariah-based strategic direction.
- Develop a strong institutional structure capable of delivering modern Islamic financial services across all segments.

Operational Oversight & Organizational Integration

- Lead and coordinate all operational wings including corporate, SME, retail, treasury, agricultural, international trade and digital banking.
- Prepare and finalize the full set of Service Regulations, Human Resource Rules, Disciplinary Rules, and Operational Manuals tailored for a fully Shariah-compliant bank.
- Design and implement human resource integration plans, ensuring fair harmonization of grades, pay structure, seniority, and placement for employees absorbed from the merged Islamic banks.
- Oversee merger-related activities, including system integration, core banking harmonization, branch network consolidation or rationalization, documentation migration, asset review and customer communication.
- Ensure effective post-merger stabilization and change-management across the organization.

Shariah Governance & Product Innovation

- Strengthen Shariah governance by ensuring effective functioning of the Shariah Supervisory Board, Shariah audit, research, and compliance.
- Design and introduce innovative, competitive and fully Shariah-compliant banking products, including deposit schemes, investment contracts, treasury instruments and digital Islamic banking solutions.
- Promote staff capacity-building in Islamic banking principles, standards and practices.

Financial Integrity & Risk Management

- Maintain sound asset quality, liquidity and capital adequacy across all business lines.
- Strengthen early-warning systems, recovery of non-performing assets and risk governance frameworks including IT and cybersecurity.
- Ensure transparent, accurate and Shariah-compliant financial reporting.

Regulatory, Government & Stakeholder Relations

- Ensure full compliance with Bangladesh Bank regulations, Government directives and Shariah governance requirements.
- Represent the bank before regulators, development partners, auditors, rating agencies and all relevant stakeholders.

3. Experience Requirements

Candidates must have:

- Minimum 20 (twenty) years of experience in the banking sector including experience as a chief executive officer of a bank or at least 2 (Two) years of Experience in a position immediately below chief executive officer of a bank.
- Substantial expertise in **Islamic banking operations, Shariah governance, Islamic accounting, profit-distribution mechanisms and Islamic risk management**.
- Significant experience in organizational transformation, digital banking or post-merger integration will be an advantage.
- Additional experience in working with or contributing to recognized international Islamic finance organizations such as IFSB, AAOIFI, ISDB, CIBAFI, IILM or other comparable global or regional Islamic banking bodies.
- Experience in bank Merger & Acquisition, system integration and regulatory coordination will be considered positively.

4. Age Limit

- Minimum: **45 years**
- Maximum: **60 years** on the date of advertisement.

5. Tenure of Appointment

- Initial contractual appointment for **03 (Three) years**.
- Renewal may be considered on satisfactory performance.

6. Integrity & Disqualification Criteria

The candidate must:

- Not be a loan defaulter or involved in financial irregularity, fraud, forgery, regulatory non-compliance or unethical conduct.
- Not have any criminal conviction or unresolved legal dispute with any bank/financial institution.
- Fulfil Bangladesh Bank's Fit & Proper requirements (BRPD Circular No. 05/2024, Circular Letter No. 12/2024 and subsequent circulars).
- Demonstrate strong ethical standards, Islamic values, leadership integrity and competence in AML/CFT and cyber-risk governance.

7. Selection Procedure

- Applications will undergo **preliminary screening** based on eligibility, academic record, experience and Shariah compliant banking expertise.
- Shortlisted candidates will go through a **documentary evaluation and interview** following the standards defined in the approved policy.
- Final selection will be made based on combined assessment, background verification and **Bangladesh Bank Fit & Proper clearance**.

8. Compensation Package

A competitive and performance-based compensation package will be offered in line with the Bank's approved policies for the post of MD/CEO.

9. Application Procedure

Applications in sealed envelopes must be addressed to:

Secretary, Financial Institutions Division, Ministry of Finance, Room No. 326, Bhaban No. 7, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.

The application must include:

- A detailed and updated Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- A **cover letter** clearly outlining the candidate's suitability for the role including overall work experience, experience in Shariah-compliant banking, explanation of strategic leadership capabilities and adherence to sound risk-management principles along with all necessary supporting documents.
- Attested copies of academic & professional certificates/transcripts.
- Copy of **National ID**.
- One recent passport-size colour photograph.

