The Fake News Media hates to report how well the US Military has done against Iran, which is totally defeated and wants a deal.
DONALD TRUMP

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

The Daily Star

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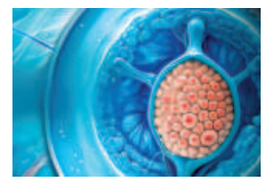
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'Send warships to secure Hormuz'

Trump urges world powers after Iran vows retaliation for attack on crucial oil hub; US bringing in more troops, ships, say reports

Iran vows to target US-affiliated energy facilities | **Israel says Iran war entering 'decisive phase'** | **Reports say US may be preparing for a ground invasion** | **US embassy attacked in Baghdad; UAE oil facility hit**

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump yesterday urged other nations to help secure a vital shipping lane choked off by the war with Iran, which showed no signs of slowing as strikes hit the US embassy in Baghdad and a major Emirati energy facility.

The rapidly evolving conflict has threatened to worsen the global energy crisis, with Trump threatening to strike Iran's oil infrastructure and Tehran vowing retaliation against energy facilities in US-affiliated countries across the region.

Meanwhile, Israel yesterday said the war against Iran was entering its "decisive phase" as explosions rocked cities across Iran and Lebanon, where scores of people have died.

Having earlier vowed that the US Navy would "very soon" start escorting tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for 20 percent of the world's fossil energy supplies, Trump appeared to call for reinforcements yesterday.

"Many countries... will be sending War Ships, in conjunction with the United States of America, to keep the Strait open and safe," he wrote on Truth Social, saying China, France, Japan, South Korea, and the UK would "hopefully" be among them.

"In the meantime, the United States will be bombing the hell out of the shoreline, and continually shooting Iranian Boats and Ships out of the water," he wrote.

Trump, after claiming to have "totally obliterated" military targets on Iran's Kharg Island hub on Friday, threatened to strike the oil infrastructure there unless Tehran stopped attacking vessels in the strait.

Kharg, the export terminal for 90 percent of Iran's oil shipments, lies about 300 miles northwest of the strait and is a crucial oil source for many countries, including China.

US strikes did not target Kharg's oil infrastructure, but "should Iran, or anyone else, do anything to interfere with the Free and Safe Passage of Ships through the Strait of Hormuz, I will immediately reconsider this decision," Trump said.

As the war entered its third week, Iran, however, struck a defiant note, playing down the extent of the damage on Kharg

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Smoke rises in the Fujairah oil industrial zone, caused by debris from an intercepted drone, in the UAE yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

A man stands on the rubble of a destroyed building at the site of an overnight Israeli airstrike that targeted the Haret Hreik neighbourhood of Beirut's southern suburbs yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

PM urges unity for a peaceful Bangladesh

Launches pilot programme for religious leaders' honorariums

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday pledged to build a peaceful and secure Bangladesh through the united efforts of people of all religions and warned against any attempt to create division among them.

"Today, people of all religions are sitting together in one row here. This has long been a tradition of Bangladesh. No one should be allowed to create division among us. Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians -- we will all work together, In Sha Allah, to build a peaceful Bangladesh."

People of all religions in Bangladesh have always lived together in peace, the PM said at the inauguration of a government pilot programme to provide monthly honorariums to imams, muezzins, and other religious leaders.

"We want to build a safe state and a secure society for everyone -- something that people from all classes and professions desire," he told the event at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the presence of leaders of all faiths.

PHOTO ON PAGE 3 | SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Govt may relax fuel purchase caps from today

Move aimed at easing Eid travel

ASIFUR RAHMAN

- Highway filling stations to remain open 24 hours during holiday period
- Fuel stocks sufficient for at least 15 days, officials say
- Govt assures uninterrupted supply for Eid travellers

The government is set to ease restrictions on fuel lifting for vehicles from today, amid mounting pressure on refuelling stations ahead of the Eid travel rush, while authorities insist that adequate supplies will be maintained throughout the holiday period.

Officials said all fuel pumps on highways will remain open around the clock for seven days before Eid and five days after, to facilitate uninterrupted travel.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam said the decision to relax the cap was taken to reduce pressure on filling stations as millions prepare to leave cities for their hometowns.

Yesterday, refuelling pumps in different areas of Dhaka were crowded with long queues since morning. The line of cars at Meghna Filling Station in the Paribag area stretched past Shahbagh Metro Station to the nearby intersection.

In the evening, the situation remained almost the same, while nearby Purbachal Traders ran out of stock. Similarly, the queue at Trust Filling Station near Bijoy Sarani extended past Jahangir Gate.

Pump owners in the Khulna and Faridpur regions also suspended the lifting of fuel from the depots of the three distributors -- Padma, Meghna, and Jamuna -- worsening the situation in those areas. They alleged they were not receiving adequate supplies to meet the growing demand.

Sheikh Murad Hossain, senior vice-president of the Khulna Divisional Fuel Distribution Association, said pump owners have been receiving less than half of their required fuel for several days.

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TRADE PROBE

USTR seeks hearing date from Dhaka

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

The United States Trade Representative (USTR) has sought a date from Bangladesh for a hearing as part of the US's twin investigations into trade and forced labour.

Brendan Lynch, the assistant USTR for South and Central Asia, contacted the commerce ministry for the date, Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star.

A date would be given right after the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays as there are only three working days left, he said.

At the hearing, the USTR may seek information on production capacity in different industrial and manufacturing sector, wage payment, labour law update, export capacity, subsidy payment and labour issues.

The USTR may raise the issues of non-tariff barriers that American businesses are facing in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has already started preparations for the hearing and gathering evidence to support the country's stance, he said.

For the USTR, it would be difficult to prove Bangladesh's excessive production

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Little Hadija and Tabassum were waiting eagerly with their family at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday to board a train to Brahmanbaria, where they will celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr at their grandparents' home. Amid the bustle of the station, the two children's bright smiles captured the excitement of the journey and the simple joy of heading home to family for the festival.

IMF LOAN

Bangladesh may get next tranche in June

$1.3b instalment tied to govt commitment to advancing reforms

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh could receive a $1.3 billion tranche from its loan programme with the International Monetary Fund by June if the new government moves ahead with reforms to make the dollar exchange rate more market-based, strengthen revenue collection, reduce subsidies, and address weaknesses in the banking sector.

A three-member high-level IMF delegation, led by Krishna Srinivasan, director of the Asia and Pacific Department, is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on March 23 for a two-day visit to resume talks on the $5.5 billion loan programme, which stalled in November last year.

The team will meet Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, and Bangladesh Bank Governor Md Mostaqur Rahman to discuss the programme and the government's reform priorities.

Finance ministry officials said the IMF would seek clarity from the highest level of government on the new administration's commitment to the programme. Further discussions are expected on the sidelines of the IMF–World Bank Spring Meetings in April.

Following those talks, a regular IMF mission may visit Dhaka to proceed with the process for releasing the next $1.3 billion tranche, the officials said.

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O, A LEVELS AWARDS

Prime Bank and Star join hands to recognise high achievers

STAR REPORT

Prime Bank PLC has joined hands with The Daily Star as the title sponsor of the prestigious O and A Levels Awards, reaffirming its commitment to empowering youth and celebrating academic excellence across the nation.

The upcoming edition will mark the 25th O and A Levels Awards, a milestone that reflects a long-standing tradition of recognising brilliance, dedication, and the promise of Bangladesh's future generation, said a press release.

This partnership stands as a strong testament to Prime Bank's belief that today's youth are the architects of tomorrow.

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Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, and M Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of Prime Bank PLC, exchange documents at the signing ceremony of the title sponsorship agreement for the 25th O and A Levels Awards at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka yesterday. PHOTO: COURTESY

180 RMG factories at risk of failure to pay before Eid

Ministry warns of unrest

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN *and* REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Some 138,392 workers of 180 ready-made garment factories at risk of failure to pay wages and bonuses before the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays could create labour unrest in different ways, the home ministry has warned.

In a confidential assessment finalised on March 8, the ministry said workers demanding payments may block roads in industrial belts, causing suffering for passengers during the Eid holiday travel rush.

It also warned that unrest in one factory could quickly spread to nearby units if workers join in solidarity, disrupting production and weakening factory management.

Asked about the assessment yesterday, Gazi Jashim Uddin, additional inspector general of the Industrial Police, said it was mainly based on cases of unpaid wages and bonuses.

"The situation is improving, but there remain some factories that did not pay the dues," he told The Daily Star.

He said in some cases factory owners were abroad, including one in Hong Kong, and authorities were contacting them to ensure workers receive their dues.

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PM urges unity

FROM PAGE 1

Tarique said he believes every religion carries positive messages for building a morally enriched human society and stressed that people with religious knowledge have a crucial role in promoting religious, social, and moral values in society.

"Once again, through today's [Saturday] programme, we take an oath to build our beloved Bangladesh into a country where people of every religion and profession can live in peace. Together, we will build this country. Let this be our oath and our expectation."

The PM said the government's programme to provide honorariums to khatibs, imams, and muezzins has reached its first phase under a pilot scheme.

A total of 4,908 mosques, 990 temples, and 144 Buddhist monasteries are covered, benefiting 16,992 religious leaders with monthly honorariums.

Tarique also promised that everyone will gradually be included under this programme, adding that the main goal of such economic initiatives for people of all professions is to help citizens become financially self-reliant.

At the same time, he made a humble appeal to religious leaders, saying that if they wish to participate in other economic or social activities alongside their duties at mosques or places of worship, the government is ready to support those initiatives as well.

The PM said his government will make its best efforts, within the capacity of the state, to ensure financial and social security for every citizen regardless of religion or background.

He, however, said citizens also have responsibilities towards the state and society. "If each of us performs our duties properly from our respective positions, I hope that within the next 10 years we will see a politically and economically self-reliant Bangladesh."

Bangladesh may get next tranche in June

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Approved in January 2023, the IMF programme was initially worth $4.7 billion and was designed to be disbursed in seven instalments following periodic reviews.

The then Awami League government sought IMF support in 2022 as foreign exchange reserves came under pressure amid the fallout from the Russia–Ukraine war. By June last year, Bangladesh had received $3.65 billion in five tranches.

The Washington-based lender later expanded the programme to $5.5 billion in May last year following a request from the interim government.

However, after the interim administration took office in August 2024, efforts to unlock further tranches slowed amid disagreements over reform conditions.

Two instalments were eventually released together in June last year, but no further disbursement followed the fifth review in November. The IMF then said the next tranche would be decided only after discussions with the new government formed after the February 12 general election, which brought the BNP to power.

"The new administration's full ownership of the programme will be critical, supported by early and active engagement with staff and efforts to secure stakeholder buy-in," the IMF said in a report released in January.

The report, issued after a board meeting reviewing Bangladesh's economic situation and progress under the programme, said performance under the fifth review had been uneven.

"Government revenue collection fell significantly short of the quantitative performance criterion. The high-level reform strategy for bank restructuring remains pending, and foreign exchange intervention practices have not been consistently aligned with understandings under the programme," it said.

The IMF noted that the primary deficit target had been met, but largely through substantial cuts in capital and social spending.

"Programme conditions on foreign reserve accumulation, reduction of payment arrears, and limits on quasi-fiscal lending were met," the report added.

It also said maintaining tight monetary policy and consistently implementing the new exchange rate regime would be necessary to address near-term macroeconomic vulnerabilities, including high inflation and low foreign exchange reserves.

Contacted, Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told The Daily Star that Bangladesh had already met many IMF conditions, though "a few issues remain".

He said the final decision would depend on the upcoming discussions with the visiting IMF delegation.

Asked whether the new government might revise programme targets, he said, "Let's see how it goes. They are coming, and much will depend on the discussions. We have our own priorities and policy issues. How we pursue our own economic policy is also important. Ultimately, the decision will be taken through the talks."

Responding to suggestions from economists about continuing the programme, the minister said the government would weigh its own priorities.

"As I said, it all depends on the discussions. We also have to serve our own purposes. The IMF's money is fine, but many issues are tied to it. We must take decisions based on our own economic policies and priorities."

"We have our own economic approach, and that must be upheld," he added.

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), said completing the IMF programme was "extremely important" for Bangladesh.

He said last year's suspension of talks partly reflected the IMF's preference to engage with an elected government, along with concerns over the slow pace of reforms, particularly in revenue collection.

"In some areas we have fallen behind. In taxation, we have even gone backwards," Raihan, also a professor at Dhaka University, told The Daily Star.

He said the programme should be viewed as an opportunity to advance reforms in key sectors. Failure in the negotiations could have "negative spillover effects", as other development partners closely monitor IMF assessments when deciding on financial support.

"If the IMF's evaluation is weak or negative, it becomes difficult for international agencies to convince their boards to justify funding or additional support for Bangladesh," he said.

Raihan also warned that the global economic environment could put renewed pressure on Bangladesh's balance of payments, particularly amid the ongoing US–Israel war on Iran.

Higher oil prices, disruptions in export markets, or a fall in remittances linked to the conflict could strain the country's foreign exchange reserves, he said.

In such a scenario, the remaining IMF funds could play a supportive role for Bangladesh, Raihan said, urging the new government to engage actively with the lender and present a realistic assessment of what the interim administration achieved over its 18-month tenure and how current reform plans align with IMF conditions.

Govt may relax fuel purchase caps

FROM PAGE 1

"For example, a pump with a daily demand of 10,000 litres has reportedly been supplied with only around 2,000 litres. In many cases, depots supply only one or two types of fuel instead of all, creating operational difficulties."

However, some pumps along the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway were found operating as usual, with less pressure.

Following the experience of the past week, when people began panic-buying fuel following the war in the Middle East, the authorities imposed caps on daily fuel purchases for different vehicles, including two litres for motorcycles and 10 litres for private cars.

Sources said the government has decided to withdraw the cap during the Eid days, and a press briefing will be held today at 10:30am at the secretariat to provide details on the decision.

They added that the current fuel stock is sufficient to ensure smooth travel during the holiday period.

As of yesterday, the country's diesel stock stood at 1.8 lakh tonnes, while octane and petrol stocks were around 16,000 tonnes each -- adequate for at least the next 15 days.

After visiting the Sayedabad and Gulistan bus terminals yesterday afternoon, Shaikh Rabiul assured that adequate fuel would be supplied for public transport and warned operators against cancelling or refunding advance tickets citing fuel shortages.

"There was an attempt to refund advance tickets due to oil issues, but we did not allow anyone to take advantage of the situation," the minister said, noting that all tickets bought in advance will remain valid.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Anindya Islam Amit said the government has taken steps to ensure a stable fuel supply during the Eid travel period.

"People travelling home for Eid should not face difficulties due to fuel shortages. We've already assured the transport sector that fuel supply will remain stable," he told reporters after inaugurating gas supply from a new well at the Srikail Gas Field in Cumilla's Muradnagar upazila.

THE SRIKAIL-5 WELL

The newly developed Srikail-5 well is currently producing about 8.1 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmcfd), with output expected to reach 8-10 mmcfd, according to officials.

Discovered in 2012, the field has already produced about 160 billion cubic feet (BCF) of gas from four wells and still holds an estimated 145 BCF in remaining reserves.

The Srikail-5 well alone contains an estimated 40 BCF of gas, of which around 28 BCF is recoverable, according to the state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited.

