



Thick smoke rises following a strike on the Babco Oil Refinery on Sitra Island, Bahrain, yesterday, amid the US-Israeli war on Iran.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Forex reserves in focus as global oil price surges

ASIFUR RAHMAN

With the government struggling to manage growing panic over fuel amid the US-Israel war on Iran, the key commodity surged beyond \$100 a barrel yesterday, raising fresh concerns for highly import-dependent Bangladesh.

The Bangladesh Bank should maintain its current contractionary monetary policy stance to prevent the oil price shock from triggering prolonged inflationary pressure.

Ashikur Rahman, principal economist at PRI



The surge in prices will increase Bangladesh's import costs and put pressure on the country's balance of payments, said analysts and officials of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

In 2025, the BPC imported oil at an average price of \$72 a barrel, making

the current spike a major concern for policymakers.

"We are a victim of the war, which forced us to manage the crisis," said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, referring to the government's recent decision to ration fuel supply.

Under the circumstances, the move to ration oil supply for a short period is reasonable, but the government should develop a clear plan for the next 15 days to one month to manage the situation.

For now, the government should

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

RELATED STORIES ON BI, PAGE 12

Freight piling up at Dhaka airport

RMG exporters worried

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The piling up of freight at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) has been increasing as some of the Middle East-based airliners suspended cargo flights due to the US-Israel war on Iran.

The cargo flight operations to some key destinations such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Muscat remained halted because of closures of airspace with the outbreak of war.

Many cargo flights from Bangladesh operate via airports in some Middle Eastern countries to transport goods to Europe or the US.

It is true that the goods have been piling up at the HSIA, but not much of them is destined for Europe or the US, said Nisher Khan, chairman of the committee on Airport Cell of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

Garments are Bangladesh's leading air-shipped export.

Europe and the US-bound flights are operating regularly from the HSIA, but most of the Middle East-bound goods are stuck, he added.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Diesel crunch hits farm heartlands

Growers struggle to secure fuel for irrigation, fear impact on Boro



STAR REPORT

Farmers across the country are struggling to irrigate paddy and other crops after the government restricted fuel supply amid the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, raising fears of disruptions to Boro cultivation.

In many areas, diesel has disappeared from local retail shops. Even after waiting long hours at filling stations, farmers often fail to obtain the amount they need, as pumps are selling only limited quantities.

Under the restriction, each person can buy just two litres of fuel. Many farmers also reported paying Tk 5-10 more per litre at retail outlets.

Diesel-run pumps are widely used for irrigation, particularly in the northern region and the haor areas of Sylhet during the Boro season, which runs from December to June.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Who is Mojtaba Khamenei?

AGENCIES

Mojtaba Khamenei, the second son of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed on the first day of the war that the United States and Israel launched on Iran, has been selected as Iran's new supreme leader, state media reports.

The 56-year-old hardline cleric's mother, wife, and one of his sisters were also killed in the strike that killed his father, but the younger Khamenei was reportedly not present and has so far survived the intense bombing of Iran.

Iran's Assembly of Experts, the 88-member clerical body that selects the country's supreme

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

HADI MURDER SUSPECTS Dhaka seeks consular access, extradition

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is seeking cooperation from India to obtain consular access and pursue the extradition of two suspects in the murder of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi who were arrested in West Bengal, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed said yesterday.

"Our Deputy High Commission in Kolkata has already contacted the Indian authorities and requested consular access, as the information we have so far is not sufficient," Shama told journalists at the foreign ministry, adding that the two suspects were likely taken on a 14-day remand.

Bangladesh has yet to receive a response from the Indian side, she said, noting that consular access would allow officials to verify the identity of the accused and determine the next course of action.

"We need to wait until we have full information. Once we get consular access, we can move forward," she said.

Bangladesh and India have an extradition treaty, and if the suspects are

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Policemen give instruction to a driver in front of a filling station in the Matsya Bhaban area of Dhaka yesterday afternoon. The pump owners have sought security due to instances of tension between the filling station workers and customers over limited fuel supply amid the US-Israel war on Iran.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Queues at filling stations remain long

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Government efforts to strengthen monitoring of the fuel supply chain appear to have done little to ease sufferings, as shortages and long queues at filling stations continued across the country yesterday.

In Dhaka and Chattogram, some stations remained closed, while others reopened after weekend shutdowns. Crowds gathered at pumps as the government-imposed cap on purchases limited sales.

In the capital, Banasree Filling Station in Meradia and Purbachal Traders in Paribagh were closed. Purbachal Traders displayed a notice blaming Padma Oil Company Ltd for halting supply.

An employee at Banasree said depots refused to supply fuel due to disputes among owners.

At least 10 motorcycles left the station in Banasree without fuel. Ride-share driver Jahid Hasan said he needs 4 to 6 litres a day but could get only two the previous day, which allowed him to complete just two trips.

"If this continues, what will happen during the Eid?" he asked, expressing

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

PLAYING MUJIB'S SPEECH Dhaka court denies bail to 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday denied bail to Sheikh Tasnim Afroz Emi, former vice-president of Shamsunnahar Hall Union at Dhaka University and a central vice-presidential candidate in the 2025 Ducsu election, and two others in an anti-terrorism case filed over playing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's March 7 speech on loudspeaker.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Didarul Alam passed the order following hearing on their bail petitions, said a court staffer.

The two others 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 BCI's Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haq Hall unit.

Yesterday, the three were sent to jail after police produced them before the court seeking their confinement.

According to the case statement, a group of Awami League, Jubo League and Chhatra League activists gathered around 3:00pm on Saturday

SEE PAGE 5 COL.1



Thousands of people wave Iranian national flags as they gather for a rally in support of the new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei at Enghelab Square in central Tehran, Iran, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Dhaka seeks consular access

FROM PAGE 1

identified, steps will be taken to bring them back to face justice, she added.

The Special Task Force (STF) of West Bengal police arrested Faisal Karim Masud, 37, the prime accused in the Hadi murder case, and his alleged associate Alamgir Hossain, 34, early Sunday from the border area of Bongaon. Faisal is a resident of Patuakhali, while Alamgir is from Dhaka.

According to the STF, the arrests followed intelligence suggesting that the two Bangladeshi nationals accused of serious crimes including murder and extortion had fled Bangladesh and entered India illegally.

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

On January 6 this year, the Detective Branch of police submitted a charge sheet against Faisal, four of his family members, and 12 others.

The charge sheet said analysis of the

accused persons' political affiliations and Hadi's statements suggested the killing was a result of political rivalry.

It also alleged that Faisal and his associates infiltrated Hadi's election campaign as part of a planned effort to disrupt the 13th parliamentary election by creating fear among voters.

Speaking at a briefing yesterday, Inspector General of Police Md Ali Hossain Fakir said efforts were underway through diplomatic channels to extradite the two suspects from India, expressing hope that the process would be completed soon.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed also said the government had begun steps to bring them back under the extradition treaty.

"The home ministry has already requested the foreign ministry to take the necessary steps," he told journalists after a law and order committee meeting in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

At the foreign ministry, asked how quickly the extradition could take place, Shama said it was difficult to give a definite timeline as the matter involved legal procedures in another country.

"We all want justice for Hadi; we wanted justice when it occurred, and we want it now. We hope India will cooperate with us in this matter," she said.

Responding to a question on diesel imports from India, the state minister said Bangladesh expects broader cooperation from its neighbour.

"We want diesel, we want water, and we want an end to killings at the border. We want many things," she said.

Noting that the Indian government had expressed interest in maintaining good relations with Bangladesh, she said Dhaka expected those commitments to be implemented.

"Since a new government has come to power in Bangladesh, they want to establish relations anew through mutual respect," she said.

On the repatriation of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, Shama said the process was ongoing.

"Our government has just assumed office. We certainly want justice for everyone, including the trial of the former prime minister. We are working on that."

any of the alleged transactions, but he has reportedly moved billions of dollars over the years through a network of insiders and associates linked with the Iranian establishment.

Bloomberg tied Khamenei to Ali Ansari, who was in the spotlight late last year after his Bank Ayandeh was forcibly dissolved by the state because it went bankrupt due to handing out loans to unnamed insiders and accruing huge debts. The dissolution of the bank helped push Iran's rampant inflation higher, making Iranians poorer, as the losses had to be compensated partly through public funds.

Khamenei's religious credentials have also been an issue of contention, since he is a hojatoleslam, a mid-level cleric, rather than the higher rank of ayatollah. But his father was not an ayatollah either when he became the country's leader in 1989, and the law was amended to accommodate him. A similar compromise could be possible for Mojtaba as well.

For now, it remains unclear when or how Iran will proceed with announcing new leaders, as it once again imposes a nationwide internet blackout and restrictions on the flow of information amid an intense bombing campaign by the US and Israel across the country.

ICDs, lighter vessels

FROM PAGE 8

Together, they require 60,000-65,000 litres of diesel each day to operate container-handling equipment and transport vehicles.

BICDA Secretary General Ruhul Amin Sikder said all equipment, including reach stackers, forklifts, trailers and prime movers, are diesel-dependent.

"The oil depots aren't providing enough diesel to most ICDs as per demand," he said.

In a letter to the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, BICDA President Khalilur Rahman warned that shortages could severely disrupt exports, imports and port operations.

Meanwhile, BWTC Convener Shafiq Ahmed wrote to the energy ministry that many lighter vessels loaded with cargo are stuck on the Karnaphuli River, unable to move to outer anchorage or depart for destinations due to lack of fuel.

BWTC officials said over 70 mother vessels carrying imported cargo are currently at the outer anchorage of Chattogram Port.

To move cargo from these mother vessels to destinations across the country, the organisation allocates around 100 lighter vessels daily, which together require around 4 lakh to 5 lakh litres of fuel for completing the trip, they added.

Diesel crunch hits farm heartlands

FROM PAGE 1

country currently has 754 diesel-powered deep tube wells, 10,39,337 shallow tube wells, and 1,84,384 low-lift pumps in operation.

Boro is Bangladesh's single largest rice crop. The cultivation target this year is 50.54 lakh hectares, with 48.53 lakh hectares already brought under farming as of March 8, according to DAE data.

In the Rangpur region alone, Boro has been cultivated on 5,09,095 hectares. In five districts—Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Nilphamari and Gaibandha—35-40 percent of cultivable land depends entirely on diesel-powered shallow machines.

Farmers in off-grid areas, particularly the chars along the Brahmaputra, Teesta and Dharla rivers, said they are struggling to keep their fields irrigated.

Mostak Ali, a farmer from Bhelabari village in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila, said he travelled 12 kilometres to obtain just two litres of diesel, although he needs around 13 litres daily to irrigate his 33 bighas of land.

In Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, Sekendar Ali of Char Jorgach said local shops have run out of diesel, forcing him to travel seven kilometres to a filling station, where he received only a fraction of what is required to irrigate his 35 bighas.

"Without adequate diesel, our Boro crop is under direct threat," he said.

Monir Hossain, a retailer in the same char, said he sold the diesel he had in stock until Sunday but has since been unable to procure more.

"Farmers and boatmen are facing severe hardship," he said.

Meser Ali, owner of a filling station

in Lalmonirhat Sadar, said they are controlling sales due to government restrictions.

Farmers, retailers and pump operators in Rajshahi, Bogura, Sylhet and Kushtia reported similar difficulties.

Tabarak Hossain, a farmer from Char Bhuban Para in Rajshahi's Godagari upazila, said electricity is unavailable in the area, leaving farmers entirely dependent on diesel.

"This is the peak time for paddy cultivation. If we cannot irrigate now, it will create a major crisis," he said.

According to DAE Rajshahi, 26,506 or about 85 percent of the district's 31,274 irrigation pumps are diesel-powered.

In Bogura's Sariakandi upazila, Abdul Gafur from Batir Char said Boro fields require irrigation two to three times a week, while other crops need watering at least once weekly.

Now, retailers are charging Tk 8-10 extra per litre for diesel, pushing the price to around Tk 110, he said.

Sirajul Islam, additional director of DAE Rangpur, warned that insufficient irrigation could seriously threaten Boro production.

He explained that in areas where irrigation depends on diesel-run shallow machines, the pumps need to operate at least 12 hours every day to supply water to all fields in an area in rotation.

"We are communicating with the ministry so farmers can get the required diesel," he said.

Farmers in remote parts of Kushtia also reported shortages. Mohammad Ali of Sonaidanga village said diesel has not been available at the Bitipara filling station for days, forcing him to

US labels Sudan's Muslim Brotherhood as 'terrorists'

AFP, Washington

The United States said yesterday it will label the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan as a terrorist organization and accused the Islamist group of receiving support from Iran.

The designation, which will be effective in a week, comes after the United States in January declared several other Muslim Brotherhood branches to be terrorist organizations, including in its historic base of Egypt.

"The Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood uses unrestrained violence against civilians to undermine efforts to resolve the conflict in Sudan and advance its violent Islamist ideology," the State Department said in a statement.

The Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood "has contributed upwards of 20,000 fighters to the war in Sudan, many receiving training and other support from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps," the elite ideological wing of Tehran's military, the State Department said.

The State Department accused the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood of having "conducted mass executions of civilians in areas they captured."

Iran, run by Shia clerics, and the Muslim Brotherhood, a Sunni organization that historically had extensive social networks inside Egypt, both have supported Sudan's army.

Who is Mojtaba Khamenei?

FROM PAGE 1

leader, has called upon Iranians to maintain unity and pledge support to Mojtaba Khamenei.

In a statement circulated on state media on Sunday, the assembly said that Khamenei was chosen based on a "decisive vote". It urged all Iranians, "especially the elites and intellectuals of the seminaries and universities", to "pledge allegiance to the leadership and maintain unity".

Khamenei has never run for office or been subjected to a public vote, but has for decades been a highly influential figure in the inner circle of the previous supreme leader, cultivating deep ties to the paramilitary Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

In recent years, Khamenei had increasingly been touted as a top potential replacement for his father, who was president for nearly eight years and then held absolute power for 36 years, before being killed in attacks on his compound in Tehran on Saturday, February 28.

The younger Khamenei's ascension is a clear sign that more headline factions in Iran's establishment retain power, and could indicate that the government has little desire to agree to a deal or negotiations in the short term, reports

Al Jazeera online.

Mojtaba Khamenei has never discussed the issue of succession publicly, a sensitive topic, considering that his ascension to the position of supreme leader would effectively create a dynasty reminiscent of the Pahlavi monarchy before the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Instead, Khamenei has largely kept a low profile, not giving public lectures, Friday sermons, or political addresses – to the point that many Iranians have not heard his voice, despite knowing for years that he was a star rising within the theocratic establishment.

Mojtaba Khamenei began developing close ties within the IRGC from his younger years, when he served in the Habib Battalion of the force during multiple operations in the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s. Several of his comrades, including other clerics, went on to obtain leading posts in the security and intelligence apparatus of the then-nascent Islamic Republic.

Khamenei, who is under US and Western sanctions, has also amassed an economic empire involving assets in multiple countries, according to reports in Western media outlets.

His name is not believed to appear in

been killed in the war. The bodies of the three others will be brought back after necessary formalities are completed.

He said a crisis management team comprising officials from the foreign ministry, expatriates' welfare ministry and civil aviation ministry was formed on the prime minister's instruction soon after the war began.

Through the team, the government is providing food support to Bangladeshis who cannot leave their homes because of the conflict, while medical assistance is being arranged for the injured, he added.

Bangladeshi missions have also been instructed to relocate expatriates living near US military bases to safer areas.

Urging expatriates to remain patient, Ariful said the government would take further measures depending on how the situation unfolds.

Bangladeshi expatriates in Lebanon are also receiving different forms of support through the International Labour Organisation.

Earlier in Dhaka, State Minister Nurul Haque said the government has been coordinating with the families of the deceased and providing logistical assistance amid disruptions to international flights.

He urged Bangladeshi expatriates to avoid conflict-prone areas, follow local warning systems and refrain from posting content on social media that could violate the laws of host countries.

company Bapco joined its counterparts in Qatar and Kuwait in declaring "force majeure" – a warning that events beyond its control may lead it to miss export targets.

The war has triggered concerns about the economies of the Gulf states, hitting their oil and gas sectors but also aviation and tourism.

Iran said that security within the strategic Strait of Hormuz could not be guaranteed for as long as the war continues.

French President Emmanuel Macron said that his country and allies were working to put together a "purely defensive" mission to reopen the strait through which nearly 20 percent of the world's crude oil usually transits.

The Saudi defence ministry said yesterday it had thwarted a drone attack targeting an oil field in the kingdom's east, near the Emirati border.

As governments around the region seek to protect their image as safe havens, Qatari authorities said they have arrested more than 300 people for sharing images online and what they described as "misleading information".

The announcement followed similar but smaller-scale arrests and warnings issued in Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The war came just weeks after Iranian authorities under Ali Khamenei crushed nationwide protests against the government.

Few expect major changes in Iran's stance under the younger Khamenei, appointed to replace the cleric who led Iran for nearly four decades and who was killed in the first wave of US-Israeli strikes and who is considered close to Iran's ideological armed force – the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

The IRGC quickly pledged support for the new leader, saying they were "ready for complete obedience and self-sacrifice in carrying out the divine commands".

Iran's allies and proxies also rushed to express support, with the powerful Badr organisation in Iraq saying the new leadership represents "blessed continuity of the path of the Islamic revolution".

Hezbollah pledged allegiance to

Iran's new supreme leader, saying, "We extend our warmest congratulations and blessings on this occasion. We renew our pledge of loyalty to this blessed approach and our steadfastness on the path of allegiance."