A **soft copy (PDF)** must be emailed to: ds.cbb@fid.gov.bd

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any application without assigning any reason.

10. Application Deadline: 25 March 2026 (Before 5:00pm).

08.03.26

Afroza Akter Riba

Deputy Secretary

Financial Institutions Division

Email: ds.cbb@fid.gov.bd

Mobile: 01795-724915

The Australian doctor who witnessed what Bangladesh wanted to forget



Bangladeshi refugees during the Liberation War of Bangladesh, November (1971).

PHOTOGRAPH: RAYMOND DEPARDON

Remember the stark black and white photograph by Naib Uddin Ahmed from our liberation war that shows a young woman with long black hair covering her face with her hand? Did you feel the profound anguish and shame she was showing? A single picture powerfully reflects the trauma experienced by the Birangonas (war heroines). This image reflects what many Bangladeshi women faced during our liberation war.

SAYEM BIN RAFIQ

In March 1972, an Australian doctor arrived in newborn Bangladesh for a mission he would later describe as one of the most dreadful experiences of his career. Dr. Geoffrey Davis, the director of Population Services International, was recruited to address a humanitarian crisis Bangladesh was struggling to confront: the systematic rape and forced impregnation of hundreds of thousands of Bengali women during the 1971 Liberation War. Dr. Davis began working with support from the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

What Dr. Geoffrey Davis witnessed and endured during his six-month tenure in Bangladesh would become one of the most comprehensive accounts of wartime sexual violence. Yet for a long time, his story and works were buried, as the country willingly wanted to forget this past and how its women bore the invisible scars of war.

Why was Dr. Davis the ideal and perhaps the only candidate for this special task? In London, during the late 1960s, Dr. Davis trained in and perfected a technique for terminating advanced pregnancies. This method proved crucial later in his Bangladesh assignment. He became the director of the International Abortion Research and Training Centre, gaining recognition for his work. By 1971, he had joined Population Services International, an organisation focused on reproductive health services in developing countries. His unique combination of skills and experience made international organisations

call him for this complicated task in Bangladesh.

Three million people were martyred, and more than ten million people were displaced due to Bangladesh's war of independence. However, it didn't end there. Among the most devastating legacies of this war was sexual violence against women perpetrated by the Pakistani Army and their local collaborators. This number was incomparable during that time. The government of Bangladesh estimated that around 200,000 women were raped and faced sexual violence. Dr. Geoffrey Davis denied this claim. According to him, the government showed a conservative number, whereas the number would not be less than 400,000.

When Davis arrived in March 1972, he found a crisis that defied comprehension. The Bangladesh Women's Rehabilitation Programme, led by Justice K.M. Sobhan, was attempting to provide care for pregnant rape survivors. But the numbers were staggering, the medical infrastructure inadequate, and the social stigma overwhelming. The programme had two goals on its agenda. One is to provide abortion to the women who are eligible, and the babies that are delivered would be given for adoption to International Social Services.

Dr. Davis explained that this violence was not incidental, but rather a calculated strategy taken by the Pakistani Army. His interviews with Pakistani prisoners of war revealed the shocking and chilling stories. The soldiers were ordered by their senior officials to impregnate as many Bangladeshi women as possible. One reason behind it was that the Pakistanis did not consider the Bangladeshis as true Muslims. Therefore, their goal was "a whole generation of children with West Pakistani blood." Dr. Geoffrey Davis accounted that Tikka Khan instructed Pakistani soldiers to impregnate Bangladeshi women so that their babies would have Pakistani blood and they would never fight against their fathers. The rape camps, the selection of victims, and the forced detention all pointed to sexual violence as a weapon of ethnic warfare.

Dr. Davis set up what he would later call "industrial-scale" abortion procedures. He started his journey from a clinic in Dhanmondi. However, he had to travel to other cities in the war-torn country to provide his services and, especially, to train doctors in his specialised abortion technique for advanced pregnancies.

What Dr. Davis encountered was, in his eyes, unbelievable. He and his team had to perform an average of 100 abortions daily. They were surprised by the magnitude of atrocities committed by the Pakistani Army. The statistics tell only part of the story. Davis documented that by the time he arrived, approximately 5,000 women had already attempted self-induced abortions by midwives or quacks using medically unsafe methods. As a consequence, many women lost their lives, while others were left permanently unable to bear children due to the physical and psychological trauma they had endured.

