



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike at Abbasiyeh in southern Lebanon yesterday.

Oil plunges, stocks rise as Trump signals quick end to war

More than 759,000 Lebanese displaced by the war

Israel not seeking endless war with Iran: FM

Trump, Putin discuss Iran war, Ukraine peace, energy crisis

‘No oil thru Hormuz if attacks continue’

Tehran warns as Trump threatens to hit harder; Iran targets Israel, US assets in Gulf nations; Israel ramps up strikes on Iran, Lebanon

AFP, Tehran

Iran vowed yesterday that not a single litre of oil would leave the Gulf while US and Israeli bombardments continue, declaring it will decide the war's end, as the United Arab Emirates shut its largest refinery following a drone strike.

Oil prices have surged since Iranian attacks on shipping closed the Strait of Hormuz in the wake of US-Israeli strikes but fell back somewhat on Monday when US President Donald Trump suggested the war would soon end.

Prices sank further and equities pushed higher

yesterday following a wild day of swings that came after President Donald Trump signalled that the US-Israeli war on Iran could end sooner than thought.

International oil benchmark, Brent North Sea crude, plunged 9.6 percent to \$89.44 a barrel, a day after it neared \$120.

The region's biggest single-site oil refinery, at Ruwais in the UAE, was closed yesterday as a precaution after a drone attack on the industrial complex which houses it caused a fire, a source familiar with the situation told AFP.

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US TRADE DEAL Bangladesh may lose Tk 1,327cr a year in revenue

Says CPD, urges review of agreement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh could lose about Tk 1,327 crore in annual import tax revenue by granting tariff benefits to more than 6,700 US products under the reciprocal trade deal signed with the Trump administration, according to the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

The think tank raised the fiscal implications of the Agreement on Reciprocal Tariff (ART) at a media briefing in Dhaka yesterday, urging the government to review the deal signed a month ago.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Tarique urges calm amid Mideast storm

Launches Family Card programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has urged people to remain patient amid current global challenges, saying the government may need more time to fulfil some of its promises but will not deviate from its commitments.

"Public expectations from the current elected government are very high, and we understand that. But if we consider the reality and the current global conditions, including the Middle East situation, we will not change our position on the promises we made," he said at the inauguration ceremony of the Family Card programme at T&T playground in Banani, adjacent to Korail slum.



Tarique formally launched the Family Card programme by pressing a button on a laptop at 11:30am, after which the selected recipients automatically received Tk 2,500 in their mobile financial services accounts.

About 15,000 women from three areas of Dhaka-17, Tarique's constituency -- Korail, Bhashantek and Saat Tola slums -- yesterday received their Family Cards.

He described the occasion as an emotional one, as it allowed him to fulfil a promise he had made to the people before the election.

The first recipient of the Family Card from Tarique was Pervin Begum. Later,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Govt looking at fuel source options

Says enough in stock to last this month

ASIFUR RAHMAN and MOHAMMAD SUMAN

The government is scrambling to secure alternative fuel sources amid the US-Israel war on Iran, as the lion's share of Bangladesh's fuel imports originates from the Middle East.

The authorities have already secured fuel consignments for March and are now working to ensure supplies for April and May in case the conflict disrupts global energy markets, said Anindya Islam Amit, the state minister for power, energy, and mineral resources.

"We have been thinking about alternatives since the beginning of the war. We hope wisdom will prevail and the war will end soon. But if it prolongs, we are preparing for April and May to deal with possible global disruptions," he said yesterday at a briefing at the secretariat.

Bangladesh mainly imports crude oil from the Middle East, particularly through the Strait of Hormuz, while refined fuel is sourced from several Asian suppliers such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

INT'L CRIMES TRIBUNAL Chief prosecutor opens probe into bribery scam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal chief prosecutor's office has launched an internal investigation after allegations surfaced that a recently resigned prosecutor sought Tk 1 crore from a suspect's family in exchange for arranging bail in a crimes against humanity case.

Chief Prosecutor Aminul Islam announced the move at a media briefing yesterday following a closed-door meeting with prosecutors in the morning. The meeting also decided to review other activities at the tribunal since its reconstitution after the August 5, 2024 changeover.

A five-member fact-finding committee was formed, headed by Aminul himself. Other members include Prosecutor Abdus Sobhan Taralder, newly appointed prosecutors Marjina Raihan and Mohammad Zahirul

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Aminul Islam made Dhaka Wasa MD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed former secretary Aminul Islam as the managing director (MD) of Dhaka Wasa.

In a gazette notification issued yesterday, the Ministry of Public Administration said Aminul Islam will serve as the MD of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) for one year on a contractual basis.

The previous managing director, Abdus Salam Bepari, resigned on Sunday after allegations of money laundering and purchasing assets abroad surfaced against him.

Following his resignation, Md Moniruzzaman, additional secretary to the Local Government Division of the LGRD ministry, was given the additional charge of Dhaka Wasa's MD on Monday. Aminul was officially appointed to the post yesterday.



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman presents a symbolic Family Card to a beneficiary at the launch of the government's Family Card programme at the T&T Ground near Korail slum in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

'No oil thru Hormuz if attacks continue'

FROM PAGE 1

"The Strait of Hormuz will either be a strait of peace and prosperity for all or will be a strait of defeat and suffering for warmongers," Iran's security chief Ali Larijani declared.

The price increase also followed strikes on oil depots in Iran and attacks on oil infrastructure in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and around the Gulf, which continued yesterday, with explosions heard in Doha.

Qatar, where a suspension of LNG exports has sent European energy prices sky-high, said Iranian attacks on its civilian infrastructure were continuing.

Explosions thundered out in Tehran yesterday after the Pentagon chief warned US strikes on Iran would reach their highest intensity since the start of the war in the Middle East.

"Today will be yet again our most intense day of strikes inside Iran," Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told a news conference at the Pentagon.

The war has shown no sign of relenting, with AFP journalists reporting three explosions in Tehran last evening, with no immediate information available about the intended targets.

Meanwhile, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said last night that Israel is not seeking an endless war with Iran and will coordinate with the US on when to end the fighting, declining to publicly state a timeline for when the conflict could end.

Israel's military pounded the Lebanese capital's southern suburbs with air strikes yesterday, and its troops pushed deeper into the country's south.

Lebanese authorities say more than 759,000 have been displaced by the war. **'CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES'** The exchanges of fire will increase fears of economic instability, with traders and energy policy makers nervously following events in the Gulf, the source of around a fifth of world oil and gas supplies.

"There would be catastrophic consequences for the world's oil markets the longer the disruption goes on and the more drastic the consequences for the global economy," Saudi oil giant Aramco's president and CEO Amin H

Nasser told journalists.

"It's absolutely critical that shipping resumes in the Strait of Hormuz."

Egypt increased the cost of fuels by up to 30 percent and Pakistan said it would provide naval escorts to commercial shipping. France has dispatched warships to the region.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) mocked Trump's bid to lessen the economic impact of the war, warning, "The Iranian armed forces... will not allow the export of a single litre of oil from the region to the hostile side and its partners until further notice."

"It is we who will determine the end of the war," the IRGC, seen as close to Iran's new supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei, said in a statement carried by Iranian media.

Larjani issued a thinly veiled threat to Trump himself, warning him to be careful "not to be eliminated".

"Iran is not afraid of your empty threats. Even those greater than you could not eliminate the Iranian nation," Larjani wrote in a social media post.

'DEATH, FIRE AND FURY' Iran's warnings came as a response to Trump, who gave a news conference in a Florida ballroom to declare of the war, "It's going to be ended soon, and if it starts up again, they'll be hit even harder."

"We've already won in many ways, but we haven't won enough," Trump said Monday.

But, in a later post on his social media platform, Trump warned that if Tehran interferes with oil exports, the US military will bomb the country in such a way to "make it virtually impossible for Iran to ever be built back, as a nation, again."

"Death, fire, and fury will reign upon them — But I hope, and pray, that it does not happen!" he wrote.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also predicted that the conflict would continue, expressing hope that the Iranian people would seize the opportunity to "cast off the yoke of tyranny".

"Ultimately, it depends on them. But there is no doubt that, with the actions taken so far, we are breaking their bones, and we are not done yet," he said.

Chief prosecutor

FROM PAGE 1

Amin, and a senior law research officer at the tribunal.

At the meeting, Aminul asked for and reviewed all documents related to the case in question.

The controversy emerged after media reports cited multiple audio recordings of WhatsApp conversations purportedly involving former ICT prosecutor Saimum Reza Talukdar.

According to the reports, he sought Tk 1 crore from the family of ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury, a former Awami League MP, to arrange bail in a crimes against humanity case linked to the July uprising.

Saimum had been appointed as a prosecutor on October 7, 2024. The law ministry accepted his resignation on Monday.

Contacted yesterday, Saimum denied the allegations. "I would address the matter through the legal process," he said.

Aminul said the prosecution would conduct a forensic examination of the audio recordings to determine their authenticity. He also said both past and present allegations against prosecutors would be reviewed.

"I will form an internal committee and review all matters since the tribunal was restructured. If any irregularities are found, I will report them to the appropriate authorities," he said.

"If any truth is found, I will take action within the limits of the law or make the necessary recommendations," he added,

noting that explanations would be sought from all relevant individuals, including former officials if necessary.

The chief prosecutor said he first learned of the allegation through news reports yesterday morning and immediately called an emergency meeting of prosecutors at 9:00am.

"This news has deeply saddened me. If any prosecutor is found involved in corruption, even to the slightest degree, I will not spare them," he said, acknowledging that such allegations could create an image crisis for the tribunal.

He also noted that although media reports and audio recordings had surfaced, the prosecution had not yet received a formal complaint regarding the alleged bribery attempt.

Aminul said Saimum had submitted his resignation letter two to three days ago, stating that he wished to return to his previous profession as a teacher.

"Once someone resigns, there is little scope for me to retain them. I accepted the resignation and forwarded it to the law ministry through due procedure," he said.

According to media reports, former chief prosecutor Tajul Islam removed Saimum from the case after learning of the allegations but did not take further action, and Saimum continued performing other duties at the tribunal.

The reports said members of Fazle Karim's family met Tajul on December 18 last year and informed him that money had been demanded. They played a recording of a

TRUMP, PUTIN TALK

US President Donald Trump and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin spoke Monday about the war in Iran and prospects for peace in Ukraine, hours after Putin warned of a global energy crisis.

The Kremlin said Trump called Putin, in the leaders' first telephone call this year, and they discussed Russian ideas for a speedy end to the conflict in Iran, the military situation in Ukraine and the impact of Venezuela on the global oil market.

Trump later told reporters he pressed Putin to resolve the Ukraine war.

Putin cautioned that US Israeli strikes on Iran had triggered turmoil in energy markets, threatening oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz. He said Russia was ready to resume long-term cooperation with Europe.

Washington is weighing easing oil sanctions on Russia to boost global supply. Officials said options include targeted relief for countries such as India.

The Kremlin described the call as "substantial," noting Trump's interest in a rapid ceasefire and settlement in Ukraine.

RARE VOLATILITY

On Monday, world oil prices swept past the symbolic level of \$100 a barrel and were briefly up 30 percent on the day before falling back after Trump's intervention. But they rose again more slowly yesterday, and experts warned that the economic outlook remains extremely volatile.

"Rare are days in the markets when you get this much volatility," said Ipek Ozkardeskaya, an analyst for Swissquote Bank, warning that investors are overreacting to every bit of news even when officials' statements contradict each other.

"Part of yesterday's optimism came after Trump said the war would end 'soon' and that the US was ahead of schedule," she said.

"Concretely, however, the conflict in the Middle East continues at full speed, political developments are not pointing to a near-term resolution, and there is little clarity about the US plans."

December 10 conversation but did not provide a copy.

Tajul told The Daily Star that no formal or informal complaint had been made during his tenure. He said he became suspicious when Saimum claimed that police were not implicated in the investigation, although police carried out atrocities across the country during the uprising. As a result, he withdrew Saimum from the case.

Incumbent Chief Prosecutor Aminul described the allegation as serious and said action should have been taken earlier.

The issue has also caused unease within the prosecution team. Several prosecutors expressed concern that the succession of allegations was affecting their ability to focus on tribunal proceedings.

Speaking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, a prosecutor said the developments had unsettled many colleagues.

"These incidents are making us extremely worried one after another. We are finding it difficult to concentrate properly on trial work. At the moment, our focus has largely shifted away from the cases," the prosecutor said.

Aminul warned that any future misconduct within the prosecution team would be dealt with strictly.

"If even the slightest credible allegation of corruption arises against any prosecutor during my tenure, they will not remain here the next day," he said.

Tarique urges calm amid Mideast storm

FROM PAGE 1

16 other women also received their cards from him.

Empowering women is crucial as it is quite impossible to advance the country leaving half of the population behind, Tarique said.

"Half of the population of Bangladesh is women. We firmly believe that if we leave this half of the population behind, if we do not empower this half of the population, if we do not empower them, if we cannot empower them educationally and economically, then it is certainly not possible to move the country forward in any way."

The government has to follow rules and regulations when taking on any initiative; as such, it has to take pilot projects first.

The Family Card programme is being piloted at 14 places or 14 upazilas across Bangladesh involving about 37,000 women, he said.

Some 15 wards across 13 city corporations and unions spanning 13 districts across the country have been chosen for the pilot, according to the social welfare ministry.

The selected households will receive Tk 2,500 through the government-to-person digital payment system directly to the women's MFS or bank accounts.

The government has also started the work on the Farmers' Card, the BNP's another landmark election pledge, Tarique said.

Within the next month, the card will be handed over to farmers, he said, adding that the government last week waived off agricultural loans up to Tk 10,000, including interest.

"This government has been elected by the people of this country. Naturally, it is bound to remain accountable to them," he added.

Yesterday, the Family Card inauguration programme was held in 14 areas across Chattogram, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Khulna, Barishal, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions.

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About a fifth of the world's crude oil usually passes through the narrow waterway, mostly to the Asian markets, so the situation would become critical if the other countries' refineries fail to secure crude to refine, said officials of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) involved with the proceedings.

As part of the contingency planning, the government is exploring potential imports from countries including the US, China, and several African nations, while also considering increasing the volumes from existing suppliers like Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and India.

Bangladesh imports fuel oil from a range of countries, including Iran, the UAE, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, and Qatar in the Middle East, as well as Singapore, Malaysia, and India, according to official data.

Between January 2025 and March 8 this year, Bangladesh imported about 20.69 lakh tonnes of crude oil, 77 percent of which came from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Malaysia and the UAE, according to data from the National Board of Revenue.

Saudi Arabia was the largest supplier, accounting for roughly 35 percent of the total crude oil imports, followed by the UAE (about 30 percent).

Crude oil imported by Bangladesh is refined at Eastern Refinery, where it is processed into around 13 petroleum products, including diesel, petrol, octane and jet fuel.

Between January last year and March

Bangladesh may lose

FROM PAGE 1

"Bangladesh needs to thoroughly assess the implications of the ART with a fiscal-budgetary lens and open discussions with the US Trade Representative to review the agreement," the CPD said.

The briefing was organised to recommend measures for the upcoming national budget for fiscal year 2026-27, which begins in July.