Another missile was fired at NATO member Turkey, the second such incident in five days, with the alliance's air defences intercepting it before it could hit its target. Washington has advised non-essential staff to leave its consulate near the southern Turkish city of Adana and ordered US citizens to leave southeast Turkey.

More explosions were heard in Tehran and central Israel as the foes exchanged strikes. At least one Israeli was killed, a man said to be approximately 40, when shrapnel showered a building site, the Magen David Adom emergency service said. At least 10 explosions were audible in Tel Aviv, Israel's commercial hub, after the military announced it had detected missiles inbound from Iran.

The multi-front war also intensified in Lebanon. Iran-backed Hezbollah said they were engaging Israeli forces who landed in eastern Lebanon on 15 helicopters across the Syrian border and a new powerful strike hit the southern districts of Beirut.

Large plumes of smoke rose from the area after the strike, which came after the Israeli military warned it would destroy branches of Al-Qard al-Hassan, a Hezbollah-linked financial firm.

Hezbollah said combat was ongoing in eastern Lebanon after its fighters "engaged the helicopters and the infiltrating force with appropriate weapons".

Lebanon's health minister said Israeli strikes have killed at least 394 people since the start of the war, including 83 children and 42 women.

In Bahrain, the health ministry reported 32 people wounded overnight by an Iranian drone attack on the island of Sitra.

The wounded include a 17-year-old girl who suffered severe head and eye injuries and a two-month-old baby, according to the ministry.

Saudi Arabia said Sunday that two people were killed and 12 wounded as a projectile landed in Al-Kharj province.

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Prof Sakhawat Ali Khan passes away

DU CORRESPONDENT

Prof Sakhawat Ali Khan, a pioneering figure in Bangladesh's journalism education and a longtime teacher at Dhaka University, passed away on Sunday night at a hospital in Dhaka, aged 85.

Family members said he had suffered a stroke a few days earlier. After several days of treatment, he was taken home. However, he fell ill again on Sunday night and was rushed back to the hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held at the DU Central

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Speakers at a roundtable, titled 'From Rights to Reality: Advancing Justice and Action for All Women and Girls in Bangladesh', organised on the occasion of International Women's Day. The event was organised by the Bangladesh National Gender Working Group (BNGWG) in partnership with Plan International and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Patriarchal norms, weak policies limit women's leadership

Say speakers at roundtable by Bangladesh National Gender Working Group, Plan International, Star

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women's participation in Bangladesh has increased over the years, but significant barriers still limit their leadership and decision-making roles, experts and activists said yesterday.

They said patriarchal attitudes, weak policy implementation and lack of institutional support continue to hinder women's meaningful representation in governance and public life.

They made the remarks at a roundtable, titled 'From Rights to Reality: Advancing Justice and Action for All Women and Girls in Bangladesh', organised on the occasion of International Women's Day.

The event was organised by the Bangladesh National Gender Working

Women are often viewed not as leaders but as liabilities or dependents. They are frequently treated as passive recipients of policies, while structural barriers and social norms continue to limit their leadership opportunities.

PROF TANIA HAQUE
Department of Women and Gender Studies, DU

Group (BNGWG) in partnership with Plan International and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre.

At the discussion, Prof Tania Haque of Women and Gender Studies at Dhaka University said Bangladesh still struggles with deeply rooted patriarchal attitudes.

Women are often viewed "not as leaders but as liabilities or dependents", she said.

She added that women are frequently treated as passive recipients of policies rather than active participants in decision-making, while structural barriers and social norms continue to limit their leadership opportunities.

Sanaul Haque Mondal, assistant

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Jamaat undecided on BNP's deputy speaker offer

Party to decide after written proposal, internal discussion

MAMUNUR RASHID

Jamaat-e-Islami has not yet decided whether to accept a verbal offer from the BNP government to take the post of deputy speaker ahead of the first sitting of the 13th Jatiya Sangsad, senior party leaders said.

The BNP, which formed the government after securing a majority in the parliamentary elections, has "verbally" proposed that Jamaat, the main opposition party in parliament, take the deputy speaker's position.

Jamaat leaders, however, said they have not received any written proposal from the BNP. They said the party would review and analyse the matter before making a final decision if a formal proposal is sent.

Opposition leaders noted that under the existing constitution, parliament has one speaker and one deputy speaker. However, the July Charter proposes a legislature with one speaker and two deputy speakers – one from the ruling party and one from the opposition. They pointed out that the BNP's election manifesto reflects the same.

Jamaat leaders said it remains unclear whether the BNP's proposal for the deputy speaker's post is based on the July Charter or its election manifesto.

The first session of the 13th parliament will be held on March 12, when the speaker and deputy speaker are expected to be elected.

On March 2, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed told reporters that the party wanted to begin implementing the July National Charter.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Moyeen Khan, Hafiz frontrunners for speaker

BNP discussions continue as party looks for credible, experienced figure for top parliament role

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

With the 13th Jatiya Sangsad set to convene on March 12, the ruling BNP is considering standing committee members Abdul Moyeen Khan and Hafiz Uddin Ahmad for the post of speaker, according to party insiders.

Party sources said the two leaders are among the main options under discussion as the party prepares to elect a speaker for the new parliament.

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman has been consulting senior leaders as the party works toward a final decision, added the sources.

The leadership is looking for someone who can preside over parliament in a neutral manner and command acceptance across the political arena.

Meanwhile, the party has offered the post of deputy speaker to the opposition.

Senior BNP leaders said both Moyeen and Hafiz Uddin are being considered for the position of Speaker due to their long political

experience and relatively clean public image.

Moyeen Khan was elected from the Narsingdi-2 constituency in the February 12 national election.

He first entered parliament in 1991 from the same constituency in the fifth parliamentary election. Before joining politics, he was



a professor of physics at Dhaka University.

He was re-elected from Narsingdi-2 in June 1996 and again in 2001 as a BNP candidate, and was elevated to the party's standing committee – the party's highest policy-making forum – in 2009.

He served as state minister for

planning from 1993 to 1996. In the Khaleda Zia-led government between 2001 and 2006, he served as minister of information from 2001 to 2002 and later as minister of science and ICT from 2002 to 2006.

Moyeen comes from a political family. His father, Abdul Momen Khan, was a politician and once served as food minister.

The other leader under discussion is Hafiz Uddin Ahmad, currently liberation war affairs minister and the MP from Bhola-3.

Hafiz was first elected to parliament in 1986 from Bhola under the Jatiya Party and was re-elected in 1988. He later won the fifth parliamentary election as an independent candidate.

After joining the BNP, he was elected to parliament for three consecutive terms up to the eighth parliament in 2001.

During the previous BNP government, he served as minister of water resources and later as commerce minister following a cabinet reshuffle.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

Police not to control parties; they will act against criminals

Says IGP Ali Hossain Fakir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Policing is not about controlling political parties, but anyone committing crimes or violating the law will face action, said new Inspector General of Police Md Ali Hossain Fakir yesterday.

Replying to a question about political patrons of teen gangs, he said political parties are the country's main driving force and policymakers who decide in parliament how the country, society, and institutions function.

Using a metaphor, he added, "Can you take action against your father?" saying it is not the police's responsibility to control political parties.

Addressing the media at Police Headquarters Media Centre, at the DMP's Central Command and Control Centre building on Abdul Gani Road, the IGP, however, said, "If they engage in any criminal activity or violate the law, we will bring them under the law."

On a planned drive against extortionists and listed criminals, the IGP said law enforcers have prepared a list and will launch drives soon.

About mob violence, the police chief said they have a plan to tackle it and have already started taking action. Many of those involved in such incidents are linked to drugs, looting, and other crimes, he said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Pass NHRC ordinance in its current form

Civil society representatives call on parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil society representatives yesterday called on parliament to approve the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) ordinance without amendment, saying this is crucial to ensure the rights body's institutional continuity.

They made the call at a consultation meeting between NHRC leadership and civil society representatives at the commission's office in the capital.

Speaking at the programme, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said, "We believe the ordinance should be approved in parliament in its current form for now. Improvements can be made later if necessary."

"If the ordinance is reopened for review now, complications may arise, and we may risk losing what has already been achieved," he said.

He proposed creating a communication channel between the commission and civil society to share information on rights concerns affecting vulnerable communities and recommended a strategic, time-bound work plan to address priority challenges.

NHRC Chairperson Justice Moyeenul

Islam Chowdhury said the commission wanted to listen to those who have long worked with victims and communities in the human rights field.

He said Bangladesh is at a time when questions of human rights, justice, accountability and institutional trust have gained renewed importance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Work towards upgrading NHRC from 'B' to 'A' status

Build a more active, rights-based NHRC

Ensure strong legal framework and institutional independence

Develop strategic, time-bound plan for priority issues

Strengthen local-level human rights monitoring committees

The commission wants to protect rights and strengthen public confidence, but its effectiveness will depend largely on the strength of the legal framework

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



Firefighters in action to douse a fire that broke out on the third floor of a 10-storey building in Mirpur-2 yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Two die in Mirpur fire

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed in a fire broke out at a commercial building named LA Plaza in Dhaka's Mirpur-2 yesterday.

Rakib Hasan and Ananya died at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital last night, said a duty officer at the Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Mirpur Model Police Station Inspector (investigation) Rajib Hossain also confirmed the deaths.

The fire broke out on the third floor of the 10-storey building at 1:52pm.

The fire was doused at 4:35pm, Khaleda Yasmin, duty officer at the control room, told The Daily Star.

A total of 23 people were rescued from different floors of the building. The two who were found unconscious later died at the hospital, she said. Market caretaker Nizam Uddin said the fire originated from an air conditioner inside a beauty parlour on the fourth floor.

Steps taken to bring back Hadi murder suspects Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said the government has initiated steps to bring back two suspects in the Hadi murder case who were recently arrested in India.



Speaking after a meeting of the district law and order committee at the Cox's Bazar DC office yesterday afternoon, he said the process to repatriate the suspects is underway. "The home ministry has requested the foreign ministry. We are trying to bring them back under the extradition agreement between the two countries," he said.

Responding to questions about recent allegations of mob violence, the minister cautioned against labelling every incident as mob action.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Severe traffic congestion grips Shaheb Bazar RD as Eid shoppers crowd the busy road. Vehicles crawl through long queues while pedestrians and roadside vendors spill onto the street. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

5 additional IGPs sent to forced retirement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has sent five additional inspectors general of police on forced retirement, according to five separate notifications issued by the Public Security Division of the home ministry on Sunday.

The order will come into effect immediately.

The five include: Tawfique Mahbub Chowdhury (Principal of the Bangladesh Police Academy, Sardah); Kusum Dewan (River Police); Abu Hasan Muhammad Tariq (Officer on Special Duty-OSD); Abdul Alim Mahmud (Officer on Special Duty OSD); and Masudur Rahman Bhuiyan (Assigned as TR at Police Headquarters).

According to the notifications, the decision was taken under Section 45 of the Public Service Act, 2018, which allows the government to retire any public servant who has completed 25 years of service without providing justification.

All five of the officials have completed 25 years in service, and the government has deemed their retirement necessary in the public interest.

Since the ouster of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5,

2024, at least 49 police officers have been sent into retirement under Section 45, according to a ministry database. They included 20 additional IGPs and 11 DIGs.

The database shows that four officers were retired on August 13, 2024; three on August 21; three on August 22; three on August 27; four on September 2; seven on September 22; and nine on December 2. It also shows three retirements on January 1, 2025; four on February 23; and four on July 28.

Many of the officials were accused of using excessive force to suppress the student movement that led to the fall of the AI government on August 5.

Those sent into retirement include Monirul Islam, additional IGP at the Special Branch; Habibur Rahman, DMP commissioner; Atiqul Islam, additional IGP at Police Headquarters; Mohammad Ali Miah, CID chief; and Krishna Pada Roy, additional IGP at Police Headquarters.

Some of them even have murder cases filed against them.

Police and home ministry sources said the steps were made as part of measures to revamp the force that has been "politically used" for a long time.

Prof Sakhawat Ali Khan

FROM PAGE 3

Jame Mosque yesterday around 10:30am. Among those present were DU Vice Chancellor Niaz Ahmed Khan, former Mass Communication and Journalism professor Golam Rahman.

His body was later taken to his ancestral home in Dhanua village of Shibpur upazila in Narsingdi, where he was laid to rest after the second janaza.

People from all walks of life joined the funeral prayers, including Khairul Kabir Khokon, MP for Narsingdi Sadar, and Manjur Elahi, MP for Narsingdi 3 (Shibpur).

Sakhawat left behind his wife, a daughter, a son, two grandchildren, and numerous students and admirers. His daughter, Sumona Sharmin, is an associate editor at Prothom Alo.

Born in 1941 in a distinguished family in Narsingdi, Sakhawat

Ali began his career in journalism and worked for nearly a decade at several national dailies before joining academia.

He later joined the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism professor at the DU, where he taught generations of students and contributed significantly to the development of journalism education in the country. He also served as chairman of the department from 1976 to 1979.

He retired from the department in 2008, but continued to serve it for five more years as a supernumerary professor. Until his death, he remained associated with the department as an honorary professor.

Beyond the University of Dhaka, he also served as a part-time adviser to the Department of Journalism at Daffodil International University and as dean of the School of Social

Science at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB).

Sakhawat Ali played an active role in civil society as well. He was the founding president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) and served as chairman of the Society for Environment and Social Development.

A respected scholar, he presented keynote papers at seminars in 15 countries and worked as a visiting scholar at Southern Illinois University in the United States.

More than 30 of his research articles were published in national and international journals, with much of his work focusing on the interaction between journalism and politics.

He also served multiple terms as a member of the Bangladesh Press Council and was a member of the management board of the Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB).

Patriarchal norms

FROM PAGE 3

professor of Social Relations at East West University, said opportunity, representation and accountability are key to women's participation in public life.

Policies may exist, he said, but without accountability, they have little impact. "Even when targets are set for women's nomination in elections, implementation remains weak."

"Representation cannot grow without creating opportunities and building capacity," he said.

Highlighting the challenge of social acceptance, Mondal said communities often assume women leaders represent only women rather than the entire community.

Kohinoor Yeasmin, co-chair of BNGWG, said women have made progress over the decades, but many still struggle to reach higher leadership positions.

Drawing on grassroots experience, she said women elected to local councils are often excluded from decision-making.

"They are selected members but kept aside," she said, adding that many are not even informed about local budgets despite being assigned supervisory roles.

Yeasmin said training on budgeting and governance has helped women question authorities, but political structures still limit their influence.

"We empower them, but politically they remain restricted," she added.

She also stressed the importance of working with young leaders and adolescent girls, noting that many now aspire to greater participation in public life.

Anika Tahsin Khan, national gender consultant at GIZ, said a positive development in recent elections was the large turnout of women voters.

However, she said women remain sidelined in leadership and decision-making despite being active in political parties due to persistent structural barriers.

Quazi Baby, CEO of the Participatory Development Action Programme, highlighted women's growing presence in digital spaces.

While online platforms create opportunities, they also expose women to harassment and risks, she said.

"Women's safety online is important because violence can occur both online and offline."

She stressed the need for greater awareness about cyber safety and digital hygiene, adding that stronger legal protections against cyber harassment are needed.

Banasree Mitra Neogi, director of Rights and Governance at Manusher Jonno Foundation, said Bangladesh has a long history of women's movements and activism and that women's visibility in economic, educational and social sectors has increased gradually.

However, she said religion and cultural norms are sometimes used to silence women.

"Influencing decisions requires courage," she said, adding that many women hesitate to speak up due to fear.

She also noted that democracy often appears limited to voting, while women's representation from grassroots to national levels remains weak.

Although the constitution guarantees equal rights, the main challenge lies in implementation, she said. "Identifying barriers to enforcement is essential to ensure women can fully exercise their rights."

The event was moderated by Tanjim Ferdous, head of strategic partnership at The Daily Star.

Among others present were Kamrun Nahar, chair of BNGWG; Khandoker Shohel Rana of Sightsavers; Sanjida Ahmed of Plan International; Rasheda Akter of Save the Children; Shahmina Isha Mannan; Rowshon Akhter Urmeed of Oxfam; and Tasaffi M Hossain of Bonhishikha.

**Partners in Population and Development (PPD)**
An Inter-Governmental Organization Promoting South-South Cooperation

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR VENDOR ENLISTMENT

Partners in Population and Development (PPD) is an Inter-Governmental organization of 28 developing countries. PPD is requesting the interested vendors to submit the relevant papers in the following categories for enlistment.

1. Travel Management Services	7. Office supplies/ stationery
2. Packers and Shippers	8. Designing and Printing
3. Rent A Car	9. Newspaper Advertisement
4. Vehicle Repairing and Maintenance Workshop	10. Courier service
5. Building Maintenance/ Office Repairing and Maintenance	11. Building Lift and Generator Maintenance
6. IT Solutions	12. Security Services for Office Premises

Required documents, experiences, and Terms of Reference (ToR) for the above-mentioned category are available in the Announcement Section of the PPD Website: www.partners-popdev.org

Interested companies/enterprises/Service Providers matching the requirements are requested to submit their proposals by **15 April, 2026**, addressed to:

Executive Director
Partners in Population and Development (PPD)
Plot- 17 B & C, Block- F, Agargaon Administrative Zone,
Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka- 1207, Email: procurement@ppdsec.org

TENDER NOTICE

**Institute of Water Modelling (IWM)** invites tender for Drilling and Installation of Monitoring Wells at 12 Selected Locations (Each Location Consists of 3 Wells) across 12 Upazilas in 6 Districts. Interested tenderers are requested to visit IWM website www.iwmbd.org for details

Office Rental Notice

BGMEA Complex-9895.28 sft. (Office Space 7541 sft.) upper basement with 5 garages will be rented on the 12th floor West Block. **Address:** BGMEA Complex, House # 7/7A, Block # H-1, Sector # 17, Uttara, Dhaka-1230, Bangladesh. **Contact: 01715-329469, 01720-381519**

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 183 OF 2026

M. Zakaria Khan --- *Petitioner*

VERSUS

F. R. Khan Estates Limited and another --- *Respondents*

Notice is hereby given that an application under sections 81(2) and 85(3), 183 read with Sections 396 of the Companies Act 1994 has been filled for condonation of delay in holding the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of F. R. Khan Estates Limited and to relieve the Directors of the Company from the liabilities of fine before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the petitioner and upon preliminary hearing on 01.03.2026; Mr. Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque was pleased to admit the said application. Anyone desirous of opposing the matter may appear before the Hon'ble court either personally or through his advocate on the date fixed. A copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary costs.