Officials estimate the recoverable gas to be worth roughly Tk 1,800 crore at current domestic prices, or Tk 6,832 crore when compared with liquefied natural gas import costs.

Amit expressed optimism that Bangladesh will achieve significant self-reliance in the energy sector within the next five years.

He added that the government is working to increase production under a 180-day action plan. "The plan aims to add 82 mmcfd of gas to the national grid from new and workover wells across the country within the timeframe."

The minister further said Bangladesh's heavy dependence on imported fuel exposes the country to global shocks. "When a country is import-dependent, any global crisis puts it at risk.... If we can strengthen domestic production, those risks will be much easier to manage."

(Our Correspondents in Chattogram, Khulna and Cumilla contributed to the report.)

'Send warships to secure Hormuz'

FROM PAGE 1

while threatening to step up its use of more powerful weapons and warning parts of the United Arab Emirates were a legitimate target as it hosts US military assets used to launch attacks in Iran.

It had threatened that US-linked oil and energy firms would be "turned into a pile of ashes" if they were hit.

Clouds of black smoke yesterday rose over Fujairah, home to a major Emirati oil storage and export terminal, shortly after Iran's military warned UAE civilians to avoid port areas.

Iran also vowed to increase its usage of upgraded weapons, particularly ballistic missiles and other missiles with greater destructive power, a defence ministry spokesperson said.

Iran's armed forces responded to the Kharg attack by saying any strike on their country's oil and energy infrastructure would lead to strikes on facilities owned by oil companies cooperating with the US in the region, Iranian media reported.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi also said Tehran will target the facilities of American companies in the region if its energy facilities are attacked.

Oil exports from Kharg Island were continuing normally despite the US attack, a senior provincial governor was quoted by the IRNA news agency as saying.

Iran, which ramped up oil output in the run-up to the February 28 launch of the war by Israel and the US, has continued to ship oil at a rate of 1.1 million to 1.5 million barrels per day, TankerTracker.com and Kpler data show.

Much of the oil shipped from Iran via Kharg goes to China, the top global crude importer.

Iranian Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei, who replaced his slain father, has said the strategic waterway should remain closed as a tool of pressure.

Amid Trump's attempts to secure the strait, India's shipping ministry yesterday said two Indian-flagged tankers carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) have safely passed through the strait.

The tankers "Shivalik" and "Nanda Devi", carrying around 92,700 metric tonnes of LPG, are expected to arrive in the next couple of days and are bound for the western ports of Mundra and Kandla.

Amid the raging war, oil prices have surged by 40 percent.

The strike could be a "turning point" with both sides escalating in a bid to force a surrender, said analyst Vali Nasr of John Hopkins University in a social media post. "The end will likely not be Iranian backing off but inflaming the Gulf."

On Friday, Trump described Iran as "totally defeated" and in search of a deal he was unwilling to consider. According to the Pentagon, the US and Israel have hit more than 15,000 targets in Iran in two weeks.

However, Iran showed no sign of backing down. According to reports, Iran has launched missile and drone attacks against at least 10 of its neighbours.

Washington's embassy in Iraq was hit by a drone yesterday, security sources told AFP, the second time it has been targeted since February 28, when the United States and Israel attacked Iran.

Blasts were heard over Jerusalem yesterday after the army detected missiles fired from Iran.

Qatar said it intercepted two missiles over the capital's downtown area yesterday and evacuated key areas after blasts were heard in Doha.

Meanwhile, two drones targeted an airbase in Kuwait housing US military staff, injuring Kuwaiti personnel and causing damage.

Strikes continued in Iran, with heavy blasts shaking Tehran late Friday and local media reporting strikes in several provinces through yesterday.

At least 15 people were killed when a missile strike hit a factory in the central Iranian city of Isfahan yesterday, the semi-official Fars news agency said.

There were workers inside the factory, which produces heaters and refrigerators, when the strike hit, Fars reported.

Iran's health ministry says more than 1,200 people have been killed by US and Israeli attacks, numbers that could not be independently verified. Up to 3.2 million people have been displaced inside Iran, according to the UN refugee agency.

In another development, the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas urged Iran to refrain from targeting Gulf neighbours, many of which have supported its cause. It was a rare breach between the allies, though Hamas affirmed Tehran's right to defend itself.

Meanwhile, US media raised the possibility of a ground invasion, with the New York Times and Wall Street Journal reporting the Pentagon had dispatched the Japan-based amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli to the region with some 2,500 Marines.

CNN said it was a Marine Expeditionary Unit -- which typically includes some 2,500 Marines and sailors -- that was being deployed.

The Journal said the request for the additional Marines was made by US Central Command, which is responsible for US troops in the Middle East, and approved by Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth.

Reza Pahlavi, the US-based son of Iran's last shah, said on social media yesterday that he was ready to lead a transition "as soon as the Islamic Republic falls".

USTR seeks

FROM PAGE 1

capacity as many of the factories, particularly the garment factories, had shuttered over the last few years for dearth of work orders from the international clothing retailers and brands.

The USTR's claim of Bangladesh giving subsidy on exports will also be difficult for them to prove, as three years ago the government has significantly reduced the subsidy as part of the preparations for graduation from the least-developed country bracket later this year.

The interim government has already amended the law to make it an international standard as per the suggestions of the International Labour Organisation, he added.

Bangladesh is well capable of facing the investigation with strong evidence, said Mostafa Abid Khan, a former member of the Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission with experience in dealing with such matters.

For instance, several years ago, the US claimed that Bangladesh's export of sleeping bags had dramatically increased, eliciting an investigation from the USTR.

Bangladesh could win the case as it produced a substantial amount of strong evidence, Khan said, adding that the US raised the same claim again without evidence the following year.

Although the hearing of the investigation will be government-to-government, the garment sector is ready to help with data and evidence to make a robust case before the USTR, said Mahmud Hasan Khan, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The garment sector does not indulge in overproduction to the extent that it would be a threat to the US's manufacturing sector, he said, adding that Bangladesh does not produce any counterfeit garment items that may violate intellectual property rights.

Jamaat, allies threaten street agitation

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staged a walkout centring on the president's speech.

With the adjourned session set to resume on Sunday, the opposition bloc has reiterated its demand for convening the reform council.

At the briefing, Azad said the government would complete 30 days in office tomorrow.

If it fails to convene, or arrange to convene, the reform council session in line with the July Charter within this period, it will not be forgiven by the nation, he said, adding that the responsibility would rest with the government, including the leader of the House.

The latest election did not reflect the people's voting rights, he said.

While violence was comparatively lower, the polls did not fulfil public aspirations, he said. Nevertheless, the alliance accepted the election in the greater national interest.

Referring to the referendum held on implementing the July Charter, Azad said 70 percent voted "Yes".

A vote in favour of implementing the charter effectively meant a vote for forming the Constitutional Reform Council. Both votes were held on the same day, the results were published together and gazettes were issued accordingly.

It is therefore the government's responsibility to implement the outcome endorsed by the people, he said.

Since the two votes were held on the same day, sessions of both the parliament and the reform council should be convened.

Although BNP lawmakers took oath as members of parliament in line with party decisions, they did not take oath as members of the reform council, which he said indicated a "U-turn" by the party after forming the government.

He termed this a betrayal of the nation and an insult to those who supported the referendum.

The July National Charter was finalised after nearly a year of discussions, dialogues and debates on state reforms, and was signed on October 17 last year.

However, sharp differences later emerged among political parties over the process of its implementation.

Subsequently, an order was issued on November 13 last year -- the same day as the 13th parliamentary election -- setting the timeframe for a referendum on implementing the charter.

According to the order, if the "Yes" vote prevailed, a Constitutional Reform Council comprising winners of the subsequent parliamentary election would be formed, empowered to exercise all authority related to constitutional reforms.

Elected MPs were also required to take separate oaths as members of the council.

As BNP lawmakers did not take such an oath, leaders of the Jamaat-led alliance have alleged that the party is unwilling to implement the July Charter.

At yesterday's briefing, Azad advised the BNP to adopt a more flexible stance on the issue.

Responding to a question about the controversy surrounding the president's speech in parliament, Azad said that after the election of the new Speaker, it had been stated during agenda discussions that no "associate of autocracy" should be allowed to address the House.

Despite this, the commitment was not upheld, he said, adding that the opposition had acted within parliamentary norms, rejecting the BNP's allegation that the walkout amounted to disrespect towards the president.

Instead, he accused the ruling party of "tarnishing parliament and insulting the nation" by allowing such a figure to speak.

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First session of 13th JS to continue till April 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first session of the 13th Jatiya Sangsad will continue until April 30.

The decision was taken at the first meeting of the Business Advisory Committee held in the cabinet room of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday with Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad in the chair.

Leader of the House and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman also attended the meeting.

The meeting discussed the allocation of time and the duration of the first session (first session of 2026) of the 13th parliament to complete its business. It was decided that 50 hours would be allocated for discussion on the president's address.

The meeting finalised that the parliament would sit every day at 3:00pm except on government holidays.

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Prime Minister Tarique Rahman inaugurates the monthly honorarium scheme for imams, muezzins, khatibs and other religious leaders at an event at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Dhaka, Ankara sign MoU on diplomatic training

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Türkiye yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen institutional cooperation in diplomatic training and capacity building, reaffirming their commitment to enhancing bilateral relations.

The MoU was signed between the Diplomacy Academy of Türkiye and the Bangladesh Foreign Service Academy during a bilateral meeting in Ankara, according to a foreign ministry statement.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan led the meeting. Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kabir was also present.

Both sides discussed the full spectrum of bilateral relations between the two countries.

Khalilur highlighted the importance of increasing Turkish investment in Bangladesh and emphasised the potential for expanding exports of skilled Bangladeshi workers to Türkiye.

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'I faced injustice and oppression'

Says journo Anis Alamgir after being released on bail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gazipur*

Journalist Anis Alamgir yesterday claimed that he was treated unjustly and subjected to oppression during his arrest and detention, shortly after being released on bail from jail.

Alamgir was released from Kashimpur Central Jail-2 in Gazipur at 2:35pm following verification of his bail documents that reached the prison on Friday night, said Senior Jail Superintendent Al Mamun.

After his release, he left for Dhaka without speaking to journalists waiting at the prison gate.

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EKUSHEY BOOK FAIR 2026

Book sales worse than pandemic year

Says Prokashok Oikya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prokashok Oikya, an organisation of publishers, yesterday said the overall book sales at this year's Amar Ekushey Book Fair dropped by around 70% compared to last year.

Book sales at the 2025 fair had already dropped by around 60% compared to 2024. The downward trend continued this year, making the situation even worse.

Nearly 90% of the publishers who participated in this year's book fair failed to recover even the initial cost of constructing their stalls, according to them.

The group also said about 30% of the participating publishers sold books worth less than Tk 5,000 during the fair.

They noted that the business situation at this year's fair was worse than during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021.

These figures were presented at a press conference held at the Kabi Shamsur Rahman Hall of Bangla Academy.

At the event, the written statement, on behalf of Prokashok Oikya, was read out by Mahrukh Muhiuddin, publisher of University Press Limited (UPL).

According to the statement, the overall book sales at

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Financial strain mounts on Dhaka city corporations

Revenue slump, rising costs squeeze budgets

DIPAN NANDY

Dhaka's two main civic service providers -- Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) -- are facing mounting financial pressure.

Slow revenue growth compared with rising expenditure, rapid payments of large development bills, controversial project approvals, and questions over administrative decisions have raised concerns about their financial management.

Officials say the growing strain on funds has slowed development work, delayed contractor payments, and made it difficult to maintain regular civic services.

In DSCC's case, the situation has reportedly reached a stage where the corporation had to borrow money to pay salaries and bonuses.

Local government experts say the crisis stems from an imbalance between income and expenditure, unplanned project approvals, and a lack of transparency in spending.

Without quick structural reforms, they warn, the corporations may face a deeper crisis in providing urban services.

DSCC: LOANS TAKEN TO PAY SALARIES

DSCC officials confirmed that employees' salaries and bonuses were paid last month through borrowed funds, and it remains uncertain whether next month's wages can be paid from regular revenue.

Administrator Abdus Salam has already sought government assistance.

"The pressure on the corporation's funds has increased due to lower-than-expected revenue collection and the rapid payment of large development bills," he said.

Revenue collection has declined significantly following political instability in 2024. Monthly collections, once between Tk 70 crore and Tk 100 crore, crossed Tk 100 crore in only two months during this period. In February 2026, an election month, revenue dropped sharply to Tk 42 crore.

DSCC's revenue peaked at Tk 1,061 crore in FY 2023–24 but fell to Tk 792 crore in FY 2024–25. Expenditures, however, continued to rise.

In the first eight months of FY 2025–26, DSCC earned Tk 625 crore, while operational expenses stood at Tk 418 crore and development spending reached Tk 520 crore -- far exceeding income.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

If we proceed with the numerous work orders issued indiscriminately by the previous administration, the city corporation will collapse. That cannot be allowed under any circumstances.

ABDUS SALAM, DSCC administrator

If the situation becomes difficult at any point, we will consider the next steps. If a serious problem arises, we may seek government assistance. However, we hope that such a situation will not arise.

SHAFIQUL ISLAM KHAN, DNCC administrator

Five more city administrators appointed

All of them BNP leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed BNP leaders as administrators to five more city corporations.

The Local Government Division under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives issued a gazette notification on the appointments yesterday.

According to the notifications, Bilkis Akhter Jahan Shirin has been appointed administrator of Barishal City Corporation, Mahfuzur Rahman of Rajshahi City Corporation, Rukunuzzaman Rokon of Mymensingh City Corporation, Mahfuz Un Nabi Chowdhury of Rangpur City Corporation, and Md Yusuf Molla of Cumilla City Corporation.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Weak reading culture holding back book industry

Speakers also cite limited distribution, poor library systems at Star Itihas Adda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's book industry is facing challenges such as weak reading habits, limited distribution, and poor library systems, while many quality books fail to reach readers due to inadequate promotion and Dhaka-centric marketing, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

They urged stronger libraries, better distribution networks, and greater government support to connect readers with good books.

The remarks were made at the 15th session of The Daily Star Itihas Adda, titled "When will the shortage of good books end?", held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

Publishing expert Badiuddin Nazir said the country's book industry is struggling due to weak reading habits, poor library infrastructure, and a limited book market.

"There was never a golden age of book sales in Bangladesh. Even today, most books sell only 100 to 300 copies," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Speakers at the 15th session of The Daily Star Itihas Adda held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Standard Islami Bank PLC.

SEARCHING FOR MANAGING DIRECTOR

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Flight chaos

FROM PAGE 12

For security concerns, these countries largely closed their airspace, triggering widespread flight cancellations across the region. According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, about 447 of the 895 scheduled flights on migrant-heavy Middle Eastern routes were cancelled until March 13 after the war broke out.

At least 20 people were killed and over 200 injured in the Gulf countries by Iranian attacks. Of them, at least four Bangladeshis were killed and eight others wounded in the Gulf where an estimated 60 lakh Bangladeshis live and send much-needed foreign currency home.

The Bangladesh government has said its first priority amid the war is protection of its citizens in the Middle East is the first priority. The foreign ministry has already spoken with the envoys of the Gulf countries in Dhaka as well as the officials in the Gulf countries seeking to support the Bangladeshi migrants.