Dr. Geoffrey Davis had an interview with Bina D'Costa in 2002, which is

the only in-depth interview of his experience in Bangladesh. There, he recounted the hidden and forgotten stories of our liberation war that even haunted the historical record. Women and girls captured by the soldiers were distributed among the camps according to the officers' ranks. Davis recalled visiting these camps and interviewing survivors. He described women tied to trees and gang-raped, their breasts mutilated, some thrown into mass graves while still alive.

Women were kept naked, and their hair was cut off. These measures were taken because the soldiers feared that women would commit suicide, a fate some had already chosen. The women were kept unfed or given inadequate food and medical care in these camps. When they came to the rehabilitation centre and to Dr. Davis, they were severely malnourished, and many were infected with sexually transmitted diseases.

In Dr. Davis's words, the agony of these women did not stop there. Perhaps the most devastating was what happened after liberation. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman attempted to honour these women by calling them "Birangona" (war heroines) and her daughter. In many cases, this designation backfired tragically. Rather than rehabilitation, the term made them outcasts in society. The agony and sorrow of these women were never ending.

Families rejected their own daughters, and some women were killed by relatives seeking to restore family honour. Many others committed suicide. A few begged their Pakistani captors to take them to Pakistan rather than face their communities. "The men didn't want to talk about it at all," Davis recalled. "Because, according to them, the women had been defiled." When Dr. Davis tried to learn what had happened to the women by knocking on their doors, he encountered complete silence from the women and their families. They did not want the world to know what had happened to their women. It was complete silence, as if nothing had ever happened.

What especially surprised Dr. Davis was the way the Pakistanis captured women from various cities and villages in Bangladesh. He rejected the Pakistani claim that the number of Bangladeshi women raped and tortured was exaggerated. He explained that the strategy the Pakistanis used to capture towns was horrendous. He noted, "Probably the numbers are very conservative compared to what they did. The description of how they captured towns was very interesting. They would keep the infantry back and put artillery ahead, and they would shell the hospitals and the schools. And that caused absolute chaos in the town. And then the infantry would go in and begin to segregate the women. Anybody with grey hair didn't get involved. Apart from little children, all the ones who were sexually matured would be segregated while the rest of the infantry tied ... the rest of the town (which would involve

shooting everybody who was involved with the East Pakistani government or the Awami League). And then the women would be put in the compound under guard and made available to the troops. It was most hideous. I know of no precedent anywhere in the world ever. Nonetheless, that is how it had happened." In his words, the Pakistani army and the local collaborators committed these rapes not only to impregnate the women but also to terrorise the people and destroy their morals and those of the freedom fighters.

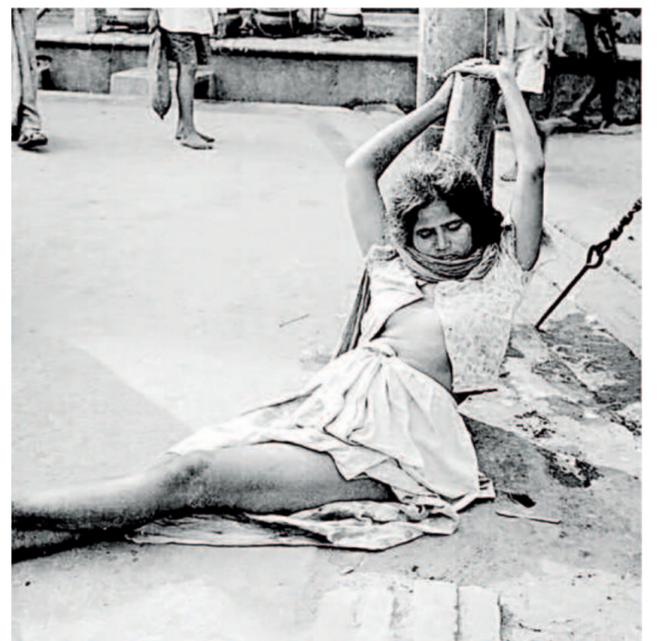
Let's unfold another chapter of this story. For women who gave birth, another distressful and agonising decision was waiting for them. They had to decide whether to keep the babies or give them up for international adoption. As Bangladesh's legal system prohibited adoption, global organisations such as International Social Services, the Missionaries of Charity led by Mother Teresa, and Families for Children in Canada facilitated transfers of these newborns to overseas families.