CPD warned that the agreement could have significant implications for Bangladesh's fiscal and budgetary framework and may also raise questions about the country's economic sovereignty.

According to the think tank, the deal includes provisions touching on trade relations with third countries and attempts to limit where goods can or cannot be sourced from.

Speaking at the event, CPD Distinguished Fellow Mustafizur Rahman said the US Supreme Court's decision to strike down President Donald Trump's global tariffs has opened a fresh window for discussion.

"If Bangladesh wishes, it can reassess the agreement," he said in response to a question.

Bangladesh initially faced a proposed 37 percent tariff after Trump announced reciprocal tariffs under a national emergency law on April 2 last year. The rate was later reduced to 35 percent, then to 20 percent during negotiations, and finally to 19 percent under the deal signed by the interim government three days before the February 12 general election.

The agreement drew criticism from several economists and analysts, who argued that many of its provisions favour US interests and could have long-term implications for Bangladesh.

Later, the US Supreme Court declared Trump's global tariffs illegal. Trump subsequently introduced a 15 percent universal tariff.

As a result, Bangladesh now faces an effective reciprocal tariff of 15 percent. Combined with the country's existing average tariff of 16.5 percent, the total effective tariff burden on Bangladeshi exports stands at about 31.5 percent.

According to a paper presented by CPD at the event, Bangladesh will have to grant duty-free access to around

4,500 US products immediately under the agreement, while another 2,210 product categories are expected to receive duty-free treatment over the next five to 10 years.

Using government data, the CPD said import duties on US goods generated about \$108.3 million, or roughly Tk 1,327 crore, in fiscal year 2024-25.

"If the structure of imports from the United States remains unchanged, at least this amount could be lost annually once the agreement is fully implemented," said CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun.

Beyond the direct revenue loss, she cautioned that the arrangement could also create complications under World Trade Organization rules.

Bangladesh's unilateral decision to grant duty-free access to US goods does not constitute a formal free trade agreement, which normally allows exceptions to the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) principle.

As a result, the move could be viewed as inconsistent with Bangladesh's MFN obligations at the WTO, potentially allowing other member states to challenge it before the organisation's Dispute Settlement Body, according to CPD.

The agreement may also carry broader fiscal implications linked to procurement commitments.

"If Bangladesh is required to purchase certain goods from the United States under the deal, the government may need to adjust its public procurement policies," Fahmida said.

Such commitments could increase public spending, particularly if US imports prove more expensive than alternative sources.

Mustafizur added that the growing tendency to use trade as a geopolitical tool is weakening the WTO system.

He noted that several provisions in the agreement carry financial risks and that much of its implementation would depend on the private sector.

However, he said, if the government wants to encourage private companies to import from the United States, it may have to offer subsidies.

"Otherwise, the question arises as to why they [private sector] would choose to import specifically from the United States," he said.

Govt looking at fuel source options

8 this year, Bangladesh imported about 3 lakh tonnes of petrol, 5 percent of which came from Middle Eastern countries such as Oman and Qatar.

In addition, Bangladesh imported about 39.07 lakh tonnes of diesel and 17.43 lakh tonnes of furnace oil during the period but neither were sourced from Middle Eastern countries.

The BPC had planned to import more than 120,000 tonnes of diesel from India this year, but after the Iran war, another 50,000 tonnes have been sought. In 2025, about 122,000 tonnes of diesel was imported from the neighbouring country, up 74.1 percent year-on-year.

In the last two days, about 5,000 tonnes of diesel have flown in through the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, to take the total to 10,000 tonnes so far this year.

The recent long queues at filling stations were caused by panic buying rather than any supply shortage, Amit said, adding that the demand was two to three times the normal in the last five days.

"This abnormal demand had no logical cause. It came from anxiety and panic buying."

The longer the Middle East crisis goes on, the higher the chances of a foreign exchange crisis for Bangladesh, said Amit, a first-time member of parliament from the Jessore-3 constituency.

As of March 8, gross foreign exchange reserves stood at \$29.4 billion, enough to cover at best five months' import bills, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

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Tarique to open canal excavation programme on March 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is scheduled to launch the government's nationwide canal excavation programme in Dinaipur on March 16, as part of implementing BNP's pledge in its election manifesto.

Ministers, advisers, whips and members of parliament will join separate programmes in 54 districts across the country to launch the initiative simultaneously.

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Speakers at a national seminar organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation marking International Women's Day 2026 at the Bangladesh Military Museum in Dhaka yesterday. It was held under the global theme 'Rights. Justice. Action. For All Women and Girls' and the national theme 'Break Barriers. Build Justice.'

PHOTO: COURTESY

Follow, share, comment, get scammed

Deepfakes push fake 'Family Card' offers on Facebook

TAREK HOSEN and ABIR AYON

On February 22, a video began circulating on Facebook showing Prime Minister Tarique Rahman handing over money to several members of the army. Numerous bundles of cash were seen on the table in front of them.

In the video, the AI-synthesised voice of Tarique Rahman states, "Countrymen, I am giving Family Cards and money to the army members to distribute to you. Those who wish to receive them, please follow, share, and comment."

Four days later, a reel featured a deepfake of Zaima Rahman, Tarique's daughter, saying she was visiting every village and had Tk 20,000 in cash along with the Family Cards. "Those of you who wish to receive them, please follow and share the page and provide your bKash or Nagad numbers in the comments."

A review of the comment section shows many users fell for this trap and shared their personal contact numbers.

Between February 19 and 26, The Daily Star documented 52 deepfake videos of Tarique Rahman and his family members offering Family Cards or cash rewards.

Analysis of the posts shows the fake offers are mainly aimed at increasing page engagements while also harvesting personal information, including names and addresses.

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'Elect women directly in reserved seats'

Women's Political Rights Forum demands genuine representation in parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women candidates continue to face limited access to party nominations and political decision-making spaces, the Women's Political Rights Forum said yesterday, calling for direct elections to the 50 reserved parliamentary seats for women to ensure genuine representation.

The forum also urged political parties to increase the number of female candidates and ensure a level playing field so both party-affiliated and independent women can contest elections free from harassment.

The demands were raised at a discussion titled "Women's Participation in the 13th National Election: Gains and Expectations" at Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka.

Rights activist Farida Akhter, a former adviser to the interim government, said, "There must be direct elections to the 50 reserved seats. If we do not get votes directly from the voters, there is no point in sitting in these seats."

"We do not want seats granted out of compassion or mercy," she added, noting that activists may file a lawsuit if necessary to demand direct elections.

She said the demand for direct elections to reserved seats dates back to

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WOMEN'S INHERITANCE RIGHTS

Need alternative legal routes to end discrimination

Says law minister at national seminar held by MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman yesterday called for exploring alternative legal avenues beyond traditional frameworks to eliminate deprivation and structural discrimination against women in Bangladesh's inheritance and family laws.

He also called for policy support for a modern interpretation of "heba" (gift) laws to ensure full property rights for daughters.

Speaking at a national seminar at the Bangladesh Military Museum in Dhaka marking International Women's Day 2026, the minister said pragmatic legal reforms are needed to protect women's rights rather than remaining constrained by religious sensitivities.

The event was organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) under the global theme "Rights. Justice. Action. For All Women and Girls" and the national theme "Break Barriers. Build Justice."

Referring to disparities in inheritance rights, the law minister said existing provisions can leave daughters without full entitlement to property.

"For instance, I have two daughters

and no son. Under our Sharia law, my daughters will not inherit the entirety of the assets I have earned through my hard work," he said. "We must consider what alternative legal measures can address this."

He also called for dialogue with Hindu community representatives to develop a legal framework to safeguard Hindu women's rights.

I have two daughters and no son. Under our Sharia law, my daughters will not inherit the entirety of the assets I have earned through my hard work. We must consider what alternative legal measures can address this.

MD ASADUZZAMAN, Law minister

"In principle, I believe that a Hindu Marriage Act and a Divorce Act are necessary," he said.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, said although women in Bangladesh have made progress in social and economic spheres, access to justice remains one of the country's biggest failures in addressing violence against

women and girls.

Citing findings presented at the seminar, she said the conviction rate in rape cases remains below 1 percent, while around one million cases related to violence against women remain pending.

She urged the law minister to ensure tangible improvements in women's access to justice.

Barrister Sara Hossain, honorary executive director of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), urged the government to move beyond a punishment-focused approach and adopt a victim-centred justice framework prioritising reparations, rehabilitation, and protection of the rights of the accused.

To streamline the legal process, she proposed linking family courts with social safety net programmes under the Ministry of Social Welfare.

Hossain also called for the immediate recognition of the remaining "Biranganas" as freedom fighters. Although the Supreme Court had directed their inclusion in the government gazette, several women remain excluded.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

TOFAZZAL MURDER

Arrest warrants for 22 DU students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against 22 Dhaka University students in a case over the killing of 35-year-old Tofazzal Hossain at Fazlul Haque Muslim Hall in September 2024.

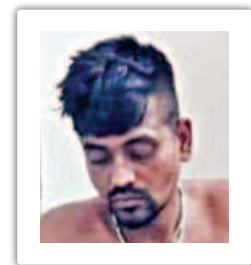
Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Jewel Rana passed the order after accepting the charge sheet in the case, said a court staffer.

The 22 accused students are Firoz Kabir, Abdus Samad, Sakib Raihan, Yeasin Ali Gain, Yamuzzaman Yam, Fazle Rabbi, Shahriar Kabir Shovon, Mehedi Hasan Imran, Ratul Hasan, Sultan Mia, Nasir Uddin, Mobasser Billah, Shishir Ahmed, Mohosin Uddin Shafi, Abdullahil Kafi, Sheikh Ramzan Ali Raky, Rashed Kamal Anik, Moniruzzaman Sohag, Abu Raihan, Redwanur Rahman Parvez, Rabbikul Riad and Ashraf Ali Munshi. All of them are absconding.

On December 17 last year, the investigation officer of the case, Md Hannanul Islam, an additional superintendent of police at the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), submitted a supplementary charge sheet before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka, naming 28 DU students.

Of them, Jalal Mia, Ahsan Ullah alias Bipul Sheikh, Al Hossain Sazzad, Mottakin Sakin

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Eid joy turns into never-ending grief

Two BAF members die in Mirpur fire, leaving families devastated

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Rakib Hasan, a member of the Bangladesh Air Force, spoke to his father Zakir Hossain over the phone on Monday morning.

Before hanging up, Zakir, a motor mechanic from Sirajdikhan in Munshiganj, made a simple request to his son – to bring a panjabi for him and a three-piece for Rakib's mother.

Within 24 hours, the father found himself waiting at the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital morgue to receive the body of his son.

Rakib died after inhaling toxic smoke during a fire at LA Plaza, a commercial building in Mirpur-2, on Monday afternoon.

Ayesha Siddika Ananya, 20, another BAF member, also died in the incident.

For Zakir, the news came as a bolt from the blue. "He called in the morning and said he was going to the market for Eid shopping," Zakir told this correspondent yesterday, holding back tears. "I told him to bring a panjabi for me and a three-piece for his mother. I was waiting for him to come home for Eid."

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Noab declares five-day Eid holiday for newspapers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) yesterday announced a five-day holiday for newspaper offices from March 19-23 on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

As a result, no newspapers will be published between March 20 and 24, according to a notice signed by Noab President AK Azad.

The decision was taken at a Noab's executive committee meeting, the notice said.

In Bangladesh, Eid-ul-Fitr will be celebrated on March 20 or March 21, depending on the sighting of the moon.

The government has declared a seven-day holiday for Eid-ul-Fitr this year. Following that, the Dhaka Reporters Unity demanded a five-day holiday for newspapers.



After waiting since early morning, throngs of low-income people rush towards a TCB truck to buy essential items at subsidised prices as soon as it arrives in the afternoon. With the prices of essentials rising and uncertainty over fuel costs, such subsidised sales offer relief to many struggling families. The photo was taken in front of the Mohanagar Project in the capital's Rampura area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Prof Pravath Chandra Biswas new DGHS DG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pravath Chandra Biswas, a professor in the Urology Department of Dhaka Medical College, has been appointed as director general of the Directorate General of Health Services. The Health Services Division issued a circular yesterday confirming it. He is one of the vice presidents of the Doctors Association of Bangladesh, a pro-BNP doctors' association.



Sellers arrange watermelons on display at Dovash Maath in Chattogram. A popular choice as a refreshing iftar meal, the fruit is being sold at wholesale prices in the port city's Firingi Bazar, ranging from Tk 30 to Tk 300 per piece depending on size and quality. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

Eid joy turns into never-ending grief

FROM PAGE 3

Instead, a phone call came at night telling him that his son had died in a fire while shopping in Mirpur. "At first I couldn't believe it," he said. "How can someone go to buy clothes for Eid and never return?"

Rakib, the elder of Zakir's two sons, joined BAF in 2020. His income was a crucial support for the family's modest household and his younger brother's education.

"Our family ran on what he earned," Zakir said. "Now I don't know how we will move forward."

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

building. Firefighters brought the blaze under control around 4:35pm.

A total of 23 people were rescued from different floors of the building. Rakib and Ananya, who were found unconscious, later died at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital on Monday night.

For Ananya's family, the tragedy has brought a similar wave of grief.

Ananya was born and raised in Saidpur of Nilphamari. The elder of two daughters of Abdul Hannan, an auto-rickshaw driver, she had grown up battling poverty.

After completing

her secondary school education, she joined BAF in March 2023, hoping to support her family and secure a better future.

"She had taken responsibility for the family," said her maternal uncle Matiur Rahman. "She also supported her younger sister's education."

On Monday, Ananya had gone to the Mirpur market for shopping when the fire broke out.

"People said she helped several of them reach the rooftop when smoke spread through the building," Matiur said.

Toward the end, she and a colleague were trapped

in the thick smoke.

Sources at the morgue said neither of the victims had visible burn marks on their bodies.

However, both died from severe smoke inhalation, with their airways badly damaged due to inhalation burns.

With their untimely demises, the anticipation of Eid has turned mournful for their families.

For Zakir Hossain, the pain remains especially difficult to grasp.

A father who had asked for a simple Eid gift must now carry home the body of the son who once held his struggling family together.

Request for Proposal (RFP)



International Labour Organization (ILO) Dhaka invites applications from interested firms/organizations for **Technical Support for Just Transition Policy Development and NDC 3.0 Implementation in Bangladesh**. The Terms of Reference (ToR) can be downloaded from the **United Nations Global Market Place (UNGM)** at <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/293348>

The deadline for submission of proposal is **Saturday, April 04, 2026**, by 04:30 PM (BST time).

Request for Proposals (RFPs)



International Labour Organization (ILO) Dhaka invites proposals from interested Organizations for the following tender:

1. **Hiring a service provider for delivering comprehensive climate-adaptive agricultural practice support through diverse range of interventions that promotes jobs, climate-resilient livelihoods for the host communities in Cox's Bazar.**

The bidding documents can be downloaded from the **UNGM website under Procurement Notices** link <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/292917>

The deadline for submission of the proposal is **Monday, March 23, 2026**, by 04:30 PM.