Many of the migrants' visas might have expired, while jobs of some are also being partially affected.

A good number of hotels and shopping complexes near the US bases in the Gulf are closed, fearing missiles or drone attacks by Iran. Even though the attacks are intercepted, the debris of the missiles or drones falling on civilian areas causes fatalities.

Many of the executives also started working from home like that of Covid period amid security concerns.

Contacted, Bangladesh Ambassador to Bahrain, Rais Hasan Sarower, said there is a sense of fear amid attacks, but authorities regularly alert the people well ahead of time so that they can remain in safe place. "We have planned to charter a flight for Bangladesh, but its fare would be high and it will need at least 200 passengers. We have notified it to the migrants who want to go home, but we have not yet received enough response," he said.

An official at the Bangladesh mission in Qatar said there are flights from Doha to Dhaka, but the number is far below the usual four flights per day.

"The number of Dhaka-bound passengers is usually a few times higher during Eid, but this time it is the opposite," he said.

In Lebanon, where Israel is conducting targeted attacks on the Hezbollah and Shia-dominated areas, there is no way for the Bangladeshis to return home on leave this Eid.

In the suburb of Beirut, several thousand Bangladeshis, among others, have been affected by the attacks.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, Abdul Karim, president of Lebanon Probashi Worker Union in Beirut, said the Bangladeshis are not even thinking of going home at this time. "They are worried about whether they can sustain their jobs and what the impact of the war will be."

A foreign ministry official said the Bangladesh government will support migrant workers in any way it can to ensure their safety. "If needed, we will arrange shelter centres and food. We are not yet thinking of any repatriation, but will do so in coordination with international organisations if required."

Matiur

FROM PAGE 12

board, announced the newly formed committee.

ASM Shahidullah Khan, chairman of the New Age editorial board, was elected vice-president, and Altamash Kabir, publisher of daily Sangbad, was elected treasurer.

The executive members are AK Azad, publisher of Samakal; Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of Prothom Alo; Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star; Tasmima Hossain, editor of Ittefaq; AMM Bahauddin, editor of Inqilab; Dewan Hanif Mahmud, editor of Bonik Barta; Mozammel Haque, editor of Karatoa; MA Malek, editor of Azadi; Ramiz Uddin Chowdhury, editor of Purbokone; and Nasim Manzur, publisher of The Financial Express.

Rajshahi District Administration launches an anti-mosquito drive at Gangapara canal near Baya Bridge in Paba upazila yesterday. The programme, aimed at preventing mosquito-borne diseases, was, among others, attended by Land Minister Mizanur Rahman Minu.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

LOCOMOTIVE SHORTAGE

Only one pair of Eid special trains to run from Ctg

SIFAYET ULLAH, *Ctg*

A severe shortage of locomotives has forced Bangladesh Railway (BR) to keep Eid special train services from Chattogram to a minimum for the second consecutive year, causing suffering to home-goers.

Despite high demand during Eid-ul-Fitr, only one pair of special trains will run from Chattogram this year -- on the Chattogram–Chandpur route -- similar to last year.

Railway officials said BR could not add more trains ahead of Eid due to a severe shortage of locomotives.

In 2024, BR operated four pairs of Eid special trains from Chattogram -- one on the Chattogram–Mymensingh route, two on the Chattogram–Chandpur route, and one on the Chattogram–Cox's Bazar route.

Last year, however, the number was sharply reduced due to the same shortage.

Elderly passengers, patients and many women often prefer trains over buses as they are considered safer and less physically demanding for long journeys.

Commuters said the limited service will cause hardship for homebound passengers ahead of Eid.

Tasmia Afroz, a resident of Cox's Bazar who regularly travels on the Chattogram–Cox's Bazar route,

said passenger pressure on the route rises sharply during Eid.

"I heard no Eid special train will run on this route this year. If that happens, it will be very difficult to get tickets and travel home," she said.

The limited service is also expected to increase pressure on regular trains, making tickets harder to secure during the holiday rush. Many travellers may be forced to take buses.

Abdul Karim, 68, a resident of Chandpur who frequently travels by train, said long bus journeys are uncomfortable at his age. "Trains are safer and more convenient for elderly people, patients and women. But if there are not enough trains during Eid, we will have no choice but to travel by bus," he said.

Tarek Imran, deputy chief operating superintendent of BR said, "this limited train service from Chattogram will increase pressure on existing trains during the Eid rush."

"We asked the mechanical department to allocate locomotives to run additional Eid trains, but they could not meet our demand."

Mizanur Rahman, chief power controller of BR's East Zone, said around 119 locomotives are needed daily to operate scheduled services across the region. "However, only around 75–77 engines are currently available," he said.

Worker dies after falling from building

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

A construction worker died after falling from the roof of an under-construction building in Rajshahi city yesterday morning.

The deceased, identified as Sabbir, 27, was a resident of the Malda Colony area under Rajshahi City.

The accident occurred around 10:30am behind City Garage in the Shalbagan area under Chandrima Police Station.

According to the victim's elder brother, Shakil Ahmed, the duo were working together on the roof of the under-construction building when his brother fell.

"While lifting a table, Sabbir suddenly slipped and fell onto the roof of a two-storey building behind it and passed," he said.

Building owner Ismail Hossain said he was at the market when he heard about the incident.

Confirming the cause of the incident after an on-site investigation and statements from locals, Sub-Inspector Md Ziaur of Chandrima Police Station said that the body was sent to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

Two missing men found dead in waterbodies

STAR REPORT

Two missing individuals were found dead in waterbodies in two districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Noakhali, police recovered the body of Ranjit Kuri, 53, from the Sadar upazila, two days after he went missing.

Locals spotted a body floating in a pond in the Gonai Ramshankar area around 12:00pm and informed the police.

Meanwhile, in Khulna, police recovered the body of a rickshaw puller from a river, three days after he went missing while bathing.

The deceased, Hanif Sheikh, of the No 4 Ghat area, was found floating near the Jailkhana Ferry Ghat around dawn. His body was later sent to Khulna Medical College Hospital for an autopsy, police said.

Locals said they first spotted the body after sehri and informed police, who then alerted river police. Officers later recovered the body and handed it over to the family.

Teen held over rape in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

A teenager was detained yesterday in connection with the rape of a 13-year-old girl in Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila.

The accused, a 15-year-old boy, was beaten by locals and handed over to police after the incident, confirmed Abhaynagar Police Station Officer-in-Charge SM Nuruzzaman.

The incident took place around 8:30am yesterday in Kapashhati village of the upazila.

According to locals and police sources, finding the victim alone in her house, the boy entered the house and raped her. Hearing her screams, family members and neighbours rushed to the scene.

When the accused tried to flee, locals caught him and beat him up before handing him over to the police. Police went to the spot and took the accused into custody.

Weak reading culture holding

FROM PAGE 3

The country has failed to build a strong reading culture because libraries in schools and communities are largely absent, he added.

"If we want good books, we must first create readers from childhood," he said.

Essayist and author Ahmad Mazhar said the industry suffers from weak connections between writers, publishers, and readers, as well as an ineffective distribution system.

"Even good books often fail because publishers do not think about readers, and bookstores cannot properly sell or return books," he said.

He said building a reading culture requires professional publishing, effective distribution, and well-managed libraries.

"Without connecting readers to books and libraries, even books worth millions will not reach the right audience," he said.

Addressing the shortage of good books in Bangladesh, Faisal Ahmed of Dhoritri Rokhhay Amra (DHORA) said many excellent works remain unnoticed because promotion and marketing focus on popular authors rather than quality writing.

He called for better support for authors and stronger book distribution systems.

"If the government and publishers properly support good books and authors, the shortage will end, and readers will benefit," he said.

He also called for reforms in state institutions and literary awards to encourage living authors rather than honouring them only after death.

Gronthik Prokashon Publisher Razzak Rubel said many good books are being published but fail to reach readers outside Dhaka due to weak distribution and marketing.

He also highlighted the difficulties faced by publishers and authors, including low cash flow, high production costs, and a lack of professional editing and promotion.

"Even when excellent books exist, they often remain unnoticed because of weak support systems and poor library networks," he said.

Rubel called for stronger public libraries, better government support, and greater participation in international book fairs.

"If distribution and promotion improve, good books can reach more readers and the publishing industry can grow," he said.

The event was coordinated by The Daily Star journalist Emran Mahfuz.

Book sales worse than pandemic

FROM PAGE 3

this year's fair declined by about 70% compared with other normal years. Political and economic instability, along with the fair being held during the month of Ramadan, resulted in lower visitor turnout, causing significant financial losses for most publishers.

The publishers said they had participated in this year's fair despite anticipating business losses, mainly as a gesture of support and cooperation for the newly elected government. However, the lack of expected visitor turnout resulted in financial setbacks for most publishers.

The platform also said the commonly cited figure of Tk 30-40 crore in book sales during the fair each year does not reflect reality, and the actual sales are much lower.

To sustain the publishing industry, the organisation placed several demands before the government. These include purchasing 300 to 500 copies of at least one quality book from each participating publisher to support those who suffered losses, increasing the government's budget for book procurement, and arranging professional training related to publishing.

Among those present at the press conference were Monirul Haque of Anannya Prokashoni, Milon Kanti Nath of Anupam Prokashoni, Mahbubur Rahman of Adarsha Prokashoni, and Syed Zakir Hossain of Adorn Publication, along with other leaders of Prokashok Oikya.

First session

FROM PAGE 3

A total of 468 questions were received for the session, including eight for the prime minister and 460 for other ministers. Besides, 27 notices were submitted under Rule 71 for call-attention notices.

Committee members who also took part in the meeting were Opposition Leader Md Shafiqur Rahman, Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Local Government Minister Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed, Chief Whip Md Nurul Islam, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman, ATM Azharul Islam, Opposition Chief Whip Md Nahid Islam, and Muhammad Naushad Zamir.

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GD-597

Beyond the panic at the petrol pump

AYESHA TARIQ

The Energy Minister met the Iranian Ambassador on March 10, and reportedly secured a safe-passage arrangement for Bangladeshi-flagged vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. The deal does not eliminate operational risk, but it opens a channel that did not exist a week ago.

Over the past two weeks, there have been more questions about Bangladesh's energy situation than about any other topic in recent memory. In very plain terms, people want to know whether they should be afraid. Anxiety without information is dangerous, and right now, fear is outrunning the facts. The picture that emerges from the data is more nuanced than what most people think.

The petrol sold in Bangladesh is 100 percent produced domestically, from local refineries processing condensate from domestic gas fields and crude, according to BPC officials. About half of octane is also produced locally, with a small share of imported components sourced from outside the Middle East. Even the supplemental petrol that is imported comes primarily from Singapore, not the Gulf. The fuel that most people are queuing for is not at risk.

Yet demand for it has nearly doubled. In the first days of March, daily petrol demand surged from a normal 1,300 tonnes to over 2,300 tonnes. Octane went from 1,100 to over 2,000. Diesel, which actually faces import risk, jumped from 12,000 to 25,000 tonnes a day. None of this was real consumption but people are pulling forward future purchases. Multiply that across thousands of vehicle owners and the system buckles under demand that does not exist. The government's rationing measures are not a signal that fuel is running out. They are designed to break the hoarding cycle before it creates the very shortage people fear.

There is no question that Bangladesh remains vulnerable where it matters most. The country imports 95 percent of its oil demand and 30 percent of its gas demand. LNG, which feeds the power grid and fertiliser plants, has no meaningful storage and operates on a tight delivery cycle. The core exposures in crude and LNG remain concentrated and Hormuz-dependent.

The questions then turn to diesel and furnace oil, which is critical for our agricultural and industrial sectors. The answer requires looking at the actual import data rather than the headlines. Diesel, which accounts for 65 percent of total fuel use, comes primarily from Singapore and Malaysia. That said, refineries in Singapore and Malaysia are also curbing production, as crude feedstock from the Middle East start to drop.

The bigger concern is what happens if this war drags on. Gulf producers who have already curtailed output will eventually run out of storage and be forced to shut in production entirely. A prolonged conflict means that even if safe passage is restored, there may be little left to ship.

There are also risks building quietly that most people are not yet tracking. Bangladesh's long-term LNG deals are indexed to oil prices on a three-month lag, similar to other South Asian countries. The full cost of $90-plus Brent will not hit the LNG import bill until June, 2026. The fiscal arithmetic gets significantly worse from the second quarter onward, regardless of whether the strait reopens this month.

Bangladesh Bank faces a balancing act between defending the taka and supporting growth. Remittances have been a genuine bright spot, with $3.17 billion in January 2026 alone, up 45 percent year-on-year. That is a buffer most import-dependent economies do not have. But a sustained oil price shock will erode it. The central bank should resist the temptation to cut rates prematurely. Defending the currency and preserving reserves matters more right now than stimulating credit.

The Energy Minister met the Iranian Ambassador on March 10, and reportedly secured a safe-passage arrangement for Bangladeshi-flagged vessels through the Strait of Hormuz. The deal does not eliminate operational risk, but it opens a channel that did not exist a week ago.

The United States has now granted a temporary waiver of sanctions on Russian crude oil. However, Bangladesh's only refinery, built in 1968, cannot process heavier Russian crude, so the country would need refined products. Transit from Russia's western ports takes 30 to 40 days, longer with Houthi disruptions in the Red Sea. As a medium-term diversification option, it is worth pursuing. An immediate solution does not exist. Saudi Arabia's Yanbu port on the Red Sea is a faster alternative, with tankers that could reach Chittagong in 10 to 14 days.

For anyone tracking where this goes, there are a handful of indicators that matter more than the rest. The most important is the Hormuz reopening timeline. Until there is clarity on that, nothing else stabilises. A short closure is a shock the region absorbs. A prolonged one rewrites the cost structure of everything Bangladesh imports.

We need to watch Brent crude and Asian LNG spot prices more closely. These determine the real cost of every replacement cargo Bangladesh is sourcing right now. If both stay elevated through the second quarter, the import bill grows in ways that pressure reserves and the exchange rate simultaneously.

The US dollar rate and Bangladesh Bank's weekly reserve data are the clearest early warning signals for external stress. Remittances are strong, but a sustained oil price shock is a large force working in the opposite direction. If reserves start sliding and the taka weakens faster than the central bank can manage, that is when the energy crisis becomes a broader economic one.

For the private sector specifically, freight rates and shipping availability deserve attention. Vessels are rerouting. That adds time and cost to supply chains that were already under pressure, and it hits import-dependent manufacturers before the fuel price does.

There is reason for cautious confidence. The government has moved quickly and built a stockpile of 4-6 weeks across various energy categories. Alternative supply routes are active, and diplomatic channels have kept Bangladeshi vessels moving. What keeps this situation under control is what ordinary people do next.

Ayesha Tariq, *CFA is CEO and Co-Founder of MacroVisor, a Dubai-based independent macro research firm.*

CODES TO DECODE

Cyber risks for Bangladesh when balancing great power rivalry

ASHEER SHAH

In the game of strategic balancing, Bangladesh is now navigating between securing energy supplies and maintaining geopolitical balance. But Bangladesh has barely examined the security of its energy infrastructure, which is heavily dependent on operational technology (OT) and industrial control systems (ICS).