Davis worked with these organisations, helping to coordinate what became one of the largest international adoption programs of its era. However, the process was filled with complexity and sorrow. This mass adoption occurred because many families did not want to accept these babies. Many mothers killed their own children after delivery. The final blow came from the government itself. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman ordered to get rid of these newborns, believing them to have

public association with the program. In press reports, Davis was typically identified only as a director of the London-based International Abortion Research and Training Centre, his works in Bangladesh quietly erased from the institutional record.

Dr. Davis left Bangladesh in September 1972. For decades, he spoke little about his Bangladesh experience. It was not until 2002 that he granted his first comprehensive interview about the work, speaking with Dr. Bina D'Costa. That interview brought the real scenario of how rape was used as a weapon of war by the Pakistanis. An interview that was documented in history, letting future generations know what scars Bangladesh had to bear throughout the liberation war. A scar that Bangladesh seemed determined to forget. Even today, the story of rape survivors remains controversial for people to talk about.

Dr. Davis's contribution represents a complicated legacy. He provided desperately needed medical care to women who had no other options. He documented atrocities that no one else wanted to explore or show, which might otherwise have been lost to history. He trained local medical professionals in techniques that would continue to serve women's reproductive health needs long after he left. Yet his work also raises uncomfortable questions about agency, consent, and the assumptions that international humanitarian workers bring to their interventions. The abortion and adoption programmes he administered



A survivor of atrocities [Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh, 11 December 1971].

PHOTOGRAPH: NAIB UDDIN AHMED

corrupted blood. The government's duplicity made the situation worse. Dr. Davis remembered one young woman who insisted throughout her pregnancy that she wanted to give up her baby, but when the moment came, "she refused to do so, and cried so much."

What makes Davis's contribution particularly significant is not just the service he provided but also the fact that he was one of the witnesses to the brutality against the women during the war. He shed light on the government of Bangladesh's efforts towards the raped women. The government built shelters, abortion centres, and provided counseling services to the women. The government may have had good intentions, but the resources were not there. All the little resources the country had were for the freedom fighters, not for these women.

Moreover, there was a lack of motivation among the doctors. Dr. Davis completed his full tenure with only two sets of instruments that he brought from the UK. The shocking revelation by him was that the doctors had the chance to provide good medical treatment to the women, but they did not do so, citing legal excuses. They were more concerned with the legality of the treatment than with the humanitarian perspective. When he went to a workshop to discuss the abortion technique he was going to implement in Bangladesh, what astounded Dr. Davis was that 90% of the questions asked were about the legality of his procedure rather than technical questions.

The controversial nature of his work meant that none of the international agencies that recruited him wanted

were carried out according to the government. The question remains, did it actually serve the best interests of the women themselves?

Dr. Geoffrey Davis's testimony remains crucial. He believed the widely cited figure of 200,000 rapes was "very conservative," based on his own data. Before this, many people saw wartime rape as random violence. After the events in Bangladesh, it became clear that rape could be used as a military strategy, a tool for ethnic cleansing, and even as a form of genocide.

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PHOTOGRAPH: NAIB UDDIN AHMED

The girl who would not show her face [Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, May 1971].

INDIA SMASH RECORDS IN ONE-SIDED FINAL

India wreaked havoc at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad yesterday, smashing a plethora of records on their way to clinching a record third T20 World Cup title with a 96-run victory in an utterly one-sided final against New Zealand. From piling up a record 255 for five to bundling out New Zealand for 159 in 19 overs, the co-hosts made the Black Caps look like an ordinary team at the largest-capacity cricket stadium in the world.

In the 10th edition of the T20 World Cup, India became the first side to win the title as a host nation.

India also became the first team to defend the T20 World Cup title and the first team to win it three times (2007, 2024, 2026). England (2010, 2022) and the West Indies (2012, 2016) have both won the tournament twice.



India's Jasprit Bumrah, the wrecker-in-chief of the ICC T20 World Cup final, celebrates the wicket of New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra during the one-sided match at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

'Bumrah is a once-in-a-generation bowler'

AGENCIES

India captain Suryakumar Yadav heaped praise on pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah after India's historic 96-run victory over New Zealand in the final of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup yesterday. Speaking at the post-match presentation, Suryakumar lauded Bumrah's impact and composure on the big stage. "Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma are top players and we knew they would do something special, and they did it in the final," he said. "Bumrah is a once-in-a-generation bowler. I can call him a national treasure. He knows exactly what needs to be done and he is the best in the business."