Invitation for Tender



The **Premier Bank PLC**, invites sealed tender (s) from reputed security printing firms for printing & supply of MICR Cheque Books (printed on CBS-1 paper) according Standard Specification of Bangladesh Bank and as per terms & conditions stated below:

Tender Name : Printing & supply of MICR Cheque Books (printed on CBS-1 paper) according Standard Specification of Bangladesh Bank.
Procurement Method : Open Tender
Eligibility of Tender : Reputed security printing firms having well experience in printing MICR Cheque Book.

Book Type & Quantity :

SL No.	Book Type	Book Quantity
1	Current Account Cheque Book-10 leaves	500 Books
2	Current Account Cheque Book-25 leaves	5,000 Books
3	Current Account Cheque Book-100 leaves	5,000 Books
4	Saving Account Cheque Book-10 leaves	15,000 Books
5	Saving Account Cheque Book-25 leaves	40,000 Books
6	Saving Account Cheque Book-100 leaves	1,500 Books
7	Payment Order Book-100 leaves	1,000 Books
Total		68,000 Books

Terms & Conditions:

1. MICR Cheque Books must be printed Standard Specification of Bangladesh Bank and The Premier Bank PLC approved design along with Front & Back cover, Re-Order slip.
2. CBS-1 (Clearing Bank Specification-1) paper to be used in cheque printing, it should be internationally certified favoring manufacturer.
3. Tender should be submitted in a sealed packed to The Premier Bank PLC, Head Office, General Services Division, Iqbal Centre (5th Floor), 42, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, Dhaka-1213, during the office hours on or before **April 15, 2026**.
4. Earnest money (refundable) equivalent to 2% of the quoted value of works in the form of Pay Order in favor of The Premier Bank PLC issued by any bank shall have to be furnished along with each tender.
5. Premier Bank reserves the right to accept, modify or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.
6. The Bank shall not bound or under any obligation to accept the lowest quotation.

The Premier Bank PLC.

General Services Division (GSD), Head Office (5th Floor), Iqbal Centre, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani Dhaka-1213. Phone: 02222274844-48, GSD Mobile No.: 01332810066, Fax: 02222274849
e-mail: info@thepremierbankplc.com, website: www.thepremierbankplc.com

the premier bank plc.com The Premier Bank PLC

The Premier Bank PLC.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
শিল্প মন্ত্রণালয়
বাংলাদেশ স্ট্যান্ডার্ডস এন্ড টেস্টিং ইনস্টিটিউশন
মান ভবন, ১১৬/ক, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮
Website: <http://www.bsti.gov.bd>

স্মারক নং-৩৬.০৫.০০০০.১০৫.০২৬.০০১.২৩ তারিখঃ ২৫ ফাল্গুন ১৪৩২ বঙ্গাব্দ
১০ মার্চ ২০২৬ খ্রিস্টাব্দ

অকোজো যানবাহন বিক্রয়ের নিলাম বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১।	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	১।	শিল্প মন্ত্রণালয়
২।	প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম	২।	বাংলাদেশ স্ট্যান্ডার্ডস এন্ড টেস্টিং ইনস্টিটিউশন, ১১৬/ক, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮।
৩।	নিলামের প্যাকেজ নং	৩।	৩৬.০৫.০০০০.১০৫.০২৬.০০১.২৩
৪।	আজানকৃত নিলামের সূত্র নং ও তারিখ	৪।	৩৬.০৫.০০০০.১০৫.০২৬.০০১.২৩; তারিখ ১২-০৩-২০২৬ খ্রি।
৫।	টেন্ডারের নাম	৫।	কিএসটিআই'র রাজস্ব বাজুটের অওতাধীন ১টি গাড়ি (ঢাকা-মেট্রো-৭-১১-০৩৮০) নিলামে বিক্রয়ের জন্য পুনরায় সংরক্ষিত মূল্য নির্ধারণ সূত্রক্রে অকোজো যোগ্যাকরণ ও নিষ্পত্তির লক্ষ্যে।
৬।	টেন্ডার ভুক্তমূল্য/দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য	৬।	৫০০.০০ (পাঁচশত) টাকা মাত্র।
৭।	টেন্ডার সিডিউল/টার্মস অফ ম্যানি পরিমাপ	৭।	১০,০০০.০০ (দশ হাজার) টাকা মাত্র ("কিএসটিআই, ঢাকা" এর অনুসূচী)।
৮।	দরপত্র সিডিউল/টেন্ডার ভুক্তমূল্য বিক্রয়কারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম ও ঠিকানা	৮।	গরান স্টপ সার্ভিস সেন্টার, বাংলাদেশ স্ট্যান্ডার্ডস এন্ড টেস্টিং ইনস্টিটিউশন, মান ভবন, ১১৬/ক, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮।
৯।	দরপত্র গ্রহণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম ও ঠিকানা	৯।	গরান স্টপ সার্ভিস সেন্টার, বাংলাদেশ স্ট্যান্ডার্ডস এন্ড টেস্টিং ইনস্টিটিউশন, মান ভবন, ১১৬/ক, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৮।
১০।	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১০।	৬-০৪-২০২৬ তারিখ অফিস সন্ধ্যাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত।
১১।	দরপত্র জমাদানের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১১।	সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের তারিখ হতে ০৭-০৪-২০২৬ তারিখ বেলা ১১:২৫ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১২।	দরপত্র ফোলার তারিখ ও সময়	১২।	০৭-০৪-২০২৬ তারিখ বেলা ১১:৩০ ঘটিকা।
১৩।	দরপত্র জমাদানের স্থান	১৩।	যামের উপর টেন্ডারের নাম পিপিএককনসাল্টার্স সীলদ্বারাভুক্ত করে দরপত্র বাংলাদেশ স্ট্যান্ডার্ডস এন্ড টেস্টিং ইনস্টিটিউশন, ঢাকা এর গরান স্টপ সার্ভিস সেন্টারে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার ব্যাল্লু দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে।
১৪।	বিশেষ নির্দেশনা	১।	প্রতিদিন সকাল ১০-০০ ঘটিকা হতে দুপুর ১৫-০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত নিরাপত্তা কর্মকর্তার সাথে যোগাযোগ করে সরেজমিনে গাড়ি দেখা যাবে। গাড়ির কাগজপত্র যা আছে তার অতিরিক্ত কোনো কাগজপত্র দাবী করা যাবে না। পরবর্তীতে এ ব্যাপারে কোন আপত্তি গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না। গাড়িটি দেখানো যে অবস্থায় আছে সে অবস্থাতেই গ্রহণ করতে হবে। ২। নিলামের সাথে সম্পর্কিত অন্যান্য তথ্যাবির বিস্তারিত বিবরণ ও শর্তাবলী দরপত্রে উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে। ৩। কিএসটিআই কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীত কোন ব্যক্তিকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন এবং সর্বোচ্চ দরপত্র গ্রহণে বাধ্য নহে। সর্ববিস্তার কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্ত চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।

(মোঃ মুহাম্মদ আরোমেদ)
উপপরিচালক (প্রশাসন-২)

GD-542

Tarique to open canal

FROM PAGE 3

According to the BNP manifesto, by reintroducing the canal excavation programme initiated by late president Ziaur Rahman during his tenure, around 20,000 kilometres of rivers and canals will be excavated and restored across the country.

Through this initiative, 520 disappeared rivers, thousands of canals, and their natural water flows will be restored, and irrigation efficiency will be improved, it added.

Dr AKM Shahabuddin, secretary to the water resources ministry, said, "For now, the canal excavation programme is being launched in 54 districts through a joint initiative of four ministries. We hope work in the remaining 10 districts will begin within April and May."

The initiative is being implemented jointly by the water resources; local government, rural development and cooperatives, disaster management and relief; and agriculture ministries.

Officials said district administrations and the agencies assigned for the excavation work will coordinate all activities related to the inauguration and subsequent implementation of the programme.

In a letter sent to ministers and state ministers, the Ministry of Water Resources said, "This canal excavation programme across the country will play a positive role in agricultural and irrigation activities and will help increase agricultural production."

"It will also increase the amount of surface water, which will reduce the demand for groundwater. As a result, drought will decrease on one hand, and floods and waterlogging will also be reduced on the other," the letter added.

Officials said restoring canals that have gradually silted up or been encroached upon over

the years is expected to improve water flow in many rural areas and strengthen the country's irrigation network, which remains crucial for agricultural productivity.

Preparations for the launch have already been completed in many districts where local authorities have identified canals for excavation or re-excavation, they added.

Meanwhile, the relevant ministries yesterday briefed the PM on the programme's latest progress at the Secretariat ahead of its formal inauguration.

After the meeting, State Minister for LGRD Mir Shahe Alam said the PM stressed that the programme should benefit ordinary people and directed that excavation work employ more labourers instead of relying mainly on machines.

He added that at least 60-70 percent of the excavation work should be carried out manually while the rest can be done using machines where necessary.

Shahe Alam also said the PM instructed the ministers and secretaries concerned to involve voluntary organisations and students from high schools and colleges in such programmes wherever possible.

"The PM has been working tirelessly to make the major pledges of the election manifesto visible. He is committed to making several promises visible before the upcoming Eid," said another state minister, wishing to be unnamed.

Officials said the canal excavation programme is expected to complement other agricultural initiatives recently launched by the government, including efforts to expand irrigation access and support farmers.

To oversee and supervise implementation of the nationwide programme, the government earlier formed an eight-member coordination cell, chaired by PM's adviser Mirza Abbas Uddin Ahmed.

BANGLADESH SHISHU HOSPITAL AND INSTITUTE

Sher-e-Bangla Nagar

Dhaka 1207

Corrigendum

In this advertisement "Invitation for Enlistment (Goods/Works)" published in this newspaper on March 5, 2026 in Business page 2. In this advertisement in Serial No. 13 in the left column should be read as Category Wise Enlistment Fee (Tk) instead of Category wise renewal Fee (Tk) and in Serial No. 14 in same column should be read as Category Wise Renewal Fee (Tk) instead of Category wise enlistment fee (Tk) which has been inadvertently printed. The printing error is deeply regretted.

GD-492

STATUTORY NOTICE

THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
Company Matter No. 44/2026

An application under section 81(2), 85(3) read section 396 of the Companies Act 1994
AND:
saddamul Islam -----Petitioner
-VERSUS-
Eva Sweater Limited and another -----Respondents
Notice is hereby given that upon application filed by the petitioner under section 81(2) and 85(3) read with section 396 of the companies Act, 1994 for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting (AGM) and for exoneration from penalty, if any and the Company Bench of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh presided over by **Eva Sweater Limited**, was pleased to admit the same on **Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque** 01.03.2026 and the Hon'ble Court has directed the petitioner to publish notices in two national newspapers one in Bengali and another in English within 3 (three) weeks and the petitioner also directed for filing of affidavit in compliance within 05 (Five) week there after, i.e. on or before If you are interested to oppose the said application you may do so by an advocate or in person on the date so fixed.

Amin Sarker, Advocate

Supreme Court of Bangladesh 83/B, New Circular Road, Mouchak Tower, Room #1004, 9th Floor, Dhaka. Mobile: 01711-139109

The First Private University with Permanent Government Charter

Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology

141-142, Love Road, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208

Phone: PABX 8870422 (Extn: 103 & 107); Website: www.aust.edu

FACULTY SEARCH

Applications are invited for the teaching posts in the following Departments/School:

1. Civil Engineering, 2. Computer Science and Engineering, 3. Electrical and Electronic Engineering, 4. Mechanical and Production Engineering (IPE & ME Discipline), 5. Textile Engineering, 6. Arts and Sciences and 7. School of Business.

Details can be obtained from the website (www.aust.edu).

All applicants including **Professor and Associate Professor** are requested to fill up the online form. Applicants for the position of **Lecturer (Grade-II)** to **Assistant Professor** are requested to download the online generated CV and send it to recr@aut.edu. Please also send the hard copy of the online generated CV to the Registrar along with a full resume, copies of published articles/papers, two recent passport-size colored photographs and attested copies of all certificates, mark sheets/ transcripts, testimonials, etc. For the post of **Professor and Associate Professor**, applicants are requested to submit 10 (ten) sets hard copies of their applications in the prescribed Application Form alongwith all certificates, mark sheets/ transcripts, testimonials, etc.

Last date of application is 02 April 2026.

Only shortlisted candidates will be called for an interview.

INNOVATION :: CREATION :: LEADERSHIP

বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড
Bangladesh Power Development Board

Directorate of Purchase
BPDB, Biddut Bhaban, (12th floor)
1 No. Abdul Goni Road, Dhaka,
www.bpdb.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice

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

SL No	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Reference No.	Description of Goods/Works	Last Selling Date and time	Closing Date and time	Opening Date and time
1.	1243099	GR-37 FY 25-26	27.11.0000.304.2 6.419.26 dated:09/03/2026	Procurement of Insulation for Gas Turbine & Steam Turbine of Bibiyana South 400 MW CCPP,BPDB, Habiganj, Bangladesh	05-04-2026 13:00	05-04-2026 14:00	05-04-2026 14:00

This is online Tender (Tender ID: 1243099), Where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered Band Branches.

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

For more details please contract to the PE's Support Desk (01755575443).

বিস্ময়/জন-৮৫৩(২)/১০/০৩/২৬
(Md. Shahedul Azim)
ID No. I-01460
Director
Directorate of Purchase
BPDB, Dhaka
E-mail: dir.purchase@bpdb.gov.bd
GD-552

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD

Road Division, Jhenaidah.

☎ 0247747110

e-GP Tender Notice

Reference No. 292 Date. 09/03/2026

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

Tender ID No	Package No	Name Of Work	Publishing Date	Last Date & Time of Selling	Opening Date and Time
1242400	e-GP-27/Works-24/PMP-Major-4/JHERD/2025-26	Widening & Strengthening Existing Pavement from Ch:10+000m (Kotchandpur) to Ch:20+000 m (Maheshpur) Total =10000.00 m of Gopalpur-Talsar Bazar-Kotchandpur-Azampur-Maheshpur Road (Z-7024) under (PMP Work Road-Major) Road Division, Jhenaidah during the year 2025-2026.	08-Mar-2026 14:30	05-Apr-2026 17:00	06-Apr-2026 12:30

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The Fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP system Portal have to be deposited online through any Member of Schedule Bank for e-GP.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system Portal and from e-GP help desk ([http://www.helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

(Md. Ahasan-ul-Kabir)
ID: 700019
Assistant Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Jhenaidah
(Md. Hafizur Rahaman)
ID: 602342
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Jhenaidah
GD-539

ISRAELI STRIKES
700,000
displaced, 84
children killed
in Lebanon

REUTERS, Geneva

The humanitarian crisis in Lebanon has deepened amid the wider Middle East war, with 84 children killed and more than 667,000 people displaced, two UN agencies said yesterday, as lives are upended on a massive scale across the country.

Lebanon was dragged into the US-Israeli attacks on Iran this month when Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah launched rockets and drones into Israel, which has responded with heavy bombardment across the country.

A total of 486 people have been killed in the war so far and 1,313 injured, of which 259 are children,



according to the World Health Organization.

"This is only seven-days conflict, and we are already seeing that almost 100 children that have lost their lives," said Abdinasir Abubakar, WHO representative in Lebanon.