The Bangladesh e-Government Computer Incident Response Team, the national frontline against cyber threats, was established in 2016 following the Bangladesh Bank cyber heist. Alarmingly, the last alert from BGD e-GOV CIRT was issued on December 9, 2025 and focused on a scam campaign. The agency has remained largely absent during critical moments such as the national polls and the ongoing US–Israel–Iran tensions.

On the geopolitical front, the Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury met with US Ambassador, Brent T Christensen on Wednesday, and requested approval from the US to import fuel oil from Russia. The Finance Minister seeks a similar temporary waiver like India, which allows India to buy Russian oil for 30 days. The smartest decision would have been to maximise capacity utilisation of the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline. This would allow Dhaka to enjoy Russian oil supply through India, keeping it distant from the longstanding US-Russia rivalry and the current US-Israel-Iran conflict.

From a crisis management perspective, seeking Russian oil directly only tangles Bangladesh further into deep geopolitical conflicts. Alliances with Russia could bring a range of cyberattacks targeting the OT and ICS systems at Bangladesh's energy infrastructure, notably Eastern Refinery Limited and the Moheshkhali Floating LNG Terminal.

In the latest threat advisory published by the Data Security Council of India (DSCI), over 150 pro-Palestinian hacktivist groups targeted Indian critical infrastructure during 2023–2024, as well as in 2025, with more than 4,000 cyberattacks recorded. Among these groups, one is reportedly claimed to be a Bangladeshi hacktivist group named "Mysterious Team Bangladesh." Even though Bangladesh has not been directly involved in war against Israel, this Bangladeshi-origin hacktivist group has already launched attacks on Indian and Israeli infrastructure. The group launched over 828 cyberattacks between 2022 and 2023 alone. India and Israel sit at the top of the group's target list, with 34 percent of attacks directed at India and 18.1 percent at Israel.

Mysterious Team Bangladesh has also claimed responsibility for a series of attacks launched at US military-linked firms in June 2025, following the escalation of the US-Israel-Iran 12-day war. These attacks by a Bangladeshi non-state actor place Bangladesh's digital infrastructure under immense risk, especially its digital energy infrastructure, from Israeli, Indian, and US non-state cyber counterparts.

Bangladesh's energy infrastructure, most notably Eastern Refinery Limited and the Moheshkhali Floating LNG Terminal, is heavily dependent on OT and ICS. Several operational functions at these facilities are completely automated. These sites could become prime targets for opposing hacker groups from the West, Israel, and India, today or tomorrow. The question remains: is BGD e-GOV CIRT prepared with a proper incident response mechanism and crisis management plan? In simple terms, it is not.

BGD e-Gov CIRT must move immediately from passive monitoring to active defence. First, it should launch a national cybersecurity hackathon focused specifically on OT and ICS vulnerabilities in energy infrastructures. Ethical hackers, universities and engineers should be invited to test and hack into the systems and identify weaknesses so that these systems can be patched quickly. Second, every employee working at Eastern Refinery Limited and the Moheshkhali LNG terminal must undergo intensive behavioural cybersecurity training, particularly on phishing and social engineering, which remain the most common entry points for cyber intrusions. Strict operational discipline must be introduced inside these facilities. Personal and work devices must be completely separated, personal phones should not be allowed inside control rooms, and employees should use dedicated secure devices for work. Finally, BGD e-Gov CIRT must establish dedicated 24/7 cyber crisis teams for these two strategic energy sites, continuously monitoring threats, coordinating with plant operators and responding immediately to any abnormal digital activity. Even if we can successfully balance between the US and Russia by receiving oil from India and China, we are completely on our own when it comes to protecting our energy infrastructure.

Asheer Shah *is director of Governance and Security Initiative.*

Why Bangladesh should use FDI as a foreign policy strategy

RAHAT AHMED

Bangladesh spends a lot of energy explaining itself, to investors, multilateral lenders, and regional partners. The pitch is always the same: young population, low labour costs, strong export fundamentals. It is accurate and it is almost entirely besides the point. The countries that command respect in economic negotiations are not the ones with the best PowerPoint decks. They are the ones whose absence would cost someone else money.

Consider how leverage actually works in geopolitical and economic negotiations. When Vietnam pushed back on US trade conditions in the mid-2010s, it had something concrete behind it: billions in manufacturing exposure from US and Asian multinationals who needed Vietnamese supply chains to remain stable and open. When India negotiates with the IMF, it does so as a country where global capital has made substantial, illiquid bets. Leverage in diplomacy increasingly follows capital. Countries that have attracted deep, sticky foreign investment — the kind embedded in factories, financial investments, and supply chains with cascading effects — negotiate from a fundamentally different position than countries that are still an after-thought.

Bangladesh is still fighting to get on the radar, not because the opportunities are weak, but because the country's playbook is outdated. Bangladesh attracted FDI equivalent to roughly 0.3 percent of its GDP in 2024, against Vietnam's 4.2 percent and Indonesia's 1.7 percent. The difference reflects a failure of narrative, coordinated outreach, and the feedback loops needed to translate strong fundamentals into opportunities that, over time, compound into policy reform and industrial development.

Bangladesh has largely assumed the fundamentals speak for themselves. They don't. This matters beyond economics. Foreign investment creates stakeholders. Foreign investment is how smaller economies build the relationships that protect them, the leverage that gives them options, and the presence in global supply chains that makes them too costly to ignore. What Bangladesh has lacked is the recognition that attracting investment is not an economic priority with diplomatic benefits.

When a Malaysian conglomerate has a major manufacturing footprint in Bangladesh, the Malaysian government has a direct interest in Bangladesh's political stability and market access. When European investors hold exposure to Bangladeshi bonds or equity, London becomes more attentive to Bangladesh's interests in trade negotiations. Capital does not just flow into a country — it creates relationships and incentives that reshape how counterparties engage.

Bangladesh's diplomatic relationships have historically been underutilised. The relationship with Malaysia is instructive: Bangladesh supplies nearly 40 percent of Malaysia's foreign workforce and received $3.03 billion in remittances from Malaysia in 2024 alone, according to The Daily Star. Yet, Malaysia's cumulative investment position in Bangladesh amounts to roughly $820 million built up over decades. Malaysia extracts labour; Bangladesh extracts remittances. Deepening Malaysian investment in manufacturing, infrastructure, halal supply chains would give Kuala Lumpur a reason to treat Dhaka as a partner rather than a labour supplier.

Bangladesh sits at one of the most strategically significant geographic intersections in Asia between South Asia and Southeast Asia. China, India, Japan, and the United States all have reasons to care about which direction Bangladesh chooses to face. That is genuine leverage. But leverage is only real when activated. Attracting capital from multiple competing powers creates the balanced exposure that gives a small country room to manoeuvre. Dependency on any single partner erodes that room. Diversified investment builds it.

The US tariff episode last year illustrated this gap in real time. When Bangladesh faced significant new tariffs on garment exports, what went unmobilised were the US corporate interests that stood to lose alongside it. Walmart, Target, and Gap source billions from Bangladeshi factories, and each has Washington lobbying operations that Bangladesh cannot match. BGMEA and the government had a ready-made coalition of US companies whose interests aligned precisely with Bangladesh's. That coalition was barely activated. Bangladesh negotiated virtually alone.

Foreign corporate presence is not just an economic input. It is a political asset and countries that understand this build their investment strategies accordingly.

The BNP government's 10 million jobs mandate creates a political opening to make this case domestically. Jobs require capital, capital requires foreign investment, and foreign investment requires institutional reforms that have been deferred for too long. What has been missing is the urgency to match the rhetoric.

Capital that does not come to Bangladesh goes somewhere else. To Vietnam. To Indonesia. To Pakistan. Every dollar that builds a factory elsewhere is a dollar that does not create a stakeholder in Bangladesh's stability. The competition for foreign investment is not abstract. It is a competition for geopolitical relevance. FDI is a seat at the table, side by side with the countries that set the terms.

Rahat Ahmed *is the founder and managing partner of Anchorless Bangladesh. He is also the co-founder of B/deshi, a global diaspora network connecting Bangladeshi professionals.*

The Daily Star
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Ripple effects of fuel squeeze

Clumsy execution of fuel rationing causing crises

Every year, as Eid-ul-Fitr approaches, millions of people leave the congested capital of Dhaka for their ancestral homes. Even in normal times, the annual exodus is a logistical nightmare. This year, however, the journey faces an additional obstacle: a severe fuel shortage that has left buses hesitant to leave the terminals.

The origins of the squeeze lie far beyond Bangladesh's borders, of course. The US-Israeli attacks on Iran and Tehran's subsequent retaliation have sent tremors through global energy markets, delaying the arrival of crucial fuel shipments at the port of Chattogram. Faced with a genuine supply shortfall, the new government responded with rigid fuel rationing: motorcycles are now limited to two litres a day, private cars to ten. More importantly, long-haul buses have seen their allocations drastically reduced, according to a report in *Samakal*.

Even the announcement of strict quotas set off a rush at filling stations. The government initially cut octane and petrol supplies to filling stations by 25 percent before easing the restriction to 15 percent in an attempt to stabilise the market. The adjustment eased the immediate crisis slightly. The constraint is not only the volume of fuel available but also the time required to obtain it. Drivers who once spent ten minutes filling their tanks now wait in queues for up to three hours. Fuel rationing has begun to weigh on the country's supply chains. In the northern agricultural hub of Bogura, the cost of transporting 10 to 12 tonnes of vegetables to Chattogram has jumped from Tk 25,000 to Tk 35,000 in a matter of weeks, according to *Prothom Alo*. Fares for shipments to Dhaka's Karwan Bazar have risen by Tk 9,000 per trip.

The economic ripple effects have spread quickly. In construction, the price of steel rods has already begun to climb. The garment sector—the lifeblood of Bangladesh's foreign exchange earnings—depends on a constant flow of covered vans transporting goods to Chattogram port. Exporters say pre-Eid freight costs have risen by as much as Tk 6,000 per van.

The official response, we must say, has been heavy on reassurance and light on economic realism. Ministers have offered comforting promises that fuel will soon flow more freely and prices will remain unchanged. Rationing may indeed be unavoidable during a severe supply shock, but applying it bluntly across every sector is an unforced error. If the government hopes to prevent a surge in inflation, it must gradually introduce monitored exemptions for daily essentials and export shipments.

To be fair to the government, this crisis was largely inherited. No administration would welcome geopolitical turmoil and delayed fuel shipments just as it assumes office. The fragile energy supply chain and procurement vulnerabilities predate the current leadership. Still, the responsibility now lies with the government to prevent economic paralysis and an inflationary spiral. Extending depot operating hours and prioritising freight transport over private vehicles would be sensible first steps. Attempting to suspend the laws of supply and demand by decree rarely ends well. Panic, after all, is a very poor substitute for fuel.

Stop landfill fires, open waste burning

Poor waste management a major source of Dhaka's air pollution

It is alarming that smoke from burning garbage at the Matuail and Amin Bazar landfills frequently blankets Dhaka's skies, worsening the capital's already severe air pollution. The city regularly ranks among the most polluted in the world, with the average Air Quality Index (AQI) hovering around 200 and occasionally exceeding 600. On the AQI scale, any value above 300 is considered "hazardous," and Savar recorded an AQI of 640 on March 4. These numbers reveal how air pollution has worsened over the years in the absence of proper planning and effective action by successive governments.

At the Matuail landfill—where waste has accumulated for decades—towering mounds of garbage, reaching 50 to 80 feet high at many points, frequently catch fire. According to officials, methane gas trapped within layers of waste often triggers spontaneous fires, sending thick plumes of smoke up into the air. These fires can burn for long periods unless fire service units intervene. The site reportedly emits thousands of kilogrammes of methane every hour. Moreover, along highways going out of Dhaka, waste collectors and traders frequently burn rubbish (especially polythene), releasing large amounts of toxic pollutants. Emissions from brick kilns and older vehicles, along with dust from construction, further worsen air quality.

Last August, the government declared Savar a "degraded airshed," ordered the closure of 106 brick kilns, and also banned open waste burning. However, several brick kilns have reportedly resumed operations after securing court orders to do so, while open waste burning continues. Meanwhile, in January this year, Dhaka's average PM2.5 concentration rose to 193 microgrammes per cubic metre, which is 38 times higher than the WHO's recommended limit of five microgrammes.

The consequences of such unchecked pollution are devastating. The National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital, the country's premier respiratory treatment centre, reportedly remains packed with patients suffering from respiratory illnesses including breathing difficulties, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Hospital data show that the number of patients has been rising steadily in recent years, reaching around 195,000 last year alone. Doctors attribute this surge largely to worsening air pollution.

The situation demands urgent action from the relevant government authorities. They must ensure proper management of landfills, prevent fires by using modern waste treatment technologies, and strictly enforce the ban on open waste burning. At the same time, stronger measures are needed against polluting brick kilns, ageing vehicles, and uncontrolled construction dust. Without immediate and sustained intervention, Dhaka's air pollution will only worsen and continue to threaten the health and wellbeing of its residents.

We need education reforms that actually work

Dr Manzoor Ahmed
is professor emeritus at BRAC University. He was the convener of the consultation committee on primary and non-formal education appointed by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, as well as of the consultation committee on secondary education appointed by the Ministry of Education. Views expressed are his own.

MANZOOR AHMED

People's expectations about real reform in education have been raised by the busy round of meetings and expression of resolve seen in Minister of Education Dr Ehsanul Haque Milon and State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Bobby Hajjaj. The ministers announced a 12-point initial agenda for action, reflecting some of the election promises of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). They have also spoken about controlling rampant corruption in education, bringing students back to the classroom (from coaching centres), and schooling that prepares young people for the world of work.

Each individual objective sounds reasonable and justifiable, but discrete action on each would make for fragmented and partial steps. It may end up being a false remedy for a symptom of a disease rather than for the disease itself.

For example, the near-universal practice of private coaching and tutoring is villainised for making students memorise guidebooks instead of studying textbooks, burdening parents with huge costs, and keeping students away from classrooms. The solution prescribed is to ban or severely restrict private coaching and tutoring. This remedy ignores the fact that coaching centres are the symptoms—the disease is that teaching and learning do not happen in the classroom. Students do not see a good reason to be in the classroom. They feel compelled to rely on coaching to prepare for their exams. Restrictions and bans on coaching have proved difficult to enforce because both suppliers and customers believe it is needed.