Suryakumar also credited the

team's consistency over the past two years. "We have been playing good cricket in the last two years and we just wanted to follow the good habits we built during the 2024 World Cup. The boys responded brilliantly. It's really important to understand what players are capable of, and I always believed they had match-winning abilities. The timing was perfect."

India's triumph also helped erase the painful memories of the 2023 ODI World Cup final loss at the same venue. The team capped off a dominant campaign, losing just one match across the last two T20 World Cups.

India's powerful batting lineup overwhelmed New Zealand, posting 255-

5 -- the highest total ever in a T20 World Cup final. In reply, the Black Caps were bowled out for 159 in 19 overs.

The win made India the first team to successfully defend a T20 World Cup title, the first to win the tournament on home soil, and the first to claim three T20 World Cup trophies.

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner admitted his side was second best.

"Today we were outplayed by a great team in front of a fantastic crowd. Playing a home World Cup brings pressure, but Suryakumar and his team should be very proud. We fought hard in the Super Eight and the semi-final, but tonight India were simply better," he said.

"Feels like a dream. Very happy and grateful. Out of words, out of emotions. [On his three fifties, thought process] To be honest, I started one-two years before. When I was in the 2024 World Cup team where I didn't play, I kept visualising, kept on working, and this was exactly what I wanted to do. After the New Zealand series, I was broken. My dreams were completely shattered, and I was thinking what I could do. But God had different plans. And I was rewarded for being brave enough to dream."

SANJU SAMSON, Player of the Tournament

"[On what the win means] Feels extremely special because I've played one final in my home venue but couldn't win that one, but today I won. Knew the wicket was a flat one, so I had to use all my experience. Before this tournament, I was in that zone where I felt I was trying too hard because I was bowling well but felt I was trying too hard. This tournament, I just tried to let the game come to me, and that worked really well."

JASPRIT BUMRAH, Player of the Match

The 96-run win is the largest margin of victory by runs in a T20 World Cup final, surpassing the West Indies' 36-run win over Sri Lanka in 2012.

India's 255 for five is the highest total in a T20 World Cup final and the third-highest overall in the tournament's history.

This was the seventh time India crossed the 250-run mark in T20Is -- the most by any team in the format. It was also India's fourth 250-plus total in 2026, the most by any team in a calendar year.

India raced to 100 in just 7.2 overs, the fastest team hundred in a T20 World Cup knockout match.

India smashed 37 boundaries in the innings -- the most in a T20 World Cup final. That included 18 sixes, also the highest in a T20 World Cup title decider.

Opener Sanju Samson's 89 off 46 balls is the highest individual score in a T20 World Cup final, surpassing the 85 not out by Marlon Samuels in 2016 and the 85 by Kane Williamson in 2021.

The 105-run second-wicket stand between Samson and Ishan Kishan (54 off 25) is the second 100-plus partnership in a T20 World Cup final, behind the 111-run stand between Craig Kieswetter and Kevin Pietersen against Australia in 2010.

Fresh guard for a rivalry in pause

ASHEAQ UL ALAM

Batters celebrating after reaching a milestone, be it a half-century, century or further increments of fifty, is commonplace in cricket, almost everyone does it.

Some jump up and down in elation, others calmly wave the bat to acknowledge their teammates and fans, a few fall to the ground to thank the Almighty and a handful stare into the heavens in gratitude.

There are, however, some players who follow up the celebration by taking fresh guard as a mental exercise to calm their nerves and to start their innings anew.

In a symbolic way, Pakistan's wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan will get to do that with his ODI career, as he is set to play his 10th ODI in the same venue and against the same opponents he had started his journey in the format nearly 11 years ago.

Rizwan had made his ODI debut for Pakistan in April 17, 2015, in the first game of a three-match ODI series against Bangladesh at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka.

That series is fondly remembered in the annals of Bangladesh cricket as the Tigers won it 3-0 and it kicked off

the trifecta of home series wins which included triumphs over India and South Africa.