MD. HAFIZUR RAHAMAN KHAN, Barrister-at-Law
Advocate, Appellate Division, Supreme Court of Bangladesh,
Jamila Villa, Flat No. C-2, House- 4/A/1 (3rd Floor), Road-02
Gulshan-1, Dhaka -1212, Bangladesh.

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 185 OF 2026

M. Zakaria Khan --- *Petitioner*

VERSUS

Commander Soap Company Limited and another --- *Respondents*

Notice is hereby given that an application under sections 81(2) and 85(3), 183 read with Sections 396 of the Companies Act 1994 has been filled for condonation of delay in holding the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Commander Soap Company Limited and to relieve the Directors of the Company from the liabilities of fine before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the petitioner and upon preliminary hearing on 01.03.2026; Mr. Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque was pleased to admit the said application. Anyone desirous of opposing the matter may appear before the Hon'ble court either personally or through his advocate on the date fixed. A copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary costs.

MD. HAFIZUR RAHAMAN KHAN, Barrister-at-Law
Advocate, Appellate Division, Supreme Court of Bangladesh,
Jamila Villa, Flat No. C-2, House- 4/A/1 (3rd Floor), Road-02
Gulshan-1, Dhaka -1212, Bangladesh.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
আইন, বিচার ও সংসদ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়
লেজিসলেটিভ ও সংসদ বিষয়ক বিভাগ
প্রশাসন শাখা-১
বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।
www.legislative.gov.bd

নং- ৫৫.০০.০০০০.০০০.১০৫.২৬.০০০৫.২৫-১৭৫ তারিখ:০৮/০৩/২০২৬ খ্রি.।

অকেজো গাড়ি নিলামে বিক্রয়ের দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি:

লেজিসলেটিভ ও সংসদ বিষয়ক বিভাগের অকেজো ঘোষিত টিওএন্ডইভুক্র পুরোনো ০১(এক) টি জীপ গাড়ি “ঢাকা মেট্রো-১৩-৮৬৫৪” যেখানে যে অবস্থায় আছে সে ভিত্তিতে উন্মুক্ত দরপত্রের মাধ্যমে বিক্রয় করার লক্ষ্যে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিক/প্রতিষ্ঠান ও আগ্রহী ফ্রেতার নিকট হতে সিলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আদান করা যাচ্ছে। দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ২৯/০৩/২০২৬ খ্রি. বিকাল ৩:০০ ঘটিকা এবং দরপত্র সিডিউল জমা দেয়ার শেষ তারিখ ৩০/০৩/২০২৬ খ্রি. বেলা ১২:০০ ঘটিকা। প্রতি সেট সিডিউলের মূল্য ২,০০০/- (দুই হাজার) টাকা মাত্র (অফেরতযোগ্য) এ-চালানোর মাধ্যমে ১৪২২০২৮ নং কোডে সচিব, লেজিসলেটিভ ও সংসদ বিষয়ক বিভাগ বরাবর জমা দিয়ে চালানোর মূল্য কপি প্রশাসন শাখা -০১, কক্ষ নং -৬৩৪, ৭ম-তলা, ভবন নং-০৪, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা বরাবর জমাপূর্বক সিডিউল সংগ্রহ করতে হবে। বিস্তারিত তথ্যাদি সিডিউলে উল্লেখ করা হবে।


(**মোঃ হোসেন হোসেন**)
সহকারী সচিব (প্রশাসন-১)
ফোন-৫৫১০০৫৭৩

GD-533

**Janata Bank PLC.**
Head Office
IT Procurement, Security, Compliance and Maintenance Department
110, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000
Tel: +02223356514, Fax: 88-02-9564644, Telex: 675840 JBD BJ
Website: www.jb.com.bd

Invitation for e-Tender

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

Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Tender Description	Tender Closing Date & Time
1241641	JB/IT-Proc-52/OTM/Network AMC/2026	Tender for Procurement of Maintenance of 76 Fiber Node (38 SFP Modular and 38 Redundant Media Converter) for Janata Bank PLC. following Open Tendering Method (OTM).	25.03.2026 03:00PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders 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 (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP portal and e-GP Help Desk (Email: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Sd/-
Mohammad Shakhawat Hossain
Deputy General Manager

GD-534

**বিনা টিকেটে রেল ভ্রমণ থেকে বিরত থাকুন**
দুর্ঘটনা এড়াতে রেলের ক্রিপ ও যন্ত্রাংশ চুরি রোধে এগিয়ে

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
সেতু প্রকৌশলী, চট্টগ্রাম এর কার্যালয়
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, সিআরবি, চট্টগ্রাম

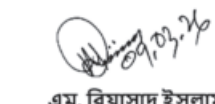
নং-বিই/সিটিজি/ই-জিপি/টেন্ডার নোটিশ/২০২৫-২৬/০৪ তারিখঃ ০৯.০৩.২০২৬খ্রিঃ

ই-জিপি টেন্ডার নোটিশ

সেতু প্রকৌশলী, বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, চট্টগ্রাম কর্তৃক National Electronic Government Procurement Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) এ নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা হয়েছেঃ

ক্রমিক নং	ক্রমিক নং	ক্রয়ের ধরণ ও কাজের নাম	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	দরপত্র প্রকাশ, দাখিলের তারিখ ও শেষ সময়
1	1161034, BE/CTG/4111308/ 2025-26/05	Works: Conducting of 02 Nos. Test boring 38mm dia Upto depth 1 x 365.85 meter for each boring at Sylhet (SYT) Railway Station Area.	NCT, OTM	10-Mar-2026 12:00:00, 30-Mar-2026 12:00:00
2	1201120, BE/CTG/3258105/ 2025-26/06	Works: At KYTO Loco Turn table: Repairing of main shaft of center pivot. bearing caser, housing boring including supplying & fixing wheel bearing, handle lock, adjusting lock & plumber box including one year maintenance with other allied works.	NCT, OTM	10-Mar-2026 12:00:00, 30-Mar-2026 12:05:00

এস (২৬) (২০৫)


এম. রিয়াসাদ ইসলাম
সেতু প্রকৌশলী
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, চট্টগ্রাম
মোবাইল নং-০১৭১১-৬৯১৫৩১
ই-মেইলঃ hce@railway.gov.bd

GD-537

INTERNATIONAL

What Mojtaba’s rise means for Iran

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran’s clerical leadership chose confrontation over compromise in appointing Mojtaba Khamenei to succeed his father, Ali Khamenei, a move regional officials say is a direct rebuke to US President Donald Trump, who had declared the son “unacceptable”.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in a US-Israeli strike at the start of the conflict, now in its second week. The appointment of Mojtaba as his successor by the Assembly of Experts locks hardliners firmly in control in Tehran – a gamble that could reshape Iran’s war with the US and Israel and reverberate far beyond the Middle East.

“Having Mojtaba take over is the same playbook,” said Alex Vatanka, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute.

FURTHER CONFRONTATION

Analysts say the choice of Mojtaba, a deeply hardline cleric whose wife, mother and other family members were also killed in US-Israeli strikes – sends an unequivocal message: Iran’s leadership has rejected any prospect of compromise to preserve the system and sees no path forward except confrontation, revenge and endurance.

According to insiders, Mojtaba will face immense internal and external strain from a disaffected population and an escalating conflict, but is expected to move swiftly to consolidate power. “The world will miss the era of his father,” a regional official close to Tehran told Reuters. “Mojtaba will have no choice but to show an iron fist... even if the war ends, there will be severe internal repression.”

NEW LEADER OPPOSED REFORMISTS

A powerful mid ranking cleric, Mojtaba, 56, has long opposed reformist groups advocating engagement with the West. He amassed influence under his father as a key figure within the security apparatus and the vast business empire it controls, operating for years as Ali Khamenei’s gatekeeper and, in practice, a “mini-supreme leader”, analysts say.

A Gulf source familiar with regional government thinking said of Mojtaba’s appointment: “This tells Trump and Washington that Iran will not back down, they will fight on until the finish.”



Israeli security forces and first responders gather near a destroyed vehicle at the site of an Iranian strike that hit a residential neighbourhood in Bat Yam, south of Tel Aviv, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Israel ‘unlawfully’ using white phosphorus in Lebanon: HRW

AFP, Beirut

Human Rights Watch (HRW) yesterday accused Israel of “unlawfully” using white phosphorus over residential parts of a southern Lebanese town last week.

“The Israeli military unlawfully used artillery-fired white phosphorus munitions over homes on March 3, 2026, in the southern Lebanese town of Yohmor,” the New York-based rights group said in a report.

HRW added that it “verified and geolocated seven images showing airburst white phosphorus

munitions being deployed over a residential part of the town and civil defense workers responding to fires in at least two homes and one car in that area”.

White phosphorus, a substance that ignites on contact with oxygen, can be used to create smokescreens and to illuminate battlefields.

But the munition can also be used as an incendiary weapon and can cause fires, horrific burns, respiratory damage, organ failure and death.

Israel launched multiple waves of strikes across Lebanon since last week and sent ground troops into border areas after the Iran-backed

group attacked it.

The Israeli army has since repeatedly called on people living south of the Litani River, around 30 kilometres (20 miles) north of the Israeli border, to leave.

At least 394 people have been killed in Israeli attacks, Lebanese authorities said, registering more than half a million people as displaced. “The Israeli military’s unlawful use of white phosphorus over residential areas is extremely alarming and will have dire consequences for civilians,” Ramzi Kaiss, Lebanon researcher at HRW, was quoted saying in the report.

Govt floats tenders

FROM PAGE 12

of Hormuz, while the US-Israeli war with Iran continues for a tenth day.

Located between Oman and Iran, and connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, the strait is one of the world’s most important oil chokepoints.

Bangladesh meets nearly 30 percent of its gas demand through imported LNG, while the country’s total requirement stands at about 2,650 mmcf/d, as domestic output continues to fall short.

The country also spends roughly \$1 billion per year to import more than 60 lakh tonnes of petroleum and relies heavily on the Hormuz route. It sources most petroleum from the Middle East, and more than half of LNG imports in 2025 passed through this chokepoint.

Dhaka court denies bail

FROM PAGE 2

at Shahidullah Hall crossing and played the 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 10-15 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 Ducsu 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.

Queues at filling stations

FROM PAGE 1

worry about supporting his children in Faridpur. “If I cannot increase my income, my children’s Eid will be ruined.”

In Chattogram, petrol shortages forced suspension of speedboat services between Sandwip and the mainland, stranding thousands. Speedboat operator Jaglul Hossain Nayan said usually 20 boats carry 2,500 passengers daily, requiring 4,000 litres of petrol. Recently, they managed only 500 litres.

In Bhairab, long queues of fuel trucks lined roads near three major depots after authorities introduced rationing. The depots supply fuel to 10 districts: Kishoreganj, Mymensingh, Netrokona, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Narsingdi, Gazipur, Brahmanbaria, Habiganj and Kurigram.

Officials at Padma, Meghna, and Jamuna depots said supply was cut by 25 percent.

Jamuna depot in charge Md Matur Rahman said agent dealers had hoarded fuel, prompting rationing.

Bhairab Tank Lorry Owners Association

General Secretary Md Zainal Abedin said many tanker drivers refused to transport fuel as operating half-loaded trucks was not worth their efforts.

Filling station owners also reported severe shortages.

Farhan Noor of Fahad Filling Station in Brahmanbaria said his pump usually needs 18,000 litres daily. It received no fuel for several days. On Monday, he was allocated only 9,000 litres.

Nazmul Haque of Nazmul Filling Station in Narsingdi said his pump received 13,500 litres on Thursday, which was sold by Friday. Yesterday, he got 9,000 litres of diesel but no petrol.

“With the current level of demand, the situation has become extremely tense. It is almost at the point where customers could get into fights over fuel,” he warned.

In Bandarban, shortages disrupted transport. Long queues formed at pumps in Bandarban Sadar, with some stations halting octane sales.

Rideshare motorcyclist Ukya Sing Marma said he carried a passenger from Thanchi to Bandarban but could not find fuel to return to Thanchi.

Another rider, Md Nur Hossain, said his family depends entirely on his passenger transport work. “If I cannot get fuel, I cannot work. It will be difficult to run my family,” he said.

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) set up five regional monitoring cells in Dhaka, Bogura, Khulna, Sylhet, and Barishal, plus a central cell in Chattogram. Energy and Mineral Resources Division Joint Secretary AKM Fazlul Haque will serve as chief coordinator.

Regional cells will collect daily data on stocks, distribution, and sales, including floating stocks on vessels. The central cell will compile reports for the Energy and Mineral Resources Division.

Officials said authorities were emphasising uninterrupted diesel supply during the irrigation season and pledged to investigate hoarding, smuggling, or adulteration.

Two diesel shipments with 32,000 tonnes arrived at Chattogram port yesterday, according to the BPC.

Freight piling up at Dhaka airport

FROM PAGE 1

He said Biman has been operating flights as usual, but it is mainly carrying the perishable goods such as vegetables and fruits on a priority basis. One of the Middle East-based airlines said it would launch chartered flights soon to reduce the backlogs.

Another Middle East-based airlines also carries cargo and transports 25 tonnes of goods every day, but it is not enough because the backlog has already increased significantly, he said.

He added that the airlines will increase the charge after they start operating chartered flights soon.

Talking to The Daily Star, Kabir Ahmed, ex-president of Bangladesh Freight Forwarders Association (BAFFA), the logistics providers’ platform, said currently nearly 2,000 tonnes of cargo have been stuck at the Hsia since the beginning of the war.

Most of the cargo is heading towards the Middle East, he said, adding that goods are brought to Hsia for export either to

Middle Eastern countries or for transit at different airports in the Middle East.

The normal capacity of the cargo village at the Hsia is nearly 400 tonnes although the airport handles even more during any emergency or peak season.

Most of the Middle East-bound cargo airlines have suspended their flights due to airspace closure, he said.

Bangladesh used to export some goods to Europe or Middle Eastern countries via the Maldives route, but since the beginning of Ramadan, the Maldives route has also been closed, Kabir said.

The Maldives itself has been sending a lot of fruits to different countries on a priority basis as perishable goods during Ramadan, Kabir said.

The Maldives airport is also suffering from the backlogs of cargo because of the war.

Over the last few years, Bangladeshi exporters have been exploring some competitive seaways for safer and easier transportation of export goods.

For instance, a

substantial amount of goods is flown from Hsia to the Maldives and then transported via seaway from the Maldives to Europe and other destinations. Similarly, the Colombo route is also becoming popular, in addition to traditional sea routes such as those via Singapore and KL.

Bangladeshi exporters usually transport goods from the Chattogram seaport using feeder vessels. The freight is load onto mother vessels in Singapore and Malaysia. These ships then carry the goods to Europe and the US via the Suez Canal or around the Cape of Good Hope in Africa.

Kabir added that some goods are being rerouted through airports in China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Thailand, or South Korea to reach Europe and the US. These goods were originally supposed to transit through Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and a few other airports in the Middle East.

So, the airlines are also charging higher freight, he said.



Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Police

Police Telecommunication Organization

Police Telecom Bhabon, Rajarbag, Dhaka.