"One reason why we have a high number of children is that most of the attacks that we see actually is, it's urban centres, like in Beirut," he said, adding that Israel's airstrikes, which it says target Hezbollah infrastructure, are putting civilian lives at risk.

The current rate of displacement in Lebanon is outpacing levels seen during the 2023-24 war between Hezbollah and Israel, the UN Refugee Agency said yesterday. During that conflict, 886,000 people were internally displaced in Lebanon, while tens of thousands of Israelis were evacuated from northern towns near the Lebanese border.

Lebanon's sharp rise in displacement this week stems from large-scale evacuation orders issued by the Israeli army for southern Lebanon and Beirut's densely populated southern suburbs.

STRUGGLE TO OUTLAST US, ISRAEL

Iran bets on endurance, energy disruption

REUTERS, Dubai

Iran is wagering it can outlast the United States and Israel—not militarily, but by grinding the war into a brutal contest of endurance. Its strategy is stark: Unleash drones and missiles, cut vital energy routes and jolt global markets hard enough to force Washington to blink first.

Despite the shock of the US-Israeli strikes and the loss of key figures, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)—long the ultimate guardian of the Islamic Republic—is firmly in control, directing the battlefield, executing pre-planned contingencies and dictating strategy and targets in the war.

The IRGC also played the decisive role in elevating Mojtaba Khamenei as supreme leader after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in the opening US-Israeli strikes.

"For them, they are waging an existential fight. This is an all-out war," said Fawaz Gerges of the London School of Economics. "They believe their very survival is at stake. They're willing to bring the temple down on everyone's heads." Alex Vatanka, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute and expert on Iranian politics, added: "They're like a bleeding animal—wounded, but therefore more dangerous than ever."

That all-out war mindset is behind Iran's escalating strikes across the Gulf, targeting energy hubs from Qatar to Saudi Arabia to maximise economic disruption in a



calculated attempt to drive up costs for its neighbours, Europe and the United States and test Washington's political will.

US President Donald Trump told Republican lawmakers on Monday the war would continue until Iran is "totally and decisively defeated" but predicted it would be over soon.

He added that once the United States is done with the military operation against Iran, Tehran will not have any weapons against the United States, Israel and US allies for a long time.

Iranian insiders say this escalation was anticipated long before the war began 11 days ago. Iranian planners assumed confrontation with Washington and Israel was inevitable, and prepared a layered strategy coordinated across the Guards' sprawling military networks and proxy forces.

Now, with little left to lose, Iran is executing that plan and turning the conflict into a grinding war of attrition aimed at exhausting its adversaries politically and economically.

The consequences are already visible at home. Mojtaba's selection as supreme leader, insiders say, proves Guards' dominance as kingmakers. They say the balance of power has shifted. The supreme leader holds the title, but the future of the Islamic Republic, and the authority of the clerical establishment itself, now depends on whether the Guards can weather storm unleashed by US Israeli campaign.

But a critical unknown in the war, says Mohannad Hage Ali, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center, is how long the Guards can sustain its missile campaign, the backbone of its strategy against its adversaries.

US officials say a large share of Iran's arsenal has already been destroyed, but regional sources say Tehran may still retain more than half its pre-war stockpile. If that estimate holds, Iran could keep launching missiles for several more weeks, a timeframe that could prove significant for Washington as economic pressure mounts at home and abroad.

Isfahan holds Iran's near bomb-grade uranium: IAEA

REUTERS, Paris

Almost half of Iran's uranium enriched to up to 60 percent purity, a short step from weapons-grade, was stored in a tunnel complex at Isfahan and is probably still there, UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi said on Monday.

The tunnel complex is the only target that appears not to have been badly damaged in attacks last June by Israel and the US on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Diplomats have long said Isfahan has been used to store 60 percent uranium, which the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed in a report to member states last month, without saying how much was there.

The IAEA estimates that when Israel launched its first attacks in June, Iran had 440.9 kg of 60 percent uranium. If enriched further, that would provide the explosive needed for 10 nuclear weapons, according to an IAEA yardstick.

"What we believe is that Isfahan had until our last inspection a bit more than 200 kg, maybe a little bit more than that, of 60 percent uranium," IAEA chief Rafael Grossi told reporters in Paris.

He said the stock was "mainly" at Isfahan, and some held elsewhere may have been destroyed.

"The widespread assumption is that the material is still there. So we haven't seen - and not only us, I think in general all those observing the facility through satellite imagery and other means to see what's going on there - movement indicating that the material could have been transferred," Grossi said.

Iran has not informed the IAEA of the status or whereabouts of its highly enriched uranium since the June attacks, nor has it let IAEA inspectors return to its bombed facilities.

Iran's nuclear programme is one reason Israel and the US have given for their current attacks on Iran, arguing that it was getting too close to being able to produce a bomb, despite Trump saying in June that US strikes had obliterated the programme. The IAEA has no credible indication of a coordinated nuclear weapons programme.



Thailand, Vietnam push remote work to save energy

India, Pakistan unveil austerity plan

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand and Vietnam yesterday urged public employees to work from home and adopt other energy-saving measures, after Israeli and US strikes on Iran disrupted oil supplies and sent fuel prices soaring.

Thai authorities said government workers should shift to remote work where possible and asked that government offices set their air conditioners to 26C to conserve energy. "The government wants all sectors to use resources wisely and effectively," it said in a statement. It also urged officials to avoid overseas trips.

Meanwhile, India yesterday

ordered tighter controls over natural and cooking gas following import disruptions, with restaurants warning it could spark widespread closures.

The Ministry of Petroleum ordered that LNG supplies be prioritised to supply households, transport sectors and production of LPG. To meet the gap, gas supplied to petrochemical facilities and power plants would either be fully or partially curtailed.

But other sectors, including fertiliser plants and tea industries, would receive 70 to 80 percent of consumption needs, "subject to operational availability".

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday evening

announced a host of austerity measures to conserve fuel in view of the global fuel crisis.

All higher educational institutions will hold online classes from March 16 to 31, while all schools will have a two-week break during the same period.

He said that for the next two months, the fuel allowance for official vehicles would be cut by 50 percent, but ambulances and public buses would be exempt. He further said that the salary of parliamentarians would be cut by 25 percent. Moreover, two days' salary of BS-20 government officials, who earn more than Rs300,000, would be used for the people.

Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of The Executive Engineer, RHD
Chattogram South Road Division, Dohazari, Chattogram.
e-mail: eedoh@rhd.gov.bd

Memo No. 35.01.1582.414.36.01.20.26-558
Date: 10-03-2026

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify for all concerns that e-Tenders is invited and published on 10 March, 2026 in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procurement of works for the following Tenders. Interested persons/firms can see details by visiting the web site www.eprocure.gov.bd.

Sl.	Tender ID	Tender Reference No.	Name of Work	Date & Time
01	1243414	e-GP/EE/CSRD/OTM/18/2025-2026	Supplying of 1st Class Bricks, Stone Chips, Local Sand, for use in Road Maintenance work at different Roads of RHD Dohazari Stackyard under Chattogram South Road Division during the year 2025-2026.	Last Selling: 31-Mar-2026 15:00 Closing: 01-Apr-2026 15:00

(Pintu Chakma)
ID No. 602219
Executive Engineer, RHD
Chattogram South Road Division
Dohazari, Chattogram.

GD-553

“অতিরিক্ত আলোকসজ্জা পরিহার করি
বিদ্যুতের অপচয় রোধ করি”
Invitation for Tender (Local)
Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Memo No: 27.12.0000.230.17.001.23.463
Date: 08/03/2026.

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for Procurement of Electrical Line Construction Materials under "Modernization and Capacity Enhancement of BREB Network (Barisal Divisions) (1st Revised)" project. Tender submission deadlines are mentioned in below table:

Sl No	Tender Package No.	Lot No.	Description	Tender ID No.	Publishing Date & Time	Closing Date & Time
01	02	03	04	05	06	07
01	MCEP/BREB/BD-SD-G-9	Lot-1	Procurement of Sectionalizing Devices (Fuse Cutout & Fuse Barrel)	1128521	11-03-2026 15:00 P.M.	16-04-2026 11:00 A.M.
		Lot-2	Procurement of Sectionalizing Devices (Lightning Arrester)	1147341	11-03-2026 15:00 P.M.	16-04-2026 11:30 A.M.

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no off line/ hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Opening Date & Time is same as Closing Date & Time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any e-GP registered Banks' branches up to 15-04-2026 at 15.00 PM (Tender ID No. 1128521 & 1147341) Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP helpdesk (e-mail: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS

Name of official Inviting Tender	Md. Helalur Rahman Bhuiyan
Address of official Inviting Tender	Training Academy Building, 2 nd Floor, Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board, Nikunja-2, Khilkhet, Dhaka-1229.

The Purchaser reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender documents.

বাংলাদেশ পল্লী বিদ্যুতায়ন বোর্ড
Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board

বাণবিবো/জন (২৬০৩-১৩৯)/২০২৫-২০২৬

(Md. Helalur Rahman Bhuiyan)
Project Director,
Modernization and Capacity Enhancement of
BREB Network (Barisal Division)
(1st Revised)" Project.
Training Academy Building, 2nd Floor,
Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board,
Nikunja-2, Khilkhet Dhaka-1229, Bangladesh,
Phone: 8900-139.
E-mail: pdmcepbdrb@gmail.com

GD-549

Institute of Modern Languages
University of Dhaka
Appointment Notice

UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA: Applications in prescribed form, obtainable on working days at the office of the Registrar, University of Dhaka, are invited from Bangladeshi nationals for the following post.

Assistant Professor (Permanent post) in German Language: 1

National Pay Scale 2015: Tk. 35,500-67,010/- plus allowances as admissible under the University rules.

Minimum Qualifications: Candidates must have a first class/ a minimum CGPA 3.50 out of 4.00 in Master degree in German Language/Literature and a Bachelor degree in any discipline. Candidates must have a first division/a minimum GPA 4.25 out of 5.00 both in SSC and HSC examinations. Requirements for either the SSC or HSC examinations may be relaxed for the candidates who have obtained the first position/the highest CGPA in both Bachelor and Master degrees.

Candidates must have at least 03 (three) years of teaching experience at a recognized university or at least 02 (two) years of post doctoral research or at least 06 (six) years research experience as a research/scientific officer or an equivalent position in a reputed research organization. Candidates with a Ph.D. should have at least 01(one) year of teaching experience at a recognized university. Applicants must have at least 03 (three) research publications in the indexed/quality journal with a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) double blind peer review policy. Candidates already in service must apply through the proper channel. Relevant notes and conditions apply. (For details, see the Dhaka University Website)

Eight copies of application together with attested copies of certificates, testimonials and mark sheets along with a Pay Order/Bank Draft of the value of Tk. 750/- (seven hundred fifty) (non-refundable) payable to the Registrar, University of Dhaka should be submitted to the Director, Institute of Modern Languages, University of Dhaka on or before 16 April, 2026. Candidates already in service must apply through proper channel.

Director (Acting)

GD-551

End this meaningless war without delay

Escalation in US-Israel war on Iran deeply alarming

It is extremely distressing to see the escalation in the war of choice being waged by the United States and Israel against Iran as it engulfs the entire Middle East, threatening not only the region but also the global economy. The shifting objectives of the US-Israel war—ranging from the so-called denuclearisation of Iran to regime change and democratisation—have already caused widespread disruption. The consequences are being felt from farming fields and factory floors to transportation networks, affecting people across the globe.

Like the ambiguity surrounding the war's objectives and the likely timeframe for ending the US-Israeli campaign remains unclear. Comments by Donald Trump about the success of US operations have sent mixed signals. While his remarks to the US network CBS—that he believed the war “is very complete”—briefly calmed markets, within hours he appeared to walk back that statement, saying: “We could go further. And we're going to go further.” It remains uncertain whether he would accept anything short of what he called Iran's “unconditional surrender” only days earlier.

Conversely, ruling out a quick end to the conflict, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said his country was prepared to continue missile attacks for as long as necessary and that talks with the US were no longer on the agenda. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps also warned that it would not allow “one litre of oil” to be shipped from the Middle East if US-Israeli attacks continued.

Beyond the ongoing blockade of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, which carries more than one-fifth of the world's energy supply, the war could expand further through continued Iranian attacks on US military assets in Gulf countries. Several producers have already reduced or partially shut down their wells. Experts warn that even if the war ended immediately, restoring oil and gas production to pre-war levels would take weeks, if not months.

This oil shock has the potential to wreak havoc in countries like Bangladesh. Some economists have likened its possible impact more to the aftermath of an earthquake than a storm surge. Farmers are already struggling to secure fuel for irrigation, without which the country's main staple crop could suffer. Universities have been closed in a bid to conserve power. Exporters are scrambling to find cargo flights to keep supply schedules on track, often at higher costs. Meanwhile, a potential decline in remittance inflows from the Gulf is unnerving policymakers already grappling with weak foreign exchange reserves. The deaths of four Bangladeshis caught in the conflict also highlight the grave danger faced by millions of expatriate workers from other countries living in the Gulf, through no fault of their own.

Once again, we see that while no one truly emerges victorious from war, millions of innocent people bear its harshest pain and endless suffering. It is, therefore, imperative for world leaders to act urgently to halt further fighting. Any escalatory move by any party in the name of securing commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz should be addressed through the United Nations rather than through the unilateral will of any superpower. The world can no longer afford to absorb the cost of this meaningless war.

NHRC ordinance must pass promptly

Any changes, if necessary, can be made later

We ardently support the recent call from civil society to pass the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Ordinance, 2025 in its current form. The ordinance, along with 132 others issued by the interim government, is due to be placed before the 13th parliament at its very first session tomorrow. The ordinance needs immediate approval so that the recently reconstituted commission can get legal validity.

Per constitutional requirement, ordinances issued during the interim period have a 30-day window for approval once they are placed before parliament. If the NHRC ordinance is subjected to further review now, the process will risk the loss of the developments made under the new law. The country was without its primary national rights watchdog for 15 months after the previous commission resigned in the aftermath of the Awami League government's ouster. Despite repeated calls for urgent action, it took the interim government more than 10 months to issue the new ordinance, and the new NHRC was appointed per this law in February this year, just before the election. In a country where human rights are regularly infringed in varying degrees, we cannot afford to have another spell of a non-functional NHRC.

The new ordinance, designed to replace the NHRC Act, 2009, aims to empower the state body with a broader mandate, plugging loopholes that prevented the commission from becoming a proper defender of human rights. Under this law, the NHRC will have full financial autonomy and independence. It also aims to align the commission's mandate with international human rights instruments ratified by Bangladesh, as well as those recognised by customary international human rights law consistent with the country's laws. These are essential factors for a strong, effective commission that will protect and uphold people's fundamental rights.

The past human rights commissions were often ineffective in addressing the gross violations of human rights in the country: suppression of free speech and dissent, extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary and prolonged detention, custodial torture, and attacks on minority communities. Political and bureaucratic influence weakened the state body. If the government is to realise its electoral pledge to restore democracy and justice for all, ensuring a strong, fully functional NHRC is a crucial first step. For that, approving the current NHRC ordinance in the parliament and its proper implementation are essential.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Japan struck by earthquake, tsunami

On this day in 2011, a 9.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the northeastern coast of Honshu, Japan, causing widespread damage in the country and triggering a devastating tsunami that instigated a major nuclear accident.