Surprisingly, Bangladesh and Pakistan have not had a 50-overs bilateral series since then, facing off only four times in the last 11 years in the format only in multi-team events.



During the same period, Pakistan have had nine ODI encounters against India -- even with no bilateral cricketing relations between them -- more than double of the matches against Bangladesh.

It's not as if Bangladesh and Pakistan have not had bilateral relations at all. During this period, Bangladesh have toured Pakistan four times and Pakistan have toured Bangladesh twice, but only for Tests and T20Is -- which could either be

pure co-incidence or a sign of the declining relevance of the ODI format.

In the 2015 series, Bangladesh were a side on the up, riding the high of their maiden quarterfinal finish in a World Cup earlier that year, with the 'Fab Five' at their peaks while Pakistan were a side in rebuild.

The games were one-sided, with Tamim Iqbal making the series his own with two centuries and a fifty.

As fate would have it, Pakistan are seemingly in the midst of what appears to be another reset, with six uncapped players getting picked in the 15-member squad and the experienced Babar Azam axed.

However, Bangladesh are no longer the well-oiled machine they once were in the 50-over format. The Mehidy Hasan Miraz-led side have lost their identity as an ODI side and are trying to regain their form in time with a direct entry into next year's ODI World Cup still on the line.

Rizwan, an experienced campaigner now, landed in Dhaka in the early hours of Sunday alongside the other Pakistan cricketers. Most likely, he will take guard for his 10th ODI somewhere along the series and hopefully, he won't have to wait till his 20th ODI to play another 50-over Bangladesh-Pakistan ODI series.

A tie with a lot on the line

SPORTS REPORTER

Debutant Bangladesh are set to face Uzbekistan, the side closest to the women in red and green in terms of rankings in their group, in a Group B encounter of the AFC Women's Asian Cup at the Perth Rectangular Stadium today, with a number of achievements in sight.

The first two group games proved to be a 'David and Goliath' affair for Peter Butler's charges. Bangladesh fought hard in a 2-0 defeat against defending champions China before faltering to a 5-0 thrashing against three-time champions DPR Korea.

The 49th-ranked Uzbekistan still pose an uphill challenge for the 112th-ranked Bangladesh. However, Afeida Khandaker and company will feel this is a match they can target to secure their maiden win in the tournament, a result that could see them advance to the quarterfinals -- which would also confirm their place in the qualifiers for the 2028 Summer Olympics.

A victory today would also open a potential pathway for Bangladesh to the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup. The top six teams in the ongoing Asian Cup qualify directly for the World Cup, while the seventh and eighth-placed teams enter the continental playoffs for the quadrennial event.

However, Bangladesh's chances of progressing as one of the two best third-placed teams across the three groups remain extremely slim. Bangladesh, currently third in Group B with zero points and a goal difference of -7, are competing with the third-placed teams from the other groups -- the Philippines in Group A and Vietnam in Group C.

Both the Philippines (-2 GD) and Vietnam (0 GD) have three points each, giving them a clear



edge. For Bangladesh to advance, they would either need to beat Uzbekistan by at least a six-goal margin or hope that Japan beat Vietnam by a significant margin in their final group game.

However, Butler believes rankings will matter little once the match begins.

"Ranking is one thing, but when you go on that pitch, it's 11 vs 11. They have come through so much. Tomorrow is a milestone for Bangladesh football and we will go there to win and give our best," said the 59-year-old.

Despite the daunting equation, Bangladesh can also draw encouragement from the fact that Uzbekistan themselves struggled during qualification, needing penalties to overcome Nepal after being pushed hard.

"I watched the Nepal game, and I think they played really well. Uzbekistan are very strong, powerful athletes. But I think our technical ability and our ability to keep the ball can cause them problems. We've got to be brave; we've got to be bold," an optimistic Butler said.

Bangladesh will now hope Butler's words translate into action as the girls aim for at least a brave showing today.

Just a goal away from 900

Goals, milestones, and trophies -- these remain a constant for Lionel Messi, and the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner moved to the brink of yet another incredible feat on Saturday. With a deft chipped finish in the first half of Inter Miami's 2-1 victory over D.C. United in Major League Soccer, Messi took his career goal tally to 899, leaving him just one away from reaching the 900-goal milestone. This was Messi's 80th goal for Miami, while he netted 672 goals for Barcelona, 32 at PSG, along with a further 115 international goals for Argentina. The 38-year-old remains only behind Cristiano Ronaldo, who has 965 career goals, on the all-time top goalscorers' list.