Web: telecom.police.gov.bd

Invitation for International Tender

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the Manufacturers/Suppliers in their official pad for Supplying, Installing, Testing and Commissioning of DMR Trunking (Tier-3) System on Turnkey Basis

1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Home Affairs		
2.	Agency	Bangladesh Police		
3.	Procuring Entity Name	SP (Logistics), Police Telecom Organization		
4.	Invitation for	Supplying, Installing, Testing and Commissioning of DMR Trunking (Tier-3) System on Turnkey Basis		
5.	Invitation Ref. No.	44.01.0000.057.11.054.25/2162/Betar		
6.	Date	09-03-2026		
Key Information				
7.	Procurement Method	One Stage Two Envelope Tendering Method (OSTETM) - (International)		
Funding Information				
8.	Budget and source of funds	Revenue Budget (GOB)		
Particular Information				
9.	Tender Publication date	10 March 2026		
10.	Tender last selling date	22 April 2026.		
11.	Tender closing date and time	23 April 2026 at 12:00 hrs.		
12.	Tender opening date and time (Technical offer only)	23 April 2026 at 12:30 hrs.		
Name & address of the office				
13.	Name & address of the office	Bangladesh Police, Police Telecommunication Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka.		
	Selling tender document	ASP (Procurement), Police Telecommunication Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka.		
	Receiving tender document	Police Telecommunication Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka.		
	Opening tender document	Police Telecommunication Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka.		
14.	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional)	25 March 2026, at 12:00 hrs. at Police Telecom Conference Room (1 st Floor), Police Telecommunication Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka.		
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
15.	Eligibility of Tenderer	1) Up to date Export license (2) Written confirmation authorizing the signatory of the tender in accordance with the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association of the Principal (3) Affidavit confirming the legal capacity and financial capability (4) Original full Brochure of products of the Principal (5) Other requirements described in the tender document (PG 5A).		
16.	Brief description of goods:	Supplying, Installing, Testing and Commissioning of DMR Trunking (Tier-3) System on Turnkey Basis		
Sl. No.	Description of Good	Price of tender document (Non-refundable)	Tender security	Completion time
1.	DMR Trunking (Tier-3) System on Turnkey Basis.	10,000/- (Ten Thousand) Taka only.	TK-15,92,000/- or US\$-13,002.00	150 days from the Date of Opening L/C.
Procuring Entity Details				
17.	Name of official inviting tender	Shahriar Bin Saleh		
18.	Designation of the official inviting tender	SP (Logistics), Bangladesh Police, Rajarbag, Dhaka-1217.		
19.	Address of official inviting tender	Police Telecom Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka-1217.		
20.	Contact details of official inviting the tender	Phone: +880 2-8301253 FAX: +880 2-8301404, Mobile: + 88 01320-020041 e-mail: splog.telecom@police.gov.bd		
21.	The tenderers shall submit their Technical and Financial offer in separate sealed envelope. Furthermore both envelopes shall be covered by an outer envelope which is sealed.			
Special instructions				
22.	a) No tender will be received after the deadline of submission time & date. b) The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender process without assigning any reason. c) The Procuring entity also reserves the right to omit, increase and/or decrease the quantity of any item(s) of the tender. d) If not possible to receive/open the tender on the scheduled date for any unavoidable circumstance, the same will be received/opened on the next working date at the same time & same venue. e) Evaluation will be done by Lot by Lot basis. f) Date of financial offer opening will be duly informed to the Technically Responsive Tenderers and their local agents. g) The Tenderer must comply with all requirements as per the tender data sheet provided with the tender schedule. h) The Tender Security shall be in the form of an irrevocable bank guarantee issued by an internationally reputable bank and shall require to be endorsed by its any correspondent bank located in Bangladesh. i) The Procurement will be performed according to the Public Procurement Act-2006 and Public Procurement Regulation 2025.			



(Shahriar Bin Saleh)
BP 7810126915
SP (Logistics)
Police Telecommunication Organization
Rajarbag, Dhaka.
Mobile: 01320020041
E-mail: splog.telecom@police.gov.bd

About 10 vessels attacked in Strait of Hormuz

Analysts report 7 killed as rescuers come under fire

AFP, Paris

About 10 vessels in or near the Strait of Hormuz have come under attack since Iran blocked the strategic waterway in retaliation for US-Israeli strikes, data analysis groups report.

The attacks throughout the week following the outbreak of war on February 28 almost completely halted traffic through the strait, a crucial route for oil and other goods. Britain’s maritime security agency UKMT0 has issued around 10 alerts for attacks as well as warnings of suspicious activity, but has released few details on the vessels involved.

The IMO listed on its website Friday a total of nine attacks on ships in the strait in one week, including four incidents that killed a total of seven people.

SEVEN REPORTED KILLED

The IMO said one person was killed in each of three attacks on the vessels Skylight, MKD Vyom and the Stena Imperative on March 2, when the Hercules Star was also hit. Between March 3 and 5 four more vessels were struck: the Libra Trader, Gold Oak, Safen Prestige and the Sonangol Namibe.

On March 6, four people were killed when the Mussafah 2 was struck. Indonesia announced Sunday that a vessel whose characteristics and last known position matched those of the Mussafah 2 sank two days earlier, but with a different toll.

Jakarta reported three Indonesian crew members missing, one injured Indonesian survivor and four survivors of other nationalities.

RESCUERS TARGETED

Maritime security firm Vanguard said the Mussafah 2 was hit by two missiles as it tried to assist the container ship Safen Prestige, which had been struck by a missile two days earlier.

“Recent incident reporting... indicates that vessels providing assistance or salvage operations to previously targeted vessels may also face elevated risk of follow-on strikes,” the Joint Maritime Information Centre (JMIC), run by a Western naval coalition, warned in a note Saturday.

Drone and missile attacks claimed by IRGC are not always confirmed by independent sources – some are confirmed only after several days, and the vessels involved are not always identified.

Fix the system that fails abuse survivors

Stop tech-facilitated violence against women

We are deeply worried to see the upward trend in technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) in the country. As smartphones and digital platforms become increasingly embedded in our everyday life, the misuse of these technologies to harass, blackmail and exploit women has emerged as a serious threat. A recent report by this daily reveals how women who experience digital abuse often find themselves trapped not only by the perpetrators, but also by a system that is ill-equipped to deliver justice and support.

According to the 2024 National Violence Against Women Survey, 8.3 percent of women in Bangladesh have experienced TFGBV. Such abuse ranges from covert filming and non-consensual sharing of images to blackmail and harassment on digital platforms. For many victims, the consequences extend far beyond the digital sphere, leading to severe emotional distress, social stigma and even family breakdowns. The experience of a small entrepreneur from Bagerhat, as reported in this daily, reveals how devastating such crimes can be. Secretly filmed by a neighbour and later blackmailed, she was living under constant fear. When she finally refused to meet the perpetrator's demands, manipulated clips were sent to her husband, who responded with violence and divorce.

Unfortunately, when survivors seek justice, they often encounter a fragmented and inadequate response system. Reportedly, the overall response to tech-facilitated abuse remains heavily police-centred, with limited coordination across health, legal and judicial services. A small number of cyber tribunals, inadequate technical capacity and insufficient expertise in handling digital evidence further weaken the system. Survivors also face insensitive questioning during investigations as officers lack proper training on the gendered nature of digital abuse.

While some steps have been taken to counter this, such as training officers on gender-based violence and digital abuse and setting up help desks in some districts, these initiatives remain limited and constrained by resource gaps. In some places, help desks lack even a computer, forcing survivors to share personal details with outside operators just to file a complaint. Many investigators, lawyers and judges lack specialised training in handling digital evidence, and forensic analysis—crucial in cybercrime cases—remains optional. Crisis centres are often understaffed, and coordination between institutions is weak. When cases are forwarded to national cyber units due to limited local capacity, the absence of an effective tracking system can leave complaints in a stagnant state for months.

Addressing TFGBV requires a far more comprehensive response. Law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and judges must receive specialised training to deal with cyber-related crimes and digital evidence. Forensic examination should be made mandatory, and cyber tribunals must be strengthened with adequate resources and expertise. Coordination between police, health services, crisis centres and legal aid institutions is also essential. At the same time, women and girls must be taught digital literacy, made aware of technology-facilitated crimes, and given clear guidance on where to seek help. Ensuring women's safety online must remain a national priority, with a system that protects survivors and holds perpetrators accountable.

Appoint information commissioners

Govt must amend RTI 2026 ordinance further before passing it

We second the Right to Information (RTI) Forum's call to immediately appoint information commissioners and further amend the RTI (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026, before passing it in the upcoming parliamentary session. It is a shame that the Information Commission has been left without leadership for 18 months, after all three previous commissioners resigned following the July 2024 uprising. Despite repeated calls since then from rights activists and civil society organisations (CSOs), the interim government did not appoint new commissioners.

Although it did amend the 2009 RTI law, it skipped several important changes proposed by CSOs. For instance, the 2026 amendments expanded the definition of "information" to include memoranda, maps, contracts, and audiovisual materials, but left out official note sheets. Furthermore, local government bodies, private entities operating under government contracts or licences, and political parties registered with the Election Commission have not been brought under the purview of the law. CSOs also urged the government to review Section 7 of the RTI Act, 2009, which outlines the categories of information that public, autonomous, and statutory organisations, as well as private institutions constituted or run by the government or through foreign financing, are not required to publish or provide. However, many government departments may misuse the clauses in this section to withhold crucial information. Therefore, it is pertinent that these amendments be made.

Nevertheless, the appointment of information commissioners is even more urgent. Without them, citizens cannot file complaints with the commission when their right to access information is denied. As stipulated in the current RTI Act, when a designated officer of an organisation that falls within the scope of the law fails to provide requested information to a citizen, the latter has the right to appeal to the appellate authority within the same office. If the appellate authority does not take any action, the citizen can then complain to the commission. But without commissioners, there has been no one to take citizens' complaints into cognisance. As a result, more than 1,000 complaints are already pending.

Therefore, the government should take immediate steps to form the Information Commission and introduce a time limit within which the commissioners must be appointed. This will help avoid long vacancies in these crucial posts in the future. It goes without saying that the independence of the commission must be ensured by appointing qualified, non-partisan individuals. To ensure transparency, the appointment committee should include CSO members and rights activists. The government must take all necessary measures to ensure that this vital organisation functions properly.

Empowering women beyond symbolic progress

MACRO MIRROR

Dr Fahmida Khatun
is an economist and executive
director at the Centre for Policy
Dialogue (CPD). Views expressed in
this article are the author's own.

FAHMIDA KHATUN



Observed for over a century, the International Women's Day (IWD) is more than just a celebration; it is about recognising women's accomplishments and reflecting on progress towards achieving gender equality. This year, the day's observance underscored an urgent call for action. The theme "Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls" stresses turning commitments into tangible change. Around the world, millions of women and girls encounter legal discrimination, social challenges, and restricted opportunities. The theme emphasises that safeguarding women's rights requires legal acknowledgement, fair justice, and proactive efforts to dismantle structural barriers.

Bangladesh should find the slogan "Rights. Justice. Action" especially relevant and timely. Over the past five decades, the country has made remarkable progress in women's empowerment. It has earned global recognition for improving girls' education, reducing maternal mortality, and expanding economic opportunities for women. Millions of women have entered the workforce in the RMG industry, which remains the country's primary export-earning sector. Bangladeshi women's presence is prominent in all three broad sectors of the economy: agriculture, industry, and services. Moreover, the country has a distinguished record of women serving in top government leadership positions, with two female prime ministers ruling the country for more than three decades.

Despite these achievements, numerous challenges still persist. Women's participation in the workforce is still significantly lower than that of men: female labour force participation stands at 38.4 percent, compared to around 80 percent for men, according to the Labour Force Survey 2024. Women are mainly employed in informal, low-wage jobs with limited social protection, job security, and career growth prospects.

Child marriage, gender-based violence, and unequal access to financial resources further impact the lives of women and girls across the country.

These facts highlight that progress in terms of development indicators does not automatically guarantee greater equality. Structural barriers still restrict women's access to opportunities in many areas. A clear example of this is the state of women's participation in national politics.

Despite the country's history of women holding top political roles, their



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

presence in electoral politics remains less than satisfactory. The recently held parliamentary election saw fewer women contesting for parliamentary seats than previous years. Although reserved seats ensure a minimum level of female representation in parliament, the number of women elected directly from general seats remains very low.

This underrepresentation is due to multiple factors. Economic barriers are particularly significant. Participating in elections requires considerable financial resources, and many women find it difficult to mobilise the funds necessary to run competitive campaigns. Political financing systems are often dominated by established male networks, which disadvantages women candidates.

Social and cultural norms play a vital role in shaping gender roles. Politics is

with higher female representation tend to prioritise social issues, including education, health, and community well-being. Women leaders introduce diverse viewpoints and experiences, which enrich policy debates and promote inclusive decision-making.

Political parties should actively nominate women candidates and support them throughout campaigns. Financial support mechanisms must be adapted to reduce economic barriers for women candidates. Furthermore, leadership training and mentorship programmes can help women take on political roles at the national level.

Women's participation in local government elections shows some promise. In the past, we have seen a number of women participating in the union parishad elections. Although

they face obstacles like limited authority and social resistance, these roles offer crucial opportunities for improving women's political involvement. Local government participation serves as a training ground for future national leaders. Women gaining experience in union parishads and similar bodies gain leadership skills, grow community connections, and get a boost in their confidence for facing greater political challenges. Increasing women's involvement in local governance is, therefore, vital for improving representation at the national stage.

Achieving the objectives of "Rights. Justice. Action" requires more than political engagement. It demands collective efforts across all levels of society. The government should improve legal safeguards and ensure that survivors of discrimination and violence have effective access to justice. The private sector needs to create more opportunities for women in employment and leadership positions. Civil society organisations should continue to advocate for gender equality and confront harmful social norms. Development partners may support reforms and initiatives that promote women's economic and social empowerment. The media plays a crucial role in highlighting women's achievements and exposing discrimination, thereby fostering more progressive public attitudes.

Women continue to be the primary drivers of change, significantly impacting Bangladesh's economic and social growth. Their progress is fuelled by education, entrepreneurship, leadership, and collective advocacy. Bangladesh's success is rooted in the efforts of millions of women working across households, factories, offices, farms, and communities. Legal protections and everyday safeguards for women are essential. Justice must be available and effective for everyone. Additionally, initiatives must be continuous, inclusive, and aimed at creating real progress.

Bangladesh has demonstrated that empowering women can drive significant social and economic progress. The aim now is to build on this achievement by ensuring that women and girls of all backgrounds enjoy equal rights, access to justice, and adequate opportunities to influence the future of the country. The true fulfilment of IWD's promise depends on the full recognition of all women's rights, dignity, and voices.

Why public service reform should be our next big leap

Ashfaq Zaman
is founder of Dhaka Forum and a
strategic international affairs expert.

ASHFAQ ZAMAN



When it comes to economic reforms, an ordinary moment when a citizen tries to access a public service and succeeds within minutes, instead of struggling for days navigating a maze, is no less significant than a successful megaproject or a new tax regime. Bangladesh has already had a glimpse of what a better future may look like. The concepts of Union Digital Centers (UDC), electronic filing system (e-Nothi), and electronic government procurement (e-GP) provide the foundation for redesigning state services around citizens. The next step is to make that experience universal, measurable, and accessible, bringing the idea of "government in your pocket" to life fully.

Imagine a single app through which a citizen can renew documents, apply for benefits, track applications, pay fees, book appointments, and file complaints—without middlemen or repeated visits to Dhaka. Singapore has moved in this direction with LifeSG, consolidating hundreds of services in a single app. India did something similar with UMANG, bringing multiple services onto one platform. By digitising services, these countries are rewriting the citizen-state relationship. Bangladesh can do the same to achieve a macroeconomic impact.

Public service reform often fails because governments measure the wrong things. They count portals and

the number of services going online. Whereas citizens measure how long it takes, how much it costs and how many visits it requires to avail a service. That is why the most powerful benchmarking idea in governance is disarmingly simple: TCV—time, cost, and visits. This is more than a monitoring tool; it is a philosophy. The state exists to reduce the transaction costs of life. If a service still requires multiple visits, long waits, and unpredictable "processing time," digitisation has only changed the shape of the queue.

As part of a broader reform effort to improve efficiency in the public service, the next step could be to make TCV an accountability standard across ministries—not a project concept limited to pilot reforms. Because, convenience aside, TCV also measures corruption risk. Every additional visit creates discretion; every "come tomorrow" acts as a silent tax on productivity. The countries that have made the biggest gains in public service are not always the richest, but those that understood a deeper principle: citizens should not have to carry information from one office to another.

Estonia is a global case study because it built interoperability through its X-Road platform. Agencies can securely exchange verified information instead of demanding repeated paper submissions. Estonia calculates the annual time saved by its digital services

in "working years," directly connecting e-government efficiency to economic output. Rwanda offers another lesson. Through Iremba, a national e-service portal, service delivery times fell dramatically when processes were simplified and made transparent.

A modern public service state needs a system where citizens can file complaints easily, track progress transparently, and see resolution timelines. India's CPGRAMS shows how a centralised grievance platform can be connected across ministries and monitored at scale. For Bangladesh, grievance redress will be an anti-corruption infrastructure. It reduces dependence on brokers and the helplessness that pushes people towards paying "speed money." And it creates a time-stamped, reviewable trail. If Bangladesh is to build citizen-friendly public services, grievance redress should be its backbone.

Artificial intelligence is important here. It compresses time, reduces paperwork friction, and shrinks discretion. At the consumer experience end, AI can provide 24/7 guidance—explaining eligibility, checking documents, estimating processing times, and thus reducing the information gap that fuels middlemen. Inside the government, AI can support faster triage and routing by classifying applications, flagging missing documents, detecting duplicates, and organising intelligent queues based on urgency and rules. This reduces delays and arbitrary decision points for the overworked government officials.

There is also a governance dividend. AI-driven analytics can detect anomalies in procurement and finance—unusual price movements, suspicious bidding clusters, or irregular timing. When designed properly, digitisation becomes an integrity system, not just a transaction system.

Public service innovation is often framed as convenience. That understates the real prize. When citizens spend fewer days chasing services, the economy gains labour hours. When businesses face predictable approvals, investment becomes less risky. In other words, public service reform is a competitiveness policy. Estonia's experience is instructive because it puts numbers behind digital productivity gains. Bangladesh should adopt that habit: quantify the savings in time and money for citizens and firms—and treat those savings as national achievements.

Economists like Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A Robinson have all pushed a simple but powerful idea into the global mainstream: institutions matter. Prosperity does not emerge from geography or slogans. It grows where public systems are accountable, and where innovation is embedded in governance itself. Their work reminds us that public service innovation is not administrative tinkering; it is institutional reform in its most human form.

Bangladesh does not need a perfect super-app overnight. But it needs a clear, disciplined plan. Start with the services people use and struggle with most: tourism permits, local certificates, business licences, passport and immigration services, and social protection enrolment. Measure their TCV. Publish the baseline. Then commit publicly to reducing the time, cost and visits required.