Jungle Salimpur and a warning for strategic land management



Ahamedul Karim Chowdhury is adjunct faculty at Bangladesh Maritime University and former head of Kamalapur inland container depot and Pangaon inland container terminal under the Chittagong Port Authority.

AHAMEDUL KARIM CHOWDHURY

The massive joint-forces operation launched this week in Jungle Salimpur, Chattogram, did more than expose a criminal stronghold; it revealed a deeper policy problem showing how strategic land around our most important port can gradually fall outside effective governance. For years, reports described this area as a place where illegal land transactions, informal authority structures, and criminal networks operated with limited state oversight. While the immediate concern now is law enforcement, the broader challenge of protecting strategic land around major logistics and industrial hubs is also something that cannot be ignored.

The scale of the problem at Jungle Salimpur became clearer when around 4,000 personnel from the army, Rab, police, and BGB were deployed to dismantle criminal hideouts and re-establish state control there. This is particularly significant because of where it occurred. Chattogram is Bangladesh's principal maritime gateway, handling over 90 percent of the country's international seaborne trade through the port there. When governance problems emerge near such a critical economic hub, the implications extend far beyond local administration.

This illustrates what may befall even strategically important land when monitoring and planning fail to keep pace with urban expansion. Over several decades, weak oversight of government-owned land, combined with rapid population growth, appears to have allowed informal settlements and illegal land transactions to spread across the area. The scale of the settlement itself is striking. Jungle Salimpur, reportedly, covers nearly 3,100 acres of government-owned hills, where tens of thousands of residents live in largely unregulated housing clusters.

In many rapidly growing cities, informal settlements initially emerge because low-income households cannot find affordable housing within the formal urban system. But when land ownership remains unclear and

institutional oversight is weak, informal brokers and organised groups often begin to control land transactions. Over time, a shadow land market develops outside the legal framework. Such dynamics are not unique to Bangladesh.

According to UN-Habitat, rapid urbanisation frequently produces informal settlements when planning systems fail to expand alongside population growth. The difference lies in how quickly authorities respond. When informal occupation is detected early, governments can intervene through planning measures or relocation strategies. But when settlements expand for decades without



PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

Members of the army in armoured personnel carriers patrol the Jungle Salimpur area of Sitakunda in Chattogram, on March 9, 2026.

effective oversight, reversing the situation becomes extremely difficult and expensive.

For a logistics-driven economy like Bangladesh, these risks are particularly serious. Industrial growth depends on predictable land availability, clear property rights, and stable governance. Investors and infrastructure planners need confidence that land designated for industrial zones, logistics facilities, or transport corridors will remain available for those purposes.

But pressure on our industrial land

is already increasing. As manufacturing expands and logistics networks become more complex, demand for properly serviced industrial zones continues to rise. The Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) is developing multiple economic zones across the country to support export-oriented industrial expansion. Meanwhile, ports require surrounding space for container yards, warehouses, inland depots, and transport connectivity. Highways and rail corridors also need protected land for future expansion. When large areas of government land near key economic centres gradually fall into informal occupation, reclaiming them later becomes extremely costly.

Chattogram's future development makes the issue even more important. The city is expected to play a central role in Bangladesh's next phase of trade and industrial growth. Planned infrastructure such as the Bay Terminal project, expected to significantly expand port capacity and allow larger vessels to berth, is intended to transform cargo handling and logistics efficiency in the



PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

Members of the army in armoured personnel carriers patrol the Jungle Salimpur area of Sitakunda in Chattogram, on March 9, 2026.

region. In such a context, instability in strategically located areas can create broader planning concerns.

Logistics infrastructure depends heavily on reliability and security. Warehousing zones, freight corridors, and port access routes must operate within a stable governance environment. When nearby areas fall under informal control or criminal influence, the risks extend beyond policing challenges and begin to affect investor confidence.

The geographic setting of Jungle

Will disability rights be finally delivered?



Ayon Debnath is campaign adviser at Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind-Sightsavers.

AYON DEBNATH

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Health Equity Report 2023, some 16 percent of the global population experiences a disability. As per this calculation, the number of Bangladeshis living with disabilities should be around 2.7 crore, which is around 15 percent of the total population of the country and is almost the same as Australia's total population.

Given Bangladesh's recent political transition, it is a critical moment to place the rights, inclusion, and dignity of this significant portion of our population at the centre of the country's reform and development agenda. BNP's election manifesto—specifically pledging to advance disability rights and the existing legislation about disability—signals hope.

Bangladesh ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2007 as one of the first countries in the world and enacted the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities (RPPD) Act in 2013. Implementation mechanisms, including a National Action Plan, were later introduced in 2018. However, due to the lack of a sound implementation strategy, most of the country's disability-inclusive initiatives remain trapped in charity models.

BNP's manifesto states that the current disability laws and the National Policy on Disability (1995) will be updated to ensure effective implementation of rights-related laws.

This is indeed a positive development. However, Bangladesh has already enacted a comprehensive RPPD Act in 2013 and ratified the UN CRPD, and both uphold the rights of people with all types of disabilities. So, BNP does not necessarily need to update the 1995 national policy for a rights-based implementation; it should first prioritise the effective implementation of the National Action Plan 2018 under the RPPD Act. This work can be done by activating the central and local disability committees and establishing inter-ministerial coordination.

BNP's manifesto also pledges disability-friendly citizen services, including accessible travel infrastructure. It is easier said than done, especially as most of the existing infrastructure in the country was not planned to be inclusive. In terms of public transport, the metro rail is the only mode of transportation that accommodates people with disabilities. So, the government must build infrastructure following the global accessibility guidelines. Similarly, all newly procured public transport must meet the universal accessibility standards.

What BNP should rather focus on is strengthening the Jatiyo Protibondhi Unnayan Foundation (JPUF), as it is already a specialised agency for persons with disabilities and functions as a foundation under the Ministry of Social Welfare, where more persons with

disabilities can be recruited. Without ensuring that persons with disabilities are making decisions about their own future, positive changes will be difficult to bring about.

As prominent disability rights activist and author James Charlton famously wrote in his book “Nothing about us without us”, lived experiences and a deep understanding of people

As prominent disability rights activist and author James Charlton famously wrote in his book ‘Nothing about us without us’, lived experiences and a deep understanding of people with disabilities are a must-have to remove the entrenched social barriers that provide little space for disabled people to participate, especially in the decision-making domain.

with disabilities are a must-have to remove the entrenched social barriers that provide little space for disabled people to participate, especially in the decision-making domain. The government should also prioritise persons with disabilities as recipients of the proposed family cards, as many of them live in deeper economic vulnerability compared to other marginalised groups.

There are a few representational factors that BNP would do well to respond to. For example, BNP's manifesto uses the term “people with special needs,” which is considered inappropriate under both the UN's

Salimpur adds another layer of sensitivity. The area lies within a belt surrounded by important national institutions, including Chattogram Cantonment, Faujdarhat Cadet College, and the Bangladesh Military Academy. From a planning perspective, land located near such key state institutions, transport corridors, and economic infrastructure should receive stronger monitoring and governance than ordinary urban land or areas.

At the same time, any long-term response must recognise the complex social realities of informal settlements. Not every resident in such areas is involved in illegal activities. Many families settle there simply because affordable housing options are limited. According to the World Bank, housing shortages and rural-to-urban migration are major drivers of informal settlement growth in Bangladesh. A sustainable solution therefore requires distinguishing between organised criminal actors, illegal land brokers, and vulnerable residents who may require alternative housing arrangements. Addressing only the security dimension without tackling underlying housing pressures is unlikely to produce lasting results.

So the broader policy lesson here is clear: protecting strategic land around major logistics hubs must become a national priority. Government land near ports, highways, and industrial corridors should be continuously monitored through digital land records, satellite mapping, and coordinated institutional oversight. Modern land administration increasingly relies on geospatial mapping and digital land information systems to detect illegal occupation early, and Bangladesh should adopt or strengthen such approaches.

Urban planning must also evolve alongside economic growth. As Bangladesh expands its manufacturing base and logistics infrastructure, planning authorities must anticipate where industrial zones, transport corridors, and urban housing can expand in a balanced and sustainable manner.

To sum up, the Jungle Salimpur development should be viewed not only as a law-enforcement episode but also as a policy warning. For a country whose economic future depends heavily on logistics efficiency and export growth, protecting strategic land near its principal port city must be treated as part of its long-term economic strategy.

CRPD and Bangladesh's RPPD Act 2013. The phrase “special needs” is misleading because it suggests that only persons with disabilities require additional or unique support. However, in reality, the fundamental needs of persons with disabilities are no different from those of persons without disabilities. Like everyone else, they require food, oxygen, education, healthcare, work opportunities, and a chance to participate in society to live with dignity.

Disability, therefore, is not solely an attribute of an individual; it emerges through interaction with societal barriers. It is often the state or society that creates conditions in which disability is experienced. For example, if a voter with a disability cannot cast their ballot because polling centres are inaccessible or election procedures are not adapted, the problem lies not with the individual but with the system that has failed to ensure accessibility. Yet, when exclusion occurs, we often focus solely on a person's impairment instead of recognising the structural obstacles that prevent inclusion. This misplaced focus obscures the real issue: the need to transform institutions, environments, and attitudes so that everyone can participate equally.

To conclude, it is worth recalling the concept of the “surplus population,” described by political economist James O'Connor. Historically, persons with disabilities in Bangladesh have often been treated as part of this “surplus population”—individuals perceived as economically unproductive and therefore positioned primarily as recipients of charity rather than as equal participants in economic and social life. However, if the commitments outlined in the BNP manifesto are translated into effective policy and practice, this cycle could very well begin to change.

Dr Susan Vize
is head of office and UNESCO Representative to Bangladesh.

Asif Bin Ali
is doctoral fellow in communication at Georgia State University, USA.

The 2026 election in Bangladesh was the first big political test after the July uprising, and it reminded us of something very basic: elections are not decided only inside polling booths. They are also decided in the information environment that surrounds voters in the weeks and months before they cast their ballots.

Bangladesh now has more information than at any time in its history. Many people use smartphones. News websites and YouTube channels are multiplying. Social media has become the main gateway to news for large parts of the population. This has created an abundance of information, but abundance does not automatically produce trust. Instead, we are living in what scholars call an “information disorder” where professional journalism, partisan propaganda, coordinated disinformation, and rumours flow through the same channels and fight for the same attention, often crowding out real information.

The February election made this disorder visible in a very concrete way. In the nights before polling day, fact-checking groups like Dismislab, Rumor Scanner and FactWatch ran live debunking operations and flagged dozens of false claims circulating on Facebook and Telegram, from fabricated ballot-stuffing videos to forged statements about lockdowns and polling centre closures. The Daily Star logged 24 pieces of election-related disinformation in one night and later documented 100 separate items on polls day, including photocards mimicking news agencies, edited videos, and several deepfakes.

So, the first lesson here is straightforward: access is not the problem anymore. The real question is the integrity of the information that people actually receive and trust.

The information disorder around the election did not appear in a vacuum.

It emerged in a media environment already shaken by structural and political challenges. For instance, in December 2025, mobs attacked the offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star in Dhaka and set the building on fire. Journalists were trapped for hours. These attacks were not only about two media houses. They sent a broader message that journalism could be punished physically for taking the “wrong” line.

partners have tried to build some protective infrastructure offering journalists mental health support and assistance with legal harassment and threats.

Efforts such as this matter because, as many reporters will admit, physical, legal and psychological safety shape what can be reported at all. When newsrooms have to worry about arson and court cases, investigative journalism and critical

rely on online and social media sources while remaining wary of their accuracy. In addition, it documented the tension between the need for clicks and the duty to verify.

One common theme in both international research and local commentary is that more voices do not automatically mean better democracy. The current media environment offers a wide range of outlets and pages, from mainstream newspapers to partisan YouTube channels and anonymous Telegram groups. The problem is that this diversity is layered on top of algorithmic incentives that reward outrage and emotional content. Moreover, Bangladeshi editors and legal experts have warned that bots and coordinated networks can create a false impression of “public opinion,” which then puts pressure on politicians and journalists alike. And the mix of domestic and cross-border disinformation is not unique to Bangladesh. Because of this, the debate on media integrity cannot stop at “more access.” What citizens need is access to information that is accurate, contextualised and credible enough to help them make choices. In a country where smartphone use is widespread but digital literacy is uneven, that is not a small task.

The 2026 election showed both the potential and the limits of this approach. Fact-checking organisations debunked dozens of viral claims in real time. Many media outlets amplified this work. Yet undecided voters remained a primary target for disinformation campaigns that exploited religious identity, nationalism, and fear of instability. Media literacy helps, but it cannot carry the full burden when economic incentives and political interests pull in the opposite direction.

The 2026 election has seen turnout above 60 percent, and that in itself is a sign that citizens still care about formal politics and are willing to queue to express their preferences. The question now is whether the new political settlement will strengthen or weaken media integrity. It is tempting to blame "the media" as a whole for all the pathologies of the information space. It is just as tempting to romanticise journalists as lone heroes who will somehow fix the problem through personal bravery. Both narratives are misleading. The evidence

from Bangladesh and other countries points to a more complicated picture.

Media integrity rests on three pillars that work together. First, journalists need to be physically and legally safe enough to pursue independent stories. Second, news organisations require sustainable business models and internal standards that reward verification over virality. Third, citizens need support to navigate a chaotic information environment without being blamed for problems that are built into platform design and political strategies.

The urgency of media integrity will become even sharper as the country moves towards local government and city corporation elections. Considering the history of local government elections, in many ways they are even more vulnerable to manipulation because voters are closely tied to neighbourhood networks, local factions, and informal influence systems. In city elections, particularly, false claims about violence, turnout, communal tension, or candidate withdrawals can spread very quickly through Facebook pages and local YouTube channels. Such false information, misinformation, disinformation and malinformation can shape public perception before corrections have any chance to catch up. That is why media integrity matters not only at the national level but also in municipal and local contests. Without a safe, credible and reasonably trusted information environment, even grassroots elections can be distorted by fear, confusion, and manufactured narratives.

If there is one constructive takeaway, it is this: Bangladesh does not lack diagnosis. Local journalists, researchers, fact-checkers, and media organisations have been mapping the problems with impressive clarity. What is now needed is a political willingness to treat media integrity as part of democratic infrastructure, not as a bargaining chip in elite competition.

That does not mean shielding journalists from criticism, and it does not mean denying that media outlets have their own biases and failures. It just means recognising that without a reasonably safe, independent, and credible media system, no election—however well organised on polling day—can deliver the kind of informed consent that democracy promises.



'The information disorder around the election did not appear in a vacuum. It emerged in a media environment already shaken by structural and political challenges.'

Unsurprisingly, both local and international actors reacted. Unesco publicly expressed concern about the safety of journalists in the run-up to the 12 February vote, pointing to recent attacks on media outlets and to the wider risks reporters face during political crises. A coalition led by ARTICLE 19 and other organisations submitted recommendations to the Election Commission and Unesco, calling for specific measures to protect journalists' safety and working conditions during the electoral period.