PHOTO: AFP



94 GOALS FOR 2026



USA and the trend of firsts

The 1994 FIFA World Cup in the United States introduced the three-points-for-a-win rule. Previously, a victory earned only two points. This time, the United States will serve as a co-host of the tournament, alongside Mexico and Canada, when the 2026 FIFA World Cup kicks off. The upcoming edition is also set to witness another 'first' in the history of the World Cup. A total of 48 teams will participate, marking the highest number of teams ever to take part in the quadrennial event.

** Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: "The silence of the Maracana"



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Five envoys withdrawn

High commissioner to the UK Abida Islam among them

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

In its first foreign ministry reshuffle since assuming power, the BNP government yesterday withdrew five Bangladesh envoys – one career diplomat and four contractual appointees.

The career diplomat is Abida Islam, high commissioner to the UK. The contractual envoys are M Mahfuzul Haque (Portugal), Md Mainul Islam (Poland), M Mushfiqul Fazal Ansary (Mexico), and Md Nazmul Islam (Maldives).

All five have been instructed to report to the foreign ministry headquarters in Dhaka, according to a press statement issued yesterday.

A ministry official clarified that the contracts of the four appointees have not been cancelled, leaving open the possibility of new postings.

Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kobir had already announced Abida's withdrawal a day earlier at Heathrow Airport, citing her "divisive conduct and partisanship"

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3



A worker uses a megaphone to inform motorists that octane is unavailable at a CNG filling station in the capital's Hazipara, where a sign at the gate also reads 'No octane', as people have been rushing to stations across Dhaka to stock up on fuel amid fears of a supply crunch.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Family Card brings hope to families in slums

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Hasen Banu is over 80. In the Korail slum, where her three sons and a daughter also live, she now spends a month at each child's home.

At this age, even buying medicine regularly has become difficult. So the news of getting a "Family Card" has brought her some relief.

Speaking at her shack in Korail yesterday, Hasen Banu said she had heard the card would allow her to receive Tk 2,500 a month. With that money, she hopes to buy medicine regularly. Sometimes, she will also be able to buy milk, eggs and fruit, and even treat her grandchildren.



Hasen Banu

"If this had come earlier, I could have lived a little better," she said.

Like Hasen Banu, many other women in Korail are hopeful about the new programme.

Residents said they had not seen such a process in a long time, one where no money was demanded and no political or organisational influence was involved.

Announcements were made through loudspeakers, people were approached at their homes and assistance was provided in filling out the forms.

At least 40,000 families will receive Family Cards in

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Edible oil prices surge despite ample stock



SUKANTA HALDER and MOHAMMAD SUMAN

The prices of loose soybean oil and palm oil have risen in the local market despite assurances of sufficient stock and adequate supply, heaving financial pressure on consumers.

Over the past three to four days, the prices of loose soybean and palm oil have risen by Tk 5 to Tk 7 per litre at the retail level, while the supply of bottled soybean oil has remained relatively low over the past month, according to traders.

"Even if I pay a higher price, the supply of bottled soybean oil is not available," said Zakir Hossain, a retailer at Kawran Bazar who has been receiving 100 litres of oil against the demand of 200 litres for the past week.

Over in Chattogram's wholesale market, edible oil prices have risen too, with traders attributing the rise to global uncertainties triggered by the Iran war.

At the wholesale market in Khatunganj, the price of soybean oil and palm oil have increased by Tk 140 to Tk 150 over the past week. Now, per mound (37.32 kg) of soybean oil is selling for Tk 7,170 and palm oil for Tk 6,060.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Key decisions of interim govt being deleted from websites

Alleges TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman has accused the government of removing key state decisions and information published on websites during the tenure of the interim government.

He made the remarks yesterday at a press conference organised by the RTI Forum at the TIB office in Dhaka. The event was titled "Immediate Formation of the Information Commission and Necessary Amendments to the Right to Information Act 2009".

Iftekharuzzaman said many important decisions and pieces of information have been taken down from government websites.

"The current government is responsible for this. They cannot do this," he said, adding, "It is unethical, contrary to the right to information, and against state interests."