Bangladesh's next big economic reform could be something quiet but more transformative: a state that fits in a citizen's pocket, respects their time, reduces their costs, and treats service as a right, not a favour. When government becomes predictable, transparent and accessible, citizens feel respected, and the economy moves faster. And that may be the most powerful reform of all.



Bobby Hajjai
MP, is the state minister for primary and mass education. He writes in his personal capacity and can be reached at bobby.hajjai@gmail.com.

BOBBY HAJJAI

There are moments in a nation's life when victory does not feel like triumph at all. It feels like an inventory. One counts the broken things. The bent institutions. The exhausted treasury. The roads that still exist but no longer promise movement. The schoolrooms in which children are present but learning is absent. The offices where authority survived but purpose did not. The new government of Bangladesh came to power not into comfort, but into consequence.

For those of us who spent more than a decade in agitation, argument, assembly, resistance, and the often-lonely labour of democratic politics, government is not a coronation. It is an audition before history. One has marched for the vote; now one must justify it. One has denounced arbitrariness; now one must build order without becoming arbitrary oneself. One has spoken for the people in the long season of opposition; now one must answer to them in the morning glare of office.

That is why the election manifesto placed before the nation by BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman on February 6 mattered profoundly. It was not simply a shopping list of promises, nor the usual carnival literature of South Asian politics. At its core was a pledge to restore the dignity of the vote, rebuild accountable government, undertake constitutional and electoral reform, and pursue a Bangladesh that is both economically stronger and politically more answerable. It set down 51 priority points, grouped around nine major commitments, and spoke openly of a state that would be "directly answerable to the people." It also tied this democratic language to an ambitious agenda: the aspiration of a trillion-dollar economy by 2034. In a country long blighted by the inflation of slogans and the shrinkage of institutions, the interesting thing was not the scale of the promise, but

the attempt to bind prosperity to legitimacy. Yet manifestos do not govern in the abstract. They govern in the debris of what they inherit. And what this government inherited was no small matter. The World Bank estimates Bangladesh's real GDP growth fell to four percent in FY2025, down from 4.2 percent in FY2024, marking a third consecutive annual slowdown. Development expenditure contracted by 25.5 percent in FY2025. Gas shortages were undermining power generation, industry, and wider economic activity. The IMF, meanwhile, identified the banking sector as the country's most pressing vulnerability. Reporting on that assessment noted tax revenue at only 6.9 percent of GDP in FY2025 and system-wide non-performing loans surging to 34 percent by June 2025. These numbers are symptoms of a republic that has been living off of institutional depletion.

This is the economic prose of our inheritance: slower growth, weaker investment, constrained energy supply, a fiscally frail state, and a banking system that too often served influence before prudence. To this, one must add the visible wear of public life itself: overburdened cities, distorted incentives, degraded service delivery, and a generation of young people whose ambition exceeded the opportunities arranged for them. One may speak grandly of national destiny. But destiny, in a developing country, often comes down to whether the lights stay on, whether credit is honestly priced, whether the school teaches, whether the road connects, whether the permit is given by rule rather than favour.

And now history, in its malicious humour, has added a further burden. The new government must govern not only amid inherited fragility, but amid a turbulent world. The war in the Middle East has already begun

to trouble Bangladesh's energy arithmetic. With shipping through the Strait of Hormuz disrupted and fuel supply threatened, what was once a distant war is impacting our fuel and fertiliser chains, and our calculations of price and supply. Fertiliser production has already been curtailed and every delay at sea threatens to reappear on land as costlier energy, tighter transport, industrial disruption, and fresh inflationary unease.

Against that vulgar pageantry, he has tried to project something else: restraint, sobriety, a notion of office as trusteeship rather than spectacle. In a poor country, personal frugality in leadership is pedagogic. It tells the political class that the age of indulgent government must end.

As for the cabinet, one should resist both cynicism and flattery. It is neither a gathering of miracle workers nor a council

struggle, I feel most sharply the moral urgency of education. If politics is to mean anything beyond the capture of office, it must alter the life chances of children. In primary and mass education, we are working under the prime minister's instructions to remake the primary school into something more than a holding pen of attendance and certificates. It must become a vault of learning: the place where language is formed, numeracy secured, curiosity dignified, discipline humanised, and the future made less accidental.

This is especially urgent because our present literacy claims, though often repeated with bureaucratic satisfaction, still conceal a harsher truth. Bangladesh's literacy rate for those aged seven and above was reported at 74 percent in 2022, and functional literacy at 77.9 percent in 2023. But literacy that means little more than name-writing, form-filling, or ritual survival in the paper economy is not enough. A nation cannot modernise on signature-literacy alone. It requires reading with comprehension, writing with clarity, and reasoning with confidence. The target must be nothing less than genuine literacy for all, because only from that foundation can secondary schooling succeed, technical education deepen, and higher education cease to be a bottleneck of disappointment.

So the burden before this government is immense. It must repair the economy without cruelty, reform the state without chaos, govern firmly without forgetting why democracy was demanded in the first place. It must keep faith with the manifesto without becoming enslaved to rhetoric. It must confront a broken inheritance and a hostile world at the same time.

But there is also, beneath the burden, an austere kind of hope. Not the sentimental hope of campaign music and flags. Not the hallucination that one election redeems a nation. Rather, the sterner hope that comes when public office is inhabited by people who know what it took to get there, and therefore know what it would mean to fail. A government born after democratic struggle carries a special obligation: to prove that sacrifice was not merely dramatic, but useful.

That is the work now. Less trumpeting, more toil. Less pageantry, more repair. The republic, after all its bruising, asks not for ecstasy, but for seriousness.



'A government born after democratic struggle carries a special obligation: to prove that sacrifice was not merely dramatic, but useful.'
FILE PHOTO: STAR

Our region, too, is not a meadow of stability. South Asia remains prey to strategic suspicion, unsettled borders, uneven growth, migration pressures, and the permanent temptation of political simplification. In such a neighbourhood, a government cannot afford either romanticism or vanity. It must be serious and must be plain in its priorities. It must understand that sovereignty in our age is not about chest-thumping rhetoric but about competence to ensure food, energy, education, order, and credibility.

In this setting, the prime minister's preferred idiom of leadership matters. Much of public life today involves theatre: sirens, entourages, waste, and upholstered ego.

of mediocrities. It appears, factually, to be a mixed formation: senior political veterans, recognised party figures, some technocratic appointments, and a few first-time parliamentarians shaped by the upheavals of recent years. Outside observers have already noted both the weight of the old guard and the inclusion, at junior levels, of newer protest-era voices. That seems a fair description. A cabinet in a recovering democracy need not be glamorous; it must be competent, cohesive, and capable of learning in public. On that count, cautious optimism is a legitimate stance.

For my own part, serving now in government after years in democratic

Nepal election: A lesson in honouring a people's uprising



Aishwarya Sanjukta Roy Proma
is lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the University of Rajshahi.

AISHWARYA SANJUKTA ROY PROMA

On a Tuesday morning in September 2025, a 19-year-old student named Suman Thapa tried to log into TikTok and saw that it was blocked. By Friday, he was in the streets with thousands of others. By the following week, he was dodging live firing. Nepal's government had made the oldest mistake in the authoritarian playbook when it tried to silence people who had nothing left to lose.

Something unusual happened in Kathmandu in September last year. It did not begin with a manifesto or in a party headquarters, or through a general strike. It began with a social media ban. The government of former Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli, already under the weight of contradictions, moved to restrict access to online platforms that young Nepalis treat as public space. That decision lit a fire that the administration either did not see or chose to ignore.

Within days, the protests had outgrown their original grievance. Tens of thousands of young people poured into the streets of Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Biratnagar. The movement had no single command structure. It was organised largely on Discord

servers and TikTok channels, coordinated by grassroots citizens. Parliament was stormed. Government buildings were set alight. When police opened fire, at least 77 people were killed. By mid-September, Oli resigned and Nepal's president called on elections. The country's first woman to lead a government, former Chief Justice Sushila Karki, was appointed as the interim prime minister. She was tasked with holding the election within six months.

The election was held on March 5 this year. The results point to a landslide for rapper Balendra Shah, which few in Nepal's political establishment anticipated, even after the uprising.

Revolutions rarely announce themselves. Nepal's did not, either. There was no vanguard party, no clear state transformation, no counter-institution waiting to take power. It signalled a moment of free-falling legitimacy for a political class that recycled itself through coalitions and backroom arrangements for three decades. This is what philosopher Antonio Gramsci called an "organic crisis." It is a rupture in which the dominant class loses its capacity to lead, not merely to govern by

force. The Nepali state's coercive response, including firing at protesters, only confirmed what the streets were already saying. Authority had become a destructive power for a generation that grew up after Nepal's civil war and the 2015 earthquake.

Nepal's political configuration had long been a cartelised party system involving the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), and the Maoists. They compete by rotating through power-sharing arrangements that shield them from meaningful accountability. Oli himself had served four times. The country's economic record remained dismal. GDP per capita stagnated. Youth unemployment was high enough that emigration, particularly to the Gulf states and Malaysia, had become a default life plan for much of the population under 30.

Nepal's next leader is a rapper whose verses talk about potholes and bureaucratic rot. That alone tells you something has broken open. Balendra Shah, known publicly as Balen, is 35 years old. He trained as a civil engineer, became one of Nepal's most prominent rappers, and won the Kathmandu mayoral race in 2022 on an anti-establishment platform. His music targeted corruption and inequality and his songs circulated as unofficial anthems during the September protests. He joined the Rastriya Swatantra Party (National Independent Party) in December 2025, and was announced as its prime ministerial candidate shortly after. The Rastriya Swatantra Party itself was founded in 2022. Oli, the veteran communist-turned-nationalist, was beaten in his own constituency, where Shah ran directly

against him. Nepali Congress, the country's oldest democratic party, won a fraction of its expected seats. Gagan Thapa, Congress's newly elected leader and widely regarded as its most credible reformist voice, lost his own race to an RSP candidate.

The RSP ran a disciplined, well-funded campaign, with a social media operation of over 660 people and significant backing from the Nepali diaspora, particularly in the US. Shah's platform focused on health and education for poor Nepalis, anti-corruption reform, and a break from the coalition politics that had made governance in Kathmandu an exercise in managed dysfunction. He offered something that the old parties had failed to: the credible possibility of a different kind of politics.

Bangladesh went through its own version of this uprising in 2024, when student-led protests brought down Sheikh Hasina's government. The two episodes share certain structural features: the youth frustrated by stagnant economies and closed political systems served as catalysts for the fall of the old system. In both cases, social media was used as both an organising tool and a political battleground. Both uprisings show the particular volatility that results when a government responds to civic protest with lethal force.

The danger in any popular uprising is not that it succeeds in removing a government, but the pace of mobilisation. Nepal has managed this transition better than many had predicted. The interim administration deliberately insulated itself from party politics and provided a holding structure that maintained basic state functions while the

election was organised. A voter roll of nearly 19 million was updated, over 800,000 first-time voters were registered, and the election itself was conducted, by all independent observer accounts, freely and fairly.

This was rather significant, given that parliament had been dissolved and the country had just come through its most violent political rupture in years. Nepal's constitutional framework, with its imperfections, provided a procedural path through the crisis. Karki followed it. The Election Commission followed it. The results are being respected.

Winning an election, it turns out, is the easy part. Political scientists who study democratic transitions are fairly united on one uncomfortable point: the removal of an authoritarian or dysfunctional incumbent is not a democratic consolidation. It is a window. What passes through that window depends on whether the incoming government can convert popular energy into durable institutional change. Whether the institutional machine of Nepal, resistant to reform for decades, can be made responsive to those demands is a question that will take years to answer.

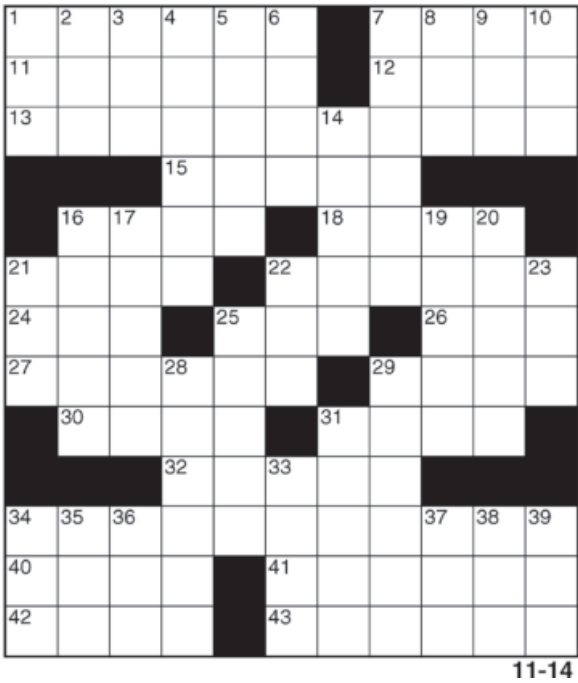
At a minimum, what Nepal has demonstrated is that democratic elections remain one of the few mechanisms through which a population can peacefully retire a political class that has exhausted its legitimacy. The uprising created the conditions. The election translated them into a mandate. Whether that mandate becomes governance, with all the complexity and compromise that word implies, is the chapter that has yet to be written.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
1 Tilted type
7 Decisive defeat
11 Ill will
12 Different
13 Took the lead
15 Dancer Castle
16 Rivals
18 Poet Ogden
21 Atlas pages
22 Hunting dog
24 Lua music maker
25 Films, slangily
26 Metal source
27 Business news topic
29 Stage item
30 Challenge
31 Club cost

- 32 Be of advantage
34 Refused to think about
40 On the ocean
41 Eventually
42 Abound
43 Tahini base
DOWN
1 Little devil
2 Letter after sigma
3 Maximum amount
4 Easter flowers
5 Bakery workers
6 Hand over
7 Prepare, as leftovers
8 Flamenco cry
9 Much of N. Amer.
10 Lasso of TV

- 14 Building wing
16 Counterfeited
17 Verdi creation
19 Mall business
20 Long lunches
21 Silent
22 Polite address
23 Agent, for short
25 Tick off
28 Verdi Greene
29 Throbs
31 Keaton of film
33 Bustles
34 Touch lightly
35 Try out
36 Take in
37 Lupino of film
38 Block up
39 Iris setting



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ICDs, lighter vessels face diesel crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Container handling at private inland container depots (ICDs) and transport of import cargo on inland waterways risk disruption due to a shortage of diesel from state-owned oil depots, say operators.

Over the past few days, Padma, Meghna, and Jamuna depots have not been supplying fuel in line with demand, they alleged.

The Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association (BICDA) and Bangladesh Water Transport Coordination Cell (BWTOCC) yesterday sent separate letters to authorities seeking uninterrupted supply to keep export and import activities running smoothly.

The 21 ICDs in Chattogram handle nearly all export containers and a quarter of imports, moving over 2,000 TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit) of export cargo to the port daily and processing more than 1,000 TEUs of imports.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



File photo of lighter vessels anchored near Chattogram port in the Bay of Bengal waiting their turn to unload goods from mother vessels at the outer anchorage.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Laws alone can’t ensure gender equality

FROM PAGE 12
Enrico Lorenzon, team leader of Inclusive Governance at the European Union Delegation to Bangladesh, said formal constitutional guarantees are insufficient unless they are enforceable.

“A right recognised in law must also be real in practice. It must be accessible, enforceable, and enjoyed equally by all.”

Presenting her study, which assessed 32 laws, Dr Taslima Yasmin, associate professor at the law department of Dhaka University, argued that Bangladesh’s legal framework remains hindered by “colonial era language”.

She highlighted a glaring loophole in the Penal Code that essentially allows the rape of child brides.

“A child is allowed to be raped literally by the Penal Code definition because of the exemption for child brides... We must repeal such colonial-era provisions.”

Yasmin also advocated for a Uniform Civil Code, mandatory marriage registration for the Hindu community, and a comprehensive anti-discrimination law to move beyond fragmented reforms.

The event also featured a panel discussion, moderated by Shrabana Datta, project manager at UN Women, which examined how laws often falter in practice.

Supreme Court lawyer Muhammad Amirul Haq Tuhin described the pursuit of justice under the Domestic

Violence Act as “a matter of luck”, noting that while some judges are familiar with the law, others dismiss it entirely.

“One judge even mockingly asked, ‘Is this a law or a PhD thesis paper?’”

He flagged a loophole where husbands claim “verbal divorces” to disqualify women from protection and criticised the lopsided punishment structure where women face higher penalties for filing “unnecessary” cases than men do for violating protection orders.

Labour Court Bar Association Vice President Sharmin Sultana Moushumi highlighted the legal vacuum in the informal sector and exposed the “compliance theatre” in factories where childcare rooms exist only to satisfy international buyers.

“In most factories, childcare rooms exist only to show buyers; in reality, the mothers cannot keep their children there.”

Moushumi also noted that without written appointment letters, domestic workers cannot prove their employment in court.

Sara Hossain, honorary executive director of BLAST, offered a pragmatic counterargument to the total repeal of the Guardians and Wards Act (1890), warning that repealing laws without a solid replacement is “dangerous”.

She also addressed the current landscape of female participation in the legal system.

“We see only 10 percent

representation of women in the Supreme Court. While it has reached 33 percent in the subordinate judiciary, we should aim for at least 50 percent -- but representation without a progressive mindset is not enough.”

Hossain also noted that the court system is just the tip of the iceberg, as most disputes are resolved outside formal courts.

“We must formally empower community organisations and ADR [Alternative Dispute Resolution] processes to deliver justice more sensitively and effectively.”