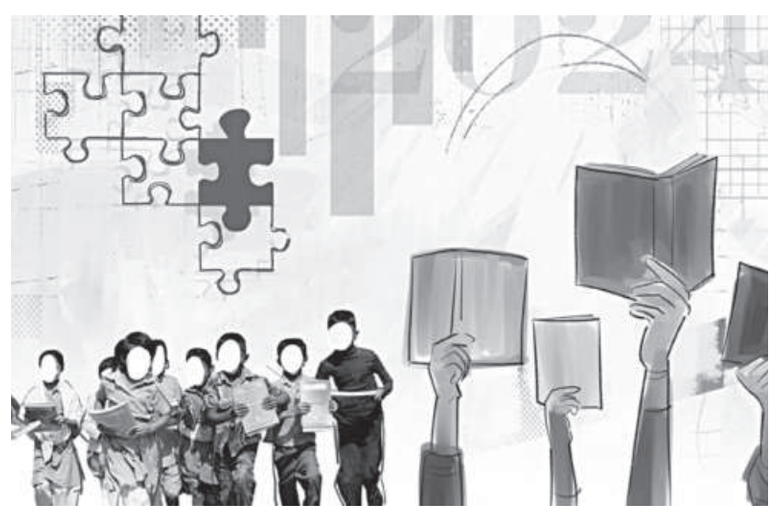
A multifaceted, multi-layered, and holistic approach is necessary to find a workable solution for the problem. Key issues have to be simultaneously addressed related to teachers' preparation and performance, school and classroom management, learning content preparation, learning assessment and exams, and teachers'/schools' interactions with students and parents. The solution has to work for each school and classroom and be supported by the administrative superstructure extending from the ministry, directorate, education boards, curriculum board, teachers' training colleges, and field-level administration.

Why does the miserably poor quality of instruction in mainstream school education—excepting the elite high-cost English medium schools and the selective Bangla medium ones—persist in Bangladesh and much of South Asia? Despite many development projects with international assistance carried out over the last four or five decades, studies point to a critical failure: the power dynamics of policymaking and decision-making by politicians and administrators who fail to prioritise inclusive and equitable education of acceptable quality for all children.

A further probe into the non-action or misguided action of decision-makers suggests a common deficiency, which is the fragmented, partial, incoherent, and non-holistic response to problems. This highlights the absence of a systems approach which is a scientific method for designing, implementing, and evaluating teaching-learning as an integrated whole. The aim is to optimise educational outcomes by analysing and working on interconnected components—inputs (students, teachers, infrastructure), processes (instructional methods, assessment of learning, management of teachers), and outputs (student performance and learning outcomes). Feedback loops allow for corrections in the system. This systems approach ensures goal-oriented, efficient, and learner-centric instruction that produces the learning outcomes.

Political neglect and system incoherence are evident in the non-action and wrong actions following the adoption of the 2010 National Education Policy. Instead of a systematic effort and coordinated work plan to implement the policy, development projects and activities were undertaken in a fragmented manner for sub-sectors without an integrated view or time-bound goals regarding quality, equity, and inclusion in education. The lack of political vision and leadership has been filled by bureaucrats in the two ministries by default. The bureaucrats by their nature are inclined to protect the status quo. This double failure has landed us in today's education debacle. Can repetition be avoided? Some early signs are not that promising.

Observers have been arguing that school education—pre-primary to pre-university—should be put under one ministerial jurisdiction. Thereby, an integrated plan for quality, universal school education can be planned and implemented to meet the demand for basic competencies in our youth. It seemed this logic had won when a minister and a state minister were appointed for the whole education sector. But now the tasks have been redistributed and the state minister has been placed in charge of the old Ministry of Primary and Mass Education. Is this a retreat to the old order and a vindication of Parkinson's law (which, in essence, says that work and staff keep expanding in a bureaucracy)?



FILE VISUAL: **REHNUMA PROSHOON**

Another problematic move concerns scholarship examinations. High-stakes public examinations after Class 5 and Class 8, respectively, have been discontinued. But there is a lobby to retain the scholarship examinations at these levels based on the argument that it is an inducement for better student performance. This may be so for those who are already good performers in a class, as only these 10-20 percent students are sent for the scholarship exams. But teachers' time and effort are diverted to these students at the cost of the remaining 80 percent of pupils who need more help from the teachers. Regular classes are halted in schools where the scholarship exams are held. Well-heeled parents of scholarship examinees support these exams; they are usually more educated, better-off, and more vocal than the parents of the disadvantaged majority.

These are instances of a bureaucratic mindset that has prevailed while sacrificing the best interests of children and education. A holistic systems thinking approach has been absent. The highly centralised management structure and the personnel there, mired in the routine tasks of regulating and controlling a large system from the capital, are not equipped in terms of training or temperament to work out and implement a major educational reform agenda.

Two consultative committees on primary and non-formal education and secondary education, respectively, were appointed by the interim government. Based on research, field visits, and stakeholder consultation, the reports of the two committees presented a critical review of school education in the country and recommendations for reform, indicating necessary short-, medium-, and long-term actions. Both reports examined the causes of past reform failures and suggested essential steps for an effective new initiative. But it is clear that reforms are not likely to take place if the task is left to the current administrative apparatus and actors as an additional duty. The reports proposed that a high-level task force should be appointed to take education reforms forward. Other subsectors of education—such as higher education, vocational-technical education, madrasa education, higher professional and technology education—also deserve to have their respective task forces. Joint strategies for preparing young children for school are needed from the ministries of education and women and children affairs.

At the same time, a comprehensive five-year education sector plan and a ten-year perspective plan need to be developed, guided by a dedicated education development council. The sector plan should combine and integrate the various sub-sector plans prepared by respective task forces. The task forces and the council may be transformed eventually into a permanent statutory education commission. These are the necessary next steps for launching an education reform effort that may have a better chance to succeed.

How tobacco companies target schoolchildren

Mohammad Ihtesham Hassan
is senior research associate at the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC).

MOHAMMAD IHTESHAM HASSAN

Targeting young children to gain future smokers is a longstanding tactic of tobacco producers globally. One of the most effective ways of doing this is by ensuring that cigarettes and other tobacco products are sold near schools, making it so that children are repeatedly exposed to tobacco branding and imagery, making smoking seem familiar, normal, and accessible.

Bangladesh is paying an enormous price for the tobacco epidemic. At least 1.61 lakh people die every year from tobacco-related diseases in the country, according to the National Heart Foundation of Bangladesh. A study by Economics for Health and Institute of Health Economics, University of Dhaka found that the total economic cost of tobacco use is Tk 87,544 crore, nearly double the amount the government earns in tobacco tax revenue.

However, the burden is not only reflected in deaths and economic losses; it is also present in the steady exposure of new generations to tobacco products. Among teenagers especially, smoking is often associated with adulthood, rebellion, or looking "cool." Children and adolescents are more susceptible to visual cues, branding, and product placement. This is what makes the retail environment around schools so important.

Among teenagers especially, smoking is often associated with adulthood, rebellion, or looking "cool." Children and adolescents are more susceptible to visual cues, branding, and product placement. This is what makes the retail environment around schools so important.

Historically, there has been very limited public data on the actual situation around Bangladeshi schools. The evidence that does exist has long pointed to a serious problem. A 2016 study by the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins found that around 90 percent of selling points within a 100-metre radius of 110 schools in Dhaka sold tobacco products. In 2018, Dhaka Ahsania Mission conducted a study across 157 schools and 23 playgrounds nationwide and found that about 90.5 percent had nearby vendors selling some form of tobacco. Most of these vendors were also advertising tobacco products and selling single cigarettes, making tobacco even more accessible.

More recently in November 2025, a study by the Power and Participation Research Centre on 121 schools and their surroundings in four divisions found 666 tobacco points of sale, averaging 5.5 outlets within 100 metres of each school. The density was slightly higher in urban areas than in rural ones. Cigarettes were found to be almost universally available, sold at 99.1 percent of all surveyed outlets. Flavoured cigarettes were available at 84.4 percent of points of sale surrounding schools, with slightly higher availability in urban areas.

The problem is not only that tobacco is being sold, but also how it is being made visible and attractive. Overall, 71 percent of outlets openly displayed tobacco products, often at a child's eye level. Placement near candy, sweets, or toys was also widespread. Some outlets even allowed customers to reach out and take cigarette packs themselves, while others used branded display units. Dummy or empty cigarette packs were the most common advertising material, followed by stickers, posters, and branded price lists.

Bangladesh is a party to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and has taken several legislative steps to regulate tobacco use, marketing, and consumption. The country enacted the Smoking and Using of Tobacco Products (Control) Act, 2005 and later amended it in 2013 to strengthen restrictions on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship, expand smoke-free public spaces, and introduce larger pictorial health warnings. A new amendment came into effect, issued by the interim government, on December 30 last year. The amended ordinance explicitly prohibits any person from selling or causing the sale of tobacco or tobacco products within a 100-metre radius of educational institutions such as schools and colleges. It also reinforces the ban on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship while introducing broader smoke-free provisions, including bans on smoking and e-cigarettes in all public places and public transport.

On March 12, the ordinance was placed before parliament. The onus is now on the new government to ensure its passage into law and, subsequently, its effective enforcement. If we are serious about protecting our children, then we cannot allow schools to remain ringed by tobacco branding.

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Continued use of post-bail 'shown arrested' cases risks repeating past abuses

David Bergman
is a journalist who has written about Bangladesh for many years. His X handle is @TheDavidBergman.

DAVID BERGMAN

It is worth recalling that at his first press conference following BNP's election victory, Bangladesh's new prime minister, Tarique Rahman, was asked the following question: "Many people in Bangladesh remain supporters of the Awami League. What kind of reconciliation should there be for them?" His answer was simple: "By ensuring the rule of law."

Well, about one month into his premiership, the government's continued reliance on "shown arrested" cases against individuals associated with the Awami League suggests that Rahman's words remain just that—words. The BNP government appears to show little concern for the rule of law when it comes to such detentions.

The government may reasonably argue, as it does, that it needs time to address the injustices it inherited from the past. But proactively taking new decisions that produce further unlawful detentions is something else entirely. It is unjustified and should be strongly criticised.

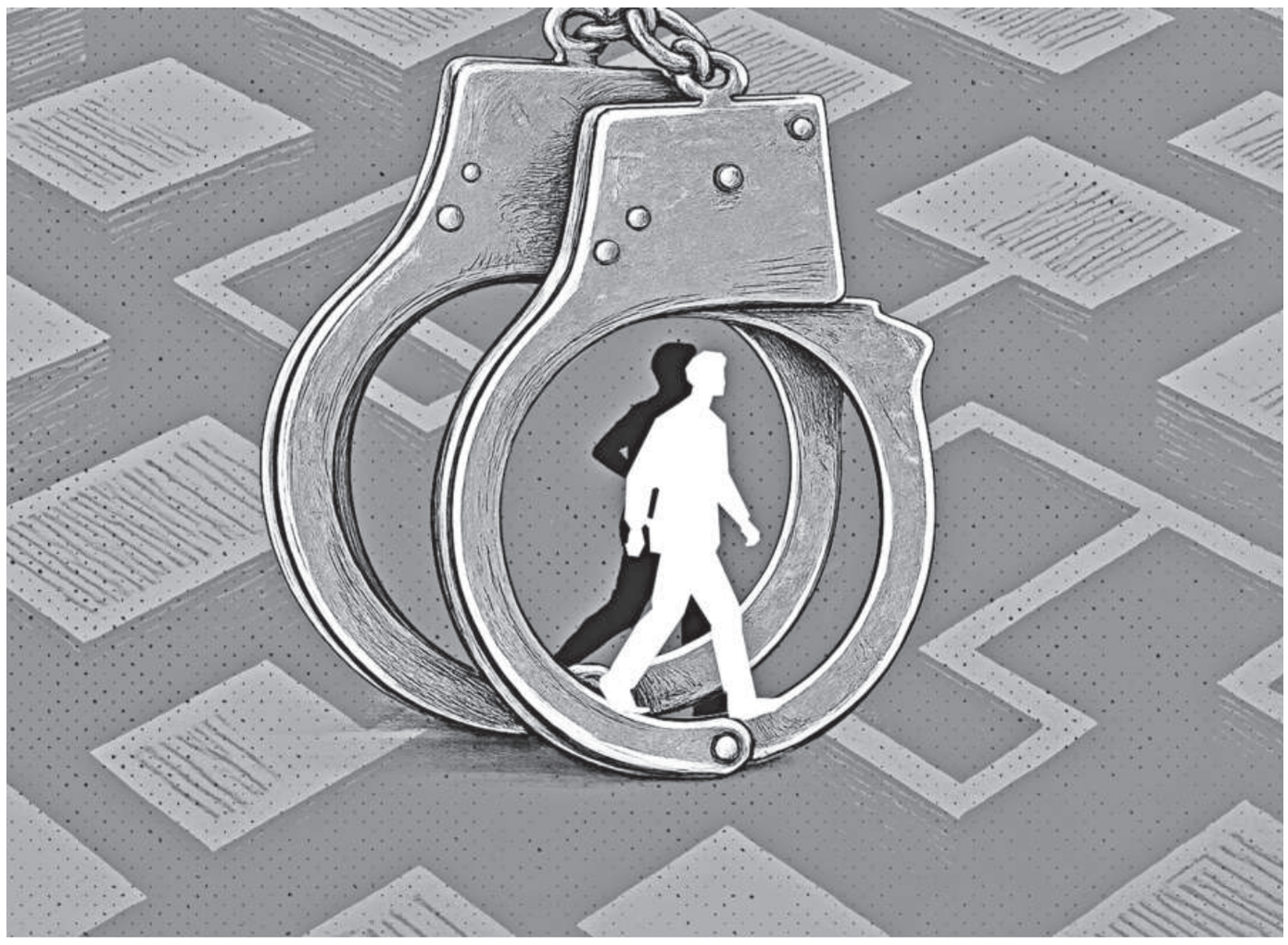
The law on this matter is clear. Section 167A of the Code of Criminal Procedure states that where a person is already in custody and the police seek to show that person arrested in another case, a magistrate should allow this only if "the application appears to be well-founded." In other words, a person should not be shown arrested in a new case unless there is a genuine and substantial evidential basis for doing so.

This provision, newly brought in by the interim government, exists precisely to prevent "shown arrested" cases from being used as a political tool. In practice, however, this standard is hardly ever applied. With extremely rare exceptions, post-bail "shown arrested" cases appear to have no evidential basis whatsoever. They are used simply to prevent individuals from being released after securing bail from the High Court, thereby keeping them arbitrarily—and unlawfully—in detention. In effect, the bail granted by the court becomes meaningless.

This background helps explain what happened on March 11, when the High Court granted former Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque final bail in the various cases pending against him. However, the process to release him was stalled after an arrest application was filed by police in yet another July 2024 murder case—a case in which, notably, he had not even been named in the original FIR. This seems like a wholly fabricated allegation.

It is difficult to believe that such a decision would have been taken independently by a local police officer or the officer-in-charge of a police station. The far more plausible explanation is that the decision to show the former chief justice arrested was taken at the political or bureaucratic level, most likely within the home ministry, which oversees the police.

In Bangladesh's politicised administrative structure, major decisions concerning high-profile detainees rarely occur without direction from senior officials. Police officers, particularly those dealing with politically sensitive cases, generally act within signals or overt instructions given by the executive branch. The question is, what does the new home minister, Salahuddin Ahmed, have to say about this? Having himself been subjected to unlawful detention and enforced disappearance, will he now allow unlawful detentions to occur as a matter of practice under his own authority?



VISUAL: **ANWAR SOHEL**

If the government is serious about establishing a justice system based on the rule of law, it must demonstrate that criminal procedure will not be manipulated for political ends. Silence from the home ministry about such police action sends precisely the opposite signal.

In this regard, one might hope that even if the police attempt to misuse the law by showing someone arrested without evidence, a magistrate would intervene and refuse to authorise it. Unfortunately, experience suggests otherwise.

