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## Tarique to open canal excavation programme on March 16

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is scheduled to launch the government's nationwide canal excavation programme in Dinajpur 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

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.

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## 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, 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