The roundtable also underscored how marginalised groups face compounded barriers.

Salma Mahbub, general secretary of B SCAN, a women-led organisation for persons with disabilities, criticised the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act for failing to explicitly mention women and girls.

“This invisibility ignores their unique vulnerabilities to abuse.”

Masuda Rehana Begum, joint general secretary of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, called for a gender-neutral Uniform Family Code.

“To stay with the world in the 21st century, we must think of ourselves first as human beings,” she stated, arguing that under their proposed uniform family code, a capable wife would even provide maintenance for an unable husband.

Fawzia Khondkar, executive director of Pragroshor, challenged

the labour law mandate for daycare only in workplaces with 40+ female workers.

“Daycares should be gender-neutral to encourage men to share the burden of care work.”

Umme Sharaban Tahura, a district judge and deputy secretary of the Law and Justice Division, shared that legal aid is now free for all persons with disabilities, regardless of income.

She noted a 312 percent mediation success rate in 10 pilot districts, indicating high public trust when judges act as mediators.

However, she admitted to a “conviction gap” in criminal cases.

“This isn’t just a legal failure; it’s a social phenomenon where evidence goes missing or parties lose interest and settle privately before the case reaches its end.”

ATM Morshed, lead at legal aid and policy advocacy at BRAC; Prof Dr Tania Haque of the women and gender studies department at Dhaka University; Laila Jasmin Banu, EU representative to Bangladesh; Asma Ruba, project coordinator at Ain o Salish Kendra; Ruhi Naz, deputy director of Research Initiatives Bangladesh; and Humaira Aziz, gender programme specialist at UNICEF Bangladesh, among others, spoke at the event.

The discussion was moderated by Tanjim Ferdous, head of strategic partnership at The Daily Star.

Forex reserves in focus

FROM PAGE 1
avoid raising domestic fuel prices, as the BPC has the financial capacity to absorb higher costs in the short term. The state-run corporation logged a profit of Tk 4,700 crore in fiscal year 2024–25, according to Moazzem.

“It is also selling petroleum at higher prices and has the capacity to absorb the extra cost in the short term,” he said, adding that tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, a critical route for global oil shipments, may gradually ease if the situation stabilises.

According to the BPC officials, though they have a plan and deals with the refineries until June, the prices are determined by the international free on board (FOB) rates.

When a shipment arrives at port, the price is fixed then -- by calculating the rates of that day, the previous day and the following day.

The surge in global oil prices poses a significant challenge for Bangladesh’s macroeconomic management, said Ashikur Rahman, principal economist at the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

As a net energy importer, higher oil prices will immediately put pressure on the balance of payments by increasing the country’s import bill, he said.

Policymakers will therefore need to carefully calibrate their response to ensure a stable supply of fuel while protecting the country’s foreign exchange reserves.

Under such circumstances, an upward adjustment in domestic petrol prices may become necessary to absorb part of the external shock.

“At the same time, higher energy costs can quickly transmit into broader inflation through increased transportation and production costs. This makes inflation management more complex at a time when price stability remains a key concern.”

The Bangladesh Bank should maintain its current contractionary monetary policy stance to prevent the oil price shock from triggering prolonged inflationary pressure.

Ashikur pointed to the global oil shocks of the 1970s and the price surge in 2022 as lessons for policymakers.

During both periods, countries that pursued loose monetary policies experienced prolonged inflationary spirals, while those that maintained tighter monetary conditions generally saw only temporary spikes.

“Bangladesh, therefore, needs steady and disciplined macroeconomic management to

Over 37,000 women to get

FROM PAGE 12
income groups to upward and eventually implemented nationwide.

The minister also said the programme would be carried out transparently. Everyone would get its benefit, regardless of which political party they support.

In response to a question from journalists, Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, PM’s adviser on finance and planning, said the government would not face any problem in funding the programmes.

The current social safety net programmes have many errors and flaws. By correcting these, waste will be reduced, and the tax-to-GDP ratio will increase. As a result, financing will not be an issue, he added.

Social Welfare Minister Zahid added that women-headed families receiving the Family Card will not be eligible for any other government benefits or allowances, and any existing benefits will be cancelled.

However, the benefits of the other members of those families will remain unaffected.

Responding to a question about any poor families who are not headed by women, he said they would consider this in the next fiscal year when this programme will be implemented in full swing.

Around Tk 38 crore has been allocated to implement the pilot programme of the Family Card scheme up to June. Of the amount, Tk 25.15 crore will be required for the allowance, while the remaining fund will be used for the beneficiary selection process, he added.

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

The government’s ultimate objective is to gradually bring two crore families under monthly cash support under the Family Card programme.

The Family Card Piloting Implementation Guideline, 2026,

navigate these external turbulences and protect overall economic stability,” he added.

Meanwhile, the rising global oil prices could also affect electricity generation, particularly at oil-based power plants that play a crucial role in Bangladesh’s power supply.

Fuel stocks at oil-fired power plants are sufficient to sustain electricity generation until April 10 at most, according to the Bangladesh Independent Power Producers Association (BIPPA).

The warning came at a press conference in Dhaka, where BIPPA President David Hasanat and former president Imran Karim presented data on the current state of fuel supply and power plant operations.

The private-sector power plants had around 1,30,000 tonnes of furnace oil in stock about a week ago, Karim said.

Of that amount, nearly 55,000 tonnes are held by just two or three companies, while the rest is spread across various operators.

Because oil-based power plants are located in different parts of the country, fuel stocks are unevenly distributed, he said. As a result, some plants may have enough fuel to operate until mid-April, while others could face shortages sooner.

On average, the current stock can sustain oil-based power generation until April 7 to 10, Karim said.

Private-sector plants currently account for around 45–49 percent of Bangladesh’s electricity generation, making their continued operation critical for maintaining power supply.

Karim also expressed concern over delays in payments to private power producers.

Though there is no scope to delay the bills by more than 30 days, in many cases, bills are paid six to nine months late, creating significant pressure on operators to cover fuel import and operating costs.

Outstanding dues have already exceeded Tk 14,000 crore, he said, adding that although producers have the contractual right to suspend operations due to unpaid bills, domestic power producers have so far refrained from doing so.

“The country’s power sector is currently at a critical juncture,” said BIPPA President David Hasanat.

Without short-term and long-term planning, the electricity supply could face serious risks.

Maintaining investment in the sector will require stronger coordination between the government and private investors, along with clear policy direction for the future, he added.

Global arms exports soar on European demand

FROM PAGE 12
“Deliveries to Ukraine since 2022 are the most obvious factor, but most other European states have also started importing significantly more arms to shore up their military capabilities against a perceived growing threat from Russia,” he said in a statement.

European countries accounted for 33 percent of global arms imports, increasing their imports by 210 percent from the previous five-year period.

Almost half of weapons to Europe, 48 percent, came from the United States.

The US dominated weapons exports, accounting for 42 percent of all international arms transfers in the period -- up from 36 percent in the previous five years.

Despite talk of Europe needing

to become more self-sufficient, George noted that transfers between European countries accounted for only a fifth of flows in the region.

“European suppliers are still supplying majorly outside of Europe rather than within,” George said.

Germany did overtake China to become the fourth-largest arms exporter in 2021–2025, with 5.7 percent of global arms exports.

Almost a quarter of German exports went to Ukraine as aid and only 17 percent went to other European states, meaning more than half left the continent.

US dominance in supplying Europe was likely to continue for the foreseeable future, George said, pointing out that more than 460 F-35 fighter jets were pending

delivery.

Arms imports to the Middle East shrank by 13 percent between 2016–2020 and 2021–2025.

But three of the world’s top importers still came from the region, which received more than half of its imports -- 54 percent -- from the United States.

Saudia Arabia accounted for 6.8 percent of global imports, while Qatar and Kuwait accounted for 6.4 percent and 4.8 percent respectively.

“Moving forward, we do see a whole list of things that are pending for delivery to the Middle East.

“So when they are delivered, then we can see those numbers potentially go up,” George told AFP.

When it comes to exports, the United States is in a class of its own, George noted.

‘People’s voting rights were violated’

FROM PAGE 12
The Jamaat chief said the number of seats his party holds in parliament is not the main issue. “How many seats we have in parliament or whether we have been made the opposition in a calculated way is not our primary concern. What matters is that we will not betray the people of Bangladesh.”

He added that Jamaat would not be swayed by “cheap privileges” and would remain committed to ensuring

people’s rights.

Recalling the mass uprising of 2024, Shafiqur said the change brought about under the leadership of the youth must be honoured.

“After enduring 54 years of suffering, the youth led the change. Jamaat will hold them close to its heart and work to fulfil their aspirations,” he said, adding that young people want justice and reject nepotism.

Chhatra Shakti men beat up

FROM PAGE 12
saying he is a regular student who attends classes in the philosophy department.

However, Md Saifullah, social welfare secretary of the Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall student body and organisational secretary of Jatiya Chhatra Shakti’s Dhaka University unit, alleged that Pavel had been involved in attacks during the July movement and had been boycotted by both his department and hall.

He said students recently learned that Pavel had put up Chhatra League posters on campus and had been organising iftar

gatherings with former activists of the now-banned organisation.

“When we caught him and wanted to check his phone, he reacted aggressively. Students then handed him over to the police.”

Contacted by The Daily Star, Dhaka University Proctor Saifuddin Ahmed said he spoke to police after learning about the incident, adding that Pavel was sent to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital for treatment.

He added that no complaint had been submitted from the victim’s side. “To take any action over the incident, a complaint has to be filed.”

About Pavel’s alleged links to

BCL, he said he is not among the 403 leaders and activists of Chhatra League show-caused by the university for their alleged involvement in attacks during the July uprising.

Later at night, both parties filed complaints with Shabbagh Police Station.

The station’s Sub Inspector Mainul Islam said, “Pavel’s mother filed a complaint around 11:30pm. About half an hour later, the other party filed a complaint against Pavel, alleging his involvement in ‘Proloy Gang’ and the Chhatra League.”

The “Proloy Gang” has long been known for criminal activities on the

Police not to control Pass NHRC

FROM PAGE 3

The IGP said some groups take advantage of chaos on the streets to carry out attacks, looting, and various criminal acts, while others help spread such violence on a wider scale.

Police are also preparing a list of those behind such activities, he said.

Regarding the arrest of three for the March 7 speech of Bangabandhu, he said, "I want to assure you that there will be no deliberate misconduct from the police. But citizens must remain law-abiding. The law cannot be taken into one's own hands."

He further said, "There are many banned organisations. If they come onto the streets on various pretexts and try to worsen law and order or incite violence, we will not accept that."

On internal police administration, IGP Fakir said honest, skilled, and qualified officers would be duly valued during his tenure.

The top police official has urged journalists not to create situations that put "psychological pressure" on the police members, referring to what he described as "media pressure".

"When an incident occurs, you ask questions in such a way that it seems the case must be resolved immediately and the truth uncovered at once. There were murder cases that took 20 to 25 years to solve... You have already seen the consequences of that in the 'Joi Mia drama'," he said.

"I believe such situations arose because of media pressure. Such incidents should not happen again. You should give us adequate response time," the IGP added.

He said criminal justice requires due process and proper investigation, and proposed placing judicial magistrates at every police station to help resolve certain disputes quickly.

FROM PAGE 3

and the independence guaranteed to the institution, he added.

He added that the strength of any national human rights institution depends on three elements: the quality of the law, institutional integrity and public trust. Bangladesh's commission currently holds "B status", and stronger legal and institutional foundations could help it move towards "A status".

CPD Distinguished Fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya stressed the importance of ensuring continuity in the commission's legal framework.

He said protecting citizens' rights requires addressing the concerns of marginalised communities, including ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, Dalits, and persons with disabilities.

He emphasised the need for a comprehensive anti-discrimination law and the appointment of an ombudsman.

ALRD Executive Director Shamsul Huda said the ordinance should be passed in parliament without negative changes, even if it has some shortcomings.

He said the country needed a more active human rights commission and emphasised local monitoring, suggesting that human rights committees function not only at the district level but also at upazila level.

Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori, said the new law must enable the commission to play a strong and effective role in protecting rights, noting that Bangladesh's "B status" limits the country's voting rights in international forums.

Zakir Hossain, chief executive of Nagorik

Uddyg, stressed the need for the commission to engage with international human rights mechanisms, including the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and to hold consultations on the recommendations.

Mabrook Mohammed, adviser to Ain o Salish Kendra, said, "We want an activist commission, not a bureaucratic one," and stressed addressing torture and violence from the perspective of civil and political rights.

Mohammad Iqbalul Islam, executive director of Human Rights Support Society, said many human rights defenders had faced an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship and hoped the commission would help rights groups work more freely.

Indigenous rights activist Dipayan Khisa raised concerns about Bawm community members who remain in jail and about deaths in custody without proper medical treatment.

Madhab Chandra Dutta, executive director of Swadesh, and Falguni Tripura of Kapaeng Foundation also spoke at the event.

Steps taken

FROM PAGE 4

"Some incidents occur as isolated crimes. If someone is detained and tortured, that is a specific offence with its own legal definition. Action will be taken accordingly," he said.

He added that authorities would take strict measures if genuine mob situations or mass unrest occur.

Replying to another question about publishing a list of drug traders, the minister said the government has no plan to make such a list public.

Moyeen Khan, Hafiz frontrunners

FROM PAGE 3

A retired major of the Bangladesh Army, Hafiz Uddin became a member of the BNP standing committee in 2024.

A six-term MP, he also comes from a political family. His father, Dr Azharuddin, was a member of the National Council of East Pakistan from Bhola.

Hafiz completed his master's degree in political science from Dhaka University in 1968.

Party leaders said both Moyeen and Hafiz have held important roles within the party and government and are regarded as senior leaders capable of commanding respect in parliament.

However, several other senior figures were also discussed informally during

internal consultations, though some names were dropped due to age or health concerns, said party sources.

"Some senior leaders are elderly or have health complications. The speaker's responsibilities require regular presence and active management of parliamentary proceedings," a senior BNP leader involved in the discussions told The Daily Star.

Two standing committee members said the choice of speaker would be important for the functioning of the new parliament.

They said the party leadership is looking for someone who is trusted within the organisation and does not carry major

controversies.

"The speaker must maintain order in the House and treat all parties fairly. So credibility, experience, and a clean image are important," one of them said.

Under Article 74(f) of the constitution, parliament must elect a speaker and deputy speaker from among its members at the first sitting after a general election.

According to the Rules of Procedure of the Jatiya Sangsad, any member may submit a written proposal nominating another member for the post at least one hour before the scheduled election. The proposal must be supported by another member and include the

nominee's consent.

Once elected, the speaker and deputy speaker take oath administered by the president, usually at the president's office within the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex.

Meanwhile, Home Affairs Minister Salahuddin Ahmed told reporters at the Secretariat on Sunday that the election of the speaker and deputy speaker will take place on the same day as the first sitting.

According to the constitution, parliamentary proceedings formally begin with the president's address at the opening session.

In the February 12 election, the BNP won 209 seats and formed the government.

Jamaat undecided

FROM PAGE 3

"For that reason, we have verbally offered the main opposition party to nominate a deputy speaker so that the speaker and deputy speaker can be elected on the same day."

Contacted yesterday, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair said, "We have not received any written proposal yet. So we need to see exactly what their proposal is."

He said once it becomes clear whether the proposal is based on the BNP's manifesto or the July Charter, the question of accepting the post will arise.

Another Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Maulana Abdul Halim said the party has not ruled

out accepting the post but needs clarification first.

"We are not saying that we will not take the deputy speaker's post. But since the matter is linked to the July Charter and the referendum, we cannot move toward a decision without clear clarification," he told The Daily Star.

On Thursday, at a press conference, the party's Naye e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammed Taher said if the government offers the deputy speaker post under the July Charter, it would have no legal validity until the full reform is implemented in line with the referendum verdict.

He said Jamaat would examine the legal basis if the BNP formally makes such a proposal.