Even before the election, Unesco and local

commentary are usually the first to suffer. Unesco's global trend reporting notes that worldwide, freedom of expression has declined and self-censorship among journalists has risen sharply in the last decade. Bangladesh fits into this wider pattern.

The other side of the story—much less visible but just as important—is the political economy of media. The Media Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) has pointed out how fragile many Bangladeshi outlets have become. A 2022 MRDI-linked trust survey found that audiences increasingly

Ramisa Rob
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RAMISA ROB

At a press conference in his Miami resort on Monday, US President Donald Trump said the war will end “very soon,” but that the US hasn’t “won enough.” His statement comes as other nations across the globe, including Bangladesh, face daily shockwaves from a disastrous war that he started. The US messaging since the war has shifted slightly, from Trump giving signals of a protracted war to one that apparently is near its end. But to what end will this consequential war end, and more pertinently, how will it end?

Trump also stated, "I think the war is very complete, pretty much." Arguably, his rhetoric appeared more contradictory and mixed than what he's been saying since the war started. Just prior to his statements on Monday, Trump called for "unconditional surrender" of the Islamic republic. The Iranian regime not only refused to give in, but the assembly announced that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's son, Mojtaba Khamenei, has been picked as the new supreme leader of the nation. The choice of Khamenei's son is in line with the regime's response to avenging his assassination. The nation's constitution does not stipulate a timeline for choosing a supreme leader, especially during war. The fact that they were able to congregate and make a decision to choose Khamenei's son as attacks continue, suggests that the regime is not falling yet.

Washington responded to the decision with unsurprising disdain, stating that any leader chosen without their approval, "won't last very long." Surely, Iran is aware of the capabilities of US-Israel operations, particularly the two nations' coordinated intelligence infrastructure that led to Khamenei's assassination.

Just three days ago, US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth appeared on 60 Minutes and addressed the involvement of Russian intelligence to aid Iran by stating, "We're tracking everything. Our commanders are aware of everything... We're aware of who's talking to who, why they're talking to him..." This means the Iranian regime is either taking risks they're not prepared for, or, as their defence ministry said, Iran has yet to use its advanced military weaponry and is prepared for a longer war.

If Iran is arming up to retaliate more against the US with the help of Russia, then the war will inevitably drag on. If the Trump administration, as Hegseth suggests, is “tracking everyone,” and the statement that the new supreme leader “won’t last very long” actually happens, the direction of the war will be worse than it is currently. But what would make the US stop? It won’t be European nations or the United Nations’ Security Council where the US has a veto.

Words alone cannot explain where we are now with the war; it's rather our collective understanding of the self-interest of the US, Iran and their allies. We need to ask, can anyone really "win" this war? For Iran, "winning" means survival of the regime. And for now, the regime is surviving the killing of Khamenei and the airstrikes on Tehran, along with US precision strikes. For the US, the questions are: does attacking them continuously benefit those closest to the Trump administration and how does it affect Washington's hold over the global economy? It is worth noting that the Trump administration has not yet ruled out seizing or controlling Iranian oil assets.

The Trump administration's "America first" policy hinges on

profits of US defence contractors such as Lockheed Martin, and US technology companies such as Palantir Technologies Inc, that heavily profit from war. Trump's own sons, Trump Jr and Eric Trump, have been investing in a Florida-based company making drones in fresh demand for the Pentagon, since the administration banned foreign drones. Trump has supported US fracking companies in his presidential campaign. US fracking companies and LNG exporters directly profit from disruptions to Qatari LNG.

Trump, however, also threatened to hit Iran “20 times harder” if Iran continues disrupting shipping in the global trade chokepoint of the Strait of Hormuz. But he added that such an escalation would not occur, calling the continuous flow of oil through the strait, “a gift” from the US to China, and all of those nations that heavily rely on the waterway. The oil supply disruptions through the strait heavily penalise China, while benefitting the US, now the largest oil exporter.

Trump seems inclined to take care of his wealthy friends through his “America First” policy that drives the “Donroe Doctrine” foreign policy. For example, in 2022, when oil and gas prices hit their highest, experts estimate that the US was the biggest beneficiary, and 50 percent of profits went to the wealthiest one percent of individuals, predominantly through direct shareholdings and private company ownership. The current war will have a similar effect, as oil prices surge.

Yet, it's not all win-win for the entire US domestic economy. There's a risk of recession, which may increase unemployment and affect US domestic politics ahead of the midterms. Trump faces pressure from some Republicans, but not enough to change course. We must also note the insulation from war for US citizens, who won't feel the oil supply and energy disruptions the same way that, let's say, Bangladesh is currently facing. US China trade tensions and US global trade benefitting the rich are more important factors to observe right at this moment.

For Iran and its allies, the Iranian regime's stake is what matters

over the people. It's a regime that has survived decades of people's uprisings. Meanwhile, sanctioned Russia, which is now publicly helping Iran, is set to profit from the market turmoil in the Strait of Hormuz. The price of Russian Urals oil has risen, and demand from buyers in Asia has increased. China, on the other hand, is not directly participating in the war, and is managing the crisis to its energy security by tapping into oil reserves. China's oil refiners, the world's top importers who export to Asian markets, are, for now, cushioned from negative impact,

with recent record purchases of Iranian and Russian crude.

On the other hand, China has been in talks with Iran for safe passage of shipments; ship tracking data showed a vessel called the Iron Maiden passed through the strait, amid disruptions, after changing its signalling to "China-owner." Beyond the closure of the strait, the deterrence for Iran to come to the negotiating table with the US isn't its allies. Iran also relies on sales of China's military technology, particularly its air defence capabilities. Precision strikes from Iran may continue or even rise if

the Trump administration continues striking and weakening the regime.

The geopolitical and geo-economic equations of the rapidly developing war suggest that governments of both the US and Iran are counting on what benefits them. But the most important facet of governance, the citizens of a country, as history has shown, often becomes the determining factor, particularly when people begin to feel the negative impacts of war. If the war drags on too long, people will protest. Who wins does not matter if the people feel they're losing.



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PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Threads that refuse to fade

Bengal Shilpalay's 'Handloom Tradition of Bangladesh'

DOWEL BISWAS

There was a festive air inside Bengal Shilpalay on Sunday, March 8. Three exhibition halls were adorned with the colourful threads of Bengal. Handloomed majestic yet homelike saris hung everywhere, wrapping the space in warmth and quiet pride. The fabrics were not simply displayed but seemed to breathe history, heritage and ancestral pride.

And this was not merely a gallery of finished garments. The craftsmen themselves were present, seated beside ancestral looms and spinning wheels, showing how thread slowly becomes cloth.

One sari, visitors were told, is so fine it can pass through a ring. Another appears so intricate that fingers hesitate before touching it, as if the slightest movement might disturb its fragile geometry.

For generations, stories about Bengal's Muslim, Jamdani, Baluchari, Tussar, Korial and Tangailfabrics have lived like folklore — tales repeated long after the craft itself seemed to slip into memory.

Inside Bengal Shilpalay this week,

those legends feel less distant.

A faint rustle of fabric greets visitors entering the halls. On one table lies a delicate stretch of Muslin, almost weightless, its threads dissolving in light. Nearby, a spinning wheel turns slowly as cotton fibres are twisted into yarn with a quiet reminder of the technique that once made Bengal's textiles famous across the world.

The exhibition, titled *The Handloom Tradition of Bangladesh*, opened on March 8 at Bengal Shilpalay in Dhanmondi. Organised by the Bangladesh Handloom Board with support from the Bengal Foundation, the nine-day programme combines a curated exhibition with a small fair celebrating the country's weaving heritage.

For curator Shawon Akand, the goal is straightforward. "Many people in the capital have heard about our textile traditions," he said. "But very few have actually seen how these fabrics come to life."

Handloom weaving, he noted, has long been embedded in everyday life across the country. Yet rapid industrialisation and the rise of

power looms have gradually pushed the craft to the margins.

At the Quamrul Hassan Exhibition Gallery, archival photographs, documents and rare textiles trace the long arc of Bangladesh's weaving tradition.



focuses on the revival of Dhakai muslin, once considered among the finest cotton textiles ever produced.

At the centre of this revival is Phuti Karpas, a rare cotton plant historically used to produce the thread for muslin. Visitors



Historians say the region's textile heritage stretches back at least two and a half millennia, when Bengal was often described as the "loom of the world."

One section of the exhibition



can see the plant itself, alongside samples of the raw fibre and the nearly invisible yarn spun from it using hand-operated wheels.

Bundles of dyed yarn, wooden reels and spinning wheels lie arranged

quietly across the room, reminders of a craft that once shaped everyday life across the region.

The exhibition is accompanied by a small fair on the fourth floor, where visitors can purchase handloom textiles directly from producers. Fifteen stalls display Jamdani, Manipuri and Tangail saris, lungis and gamchas from Sirajganj, khadi from Cumilla, bedsheets from Kumarkhali, Rajshahi silk and garments from the hill districts.

Nearly 1.5 million people in Bangladesh are directly or indirectly involved in the handloom sector, according to the Ministry of Textiles and Jute. After agriculture, it remains one of the country's largest sources of rural employment.

Yet for many artisans, the craft remains a difficult profession.

Md Monir Hossain, 65, from Rugganj in Narayanganj, has been weaving Jamdani since he was 12. The skill came from his grandfather, though financial necessity first pushed him into the trade.

"I have spent my whole life doing this," he said quietly. "But I would not

want my children to follow this path. It is hard to provide for a family."

Md Monir Hossain, 65, from Rugganj in Narayanganj, has been weaving Jamdani since he was 12. The craft first came to him through financial necessity, though the knowledge traces back to his paternal grandfather. Over the decades, Monir honed the skill until the Bangladesh Handloom Board recruited him as one of its Jamdani craftsmen.

Around 300 craftsmen work alongside Monir, Hasmat and others within the Handloom Board's network — artisans whose lives remain closely tied to the fragile threads they weave each day.

It is a reminder that Bangladesh's weaving tradition lives not only in museums or markets but in villages, riverbanks and small workshops where knowledge passes quietly from one generation to the next.

Inside Bengal Shilpalay, those scattered threads gather again — if only for a moment.

The exhibition and fair will continue until March 16, open daily from 12:00pm to 9:00pm.

NEWS

When dialysis means distress

FROM PAGE 12

households are losing their belongings to pay for costly kidney disease treatment, pushing them deeper into poverty.

A 2024 study by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies found that 92 percent of families with kidney patients face financial distress while trying to finance dialysis treatment in Bangladesh.

Patients bear an average monthly expense of Tk 46,426, with costs ranging between Tk 6,690 and Tk 2,10,000, according to the study published in December 2024.

It also revealed that around 90 percent of households face catastrophic health expenditure (CHE) — healthcare spending that is so high it threatens a household's financial stability — to finance dialysis treatment, and about 19.5 percent of patients receive fewer dialysis than the recommended number.

A total of 477 hospitalised patients from public, private, and NGO healthcare facilities participated in the cross-sectional hospital-based study.

Some 35 government hospitals offer kidney dialysis at a relatively low cost compared to private healthcare facilities that provide the same treatment. Besides, most private facilities are located in towns and cities, leaving many rural patients deprived of healthcare services.

Meanwhile, the government does not have comprehensive data on the number of kidney patients in the country, but records from the nation's largest public kidney hospital indicate that cases of kidney complications are increasing.

A total of 2.06 lakh patients received treatment at NIKDU in 2024, an 8.42 percent increase from 2023, when 1.90 lakh patients were treated at the 500-bed facility, according to the Health Bulletin 2024, published earlier this month.

The number of patients in 2022 was 1.78 lakh.

Against this backdrop, Bangladesh, along with the rest of the world, will observe World Kidney Day tomorrow under the theme "Kidney Health for All — Caring for People, Protecting the Planet".

Contacted by The Daily Star last evening, Farhad Hasan Chowdhury, member secretary of the Bangladesh Renal Association, said that as the treatment of kidney diseases — particularly dialysis — is expensive, greater emphasis should be placed on prevention.

"We are putting emphasis on how to keep the kidneys healthy and on raising

public awareness about its importance.

"Although the government is working to expand dialysis services, that is not the best long-term option. Instead, cadaveric kidney transplants could be a better alternative."

'SOLD MY EARRINGS AS LAST RESORT'

Khadiza Begum said when her husband Shahabuddin was admitted to Faridpur General Hospital around October last year, he stayed there for 12 days, during which the family spent around Tk 20,000 on treatment — money villagers helped collect.

"Doctors later advised three injections costing Tk 11,000 each, but we couldn't afford them. After staying home for four days, he became seriously ill again and was readmitted for another 12 days. Relatives helped with money, and trees worth Tk 40,000 had to be sold to cover treatment."

The family later consulted other doctors and continued medicines at home, but Shahabuddin's condition did not improve. On February 10 this year, he was admitted to the same hospital again as his condition deteriorated.

"On February 12, the day of the national election, doctors advised dialysis, but services were unavailable that day. He later underwent dialysis at a private clinic in Faridpur town at a cost of Tk 17,000," Khadiza said.

They later returned to the general hospital, where dialysis cost Tk 420 per session. "After some improvement, doctors advised dialysis twice a week and discharged him. Outside the hospital, each session costs around Tk 3,500, with transport costing another Tk 1,500."

Shahabuddin was later admitted again for four more dialysis sessions. "Meanwhile, we had to sell his auto-rickshaw for Tk 26,000."

Doctors then advised inserting a permanent dialysis access (fistula) in his hand, which Faridpur hospital could not provide, so the family came to Dhaka last Thursday (March 5).

"However, the procedure could not be done because his hand was swollen, and the hospital also refused admission. Despite pleading and crying, he could not get admitted to hospital [NIKDU]."

Meanwhile, Shahabuddin has been receiving dialysis as an outpatient at Tk 3,400 per session. "An inpatient receives dialysis at Tk 600..."

The dialysis services at NIKDU are provided by an Indian company under a public-private partnership with the Directorate General of Health Services.

"To continue his treatment, I sold my earrings for Tk 26,000 as a last resort," Khadiza said, adding that three more dialysis sessions are needed to

normalise his hand for the fistula. "Then we will return to Faridpur Hospital."

She concluded, "One of my sisters-in-law previously died from kidney disease. Because of that, many people believe he will not survive either and are reluctant to help. But as a wife, I can no longer bear to see my husband suffer like this. So, I am trying everything I can."

NIKDU Director Syed Alfa Sani could not be reached for comments.

Eleven countries

FROM PAGE 12

"No one in the world has the expertise and experience that we do. We use combined systems, acoustic detectors and sensors. We use early warning systems, different types of radars," he told AFP.

According to Ukraine air force data, the military has been consistently intercepting or shooting down more than 80 percent of all incoming Russian drones — hundreds of which are fired every night.

Kyiv uses a mix of cheap drone interceptors, electronic jamming tools, anti-aircraft guns, fighter jets and helicopters to defend its skies from the Russian attacks.

JS to deal with 133 ordinances

FROM PAGE 12

first and only did so after the election attaching certain conditions.

"There is no scope to attach conditions to the July National Charter. One must either sign it as it is or clearly explain why it cannot be signed," he said.