The recent case of Selina Hayat Ivy, the former mayor of Narayanganj, illustrates the problem. Recently, she was granted bail in five cases. However, following application from the police, she was shown arrested in another case that, again, appeared plainly fabricated. When the matter came before the magistrate, did the court independently examine whether the application was "well-founded"?

This pattern reflects a deeper institutional weakness in Bangladesh's criminal justice system. Magistrates, who are formally responsible for scrutinising police applications, often function in practice as extensions of the executive branch rather than as independent judicial actors. We must now wait to see what decision the magistrate will make in Khairul Haque's case. It is still possible—though perhaps optimistic—to hope that the court will act independently.

But this should not be a matter of hope. Every citizen should expect independent judicial decision-making as a matter of course.

For that to happen, however, the law minister, Md Asaduzzaman, must also step forward and take responsibility. Magistrates will continue to defer to the executive unless the government clearly signals that judges are expected to decide cases according to law and evidence, not political considerations. It needs to signal that they should no longer be executive rubber stamps, but independent judicial decision-makers.

This is why political leadership matters. In Bangladesh, judicial behaviour has long been influenced by signals from the executive. Magistrates and judges—like the police—often act either on direct political instruction or on what they understand the government expects of them.

If magistrates continue to approve "shown arrested" applications with no evidential basis, it will be difficult to avoid the conclusion that the government is tolerating, if not encouraging, the misuse of criminal procedure to keep political opponents in detention. Someone with Asaduzzaman's background—who spent many years involved with the human rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra, and even served on its executive committee—should understand better than most how dangerous such practices are for the rule of law.

There are, unfortunately, many in Bangladesh who care little for the rule of law or due process. For them, anyone associated with the Awami League deserves to be detained, convicted, and punished, whether or not there is evidence of an actual crime. Many of these voices, often young and unfamiliar with how a fair justice system operates, see virtually any act that supported the previous political government as a criminal offence. And where no such offence exists, they are content for them to be arrested for any offence at all.

This mindset exists not only under authoritarian regimes (as Bangladesh suffered during the later years of the Awami League government); it often emerges in the aftermath of political upheaval. Periods of transition can create strong public demands for accountability, but those demands can easily slide into collective punishment, which is exactly what is happening in the country now. If this mentality continues to prevail, Bangladesh risks returning to the same pattern of systemic human rights abuses that characterised the latter years of the Awami League government.

Moreover, bringing fabricated July 2024 murder cases against individuals who have no connection to those events is not merely arbitrary, harassing, and unlawful. It is also deeply disrespectful to the memory of those who were killed. The victims of the July protests deserve genuine justice based on credible investigations and fair trials. Using their deaths as a pretext for politically motivated arrests undermines that objective and risks turning a search for accountability into yet another cycle of injustice.

Why the government must prioritise RTI

Shamsul Bari *and* **Ruhi Naz**
are chairman and deputy director of RTI, respectively, at Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB). Email: rib@citech-bd.com.

SHAMSUL BARI *and* **RUHI NAZ**

After the first cabinet meeting of the new BNP government on February 18, a 180-day priority plan was announced focusing on controlling commodity prices, maintaining law and order, stabilising supply chains, and ensuring uninterrupted gas and electricity supply. Given the difficult inheritance from the interim administration, setting these priorities was expected as they addressed the immediate anxieties of ordinary households and the basic conditions for economic stability.

However, if the government truly intends to deliver on these commitments, and sustain public confidence while doing so, it must tackle a less visible but more decisive requirement: a governance system that is transparent, accountable, and responsive to citizens. Without that foundation, even well-designed welfare programmes can be weakened by information gaps, weak monitoring, and administrative inertia.

In this regard, a promising signal was when Prime Minister Tarique Rahman urged senior officials to honour the people's mandate sincerely. He stressed the importance of merit-based performance, insisting that officials act in accordance with the constitution, the laws, and the rules of business. This emphasis on rules-based governance creates an opening to revive one of Bangladesh's most powerful yet chronically underused democratic instruments: the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009.

Properly applied, RTI can help the government improve service delivery, raise integrity in public programmes, and build trust in institutions. Tragically, RTI was among the laws most conspicuously neglected during the interim period, leaving the regime close to paralysis. If the new government is serious about a fresh approach to governance, reviving RTI should be among its earliest reforms.

It bears repeating that government initiatives—social safety nets, health services, education stipends, and infrastructure—often falter not because of a lack of intent but because oversight is weak. Beneficiaries are frequently unaware of how the programmes are designed, how resources are allocated, which criteria apply, or who is responsible for delivery. In that vacuum, welfare policies risk remaining promises on paper. RTI addresses this problem at its source.

When citizens can access information about where resources go, how programmes are run, and whether targets are met, a clear chain of positive outcomes follows: transparent information resulting in a more informed citizenry, better monitoring, better accountability, more effective service delivery, and stronger trust in public institutions. RTI turns citizens from passive recipients into constructive participants. It enables them to ask informed questions, detect gaps between policy and practice, and press for corrective action. Far from undermining government programmes, RTI strengthens them by improving integrity, efficiency, and public confidence.

To that effect, the first practical step for the BNP government will be to restore the Information Commission immediately. During the interim period, key positions remained vacant, leaving citizens with little recourse when authorities ignored or obstructed requests. Backlogs grew and civic engagement declined. The government can quickly reverse this by appointing the three designated information commissioners, including the chief information commissioner, through a credible and transparent process consistent with the Act. This is urgent not only to clear pending cases but also to send a clear message to the bureaucracy and public alike that impunity and secrecy will no longer be acceptable.

Once a credible commission begins working, many activists and ordinary users who have retreated in frustration in recent months will return. That said, it is also important that expert recommendations on the RTI (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026 are heeded before the ordinance is passed in parliament.

The value of RTI is best seen in outcomes. One of its strongest contributions in Bangladesh so far has been in improving the integrity of social safety net programmes. Citizens, often with civil society support, have used RTI to ask simple but powerful questions: How were beneficiary lists prepared? Who participated in the selection? What criteria were applied? Frequently, the prospect of disclosure alone deterred nepotism and exposed irregularities, helping ensure that limited resources reached those most in need.

RTI has also strengthened healthcare delivery, especially for vulnerable communities. Citizens have sought information on free medicine supplies, doctors' attendance records, and sanitation schedules at public facilities, often prompting immediate corrective action once officials realised that records could be scrutinised.

A striking example is the Nilphamari Mother and Child Health Welfare Centre, where beneficiaries were repeatedly told that no doctor was available and services effectively ceased. In January 2025, an RTI request seeking the list of posted doctors and attendance records revealed prolonged unauthorised absences. The disclosure increased public awareness, triggered pressure for accountability, and prompted a more responsive local administration, thus helping restore services for mothers and children.

Similar improvements have been documented elsewhere, reducing misuse of scholarship funds and exposing contractors' non-compliance in roads and highways projects. These instances exemplify how RTI works best, not as a tool for sensational exposure but as a mechanism of continuous correction. This means identifying problems early, fixing them promptly, and improving systems over time.

For a government that wants to deliver results and rebuild trust, RTI offers a constructive pathway. It is therefore vital to establish a clear institutional focal point within the government to engage with RTI users, civil society, and concerned citizens so that feedback is translated into administrative improvements and transparency becomes routine rather than exceptional. For example, citizens can be useful allies in implementing the government's new family card and farmer card programmes.

The government's priorities cannot be achieved sustainably without transparency and accountability. The RTI Act provides proven, practical means to bridge this gap. By restoring the Information Commission, strengthening compliance, and encouraging civic engagement, the new government can improve service delivery and lay the foundations for trust-based, participatory governance.

BANGLADESH HOUSE BUILDING FINANCE CORPORATION
Engineering Department
Head Office, 22 Purana Paltan, Dhaka-1000
Website: www.bhbfc.gov.bd

Reference : 53.14.0000.000.165.07.0057.26/7020

e-Tender Notice

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

e-Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of the Work	Last Date and Time for Tender/Proposal Security Submission	Tender/Proposal Closing & Opening Date and Time
1241303	BHBFC/WR-06/2025-2026	Repairing & Maintenance Works at 1st Floor South-East Wing, 2nd Floor (DMD Sir's Office), 5th Floor Annex & 7th Floor Annex of BHBFC Head Office Building at 22, Purana Paltan, Dhaka.	30-March-2026 Time: 13:00	30-March-2026 Time: 14:00

This is 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 e-GP registered Bank's Branches.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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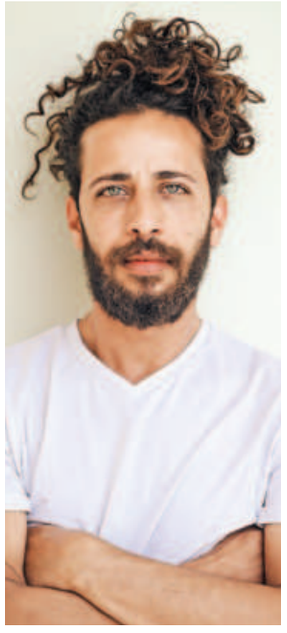
Md. Golam Mostofa
Deputy General Manager
Engineering Department
E-mail: dgm.eng@bhbfc.gov.bd
Tel: +88-02-223352499

GD-592



Palestinian actor unable to attend Oscars due to travel ban

Actor Motaz Malhees, one of the stars of the Oscar-nominated film ***The Voice of Hind Rajab***, will not be able to attend this year's Academy Awards due to a US travel restriction affecting Palestinian passport holders.

Malhees, who portrays a call centre operator trying to help a five-year-old Palestinian girl trapped in a car under fire in Gaza, said he cannot enter the United States because of his Palestinian citizenship. In an Instagram post, he wrote, "You can block a passport. You cannot block a voice."

The restriction was introduced during the administration of US President Donald Trump, barring Palestinian passport holders from entering the US.

Sadia Ayman recalls beautiful 'meow'ments with feline co-stars

SHARMIN JOYA

Projects centred around furry actors remain a rarity in the local entertainment industry. Breaking that barrier, ***Meu*** received significant love from audiences, with the story revolving around a cat named Aloo — the real-life pet of actor Sadia Ayman. The film also featured Afsana Mimi and Azizul Hakim.

Continuing her experience of sharing the screen with furry co-stars, Sadia is set to appear in another OTT project this Eid. Titled ***Love Sitter*** and slated for release on Bongo, the project again features a furry character who connects the central roles. The Daily Star caught up with Sadia about working with furry actors, the project, and her Eid plans.

In Chorki's *Meu*, directed by Atiq Zaman, Aloo was featured. What was the experience like? How did you prepare him?

Working with Aloo has been a wonderful experience. Since coming into my life, he has been a source of comfort and healing, especially during difficult times. There was a period when my previous cat, Mio, went missing, which was a very traumatic phase for me.

Because of my bond with him (Aloo), sharing the screen felt very natural and pleasant. He turned out to be a wonderful co-actor — surprisingly responsible and quite professional in the way he did his work! I am a proud mother and a proud co-actor.

On set, we did not really have to prepare him separately for anything. He is naturally very friendly. If someone visits our home, he lies down near their feet. He loves affection and has been raised with a lot of love and care. Because of that, he expects everyone to show him affection.

In *Love Sitter*, you have worked with another cat.

We worked with Chhotu, whose screen name is Hypnosis. Alongside my co-actor, Ziaul Haque Palash, ***Love Sitter*** follows a journey involving a cat, and it also touches on themes of sacrifice and love. This project has been written and directed by Amitabh Reza Chowdhury and Mushficaa Maasud. It is also special because it is Amitabh *bhai* and Mushficaa *bhabi's* first fiction work, so it holds significance for them as well as for me.

How accommodating are film sets for furry actors?

The team was very supportive in this regard. From keeping the make-up room clean to ensuring that unnecessary visitors did not enter certain areas, they tried their best to maintain proper hygiene and a suitable environment.

I had informed the team beforehand about Aloo's needs — his food, toys, cat food pouches, and other essentials — and everything was arranged very thoughtfully. Since Aloo is my pet and I was one of the main characters in the project, perhaps he received a bit of special attention. But even if that was not the case, I believe this level of care should be given to any animal involved in a production. Many stories may require cats or dogs in the future, and maintaining hygiene and providing a clean, safe space for them is extremely important.

What touched me the most was that a few members of the team eventually adopted some of those cats. I found that incredibly kind. In a way, through this shoot, a few stray cats from the sets ended up finding homes. If people continue to show that kind of kindness towards animals, it would truly make the world a much better place.

What can audiences anticipate from you this Eid? How are you planning to celebrate it?

This Eid, I have not taken on too much work. The main project is the web film ***Love Sitter***. Apart from that, I have also done a few other interesting projects. In terms of television dramas, there's Sagar Jahan's ***Chhitkini***, Majumdar Shimul's ***Ek Chilte Chhowa***, and Prabir Roy Chowdhury's ***College Days***. I am now waiting to see how audiences respond to these projects.

As for Eid itself, I will celebrate it the way I usually do — with my family. This year will be a little different because many of my cousins who usually live abroad are now in the country. Towards the end of last year, one of my cousins had twin babies, and another had a baby boy, so our family has grown a little bigger. Because of that, Eid will feel a bit more special as we celebrate with the new family members.

And of course, Eid Mubarak to all of you at The Daily Star and to all my viewers.

Sadia with Aloo in 'Meu' ▸

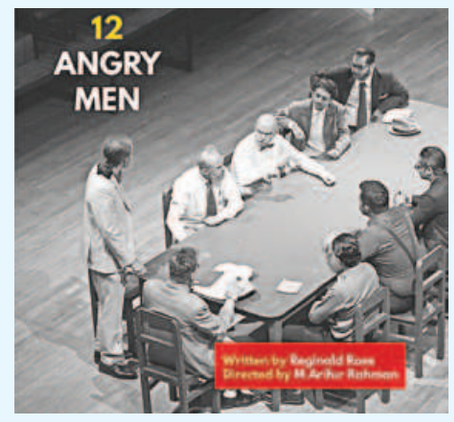
PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHORKI

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'12 Angry Men'

Open Space Theatre presents courtroom drama ***12 Angry Men***, written by Reginald Rose and directed by M Arifur Rahman. The production brings the classic story of twelve jurors debating a life-changing verdict to the stage. It will be an intense and thought-provoking theatrical experience for the audiences.

DATE: THURSDAY | MARCH 26
TIME: 4 PM & 7 PM
VENUE: STUDIO THEATRE HALL, BSA



Bangladeshi migrants perform in Lisbon

A theatre production portraying migrant life is currently being staged in Lisbon, featuring performances by eight Bangladeshi expatriates.

Titled ***Um Inimigo do Povo*** (Enemy of the People), the play opened Thursday at the Centro Cultural de Belém and will conclude today. Written and directed by Portuguese filmmaker Marco Martins, the production is inspired by Henrik Ibsen's play ***An Enemy of the People***.

NEWS

180 RMG factories at risk of failure

FROM PAGE 2

"We are coordinating with all stakeholders. Our intelligence wing is also monitoring attempts by some individuals to provoke unrest, and we hope they will not be able to create trouble," he added.

Regarding the 180 factories flagged for possible payment problems, BGMEA President Mahmud Hasan Khan said around 40 to 50 factories were still facing difficulties in clearing dues.