 Rupali Bank PLC. Procurement Division Head Office					
Eunoos Trade Center, (Level -14), 52-53, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000 Mobile: +8801673-750853; E-mail: ho-procurement@rupalibank.org ; Website: www.rupalibank.com.bd					
Ref No. HO/Procurement/ICT/2026/652				Dated: 09.03.2026	
Tender No.	Name of work (OTM)	Tender selling last date and time	Tender price (non-refundable)	Last date & time for tender & security submission (refundable)	Tender/proposal opening time
HO/1 CT/20 26/06	Supply, installation, Testing & Commissioning of 149 set Desktop PC (with Monitor), 42 set UPS (Offline, 650VA), 43 set Scanner (Flatbed A4 Size), 10 set Roller Scanner, 50 set Laser Printer (Network), 38 set Monitor (18.5") for Divisional office Rajshahi & Zonal office/ Branches under this division of Rupali Bank PLC.	31/03/2026 Time: 04:00pm	Tk. 1,500/- (One thousand five hundred only)	01/04/2026 Time: 12:00pm Tender security amount: Tk. 4,00,000.00 (four lac only)	01/04/2026 Time: 12:01pm (In front of bidder, if any)
**Note: 1. Details in Rupali Bank PLC. website: https://www.rupalibank.com.bd 2. Price of Tender Documents is Non-refundable and to be furnished through PO/DD favouring "Rupali Bank PLC." from any Scheduled Bank of Bangladesh.					
(Signed) Md. Shahidur Rahman Deputy General Manager Rupali Bank PLC. Procurement Division					
GD-531					

 Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Bangladesh Police Police Telecommunication Organization Police Telecom Bhabon, Rajarbag, Dhaka. web: telecom.police.gov.bd				
Invitation for International Tender				
Sealed tenders are hereby invited from the Manufacturers/Suppliers in their official pad for Supplying, Installing, Testing and Commissioning of DMR Tier-3 System for Extension of Existing Network in Hill Districts (Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban)				
1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Home Affairs		
2.	Agency	Bangladesh Police		
3.	Procuring Entity Name	SP (Logistics), Police Telecom Organization		
4.	Invitation for	Supplying, Installing, Testing and Commissioning of DMR Tier-3 System for Extension of Existing Network in Hill Districts (Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban)		
5.	Invitation Ref. No.	44.01.0000.057.11.053.25/2161/Betar		
6.	Date	09-03-2026		
Key Information				
7.	Procurement Method	One Stage Two Envelope Tendering Method (OSTETM) - (International)		
Funding Information				
8.	Budget and source of funds	Revenue Budget (GOB)		
Particular Information				
9.	Tender Publication date	10 March 2026		
10.	Tender last selling date	22 April 2026.		
11.	Tender closing date and time	23 April 2026 at 12:00 hrs.		
12.	Tender opening date and time (Technical offer only)	23 April 2026 at 12:30 hrs.		
Name & address of the office				
13.	Name & address of the office	Police Telecommunication Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka.		
	Selling tender document	ASP (Procurement), Police Telecommunication Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka.		
	Receiving tender document	Police Telecommunication Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka.		
	Opening tender document	Police Telecommunication Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka.		
14.	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional)	25 March 2026, at 12:00 hrs. at Police Telecom Conference Room (1 st Floor), Police Telecommunication Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka.		
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
15.	Eligibility of Tenderer	1) Up to date Export license (2) Written confirmation authorizing the signatory of the tender in accordance with the Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association of the Principal (3) Affidavit confirming the legal capacity and financial capability (4) Original full Brochure of products of the Principal (5) Other requirements described in the tender document (PG 5A).		
16.	Brief description of goods: Supplying, Installing, Testing and Commissioning of DMR Tier-3 System for Extension of Existing Network in Hill Districts (Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban)			
Sl. No.	Description of Good	Price of tender document (Non-refundable)	Tender security	Completion time
1.	DMR Tier-3 System for Extension of Existing Network in Hill Districts (Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban)	10,000/- (Ten Thousand) Taka.	TK-17,98,000/- or US\$-14,685.00	150 days from the Date of Opening L/C.
Procuring Entity Details				
17.	Name of official inviting tender	Shahriar Bin Saleh		
18.	Designation of the official inviting tender	SP (Logistics), Bangladesh Police, Rajarbag, Dhaka-1217.		
19.	Address of official inviting tender	Police Telecom Organization, Rajarbag, Dhaka-1217.		
20.	Contact details of official inviting the tender	Phone: +880 2-8301253 FAX: +880 2-8301404, Mobile: + 88 01320-020041 e-mail: splog.telecom@police.gov.bd		
21.	The tenderers shall submit their Technical and Financial offer in separate sealed envelope. Furthermore both envelopes shall be covered by an outer envelope which is sealed.			
Special instructions				
22.	a) No tender will be received after the deadline of submission time & date. b) The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender process without assigning any reason. c) The Procuring entity also reserves the right to omit, increase and/or decrease the quantity of any item(s) of the tender. d) If not possible to receive/open the tender on the scheduled date for any unavoidable circumstance, the same will be received/opened on the next working date at the same time & same venue. e) Evaluation will be done by Lot by Lot basis. f) Date of financial offer opening will be duly informed to the Technically Responsive Tenderers and their local agents. g) The Tenderer must comply with all requirements as per the tender data sheet provided with the tender schedule. h) The Tender Security shall be in the form of an irrevocable bank guarantee issued by an internationally reputable bank and shall require to be endorsed by its any correspondent bank located in Bangladesh. i) The Procurement will be performed according to the Public Procurement Act-2006 and Public Procurement Regulation 2025.			

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department Office of the Executive Engineer District: Tangail www.lged.gov.bd						
Memo No. 46.02.9300.000.01.014.25-1339			Date: 05-03-2026			
<u>e-Tender Notice No. 53/2025-2026 [OSTETM]</u>						
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following works.						
Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Name of scheme	Package No.	Last selling date & time of e-Tender document	Closing & opening date & time of submission e-Tender document	Remarks (OSTETM)
1	1236463	Construction of 264.25m long PSC Girder Bridge on Alanga GC-Zogarchar JBA Road via Durgapur UP Road at Ch. 10500m over Zogarchar (Pungli) River under Kalihati Upazila District Tangail (Road ID No. 393472007) (Remaining Part)	CIB-Tan/W-50.B Remaining Part	08-04-2026 & 16.00pm	09-04-2026 & 15.00pm	OSTETM
1. 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. 2. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. 3. Detail about the tender have shown in e-Tender notice and e-Tender document.						
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).						
Mohammad Qamruzzaman Executive Engineer LGED, Tangail E-mail: xen.tangail@lged.gov.bd						
GD-527						

The startup world says it wants women founders. So why doesn't it trust them?

NOMROTA SARKER

Bangladesh is very fond of the idea of the woman founder. She appears everywhere the ecosystem likes to flatter itself: on panels, in annual reports, in donor presentations, in the language of “inclusion” and “progress”. She is photographed as proof that things are changing. That the country is modern. That entrepreneurship is opening up.

But speak privately to enough female founders in Dhaka and you hear a familiar complaint. They go into investor meetings prepared to talk about margins, customer acquisition, logistics, retention. They leave with the odd feeling that somewhere in the room, without anyone quite announcing it, they have stopped being treated as founders at all; they have been gently recast: as daughters, as girls, as someone’s future wife.

An investor asks whether your parents support what you are doing. He wonders, almost tenderly, whether you plan to continue after marriage. He tells you startup life is very hard for girls. He praises your courage, your energy, your resilience, your “passion”. What he does not do, at least not with the same force, is engage with your business as though it were an engine built to last.

A founder might be told: you remind me of my daughter. Another hears: don’t burn yourself out, life is long. A third is praised for being “brave” rather than pressed on her numbers. Each remark, taken together, creates a pattern that is harder to shrug off. The founder is being moved, conversationally and psychologically, from the world of competition into the world of care.

That is the problem with paternalism. It rarely thinks of itself as prejudicial.

It often arrives disguised as warmth. Our business culture prizes respect, hierarchy and interpersonal ease. None of those are bad things in themselves, but they can provide a very comfortable shelter for bias. A woman is not dismissed outright. She is indulged. Encouraged. Protected, even. It sounds good until you realise that protection is often just another way of saying: I do not quite place you in the category of people I would back without reservation.

Ambitious, certainly. Promising, perhaps. Serious? That is where the hesitation creeps in.

A woman may be good enough to represent the ecosystem, but not quite solid enough to be read without qualification. She can be visible without being fully believed in. She can be funded, even, but under a cloud of extra supervision, extra advice, extra doubt. She gets mentorship when she is asking for money. She is described as inspiring



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

when she would rather be described as formidable. She is praised for surviving conditions that her male peers are expected simply to master.

But startups do not run on encouragement alone. They run on capital, trust and the presumption of seriousness. Once a woman is seen not quite as an operator but as an interesting exception, something essential has already been lost.

Then there is the simple matter of scarcity. Capital is not abundant. Women, like everyone else building companies here, are repeatedly told to be practical. Take the meeting. Take the money. Ignore the tone. Don’t make it personal. But of course it is personal. It is also structural. Those are not opposites.

Investors like to think they have a back vision. In truth, they also back inevitability. They back the person they can imagine still pushing, still expanding, still hardening into scale five or 10 years from now. If a woman is being subconsciously read as temporary—someone who will eventually soften her edges, step back, settle down—then her ceiling has already been lowered in the minds of the people holding the cheque books.

Intent, at this point, is almost beside the point. Many of the men who speak this way would be horrified to think of themselves as sexist. Some probably are trying, in their own minds, to be decent. But ecosystems are not shaped by self-

image. They are shaped by habit. And habit, repeated often enough, becomes culture.

It has consequences for how ambition itself is read. When a woman founder is repeatedly exposed to this systemic exclusion, her ambition starts to look provisional. Her company becomes a phase, or a passion project, or an admirable hustle to be admired before life “properly” begins. That may never be said outright. It does not need to be. The assumption settles over everything anyway.

The cost of all it is harder to measure than a missed round of funding, but it is real all the same. Women learn to modulate constantly. To laugh when a comment misfires. To soften a sentence that ought to land with force. To choose likeability over precision because the room feels brittle and access feels precarious. A great deal of entrepreneurial energy is spent managing male comfort instead of building the company.

The encouraging part is that women are naming it more clearly now. They are comparing notes. They are becoming less willing to interpret every uneasy moment as individual oversensitivity. Some are learning to redirect these conversations back to the business at hand. Some are being more selective about whom they raise from. Some are simply staying put, succeeding noisily enough that the old patronising script begins to fail.

That, perhaps, is where the real change begins: not in the ecosystem’s self-congratulation, but in its discomfort. In being forced to hear that what has long passed for politeness may also be a way of keeping women in their place.

We often ask when the country will produce more globally significant startups. It might ask, first, what kind of rooms it is asking people to build them in.

Because an ecosystem is not judged only by valuations and exits. It is judged by the assumptions that govern everyday encounters. By who gets to be treated as inevitable and who is still treated as decorative evidence of progress.

If Bangladesh wants a startup culture that can genuinely compete, it will have to do better than applauding women in public while quietly domesticating them in private.

The politeness is part of the problem. And until that is said without flinching, the pattern will continue to hide in plain sight.

Nomrota Sarker is a consumer brand founder and operator. Her work focuses on unit economics, cross-border scalability, and culture-led brand building across South Asia. Reach her at reachnomrota@gmail.com.

Views expressed in this article are of the author's own and may not reflect the editorial stance of The Daily Star.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

Radiant Pharmaceuticals Limited

Officer, Production/
Quality Control

Deadline: March 14



Eligibility:

🔗 M. Pharm or M. Sc. in Chemistry from a recognised university.

Minimum experience: 1-2 years

IDLC Finance PLC

Legal Officer, Litigation

Deadline: March 14



Eligibility:

🔗 LL.B (Hons), LL.M, with previous experience in court activities.

Minimum experience: 1-2 years

Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

Area Support Services
Manager

Deadline: March 15



Eligibility:

🔗 Master's degree in the relevant field of studies, with previous experience in people management and similar roles.

Minimum experience: 3-5 years

American International University

Bangladesh (AIUB) - Lecturer,
various departments

Deadline: March 24



Eligibility:

🔗 MBA/Master's with a Bachelor's/Honours degree in a relevant discipline with no third class in all examinations with a minimum 3.80 CGPA.

Minimum experience: N/A

FOR MORE
DETAILS AND THE
APPLICATION
LINKS, SCAN THE
QR CODE BELOW.



“Without work,
all life goes
rotten. But when
work is soulless,
life stifles and
dies.”

ALBERT CAMUS



OpenAI robotics head resigns over Pentagon deal

NEXT STEP DESK

A top hardware executive at OpenAI has resigned over the company's recent agreement with the US Department of Defense, citing concerns that the deal was announced without proper safeguards in place.

Caitlin Kalinowski, who led OpenAI's robotics and consumer hardware team, announced her departure on Saturday in a series of social media posts. She joined the company in 2024 after previously leading augmented reality hardware development at Meta.

“AI has an important role in national security,” Kalinowski wrote on X. “But surveillance of Americans without judicial oversight and lethal autonomy without human authorisation are lines that deserved more deliberation than they got.”

She emphasised that her decision was “about principle, not people” and expressed “deep respect” for CEO Sam Altman and the team. In a follow-up post, she clarified that her issue was with the process: “The announcement was rushed without the guardrails defined. It’s a governance concern first and foremost. These are too important for deals or announcements to be rushed.”



Human advantage in workplace remains critical, study finds

NEXT STEP DESK

As artificial intelligence transforms how work gets done, organisations that prioritise human-centric approaches are significantly more likely to see returns on their investments, according to financial consulting firm Deloitte's 2026 Global Human Capital Trends report.

The study, which surveyed more than 3,000 business and HR leaders across 15 countries,



found that those taking a human-focused approach to AI are 1.6 times more likely to exceed return expectations compared to those taking a tech-focused approach. Technology is replicable, the report argues, while people are not.

As per the report, despite nearly 60% of workers now using AI intentionally at work, only 14% of leaders say they are adept at shaping human-AI interactions. Organisations that prioritise intentional design of human-machine collaboration are nearly 2.5 times more likely to report better financial results and twice as likely to provide meaningful work, says Deloitte.

The research also highlights growing concerns around trust and culture. 80% of leaders, managers, and workers are concerned that colleagues are using AI to appear more productive than they are. Only 5% of organisations are making significant progress in understanding AI's impact on organisational culture, adds the report.

Special committee formed to examine PayPal launch in Bangladesh

MD ZAHIDUR RABBI

The government has formed a special committee to examine what is needed to launch PayPal in Bangladesh, according to a gazette notification issued by the Prime Minister's Office on March 2.

The committee will be chaired by Rehan Asif Asad, adviser to the ministry of posts, telecommunications and information technology. Its members include the chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, the governor of Bangladesh Bank, the secretary of the finance division, the chairman of the National Board of Revenue, and the secretary of the information and communication technology division, who will serve as member secretary.

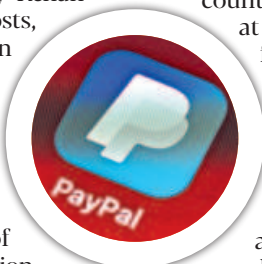
According to the notification, one of the committee's main responsibilities is to take effective steps to facilitate the start of PayPal's operations in Bangladesh. PayPal, one of the

world's largest online payment platforms, is widely used for cross-border transactions, particularly by freelancers.

The committee has also been tasked with improving the management of high-tech and software parks and ICT centres across the country. It will also work on policies aimed at providing affordable workspaces for freelancers and technology professionals.

Another part of its mandate is to promote ICT training programmes to help build a skilled workforce for the technology sector. The notification also says the committee may co-opt additional members if needed.

For years, freelancers and technology entrepreneurs in Bangladesh have called for access to global payment services such as PayPal, arguing that it would make international transactions easier and help connect the country's growing digital workforce more closely with the global economy.



Google CEO Sundar Pichai eyes new pay package worth \$692m

NEXT STEP DESK

Google parent Alphabet has lined up a new three-year pay package for chief executive Sundar Pichai that could be worth as much as \$692m, putting the Google boss among the best-paid corporate leaders in the world if the performance targets are met. Most of the award is tied to long-term stock incentives, including new grants linked to Waymo, the group's self-driving car business, and Wing, its drone delivery unit.

A filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission shows Pichai's annual salary will remain unchanged at \$2m and that he will not receive an annual bonus. Instead, Alphabet has structured the package around triennial equity awards: two tranches of performance stock units with a target value of \$63m each, \$84m in restricted stock units, and separate “bet performance units” in Waymo and Wing with target values of about \$130m and \$45m respectively. Those performance awards can vest at between 0% and 200% of target, depending on results.

Alphabet said the award was intended to reflect Pichai's performance and to sharpen his focus on scaling its more mature “Other Bets” businesses. In the filing, the company said Waymo and Wing had made strong progress under his supervision and that incentivising him to develop those operations was in shareholders' interests.

The package also underlines how much Alphabet's value has grown during Pichai's tenure. The Financial Times reported that the company's market capitalisation had risen from about \$535bn when he took over as Google chief executive in 2015 to \$3.6tn, after briefly topping \$4tn in January.

3 deals drive massive \$189 bln venture spike in February

NEXT STEP DESK

Artificial intelligence (AI) companies accounted for the vast majority of global venture capital investment in February, according to a recent report from Crunchbase, with 3 firms alone responsible for most of the record-breaking total.

The report found that \$189 billion in venture funding flowed to startups worldwide last month, more than three times the amount recorded in January. Of that sum, \$171 billion, or roughly 90 percent, was directed to AI-focused companies.

Much of the capital was concentrated in three large funding rounds. OpenAI secured \$110 billion in fresh investment, one of the largest private fundraising rounds on record, valuing the company at \$730 billion. Its competitor Anthropic raised \$30 billion in a Series G round at a valuation of \$380 billion. Meanwhile, Waymo, the self-driving technology subsidiary of Alphabet, attracted \$16 billion at a valuation of \$126 billion.

Together, the three companies accounted for 83 percent of all venture dollars raised in February. The combined \$156 billion raised by OpenAI, Anthropic and Waymo in a single month amounts to roughly one-third of the \$425 billion invested across the entire venture capital market in 2025, according to data provided in the Crunchbase report.

Bangladesh face Asian reality

Butler calls for better support

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's historic debut in the AFC Women's Asian Cup ended without a point, or a goal scored, as the women in red and green expectedly lost all three group-stage matches in Australia, finishing the campaign with yesterday's 4-0 loss to Uzbekistan in Perth.

However, the experience of playing in Asia's top-flight competition is widely seen as a crucial step forward for the country's women's football.

Bangladesh were the only team among the 12 participants with a FIFA ranking beyond 100 – and also the youngest. The next lowest-ranked side, Iran, were placed 44 spots higher, highlighting the considerable gap the women in red and green had to bridge.

While the 3-0 and 5-0 defeats to powerhouses China and North Korea were largely expected given the differences in footballing standards, many had hoped Bangladesh might frustrate Uzbekistan, as they did against Myanmar in the deciding fixture in the qualifiers last year.