On constitutional matters, Salahuddin said the government had so far acted in accordance with the constitution and would continue to do so.

If the verdict of a referendum is to be honoured, parliament must first take up the issue, hold discussions, enact the necessary law, and incorporate it into the constitution, he said.

He added that if members of a constitutional reform council are to take oath, the matter must also follow due constitutional process.

"It would have to be determined formally, incorporated into the Third Schedule of the constitution, and the authority to administer the oath would also need to be specified," he said.

Referring to what he described as a forced oath administered to some MPs, the minister said it was the responsibility of the Supreme Court to determine whether the constitution had been upheld, as judges had taken an oath to protect it.

'Nirbhaya' salutes five for courage

FROM PAGE 12

with many urging her to run for the Union Parishad.

Asma's journey was one of five inspiring stories highlighted yesterday at the IDB Bhaban in Dhaka's Agargaon. She, along with four other changemakers, was honoured with the "Nirbhaya" (The Fearless) Award, a recognition celebrating women who have shown exceptional courage and leadership.

The award is a joint initiative of UNDP Bangladesh and The Daily Star, introduced to mark International Women's Day and to spotlight women whose work is driving meaningful change in their communities.

This sixth edition of the awards celebrated women who transformed personal tragedy and hardship into triumph in remote areas of Bangladesh.

The 2026 Nirbhaya awardees represent a diverse spectrum of courage.

Joining Asma on stage were Jaita Rani Shil from Bandarban, who has become a fierce advocate against child marriage and harassment in her

community; Konkolata Mondal from Khulna, who shattered gender norms by becoming the first woman in her village to sell her agricultural produce directly in the local market; Khushi Chakma from Rangamati, who transformed her life through papaya cultivation; and Trinalom Rong, a Union Parishad member from Sherpur, who is ensuring legal justice for indigenous women through village courts.

Addressing the event, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam reflected on the subtle ways gender discrimination persists even in educated households.

Sharing a personal anecdote about the birth of his daughter, he noted how relatives discussed her marriage prospects while celebrating the career potential of his nephews.

"I feel small standing before these women."

"They are the true giants. They are fighting against centuries of prejudice, against culture and social values to pave their own way."

Seven-minister committee

FROM PAGE 12

The finance ministry will provide secretarial support to the committee, which may co-opt additional members if necessary and hold meetings as required, said the gazette notification.

At a meeting on Monday, it was decided that the finance ministry will collect feedback from relevant ministries and submit a draft report to the cabinet committee outlining the short-, medium- and long-term effects of the war. The committee will then work further on it, officials added.

The meeting also discussed that there would be no immediate impact on fertiliser supply and irrigation in Bangladesh, as the cultivation of Boro paddy, the country's single largest rice crop, is already over, said meetings sources.

However, if the war prolongs, industries, electricity generation, and the transport sector could face disruptions, as these sectors rely heavily on fuel.

The meeting discussed that the power and energy ministry would take steps to ensure coal-based power plants continue operating at full capacity. "If there is any disruption in power generation from the plants, immediate measures will be taken," a meeting source said.

To facilitate the smooth operation of coal-based power plants, the

meeting underscored the need to clear arrears to the plants. A portion of the arrears has already been paid.

The meeting also reviewed the possible impact of the war on foreign exchange reserves and inflation, as well as potential austerity measures. However, given the uncertainty over how long the war may continue, officials said the government would take steps in line with how the situation evolves.

Asked about the government's preparations in the wake of the war, Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said the government was moving ahead by anticipating possible impacts.

"We cannot avoid it [the war]. So, we will set our future projections taking its potential effects into account. We are aware of the risks and working accordingly," he told reporters on Monday at a press conference.

Comparing the potential shock of the war to an earthquake, Zahid Hussain, former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office, told this newspaper that the scale of the impact would depend on both the intensity and duration of the war.

"The key question is not only the magnitude of the shock, but also how long it lasts. The longer it continues, the greater the damage," he said.

He also suggested a follow-up programme to track the progress of the 30 Nirbhaya awardees honoured over the last six years.

UNDP Bangladesh Resident Representative Stefan Liller described the awardees as "everyday heroes".

He also emphasised that despite Bangladesh's progress in education and economic empowerment, the shrinking space for women in political leadership — evidenced by the low number of women in the recent national election — remains a concern.

The ceremony also saw the unveiling of a special photo book titled "SWAPNO: Women Leading Their Own Future", which documents the transformative journey of women under UNDP's SWAPNO project focused on the economic empowerment of ultra-poor rural women.

According to UNDP Bangladesh, the Nirbhaya initiative this year is supported by the project Gender-Responsive Coastal Adaptation, which is funded by the Green Climate Fund.

Ameer's adviser

FROM PAGE 12

countries in Asia, Africa, Oceania, America, and Europe efficiently.

The appointment of the opposition leader's foreign affairs adviser at the foreign ministry as an adviser, equivalent to the foreign minister, which is new and innovative, the letter said.

"Through this posting, the position of the opposition in the parliament on foreign affairs can be presented to the ministry and thus maintain balance in the international relations," it added.

The letter suggested that Khalilur give special consideration to appointing Prof Mahmudul as an adviser at the foreign ministry for navigating, together with the government, the geopolitical dynamics and Bangladesh's foreign ministry.

Top foreign ministry officials have expressed surprise over such proposal by the opposition.

"There is no precedence of appointing an adviser at the foreign ministry from the opposition in the parliament," said an official, seeking anonymity.

In the Facebook post, Porwar said as soon as the party became aware of the matter, the Jamaat chief removed Prof Mahamudul.

He emphasised that the party believes in responsible, transparent, and accountable political conduct, and maintains a policy of promptly correcting any misunderstandings or errors.

RIGHTS AND RECOGNITION

Recognise women’s labour that run the economy

ERA SHARMILA KHAN

Women across the world begin their labour way before the formal workday starts, performing countless tasks that sustain both national economies and private households. They engage in paid and unpaid work, from agricultural production and small-scale trade to caregiving. Despite these, much of women’s work remains invisible, undervalued, and entirely excluded from formal recognition. Women are often underrepresented in ownership rights, financial resources, policy-making spaces, and leadership positions that shape the economic systems. This persistent gap highlights how historically male dominated structures continue to influence economic governance, constraining women’s equal recognition, authority, and equitable access to opportunities and resources. In this piece, I discuss a specific sector, namely ocean governance, where women’s labour falls through the cracks.

In Bangladesh, women dominate the pre- and post-harvest sectors, including drying fish, processing, marketing, aquaculture, and, increasingly, seaweed cultivation. Despite their significant labour, they frequently lack recognition in fisheries regulations and miss out on subsidies as well as cash assistance provided to “registered fishers” during fishing bans. They also face occupational hazards in unsafe drying yards and processing sheds and are absent from co-management bodies that determine fisheries rules in Marine Protected Areas.



THE IMAGE IS GENERATED BY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.

Women are often underrepresented in ownership rights, financial resources, policy-making spaces, and leadership positions that shape the economic systems. This persistent gap highlights how historically male-dominated structures continue to influence economic governance, constraining women’s equal recognition, authority, and equitable access to opportunities and resources.

It is unfortunate that their voice is not represented in governance, and this has undermined gender justice and sustainability because women’s silent contributions get subsumed as informal labour. In contrast, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include SDG 14, which proposes a sustainable use of the marine life, and SDG 5, which requires equal involvement of all genders. There is no way to achieve one

without the other.

Furthermore, Bangladesh has obligations and good faith commitments to incorporate gender in ocean management under various international instruments. For instance, the FAO Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines 2014 urge states to acknowledge women in value chains and engage them in decision-making arrangements. Moreover, fisheries techniques that are socially responsible are promoted in the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries and Post-Harvest Practices and Trade 1995, where post-harvest activities take the centre stage and women are mostly engaged.

Similarly, the ILO Convention No 190 of 2019 is concerned with violence and harassment in the workplace, which is applicable to women working in these sectors as well. Similarly, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women 1979 acknowledges the right of rural women to access resources and participatory development, and its General Recommendations iterate state

obligations to realise gender responsive governance. Similarly, the Sendai Framework Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) focuses on inclusive policies for disaster preparedness, which is crucial for coastal workforce, particularly women.

Unfortunately, in our law, the legal definition of fishing is narrow, and it leaves out women involved in the important aspects of the value chain like fish processing, aquaculture and post-harvest activities, thus depriving them of identification, subsidies, and other social support programs. Moreover, representation gaps are also crucial, and women do not have an opportunity to engage effectively in fisheries co-management councils and other decision-making bodies due to a lack of mandatory quotas. The gender-specific prism is also missing even in the occupational standards of the sector, as the requirements of personal protective equipment (PPE), toilets, and even a childcare space are seldom provided, exposing women to hazardous and unfair working conditions. The challenges are compounded by

financial exclusion, in which women still experience limited access to credit, insurance, and collateral-free loans, and are not able to invest and expand their marine based livelihoods.

To empower women in fisheries, we need a holistic approach at the policy-legal level recognising women across all levels of marine governance and coastal development. First, the definition of ‘fishing’ under the Marine Fisheries Act needs to be extended to explicitly recognise women across the value chain, i.e., catching, processing and marketing, and in aquaculture. This will potentially qualify them to receive formal identification, subsidies, and compensation in the event of a fishing ban or natural calamity. In addition, institutional representation should be ensured to make sure women are mandatorily represented in the fisheries co-management councils and different decision-making committees. Also, the Delta Plan and National Adaptation Plan should be made gender-responsive to facilitate women-managed coastal livelihoods, including seaweed and shellfish aquaculture,

eco-tourism, and mangrove-based enterprises. Furthermore, our labour standards require urgent convergence with the global norms; hence, fisheries labour regulations need to be aligned with the ILO Convention 188 to ensure the written contracts, occupational safety and health standards, the use of personal protective equipment, access to sanitation provisions, etc. In order to further guarantee a safe working environment, protocols on ILO Convention 190 against harassment should be enforced stringently on landing sites, fish markets, as well as processing sheds.

The blue economy discourse in Bangladesh often revolves around industrial fishing, shipping and offshore energy. But it is equally important that the invisible hand of women in fish-drying yards, shrimp-processing plants, and seaweed farming is recognised. This is the bare minimum they deserve for the immense contribution they make.

The writer is apprentice lawyer at the Dhaka judge court.

GENDER AND LAW

Threats of tech-facilitated gender-based violence

JEBA MOBASHWIRA

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) is a new form of, often cross-border, gender-based violence. According to the International Centre for Research on Women, TFGBV refers to actions by individuals that cause harm to another person because of their gender identity, among others, or by pushing harmful gender stereotypes, using the web or digital devices. The most common forms of TFGBV include the use of technology to harass, hack, share sexually abusive images, and disclose private information or contents without consent of the person shown therein with an intention to annoy, harass, extort, etc. Other violent or severe forms of misogyny may also constitute TFGBV.

It needs to be noted here that TFGBV is not confined to targeting women but extends to those who do not fit the traditional gender norms. However, women who are public figures, journalists, activists, and young adults are among the most targeted groups. Although it takes place on digital or online platforms, its effects extend to both public and private spheres and may sometimes even create life-threatening situations. Additionally, such abusive contents in digital spaces can spread alarmingly fast and may remain out on the internet permanently. Since the internet allows people to stay anonymous or pseudonymous, the abusers generally escape accountability, and the culture of impunity thrives.

TFGBV causes serious financial,



emotional, social, mental and privacy-related harms. The survivors often lose income, especially those whose financial livelihood depend on social businesses or whose professional lives are linked to social media. They also face additional hurdles getting jobs or face expulsion from educational institutions due to no fault of their own, and in worst cases, are even ostracised from society. Furthermore, stress, anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and even suicide attempts are some common psychological consequences. In fact, a survey by the Economist Intelligence Unit showed that 92% of women reported that online violence negatively affects women’s well-being.

On the other hand, TFGBV silences women

online and decreases their involvement in democratic processes, public and political life, and leadership positions. A report published by PBS news showed that most deepfakes are sexual in nature and are made against women. Such TFGBV not only affects women’s digital rights, such as privacy, speech, and security, but is also a key barrier to achieving gender equality. Furthermore, the targeted and organised character assassination of female political figures and journalists, as we have seen in recent times, greatly discourages women from entering or remaining in politics, activism and journalism. In fact, we currently have only 7 women out of 300 directly elected Members of Parliament and only 1 woman out of 25 ministers. This clearly reflects how

women’s voices in politics are being silenced and sidelined.

Because TFGBV is transnational in nature, gaps in cross-border jurisdiction issues and a lack of explicit recognition of the term in the laws hinder accountability. Although the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women did not initially recognise online based violence against women, it is now specifically included in CEDAW’s General Recommendation No. 35 (2017) (general recommendations are authoritative treaty interpretations). Nonetheless, there has been a lack of statistical research contributing to a regulatory vacuum, and a large number of cases remain unreported. In fact, survey data by the Economist shows that most women

Technology facilitated gender-based violence silences women online and decreases their involvement in democratic processes, public and political life, and leadership positions.

are often unaware of available mechanisms to report harmful online activity.

Moreover, there is neither a legally binding obligation on platforms regarding

prevention, management and rapid removal of harmful material nor financial liability/accountability mechanisms for failure of such act. Moreover, unfortunately, in many countries, including Bangladesh, online abuse is often viewed as insignificant or distinct from ‘real’ violence. However, the Cyber Security Ordinance 2025 under section 25 criminalises the use of digital platforms to create, share, or threaten to share sexually exploitative or blackmail-related content, including AI-generated material, with the intent of harassing others. The Personal Data Protection Ordinance 2025, in the same light, criminalises the unauthorised use or disclosure of personal data, whereas defamation and obscenity (potentially also prone to misuse) are punishable under the Penal Code 1860. Yet, in my view, these fragmented laws fail to properly recognise TFGBV without a unified definition.

In conclusion, despite its severity, ill-equipped regulatory and institutional mechanisms to address this complex gender-based violence leave survivors highly vulnerable. It is crucial to remember that survivor-centred and rights focused legal reforms are necessary to combat TFGBVs. Additionally, gender-sensitive education centering on early prevention and technological accountability with safety and rights-by-design measures are essential as well.

The writer is intern at Law Desk, the Daily Star.

Surprise in store in Mirpur?

SPORTS REPORTER

The Mirpur wicket has often looked green in the past, hinting at assistance for fast bowlers, but more often than not it has behaved like a typical slow and low surface, offering little surprise. However, a BCB official yesterday claimed that the track could indeed offer a bit of a surprise in terms of quality this time around.

“It may be a bit of a surprise this time. Things are changing now,” a BCB official, with knowledge about the surface, told The Daily Star yesterday as Bangladesh host Pakistan for a three-match ODI series, starting today.

The wicket appeared to have a thin covering of grass and looked hard, which could ensure good carry for the bowlers. Traditionally, however, Mirpur pitches have tended to be slow and uneven.

Pakistan captain Shaheen Shah Afridi seemed encouraged by the conditions as a fast bowler.

“So far it feels like there’s a little bit there for fast bowlers. Haven’t seen what it’s like right now but we will check again and have a discussion with the team management and go from there,” he added during the press conference at Mirpur yesterday afternoon.