He said citizens have the right to access information regardless of whether it reflects positively or negatively on the state.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 8

Country's legal framework is failing women

UN Women study warns, calls for sweeping reforms

NILIMA JAHAN

A new assessment has revealed a glaring "equality gap" in Bangladesh's justice system, highlighting 19 laws that remain discriminatory, one law that needs to be repealed, and four new laws that are urgently required.

The study, titled "Achieving Equality Before the Law in Bangladesh: An Assessment of the Law from a Gender Perspective", conducted by UN Women and authored by Dr Taslima Yasmin, associate professor of the law department at Dhaka University, warned that without repealing colonial-era relics and introducing a modern protective framework, the country's promise of justice for women will remain largely symbolic.

The assessment reviewed 32 laws essential to Bangladesh's international commitments on gender equality, identifying progress alongside significant gaps.

It examined three critical pillars where structural barriers hinder women's autonomy: gender-based violence (GBV), labour legislation, and personal law.

This included scrutiny of archaic definitions of rape and domestic violence, deficiencies in maternity protections, and the exclusion of the informal workforce. It also exposed discriminatory practices in citizenship, property, and family laws that continue to restrict women's decision-making power.

To bridge this gap, the study recommended

AT A GLANCE

19 laws remain discriminatory, one must be repealed, and four new laws are needed.

Rape and sexual offence laws have major gaps, including narrow definitions and marital rape exemptions.

Workplace protections are weak, with no enforceable sexual harassment law and limited maternity rights.

Personal and citizenship laws remain discriminatory, limiting women's rights in marriage, property, and nationality.

amending the 19 discriminatory statutes and repealing the 136-year-old Guardians and Wards Act.

It also recommended introducing four new laws, including dedicated legislation on workplace and educational sexual harassment,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

SWADHINATA PADAK Govt revises rules after 'award error'

BAHARAM KHAN

In order to allow the authorities to confer the Swadhinata Padak on late physician and social activist Zafrullah Chowdhury for a second time posthumously, the government yesterday amended the guidelines governing the country's highest civilian honour.

Last Thursday, the government announced the recipients of this year's Swadhinata Padak. The list included Zafrullah under the "Social Service/Public Service" category.

He had previously received the award in 1977 for his contribution to "Population Control".

Before yesterday's amendment, an individual or organisation was not eligible to receive the award more than once.

The revised Guidelines Regarding the Swadhinata Padak now allow an individual or institution to receive the honour again after a 25-year interval.

The Cabinet Division formalised the decision through an office memo.

While prominent citizens described the move as unprecedented, officials said the amendment was made to legalise a mistake.

Researcher and former secretary Abdul Awal Mazumder told The Daily Star, "Those who take such decisions just to justify their own mistakes are harmful to the state."

SEE PAGE 5 COL 7

PLAYING MUJIB'S SPEECH 3 ex-leaders of DU dorms sent to jail

They've been sued in a terrorism case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent three people, including Sheikh Tasnim Afroz Emi, former vice-president of Shamsunnahar Hall Union at Dhaka University and a central vice-presidential candidate in the last Ducus election, to jail in a case filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act with Shahbagh Police Station.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Jewel Rana passed the order after police produced the accused before the court in the afternoon.



Tasnim Afroz Emi

The two other accused are Md Asif Ahmed Shoikot, former employment affairs secretary of the banned Chhatra League's Shahidullah Hall unit of Dhaka University, and Abdullah Al Mamun, a leader of BCL's Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haq Hall unit.

According to the case statement, a group of Awami League, Jubo League and Chhatra League activists gathered around 3:00pm on Saturday at Shahidullah Hall crossing and played Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's historic March 7 speech on loudspeaker.

Police went to the spot on information and detained Shoikot with the help of locals while he was trying to flee.

Later, around 9:20pm, Mamun and Emi, along with 10-

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



A farmer lifts water with a traditional bamboo-made irrigation device to water his Boro paddy field amid a water shortage in Naogaon's Mahadevpur Upazila yesterday. Farmers in several parts of the district are facing irrigation difficulties this season.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Inflation hits 10-month high in February, crosses 9%

B1

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PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 9

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-00	12-45	4-30	6-07	7-30
JAMAAT 5-10	1-15	4-45	6-17	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MAR	SEHRI	IFTAR
19	9		6:07
20	10	4:57	6:07
21	11	4:56	6:07