"Efforts are underway, and we hope these problems will not remain unresolved in the end," he told this newspaper.

Khan said in some cases factory owners were abroad, but the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association was working on those cases as well.

"We hope those problems will also be resolved eventually," he said.

He added that some factories were facing financial shortfalls, but those could be managed. "We are monitoring the matter closely."

SPILLOVER RISK

The report said some owners might fail to clear wages and bonuses before shutting factories for the holidays, a situation that could trigger worker anger, vandalism, absenteeism, and road blockades.

Workers may also gather on highways and at places such as the Secretariat and the National Press Club to demand unpaid dues, raising the risk of a deterioration in law and order, it said.

Mass leave declarations could further increase pressure on roads during the Eid rush, while withholding part of workers' dues on the assumption that many may not return after the holidays could deepen discontent, the report added. It also warned of outside attempts to provoke workers.

Gazi Jashim said even a small number of factories facing payment disputes could create a wider problem.

"If even five factories have disputes and workers come out onto the streets, it can create a significant situation," he said.

He added that the ministry and law enforcement agencies had taken precautionary steps and were coordinating with BGMEA, BKMEA, and BTMA.

TALKS, SURVEILLANCE SUGGESTED

The report recommended resolving disputes at vulnerable factories through tripartite talks involving owners, workers, and the government, and ensuring payment of wages, bonuses, and advance March wages before Eid.

Where owners are unable to pay, it suggested arranging funds through the labour ministry, financial institutions, or other factories under the same ownership group.

It also called for close monitoring of those trying to provoke workers, tighter surveillance across garment zones, maximum alert for Industrial Police intelligence units, and extended banking hours in industrial areas to facilitate payments.

Nazma Akter, president of the Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation, told The Daily Star that workers in some areas had already begun protesting over delayed payments as many factories had yet to clear wages.

She said the government should investigate why some owners failed to pay Eid bonuses by March 12 as directed, even after receiving Tk 2,500 crore in export incentives and some loans.

"The government must monitor the issue and take immediate steps," she said.

CONSTITUENCY-WISE LIST

Labour and Employment Minister Ariful Haque Choudhury yesterday warned against any complications over workers' dues, saying all outstanding wages and Eid bonuses must be paid before the holidays.

At a high-level meeting at his Bailey Road residence, he said a constituency-wise list of factories at risk of unrest would be prepared and shared with MPs so they could press owners to clear payments quickly.

He also ordered the preparation of a list of absconding owners and their factories.

Mahdi Amin, labour and employment adviser to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, said the head of government had instructed officials to address workers' problems through close monitoring.

According to the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, 2,127 factories are currently operating in Dhaka and Chattogram. Of them, 1,964 factories (92.34 percent) have paid February wages, while 1,535 factories (72.17 percent) have paid Eid bonuses.

BNP unmoved by Jamaat's threat

FROM PAGE 12

that the campaign is to force the ruling party to commit to a timetable of the opposition's choice.

"If anyone wants to take to the streets, they can do that -- that is their freedom," said Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed.

The BNP leaders stressed that constitutional reforms should be debated and passed in the parliament, where elected MPs can participate and decide on such matters.

"We will move forward by following the constitutional process," said a standing committee member on condition of anonymity.

Under the July charter order, members of the 13th parliament are expected to perform the dual role of lawmakers and as members of a Constitution Reform Council to deal with 48 constitutional provisions outlined in the July charter within 180 working days.

For this purpose, the MPs were required to take two separate oaths: one as members of the parliament and another as members of the council.

However, uncertainty remains over the formation of the council, proposed under the July National Charter (Constitution Reform) Implementation Order, 2025, as two-thirds of the lawmakers are from BNP and its allies and they did not take the oath as members of the council.

However, 77 members of Jamaat alliances took both oaths.

The crisis became more complex, as Jamaat demanded the convening of the council session by President Mohammed Sahabuddin in line with the July charter implementation order.

According to the order, the first session of the council shall be summoned, in the same manner as the first session of the parliament, within 30 calendar days of the declaration of the election results. Gazette of the results were issued on February 13.

However, while convening the parliament on February 23, the president did not mention anything about convening a session of the reform council.

Regarding Jamaat's call for convening the session of the council, Salahuddin said: "We have been elected as members of the parliament. We have taken oath as members of parliament. The president has called the session of the national parliament. The president has not called the Constitution Reform Council. So we are attending what has been called, according to the constitution."

The council as proposed may conflict with the constitutional structure if it operates outside the authority of parliament, said a BNP policymaker on the condition of anonymity.

The BNP will only support and implement the reform proposals on which they did not submit a note of dissent during the discussion of the July National Charter.

Fuel loading to begin April 7

FROM PAGE 12

that fuel loading will begin on April 7. We expect to start electricity production and supply a minimum of 300 megawatts to the national grid by July," Science and Technology Secretary Md Anwar Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the unit is expected to reach its full 1,200 MW capacity by December, if the schedule is maintained.

Last Sunday, a delegation led by Science and Technology Minister Faqir Mahbub Anam Swapan and Prime Minister's Adviser Rehan Asif Asad, also attached to the ministry, visited the site to review progress.

"During the visit, project authorities confirmed that all testing and inspections will be finalised by March 27, after which Unit-1 will receive its commissioning licence," Secretary Anwar Hossain said.

Dr Md Zahedul Hasan, managing director of Nuclear Power Plant Company Bangladesh Limited (NPCBL), said about 2,000 tests have already been completed. "As of last week, 1,650 inspections were completed, and we expect to finish the remaining checks within the next two weeks," he added.

He noted that while minor issues have arisen, no major faults were found and the small problems are being handled promptly.

The Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority (BAERA) is overseeing the inspection process to ensure that all safety standards comply with international guidelines.

According to project officials, the fuel loading process takes about one month, followed by roughly two months to reach the chain reaction stage required for power production.

Unit-2 is expected to reach full capacity about a year after Unit-1 begins producing its 1,200-megawatt output in December. Together, the two units are projected to generate 2,400 megawatts by December 2027.

Unit-1 is in the final stages of commissioning, while Unit-2 is more than 70 percent complete.

Since construction began in 2017, 81 percent of the $12.65 billion project, which includes two VVER-1200 reactors, has already been spent.

Originally slated for 2022, the commissioning was delayed by three years. Last year, Bangladesh and Russia agreed to extend the timeline to late 2027 to complete both the units.

"This is not like other development projects; we cannot compromise on anything. We must reach 100 percent completion before moving to the next step," a senior plant official said. "Ensuring safety in line with international standards is our top priority."

Rains pile misery on potato farmers

FROM PAGE 12

told The Daily Star that 30 hectares of potato fields were submerged in Shibganj due to heavy rain over two days. "Additionally, 10 hectares of vegetables were affected, and banana orchards on about eight hectares were damaged by the Nor'wester."

Sadiqul Islam, deputy director of Joypurhat DAE, said, "We repeatedly urged farmers to harvest their potatoes, but many delayed because of the low market prices. We are now advising those with affected fields to harvest immediately. Potatoes left in water for two to three days are highly likely to rot."

The untimely rain also affected many farmers in Thakurgaon, while potatoes on around 6,000 hectares of land are yet to be harvested, officials of the DAE said.

Farmers said the crop could be severely affected if strong sunlight follows the rainfall, as heat generated from the soil may further damage the potatoes.

Rafiiqul Islam, of Yakubpur village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, told The Daily Star that he spent around Tk 6.5 lakh to cultivate potatoes on six acres. So far, he has harvested only 1.5 acres, while the rest of the fields remain waterlogged, putting the crop at risk of damage or rotting.

In Rangpur as well, continuous heavy rainfall over three days submerged potato fields in several areas, increasing farmers' worries.

According to the Rangpur Met office, approximately 49 millimetres of rainfall was recorded in the region from Wednesday to Friday.

Altaf Hossain, a farmer from Fakirpara village in Taraganj upazila, said that he suffered nearly Tk 200,000 in losses from potato farming last year. "Hoping to recover that loss, I cultivated potatoes on two acres this season. I was scheduled to start harvesting potatoes on Thursday, but heavy rainfall on Wednesday night and Thursday morning submerged the entire field."

Sirajul Islam, additional director of the Rangpur regional DAE, said, "The accumulated rainwater in the potato fields is not permanent; it will naturally recede over time. Most fields have already seen a reduction in water. Farmers who were harvesting have paused and will resume according to weather conditions. However, if it rains over the next two to three days, the emerging crop may suffer some damage."

Meteorologist Md Omar Faruq told The Daily Star yesterday that the forecast suggests Nor'westers, thundershowers, or hailstorms may continue in various districts until March 17, after which the rainfall is expected to subside.

Prime Bank

FROM PAGE 2

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) was exchanged at a signing ceremony held at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka. The agreement was signed between Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, and M Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director of Prime Bank PLC.

Also present at the ceremony were Tajdin Ahmed, chief business officer of The Daily Star; Mizanur Rahman, chief financial officer of Prime Bank PLC; and Syed Rayhan Tarique, head of Brand and Communications of Prime Bank PLC, along with senior officials from both organisations.

Man who helped

FROM PAGE 12

Investigators said that after the killing of Hadi, Sangma fled to India through a border amid mounting pressure from Bangladesh police.

Indian investigators also said Sangma had been planning to return to Bangladesh while maintaining contact with two other suspects -- Faisal Karim Masud and Alamgir Hossain. After being produced before a court, Sangma was remanded in police custody for further questioning, the STF said.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata wrote a note verbaleto the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, seeking consular access to Sangma.

Earlier, Bangladesh also sent a note verbale seeking consular access to Faisal and Alamgir, which the Indian government has yet to respond to.

On March 7, the STF held Faisal and his associate Alamgir during a raid in Bongaon, a border town in West Bengal.

On December 12 last year, Hadi, an aspirant for Dhaka-8, was shot while campaigning in the capital's Paltan area. He was later taken to Singapore but died on December 18 while undergoing treatment.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police on December 28 that year claimed that Faisal and Alamgir fled the country with the help of Sangma through the Mymensingh's Haluaghat border. However, the Indian police rejected the claim.

Dhaka, Ankara sign

FROM PAGE 3

They also exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest and expressed their commitment to supporting peace efforts concerning Gaza.

Türkiye reiterated its commitment to maintaining friendly relations with Bangladesh in both bilateral and multilateral forums.

Türkiye also expressed its support for Bangladesh's candidacy for the presidency of the upcoming session of the UN General Assembly.

Following the meeting in Ankara, the foreign minister left for New York last night to campaign for the UN General Assembly presidency.

"The minister is likely to stay there for about two weeks," a diplomatic source said.

During the visit, he is expected to meet diplomats and other stakeholders to strengthen support for Bangladesh's candidature.

"In between his campaign at the UN in New York, the foreign minister may visit Washington and meet US officials if meetings can be scheduled," a diplomatic source said.

Five more city

FROM PAGE 3

The notification said they will serve as administrators until further orders are issued.

Bilkis, organisational secretary of the BNP central committee for Barishal division, previously served as a reserved-seat member of parliament from 2001 to 2006. In 2024, she was suspended from her party post over allegations of violating party discipline, although the decision was later withdrawn.

Mahfuzur Rahman is general secretary of Rajshahi metropolitan BNP, Rokon is member secretary of BNP's Mymensingh South district unit, Mahfuz Un Nabi is member secretary of Rangpur metropolitan BNP, and Yusuf is general secretary of Cumilla metropolitan BNP.

With these appointments, the government has now appointed administrators to 11 city corporations across the country.

Earlier, on February 23, the government appointed administrators to six city corporations, including Dhaka North and Dhaka South. In Chattogram City Corporation, BNP leader Shahadat Hossain is currently performing the duties of mayor following a court order.

Financial strain mounts on Dhaka's city corporations

FROM PAGE 3

Officials say rapid payment of development bills is a major reason behind the pressure. Sources in the engineering department said around Tk 1,000 crore has been paid from DSCC's own funds over the past 19 months.

Officials alleged that during the interim government period, contractors pressured staff to process bills quickly, sometimes through intimidation.

Work orders worth Tk 1,400 crore have already been issued, but DSCC currently lacks the capacity to pay contractors. With Tk 25 crore required monthly for salaries and allowances, the general fund now holds only Tk 16 crore.

Meanwhile, Tk 869 crore remains in designated funds like security deposits and road excavation funds, which cannot be used for regular expenses.

Abdus Salam said, "If we proceed with the numerous work orders issued indiscriminately by the previous administration, the city corporation will collapse. That cannot be allowed under any circumstances." He said unnecessary or irregular projects are being reviewed and may be cancelled.

DNCC: DISPUTE OVER FINANCIAL POSITION

DNCC's financial management has also become a matter of debate.

Former administrator Mohammad Azaz, in a Facebook post, claimed that while leaving office, he handed over "a prosperous DNCC with Tk 1,260.15 crore deposited in 26 accounts".

However, current officials say most of that money is tied up in designated funds and fixed deposits and cannot be used for operational expenses.

At the time of the handover, they said, the general fund held only Tk 25 crore -- the lowest in DNCC's history.

DNCC's income in FY 2023-24 was Tk 1,177 crore against expenditure of Tk 1,082 crore. In FY 2024-25, spending rose sharply to Tk 1,438 crore, surpassing revenue growth.

In the first six months of FY 2025-26, DNCC earned Tk 750 crore but spent Tk 811 crore.

Sources alleged that on his final day in office, Azaz approved 36 bill documents worth Tk 42 crore without verifying project implementation or the availability of funds.

Current administrator Shafiqul Islam Khan told The Daily Star, "The financial capacity of the city corporation largely depends on the daily flow of revenue. We are receiving revenue from various sources every day, and we are meeting our regular expenditures from that income."

"If the situation becomes difficult at any point, we will consider the next steps. If a serious problem arises, we may seek government assistance. However, we hope that such a situation will not arise," he added.

EXPERTS CITE DEEPER GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Urban planner Adil Mohammed Khan said the financial crisis of Dhaka's two city corporations is not solely due to revenue shortfalls. Administrative inefficiency, lack of transparency in spending, and irregular bill payments have also contributed significantly.

He said over the past one and a half years, many bills containing discrepancies were paid without proper verification.

"There are also allegations of commission-based dealings in some cases, which require investigation," he said.

"When a corporation faces a revenue deficit, settling bills with large discounts or approving controversial expenditures raises serious questions. Yet both city corporations have paid many such bills, creating concerns about transparency."

These irregularities involved not only administrators but also officials at different levels within the corporations, he said.

"The impact has been reflected in the condition of the general fund. The fund has reached a point where even routine operations have become difficult," he said.

To manage the situation, in some cases, fixed deposits (FDRs) were broken to cover expenses -- a step he described as crossing a "red line" in financial management. He also noted that despite breaking FDRs to meet expenditures, new tenders and work orders continued to be issued, which goes against financial discipline.

I faced injustice

FROM PAGE 3

Later, speaking to reporters over the phone, Alamgir alleged that he had been targeted after criticising Prof Muhammad Yunus, the then chief adviser to the interim government.

"Prof Muhammad Yunus once encouraged people to criticise him openly. After criticising him, I was arrested and charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act," he said.