In Bangladesh’s last home ODI series in October last year, West Indies used spinners to bowl all fifty overs in one match. Shaheen, however, suggested that things could be different this time.

Bangladesh captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz said that the team needed true wickets as part of their preparation for the upcoming World Cup.

Whether such expectations will finally be met at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium remains to be seen, as the balance between securing direct World Cup qualification and building confidence among the batters continues to be a key consideration.

Questions over captain Miraz ahead of key series

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh enter the three-match ODI series against Pakistan, starting today in Mirpur, with several objectives in mind.

While the Tigers will be eager to produce a noteworthy performance, especially after being excluded from the recent T20 World Cup, the outcome of the series will also influence Bangladesh’s bid to qualify directly for the 2027 ODI World Cup. A series win will see the 10th-ranked Bangladesh climb to ninth – the bare minimum spot needed to be ensured for a direct World Cup qualification.

Despite such stakes, the focus on the eve of the first match centred largely on Mehidy Hasan Miraz’s captaincy and his own performances.

Questions surrounding Miraz’s leadership first surfaced in June 2025, when the all-rounder replaced Najmul Hossain Shanto as Bangladesh’s ODI skipper. The decision by the cricket operations department came under scrutiny, and Bangladesh’s results under Miraz did little to quiet those concerns.

Since taking charge, Bangladesh lost their first two series – away to Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. Miraz later led the team to a series win over the West Indies, but questions over his captaincy remained ahead of such an important ODI assignment.

Miraz, who has won just three of his 13 matches as ODI captain, declined to view the Pakistan series as a ‘litmus test’ for his leadership.

“Whoever is given the captaincy role needs time to build the team well,” he said during the pre-match press conference yesterday.

Miraz mentioned that the team’s objectives remain the priority.

“My goal is to take the team to a good position. This series is important for Bangladesh, not just me, because qualifying for the World Cup is the primary goal, regardless of who is the captain,” he added.

However, the numbers present a concerning picture. In four of his 13 matches as captain, Miraz batted at number four and averaged over 50. Despite those returns, Bangladesh lost each of those games, prompting questions about his approach in a format where higher strike rates are increasingly important.

He has one fifty as captain while batting at number five, but when Miraz produced steady innings, the pressure often shifted to the rest to accelerate the scoring.

Overall, Miraz averages 32.58 as captain. His recent preference to bat at number seven also suggests he has yet to settle into a fixed role in the lineup, despite producing some respectable numbers.

Miraz himself admitted that batting higher up the order did not translate into team victories, saying his presence at number seven “would be most helpful for the team’s balance.”

There were also questions over his decision-making during last year’s series against Afghanistan, particularly regarding the handling of death overs.

Miraz, however, said he intends to rely on established methods to tackle the upcoming challenge.

Although Miraz – whose captaincy tenure currently runs until June this year – said there have been no discussions with management about an extension, the Pakistan series represents an important test for Bangladesh, who have lost four of their last five ODI series.

And, questions over the captaincy do not create the right atmosphere ahead of important challenges, especially with direct World Cup qualification on the line.

ABAHANI salvage draw to stay in hunt

SPORTS REPORTER

Last season’s Federation Cup runners-up Abahani kept their semifinal hopes alive after coming from behind to draw 1-1 with Rahmatganj MFS, courtesy of a disputed penalty in Cumilla yesterday.

The result left Abahani second in the five-team group with four points from three matches, three behind leaders Brothers Union, who beat PWD SC 3-0 at Bashundhara Kings Arena.

The Cumilla clash was a rematch of last Friday’s Bangladesh Premier League meeting, when Abahani thrashed Rahmatganj 4-1 at the same venue, but the Sky Blues struggled to break down the Old Dhaka side’s defence despite dominating possession at Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium.

Rahmatganj took the lead against the run of play in the ninth minute when Earnest Boateng fired a low shot from outside the box past Abahani goalkeeper Mitul Marma.

92 GOALS DAYS

92 games, three World Cups

Pele played 92 international matches for Brazil between 1957 and 1971, scoring 77 goals. During this period, he became the only player in history to win three FIFA World Cups – 1958, 1962, and 1970.

**** Visit The Daily Star’s website to also read: ‘From exile to immortality: The Paulo Rossi story’**

Probe sought over BCB polls

SPORTS REPORTER

Several councillors from district and divisional sports associations and universities submitted a complaint to sports state minister Aminul Haque yesterday, seeking an independent investigation into alleged irregularities, manipulation, and abuse of power in the 2025 elections of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

In the letter, they also demanded the dissolution of the current BCB board of directors and called for fresh elections in accordance with the board’s constitution.

Former BCB director and University of Chittagong councillor Sirajuddin Mohammad Alamgir said they were seeking a proper inquiry and appropriate action if irregularities were found.

“We are demanding a proper investigation. Previously, the environment was not conducive, but now there is a fair environment and an elected government. If irregularities are found, appropriate action should be taken,” Alamgir told The Daily Star after submitting the letter to the minister’s personal secretary at the National Sports Council.

“The State Minister for Sports has the authority to act under the National Sports Council Ordinance,” he added. Alamgir said they were also awaiting a court hearing on the matter.

Earlier, on Sunday, representatives of 50 Dhaka clubs, including former national team captain Tamim Iqbal, submitted a separate complaint to the NSC seeking an independent investigation into the last BCB elections.

Bernabeu set for another Real-City battle

AGENCIES

Wednesday’s Champions League action features several high-profile clashes. PSG meet Chelsea for the first time since last year’s Club World Cup final, Arsenal take on Bayer Leverkusen, and Bodo/Glimt host Sporting.

However, the spotlight falls on Real Madrid vs Manchester City at the Bernabeu in the first leg of their last-16 tie. It marks the fifth straight season the teams have met in the knockout rounds.

Rarely do record 15-time winners Real Madrid enter a Champions League clash as underdogs, but that appears to be the case when City visit the Santiago Bernabeu.

With key attackers Kylian Mbappe, Jude Bellingham and Rodrygo Goes set to miss the game through injury, and Alvaro Arbeloa’s team in inconsistent form, the Premier League side are firm favourites in the last-16 tie.

Manchester City beat Madrid in the league phase in the Spanish capital and have strengthened since then.

Premier League leaders Arsenal, who have never been crowned European champions, remain on track for four trophies this season as they chase their first major silverware since 2020.

Mikel Arteta’s men won all eight matches in the league phase to cruise into the last 16, where success against Leverkusen will set up a tie against Bodo/Glimt or Sporting.

PSG are wobbling as the reigning European champions put their title on the line against Chelsea in the first meeting of the teams since the London side won 3-0 in last July’s Club World Cup final.

Bodo/Glimt’s fairytale run continues as they welcome Portuguese champions Sporting to the Aspinrya Stadion, which lies inside the Arctic Circle.

Kjetil Knutsen’s team finished the league phase with wins against Manchester City and Atletico Madrid before beating Inter Milan home and away in the play-offs.

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‘Nirbhaya’ salutes five for courage

Joint initiative by UNDP Bangladesh, Star marks Int’l Women’s Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asma Begum was just one year old when she lost her father, and 13 when she was married off.

Her husband eventually abandoned her – leaving her to raise two children in extreme poverty. To survive, she took on gruelling manual labour, including cutting soil and chopping wood.

“I’ve done everything – collected fallen leaves, caught fish, and even begged for old clothes for my children,” recalled Asma, her voice trembling yet resolute.

Today, the once-helpless girl from Pirojpur is a successful entrepreneur and community leader who recently spearheaded the repair of a local road. Villagers now see her as a leader,

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

The five recipients of the 2026 Nirbhaya Award pose with their certificates at IDB Bhaban in Dhaka’s Agargaon yesterday.

JS to deal with 133 ordinances in first session

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 133 ordinances were issued during the tenure of the interim government, and under the constitution they must be placed before parliament at its first session scheduled to start tomorrow, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said yesterday.

Parliament will decide which ordinances will be passed, amended, allowed to lapse, or approved as they are, he said.

The minister made the remarks while speaking at a discussion, prayer, and iftar programme organised by the Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum at the Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium in Dhaka.

“Not only the July National Charter, we are committed to implementing all the issues on which we received the people’s mandate through our election manifesto,” he said.

Salahuddin said the government remained fully committed to the July charter and described it as a document of political understanding that his side had signed.

He also criticised those who, he said, signed the charter only after the election despite previously opposing it.

He said those who had criticised the charter the most did not sign it at

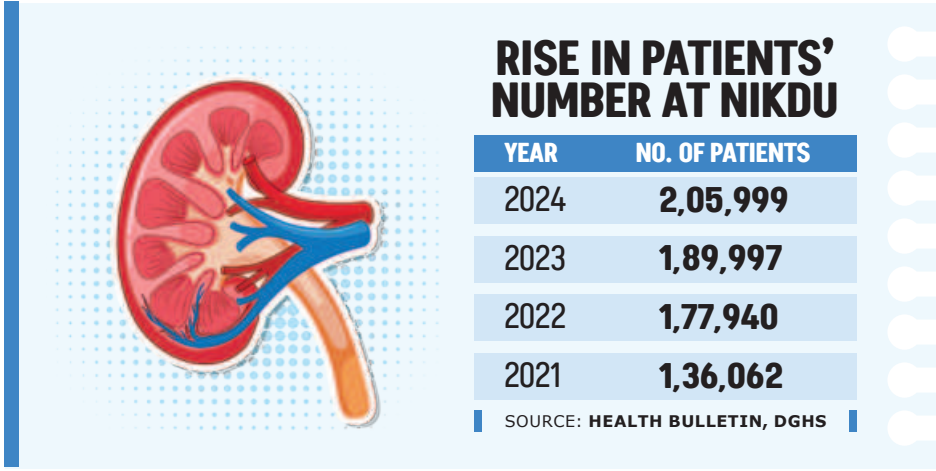
SEE PAGE 8 COL 3



WORLD KIDNEY DAY

When dialysis means distress

92% of families with kidney patients face financial struggles; cases rising every year



TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Shahabuddin used to drive an autorickshaw to support his three-member family in Faridpur Boalmari upazila.

The 45-year-old had suffered a stroke four years ago and dengue two years later. Then, in February last year, he developed problems with his eyes.

After receiving treatment at a hospital in Gopalganj for six months, he resumed driving. But within a week, his body suddenly started swelling. He was admitted to Faridpur General Hospital the same day, where tests revealed kidney complications.

Over the past six months, Shahabuddin has spent much of his time in hospitals, receiving dialysis at government and

private facilities in Faridpur and Dhaka. To cover treatment costs, his family had to sell his rickshaw, trees, and his wife’s jewellery, and also collected donations from relatives and villagers.

“We’ve exhausted whatever we had. We don’t have land to sell... I don’t know how we will continue his treatment...” Shahabuddin’s wife, Khadiza Begum, said as worry and despair were evident in her voice.

She spoke to this correspondent in the waiting room at the National Institute of Kidney Diseases and Urology (NIKDU) while her husband underwent dialysis.

Like Shahabuddin’s family, many

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Ameer’s adviser dropped for seeking foreign ministry post

Claims Jamaat

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader and Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman has relieved his foreign affairs adviser Prof Mahamudul Hasan of his responsibilities for violating the instructions of the leader regarding a letter to the foreign ministry.

He was replaced by Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem (Arman) MP for Dhaka-14 constituency on March 2, claimed a Facebook post of Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar made yesterday following media reports on the matter.

It said about two weeks ago, Prof Mahmudul was tasked with writing a letter to Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman to clarify Jamaat’s positions on certain foreign affair issues. However, it did not clarify the party’s position on those issues.

“He [Prof Mahamudul] included matters in the letter that were beyond the ameer’s instructions, specifically a section regarding the minister’s rank,” Porwar said in the post.

The letter, signed by Shafiqur and sent to the foreign minister on February 22, said Prof Mahmudul has long been playing the role of his adviser on foreign affairs.

It said Prof Mahmudul, on behalf of the party, has been able to strengthen bilateral relationship with the major partners, including the UN, Commonwealth, Asean Regional Forum, European Union, and the

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

US-ISRAEL WAR ON IRAN

Seven-minister committee to shield shocks

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government has formed a high-powered cabinet committee to draw up a crisis management plan, aiming to safeguard economic stability amid the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran, which shows no signs of easing.

Led by Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, the seven-member committee will also analyse the war situations in different countries and assess the potential impact on Bangladesh, according to a gazette notification issued yesterday.

The committee members include the ministers of local government, rural development and cooperatives; home affairs; power, energy, and mineral resources; commerce; expatriates’ welfare and overseas employment; and food.

The committee has been asked to submit an assessment report within 15 working days and update the Cabinet Division on the first week of every month on the progress of remedial measures to offset the impacts, Cabinet Division officials told The Daily Star.

The decision to form the committee was made at a cabinet meeting last week with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in the chair.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Antarctic sea ice improves after 4yrs of extreme lows

AFP, Paris

Antarctic sea ice coverage has likely rebounded this year, coming closer to its annual summer average after four years of extreme lows, US scientists said Monday.



The area covered by Antarctic sea ice likely reached its annual minimum level at 2.58 million square kilometres (996,000 square miles) on February 26, according to scientists at the National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) at the University of Colorado Boulder.

Every year Antarctic sea ice reaches a minimum level during the southern hemisphere’s summer, so this is the point that scientists measure it for annual readings. This year’s level ranks as the 16th smallest since satellite measurements began in 1979.

The 2026 minimum sea ice extent is closer to average than in the past four years, and 730,000 square kilometres above the record low set in February 2023, the scientists said. But it was still 260,000 square kilometres below the 1981-2010 average.

Eleven countries asking Ukraine for drone help

Zelensky says as war escalates

AFP, Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Monday that 11 countries had tapped Kyiv for help in how to counter Iranian drones being fired by Tehran in retaliation for US-Israeli strikes.

Ukraine has to fend off nightly barrages of Iranian-designed Shahed attack drones launched by Russia, an ally of Tehran. They now being used in strikes across the Middle East.

“As of now, there are 11 requests from countries neighbouring Iran, European states, and the US. There is clear interest in Ukraine’s experience in protecting lives, relevant interceptors, electronic warfare systems and training,” Zelensky said.

He did not specify which countries.

Some Ukrainian drone experts are already en route to the Middle East and are due there this week, Zelensky said over the weekend.

Ukraine has proposed swapping Kyiv’s drone interceptors – drones designed to intercept incoming attack craft mid-air – for expensive air defence missiles that Kyiv is in short supply of.

Beyond interceptors, Kyiv has gained a “body of knowledge and skills” that it could share with allies, said Igor Fedirko, CEO at the Ukrainian Council of Defence Industry.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3



Amid instability in the fuel market triggered by the ongoing war in the Middle East, hundreds of tanker lorries were lined up outside the fuel depot in Narayanganj’s Fatullah yesterday afternoon. Drivers and their assistants said they had been waiting for hours but still could not collect the required fuel due to a government-imposed supply limit.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Taka weakens vs dollar for fifth day

B1



Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:58	12:45	4:30	6:07	7:30
JAMAAT 5:08	1:15	4:45	6:17	8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MAR	SEHRI	IFTAR
21	11		6:07
22	12	4:55	6:08
23	13	4:54	6:08