At the Perth Rectangular Stadium yesterday, a victory over the Central Asian side could have pushed the team into the quarterfinals, opening the door to opportunities such as competing in the Olympic Games qualifiers and



the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup.

The country's women's football still faces significant limitations in infrastructure, domestic league structure, training facilities and international exposure. Comparing the facilities available to Uzbekistan with those in Bangladesh, head coach Peter Butler said post-match, "The opposition brings TV cameras and video equipment – luxuries that we simply do not have.

"At times, it feels like a boxer entering a fight with one arm tied behind his back. At the AFC level, you face teams that are far better prepared than we are, both physically and logistically.

"A major issue we face is that we do not have a designated training pitch in Bangladesh. This is one of the primary challenges for our development."

Despite the defeats, Bangladesh's qualification for the Asian Cup itself marked a milestone for the country's women's football. The team have already shown their regional dominance by winning the SAFF Women's Championship in 2022 and 2024, but the Asian Cup campaign provided a valuable reality check about the standards required at the continental level.

"I have nothing but praise for the girls; they have come a long way. I have a lot of respect for them and I am very proud of what they have achieved," Butler remarked.

Rather than being treated as a one-off achievement, the appearance should serve as a foundation for long-term development. For that to happen, Bangladesh Football Federation must use this experience to provide the platform the players need and deserve – starting with basic requirements such as a "designated training pitch", an issue captain Afeida Khandaker also highlighted during the tournament.



The experienced Mustafizur Rahman will be a key figure for Bangladesh in their upcoming three-match ODI series against Pakistan, starting on Wednesday at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium. Before the series, the mercurial Mirpur wicket is turning heads with its bright look, a complete opposite to its usually dark and gloomy appearance. Pakistan skipper Shaheen Shah Afridi and coach Mike Hesson looked on curiously during their practice session yesterday, trying to decode its mystery.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Different agendas for Bangladesh, Pakistan

SPORTS REPORTER

With the Pakistan team in town for Bangladesh's first ODI assignment in more than four months, both sides have begun preparations in Dhaka and are heading into the three-match series chasing different agendas.

For Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons, improving on their ODI mettle seems to be the goal along with getting over the hurt of missing the recently-concluded ICC T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

"I think we are at that stage now where we're getting past that [disappointment of missing the T20 World Cup]. It was very hurtful for the guys and I'm talking to them and it was very, very hurtful," Simmons said on Monday during the press conference.

The Pakistan series kicks off a sequence of ODI series for Bangladesh and although they have won their last two ODI series at home against West Indies and Sri Lanka, both by a 2-1 margin, the quality has seemingly declined since the last ODI World Cup in 2023.

Bangladesh, ranked 10th in the ODI rankings, need wins to climb up the ladder and secure a direct entry into next year's ODI World Cup. However, Simmons wants to look beyond the qualification.

"The ultimate goal is to get better at ODI cricket rather than just focusing on qualification math. Although the team currently lacks some of the experience it had when Bangladesh was at the top of the ODI rankings, the focus is

on playing to the level the current talent allows," Simmons said.

"The team is currently looking at a pool of 23 to 24 players who train together, ensuring that depth is available for the numerous upcoming one-day series," he added on the player pool, as was evidenced by the likes of Jaker Ali and Parvez Hossain Emon, who are not part of the squad for the Pakistan ODIs, going through batting sessions at the Mirpur Academy ground yesterday.

ODI outings.

"First, it is physically demanding to keep wicket for 50 overs and then immediately open the batting. Second, Litton is one of the team's better players of spin bowling, which is a vital skill for the middle overs. His experience and skill set are expected to provide the stability the team has lacked in that period," Simmons said on Litton.

Pakistan, on the other hand, named six uncapped players for the series. It was suggestive that



Soumya Sarkar and Saif Hassan raised faith in the top-order in the last ODI series against West Indies in October. In the absence of a few experienced stars, Bangladesh middle-order does not look as steady as it did before 2023 World Cup.

The creaky middle-order situation made way for the inclusion of Litton Das in the middle-order despite producing single-digit scores in his last eight

Pakistan – fourth in the ICC rankings – wanted a shake-up. Even Babar Azam, who has a ton in Pakistan's last ODI series, was axed.

Usually worried about Bangladesh's unpredictable surfaces and its uneven bounce, Hesson was more willing to experiment in this series.

"I don't think anyone particularly was dropped. It is a great opportunity for us to look at some younger talent," Hesson said.

What to WATCH

T SPORTS

Women's Asian Cup

Japan vs Vietnam

Live from 3:00 pm

SONY SPORTS 1, 2, 5

UEFA Champions League (Round of 16)

Galatasaray vs Liverpool

Live from 11:45 pm

Atalanta vs Bayern Munich

Atletico Madrid vs Tottenham Hotspur

Newcastle United vs Barcelona

Live from 2:00 am (Wednesday)

93 DAYS TO GO

The five-time club

Mexico's Antonio Carbajal, who passed away in May 2023 at the age of 93, was the first player in history to appear in five consecutive World Cups (1950-1966). Since then, five others have matched the feat: Lothar Matthaus (Germany), Rafael Márquez (Mexico), Lionel Messi (Argentina), Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal) and Andres Guardado (Mexico). Of them, Messi and Ronaldo are on course to becoming the first players to compete in six World Cups in the upcoming in the USA.

**Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: "The hatrick lore of the FIFA World Cup"



Newcastle eye history against Barcelona

AGENCIES

The knockout stage of the Champions League begins on Tuesday with four compelling round of 16 first-leg clashes across Europe, but much of the spotlight will fall on the meeting between Newcastle United and Barcelona on Tyneside.

Premier League champions Liverpool launch the night's action with a difficult trip to Galatasaray in the intimidating atmosphere of Istanbul. In Spain, Atletico Madrid host Tottenham Hotspur in what promises to be a tightly contested tactical battle, while in Italy, Atalanta welcome six-time European champions Bayern Munich to Bergamo.

Yet the most anticipated tie of the opening night sees Newcastle face Barcelona in a historic occasion for the English side.

Manager Eddie Howe has called the clash the "biggest game" in the club's history, as Newcastle prepare for only their second appearance in the Champions League last 16.

Having comfortably overcome Azerbaijani side Qarabag FK in the play-off round, Newcastle now face a major step up against the La Liga leaders coached by Hansi Flick.

The tie also rekindles memories of the clubs' famous first Champions League meeting in 1997, when Newcastle stunned Barcelona 3-2 with a hat-trick from Faustino Asprilla.

After years of decline under Mike Ashley, Newcastle United have been revitalised since their 2021 takeover and now hope the visit of Barcelona can spark another memorable European night on Tyneside.

FROM CHAOTIC BUILD-UP TO T20 KINGS

AGENCIES

The 10th edition of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup began in confusion and controversy but ended with a statement of dominance as India cemented their legacy as the kings of the shortest format.

What started as a tournament overshadowed by political drama and uncertainty eventually delivered thrilling cricket, unforgettable moments and a historic triumph for the hosts.

India thrashed New Zealand by 96 runs in the final at the colossal Narendra Modi Stadium in front of nearly 86,000 spectators. The emphatic victory allowed India to retain the title and lift the trophy for a record third time, reinforcing their supremacy in T20 cricket.

It was also historic for several reasons: India became the first team to win the tournament on home soil, the first to defend the title successfully, and now stand as the most successful team in the tournament's history.

Yet the road to glory began under a cloud. The tournament's build-up was chaotic, dominated by political tensions that saw Bangladesh



withdraw from participation. Their late replacement by Scotland created logistical challenges, while Pakistan initially threatened to boycott their high-profile group clash with India in solidarity with Bangladesh.

After intense negotiations with the International Cricket Council, Pakistan reversed their stance and the highly anticipated encounter went ahead in Colombo. India won the emotionally charged contest, though tensions lingered with no

handshakes exchanged between the two teams afterward.

Despite the rocky start, the tournament quickly found its rhythm and delivered the excitement that T20 cricket promises. High-scoring thrillers, nail-biting finishes and standout individual performances kept fans on the edge of their seats.

For the ICC, the event also provided another step toward its goal of globalising the game through the shortest format.



Eight associate nations participated in the expanded 20-team competition. None managed to defeat a full member side, yet several pushed the established teams to their limits.

Netherlands nearly stunned Pakistan in the opening match, while the USA gave eventual champions India an early scare.

Nepal displayed admirable fighting spirit, and debutants Italy played several competitive matches that hinted at cricket's growing

reach.

The tournament also produced several remarkable storylines.

One of the most dramatic encounters came when South Africa and Afghanistan tied their group-stage match before producing the first-ever double Super Over in T20 World Cup history.

After both sides were tied again in the first Super Over, South Africa eventually prevailed off the final ball of a nerve-shredding second showdown.

Another major headline was the shock early exit of Australia.

Missing key pacers due to injury, Australia lost to the tournament's surprise package Zimbabwe and later to Sri Lanka. A rain-affected match elsewhere sealed their fate, eliminating the former champions before the second phase.

For India, the campaign was defined by resilience and redemption. Wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson emerged as one of the tournament's heroes.

Initially not part of the opening plans, he seized his opportunity with a stunning unbeaten 97 against the West Indies in a crucial Super Eights clash.

Samson followed it with another match-winning 89 in the semifinal against England and delivered again in the final, completing a remarkable redemption arc.

There were also individual feats that electrified the competition. Finn Allen blasted the fastest century in tournament history – a breathtaking 33-ball hundred – during New Zealand's semifinal victory over South Africa.

His brutal display of power-hitting shattered the previous record set by Chris Gayle in 2016.

Meanwhile, Italy produced one of the tournament's most emotional moments by securing their first-ever World Cup victory with a dominant 10-wicket win over Nepal.

The historic triumph moved players to tears and symbolised cricket's expanding footprint beyond its traditional strongholds.

Ultimately, though, the story of the tournament belonged to India.

From a troubled start overshadowed by politics to a triumphant finish in Ahmedabad, the hosts turned chaos into glory and emerged as the undisputed T20 kings.



FAMILY CARD

Over 37,000 women to get Tk 2,500 each before Eid

PM inaugurates pilot today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 37,567 women-headed households in 14 areas, including two in the capital, are going to get Tk 2,500 each against the family cards through their bank accounts or mobile wallets before Eid.

Social Welfare Minister Abu Zafor Md Zahid Hossain yesterday announced the decision at a press conference in the finance ministry.

He added that during the pilot phase, the beneficiaries were selected after data from 51,805 households of the extremely poor, poor, and lower-middle-class were verified. “Those who have been selected will get their money through their bank accounts or mobile wallets before Eid.”

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is expected to inaugurate the pilot phase of the Family Card programme at the Korail slum today.

At the briefing, Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said the pilot programme would continue until June. The full programme would start from the next fiscal year. Gradually, it would be expanded from lower-

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5



Members of the army in armoured personnel carriers during a major joint forces operation in the Jungle Salimpur area of Sitakunda in Chattogram yesterday afternoon. The remote hilly area, known as a safe haven for criminals, came under renewed scrutiny after a Rab officer was beaten to death there in January.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Joint forces claim control of Jungle Salimpur

Key suspect Yasin escapes; 15 held, weapons recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Joint forces yesterday launched a large-scale operation in the Jungle Salimpur area of Sitakunda upazila in Chattogram, deploying around 3,200 personnel from the army, police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

The operation began around 6:00am with heavy equipment, with members of the joint forces cordoning off the entire area before conducting raids.

Later, Ahsan Habib Palash, deputy inspector general (DIG) of the Chattogram Range, while talking to journalists in the afternoon, said that they established full control in the much-discussed area.

According to him, several weapons were recovered during the drive and around 15 people were detained, though the exact number could not

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

WAR ON IRAN

4 Bangladeshis killed in Middle East so far

STAR REPORT

The government yesterday condemned attacks that have claimed innocent lives after two Bangladeshis were killed in a strike in Saudi Arabia amid the US-Israel war on Iran.

In a statement, the foreign ministry said the government was deeply saddened by the deaths and injuries of Bangladeshi nationals in the conflict.

“Continued loss of lives of innocent Bangladeshi civilians in the region is a matter of grave concern,” the statement said, calling on all parties to exercise maximum restraint.

It also urged the international community to take urgent and effective measures to de-escalate the situation and prevent further loss of life.

The two Bangladeshis killed in the attack in Saudi Arabia’s Al-Kharj governorate were Bachchu Miah of Katiadi in Kishorganj and Mosharrarf Hossain of Shakhipur in Tangail.

The injured are receiving treatment at local hospitals, while officials from the Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh have visited them and are in contact with Saudi authorities to bring back the bodies, the ministry said.

The government is closely monitoring the evolving situation and attaches high priority to the safety and welfare of Bangladeshi nationals in the Middle East, where

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Global arms exports soar on European demand

AFP, Stockholm

Global weapons flows grew by almost 10 percent in the past five years, with Europe more than tripling imports, a report showed yesterday.

The surge in European countries can be explained, in part at least, by the fact they are buying weapons to supply to Ukraine and because they are



seeking to boost their own military capabilities against a perceived threat from Russia, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said.

The volume of worldwide arms flows grew by 9.2 percent in the period 2021 to 2025 compared to the preceding five-year period, according to SIPRI’s new report.

SIPRI analyses trends over half-decades because a few deliveries of major contracts can tilt yearly figures.

While imports of weapons to Europe are still not at the levels seen during the Cold War, “Europe is now the largest recipient of arms”, Mathew George, director of SIPRI’s Arms Transfers Programme, told AFP.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

‘People’s voting rights were violated’ Says Jamaat ameer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader and Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday alleged that people’s voting rights were violated in the national election and claimed that his party had been “made the opposition in a calculated way”.

Speaking at an iftar event in the capital’s Siddheshwari yesterday, he said the outcome of the polls did not reflect the will of the people.

“Before the election, we said loudly that we did not want the victory of any party. I even mentioned my own party by name and said we did not want its victory. We wanted the victory of 180 million people. That victory has not been achieved.”

Shafiqur claimed that the facts surrounding the polls were now becoming clear. “Everything has come out in broad daylight, and witnesses are also emerging. The judgment now rests with the court of the people, and In Sha Allah, the verdict will come in favour of the people.”

Jatiya Ganatantrik Party (Jagpa) organised the iftar event at a hotel.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Chhatra Shakti men beat up DU student

Allege he is linked to banned Chhatra League

DU CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka University student was beaten and later handed over to police by activists of Jatiya Chhatra Shakti, the student wing of the National Citizen Party, early yesterday.

Speaking to journalists while lying injured on the Shahbagh Police Station premises, philosophy student Rahid Khan Pavel, from the 2020-21 academic session, said he was assaulted after being labelled a member of the now-banned Chhatra League.

He alleged that the attackers left him at the police station after taking away his mobile phone, motorcycle keys, and wallet.

Pavel said he had gone to Kazi Nazrul Islam Hall of Buet to have sehri. There, DU students Hasib, Shuvo, Saifullah, and Abrar, along with around 20-25 others, began beating him.

“They hit me on the head with bricks, stabbed my hands and body with a bike disc lock, stepped on my legs from the toes up, and beat me with belts.”

He alleged that the attackers took him to the DU campus and continued the assault, saying, “They also beat me at the police station, but law enforcers intervened and saved me.”

Pavel denied having any political affiliation,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Govt floats tenders to buy 3 LNG shipments

Seeks deliveries in April

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has floated tenders to buy three more liquefied natural gas (LNG) cargoes from the spot market for April delivery in a desperate race to secure gas amid deepening turmoil in the Middle East.

State-run Rupantarita Praktitik Gas Co Ltd (RPGCL) on Sunday sought delivery of the LNG cargoes in three phases between April 5 and April 13, a move that came four days after the company floated tenders to buy two cargoes of gas for March 15-16 and March 18-19 deliveries.

Bangladesh had to buy two LNG cargoes from the spot market after failing to attract bidders for two consecutive days, although at more than double the normal rate.

The move comes amid uncertainty over the timely arrival of LNG shipments from Qatar, as shipping in the Gulf remains severely disrupted after Tehran threatened to “set fire” to vessels in the Strait

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Laws alone can’t ensure gender equality

Speakers say at UN Women report launch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Achieving gender equality requires more than strong legal provisions; it demands institutional accountability, inclusive reforms, and the dismantling of colonial-era loopholes that leave women and marginalised groups vulnerable, speakers said at a roundtable yesterday.

Organised by UN Women, in partnership with the European Union and The Daily Star, at The Daily Star Centre in the capital’s Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, the roundtable marked the launch of a study titled “Achieving Equality Before the Law in Bangladesh: An Assessment of the Law from a Gender Perspective”.

Launching the report, UN Women Country Representative Gitanjali Singh outlined a six-point strategy to bridge the gap between legal theory and the lived realities of women.

She urged the immediate passage of the sexual harassment prevention and domestic violence amendment ordinances.

“We need justice systems that don’t just respond to violence but prevent it,” Singh stated, advocating a “whole-of-government” justice strategy integrating police, courts, and social services while increasing funding for grassroots movements.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Participants at a roundtable organised by UN Women at The Daily Star Centre, marking the launch of the report “Achieving Equality Before the Law in Bangladesh: An Assessment of the Law from a Gender Perspective”.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Taka weakening against dollar amid war tensions

B1



PRAYER TIMING					
MARCH 10					
Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 4:59	12:45	4:30	6:07	7:30	
JAMAAT 5:09	1:15	4:45	6:17	8:00	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					
SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING					
RAMADAN	MAR	SEHRI	IFTAR		
20	10		6:07		
21	11	4:56	6:07		
22	12	4:55	6:08		