"Even that was not enough -- another harassment case was filed against me by the Anti-Corruption Commission, which is even more ridiculous," he added.

Describing his time in custody, Alamgir said he spent the first month in jail sharing a single room with 35 other inmates in what he described as inhumane conditions. "Later, I was moved to a slightly better environment," he said.

The culture of enforced disappearance and detention without trial began during the 2007-08 caretaker government and continued under the Awami League government, he claimed, adding that a new form of legal oppression started after that.

Alamgir was picked up from Dhaka's Dhanmondi area on December 14 last year and taken to the Detective Branch office on Minto Road.

He was shown arrested the following day under the Anti-Terrorism Act and remanded for five days before being sent to jail. Later, on January 28, he was also shown arrested in a case filed by the ACC over allegations of acquiring assets beyond known sources of income.

On March 5, a High Court bench granted him bail in the anti-terrorism case, while on March 11, a Dhaka court granted him bail in the corruption case.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

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তারিখ:১০.০৩.২০২৬ খ্রি.

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

তথ্য অধিদফতরের রাজস্ব খাতভুক্ত গ্রেড ১১ থেকে গ্রেড ২০ পর্যন্ত (পূর্বতন তৃতীয় ও চতুর্থ শ্রেণি) স্থায়ী পদে অস্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে সরাসরি জনবল নিয়োগের নিমিত্ত নিচের বর্ণনা অনুযায়ী বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:

ক্র. নং	পদের নাম, বেতনস্কেল ও গ্রেড (জাতীয় বেতনস্কেল ২০১৫ অনুযায়ী)	পদ সংখ্যা	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা
০১	ইনফরমেশন অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট টা: ১২,৫০০-৩০,২৩০/- (গ্রেড-১১)	১৪টি	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে ২য় শ্রেণি বা সমমানের জিপিএসহ স্নাতক বা সমমানের ডিগ্রি অথবা ৪ (চার) বৎসর মেয়াদি অন্যূন ২য় শ্রেণি বা সমমানের জিপিএসহ স্নাতক (সম্মান) ডিগ্রি; (খ) কম্পিউটারে MS Word & Power Point সম্পর্কে অভিজ্ঞতা; (গ) পত্র-পত্রিকায় নিয়মিত ফিচার বা নিবন্ধ লেখার অভিজ্ঞতা; এবং (ঘ) ইংরেজি থেকে বাংলায় এবং বাংলা থেকে ইংরেজিতে অনুবাদ করার অভিজ্ঞতা।
০২	ফটোগ্রাফার টা: ১২,৫০০-৩০,২৩০/- (গ্রেড-১১)	০৭টি	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে ২য় শ্রেণি বা সমমানের জিপিএসহ স্নাতক বা সমমানের ডিগ্রি; (খ) ডিজিটাল ক্যামেরা পরিচালনা ও কম্পিউটার সম্পর্কে বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা; (গ) কোনো স্বীকৃত প্রতিষ্ঠান হইতে ডিজিটাল ফটোগ্রাফিতে অন্যূন ০৬ (ছয়) মাসের কোর্সের সনদ; (ঘ) বাংলা এবং ইংরেজিতে ছবির ক্যাপশন লেখায় দক্ষতা; এবং (ঙ) ফ্রিল্যান্স ফটো সাংবাদিকতার যোগ্যতা।
০৩	সাঁটমুদ্রাক্ষরিক-কাম-কম্পিউটার অপারেটর টা: ১০,২০০-২৪,৬৮০/- (গ্রেড-১৪)	০৬টি	ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে অন্যূন ২য় শ্রেণি বা সমমানের জিপিএসহ স্নাতক বা সমমানের ডিগ্রি; (খ) কম্পিউটার ব্যবহারে দক্ষতা; এবং (গ) বাংলা ও ইংরেজি শর্ট হ্যান্ডে প্রতি মিনিটে সর্বনিম্ন বাংলা ৪৫ শব্দ ও ইংরেজি ৭০ শব্দ এবং কম্পিউটার টাইপিং গতি প্রতি মিনিটে সর্বনিম্ন বাংলা ২৫ শব্দ ও ইংরেজি ৩০ শব্দ।
০৪	ড্রাইভার টা: ৯,৩০০-২২,৪৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৬)	১১টি	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে জুনিয়র স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) হালকা গাড়ি চালনার বৈধ হালকা ড্রাইভিং লাইসেন্স; (গ) অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন চালকগণ অগ্রাধিকার পাবেন।
০৫	ক্যাটালগার টা: ৯,৩০০-২২,৪৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৬)	০১টি	সংশ্লিষ্ট কাজের অভিজ্ঞতাসহ কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে অন্যূন ২য় শ্রেণি বা সমমানের জিপিএসহ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ।
০৬	স্টোর অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট টা: ৯,৩০০-২২,৪৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৬)	০১টি	কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে বাণিজ্য বিভাগে অন্যূন ২য় শ্রেণি বা সমমানের জিপিএসহ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণসহ কম্পিউটারে MS Word & Excel সম্পর্কে অভিজ্ঞতা।
০৭	অফিস সহকারী-কাম-কম্পিউটার মুদ্রাক্ষরিক টা: ৯,৩০০-২২,৪৯০/- (গ্রেড-১৬)	০৯টি	(ক) কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হইতে অন্যূন ২য় শ্রেণি বা সমমানের জিপিএসহ উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ; (খ) কম্পিউটার ব্যবহারে দক্ষতা; এবং (গ) কম্পিউটার টাইপিং গতি প্রতি মিনিটে সর্বনিম্ন বাংলা ২০ শব্দ ও ইংরেজি ২০ শব্দ।
০৮	অফিস সহায়ক টা: ৮,২৫০-২০,০১০/- (গ্রেড-২০)	১৯টি	কোনো স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ।

আবেদনকারীদের জন্য প্রযোজ্য/অনুসরণীয় শর্তাবলী:

০১. আগ্রহী প্রার্থীগণ https://pid.teletalk.com.bd ওয়েবসাইটে প্রকাশিত নির্দেশনা মোতাবেক অনলাইনে আবেদন করতে পারবেন। সরাসরি/ডাকযোগে কোনো আবেদন গ্রহণ করা হবে না।

০২. শুধুমাত্র বাংলাদেশের স্থায়ী নাগরিকগণ আবেদন করতে পারবেন। সকল জেলার প্রার্থীগণ আবেদন করতে পারবেন।

০৩. আবেদনকারীর *বয়স* ০১-০৩-২০২৬ তারিখে সর্বনিম্ন ১৮ (আঠারো) এবং সর্বোচ্চ ৩২ (বত্রিশ) বছর হতে হবে। এসএসসি সনদ/জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র/জন্মনিবন্ধন সনদে প্রদত্ত জন্ম তারিখের ভিত্তিতে বয়স প্রমাণিত হবে। বয়স প্রমাণের ক্ষেত্রে এফিডেভিট গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। তবে, বর্ণিত ছকের ৩ ও ৭ নং ক্রমিকে উল্লিখিত পদের বিভাগীয় প্রার্থী অর্থাৎ তথ্য অধিদফতরের রাজস্ব খাতে সৃষ্ট পদে অন্যূন ২ (দুই) বছর স্থায়ী বা আস্থায়ীভাবে চাকরিরত প্রার্থীর ক্ষেত্রে বয়সসীমা ৪০ বছর পর্যন্ত শিথিলযোগ্য।

০৪. কোনো পদে সরাসরি নিয়োগের জন্য কোনো ব্যক্তি যোগ্য বলিয়া বিবেচিত হবেন না যদি তিনি –
(ক) বাংলাদেশের নাগরিক না হন অথবা বাংলাদেশের স্থায়ী বাসিন্দা না হন অথবা বাংলাদেশের ডমিসাইল না হন; এবং
(খ) এমন কোনো ব্যক্তিকে বিবাহ করেন অথবা বিবাহ করার জন্য প্রতিশ্রুতিবদ্ধ হন, যিনি বাংলাদেশের নাগরিক নন।

০৫. নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে সরকারি বিদ্যমান বিধিবিধান এবং পরবর্তীতে এ সংক্রান্ত বিধিবিধানে কোনো সংশোধন হলে তা অনুসরণ করা হবে।

০৬. কোটা নির্ধারণের ক্ষেত্রে সরকারের সর্বশেষ বিধিবিধান/জনপ্রশাসন মন্ত্রণালয়ের সর্বশেষ জারিকৃত প্রজ্ঞাপন প্রতিপালিত হবে।

০৭. অসম্পূর্ণ বা ত্রুটিপূর্ণ আবেদনপত্র সরাসরি বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।

০৮. সরকারি/আধা-সরকারি/স্বায়ত্তশাসিত/আধা-স্বায়ত্তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে কর্মরত প্রার্থীগণকে সরকারি বিধিবিধান অনুসরণপূর্বক অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের পূর্বানুমোদন গ্রহণ করার মাধ্যমে নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যে আবেদন করতে হবে এবং সকল চাকরিরত প্রার্থীদের মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত ছাড়পত্র/অনাপত্তিপত্র (NOC) বাধ্যতামূলকভাবে জমা দিতে হবে।

০৯. মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় নিম্নবর্ণিত সনদ/প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্রের মূলকপি সঙ্গে আনতে হবে (এক সেট সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি জমা দিতে হবে):-
(ক) সকল শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার মূল সনদপত্র/সাময়িক সনদপত্র/প্রত্যয়নপত্র/অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র ইত্যাদি;
(খ) জেলার স্থায়ী বাসিন্দা হিসাবে সংশ্লিষ্ট ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ চেয়ারম্যান/পৌরসভার মেয়র কর্তৃক ইস্যুকৃত (নিজ জেলা উল্লেখ করত:) নাগরিকত্ব সনদ;
(গ) জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র/জন্মনিবন্ধন সনদপত্র;
(ঘ) আবেদনকারীর পাসপোর্ট সাইজের রঙিন ০৩ (তিন) কপি সত্যায়িত ছবি;
(ঙ) আবেদনকারী মুক্তিযোদ্ধা, শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা ও বীরাঙ্গনার সন্তান, ক্ষুদ্র নৃ-গোষ্ঠী এবং শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধী ও তৃতীয় লিঙ্গের প্রার্থীদের সর্বশেষ নীতিমালা অনুযায়ী উপযুক্ত কর্তৃপক্ষের সার্টিফিকেট মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় উপস্থাপন করতে হবে;
(চ) ক্ষুদ্র নৃ-গোষ্ঠী প্রার্থীর ক্ষেত্রে সংশ্লিষ্ট জেলা প্রশাসক কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সনদপত্র;
(ছ) শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধী ও তৃতীয় লিঙ্গের প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে সমাজসেবা অধিদপ্তর/জেলা সমাজসেবা কার্যালয়ের উপপরিচালক কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সনদপত্র;
(জ) সরকারি ১ম শ্রেণীর গেজেটেড কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত চারিত্রিক সনদপত্র;
(ঝ) প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে কম্পিউটারে দক্ষতার প্রমাণস্বরূপ সনদপত্র;
(ঞ) ডাউনলোডকৃত Applicant's Copy এবং Admit Card এর রঙিন প্রিন্ট কপি।

১০. কেউ প্রকৃত তথ্য গোপন করে চাকুরি গ্রহণ করলে নিয়োগ বাতিলসহ তার বিরুদ্ধে আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।

১১. যদি কোনো প্রার্থী কোনো ফৌজধারী আদালত কর্তৃক নৈতিক স্খলনজনিত অভিযোগে দণ্ডিত হন কিংবা কোনো সরকারি বা স্বায়ত্তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠান বা স্থানীয় কর্তৃপক্ষের চাকরি হতে বরখাস্ত হয়ে থাকেন তবে তিনি আবেদন করার জন্য যোগ্য বলে বিবেচিত হবেন না।

১২. প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে লিখিত ও ব্যবহারিক পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ প্রার্থীগণ মৌখিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য যোগ্য বলে বিবেচিত হবেন। ব্যবহারিক/বাছাই/লিখিত পরীক্ষা/সাক্ষাৎকারের জন্য ভ্রমণ ভাতা বা দৈনিক ভাতা (টিএ/ডিএ) প্রদান করা হবে না।

১৩. নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে সংশ্লিষ্ট কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য করা হবে।

১৫. নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে উল্লিখিত পদের সংখ্যা হ্রাস/বৃদ্ধি এবং পূর্ণাঙ্গ/আংশিক বিজ্ঞপ্তি বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন।

১৬. **আবেদনপত্র পূরণ সংক্রান্ত শর্তাবলী:**

ক. একই দিনে লিখিত পরীক্ষা অনুষ্ঠিত হতে পারে বিবেচনায় একাধিক পদে আবেদন নিরুৎসাহিত করা হলো।

খ. আবেদনের সময়সীমা ও নিয়মাবলী/শর্তাবলী নিম্নরূপ:
(i) অনলাইনে আবেদনপত্র পূরণ ও পরীক্ষার ফি জমাদান শুরুর তারিখ ও সময় ০১ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ সকাল ১০:০০ টা হতে।
(ii) অনলাইনে এ আবেদনপত্র জমাদানের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় ২১ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ বিকাল ০৫:০০ টা পর্যন্ত।
(iii) উক্ত সময়সীমার মধ্যে User ID প্রাপ্ত প্রার্থীগণ অনলাইনে এ আবেদনপত্র submit এর সময় থেকে পরবর্তী ৭২ (বাহাত্তর) ঘণ্টার মধ্যে এসএমএস এ পরীক্ষার ফি জমা দিতে পারবেন।

গ. অনলাইনে আবেদনপত্রে প্রার্থী তার সম্প্রতি তোলা রঙিন ছবি (দৈর্ঘ্য ৩০০ × প্রস্থ ৩০০) pixel ও স্বাক্ষর (দৈর্ঘ্য ৩০০ × প্রস্থ ৮০) pixel স্ক্যান করে নির্ধারিত স্থানে upload করবেন। ছবির সাইজ সর্বোচ্চ ১০০KB ও স্বাক্ষরের সাইজ সর্বোচ্চ ৬০KB হতে হবে।

ঘ. অনলাইনে আবেদনপত্রে পূরণকৃত তথ্য যেহেতু পরবর্তী সকল কার্যক্রমে ব্যবহৃত হবে, সেহেতু অনলাইন আবেদনপত্র submit করার পূর্বেই পূরণকৃত তথ্যের সঠিকতা সম্পর্কে প্রার্থী নিজে শতভাগ নিশ্চিত হবেন।

ঙ. প্রার্থী অনলাইনে পূরণকৃত আবেদনপত্রের একটি প্রিন্টকপি পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত যে কোনো প্রয়োজনে সহায়ক হিসেবে সংরক্ষণ করবেন এবং মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় এক কপি জমা দিবেন।

১৬. **SMS প্রেরণের নিয়মাবলী ও পরীক্ষার ফি প্রদান:** অনলাইনে আবেদনপত্র (Application Form) যথাযথভাবে পূরণ করে নির্দেশনা মতে ছবি এবং স্বাক্ষর আপলোড করে আবেদনপত্র Submit করার অব্যবহিত পরে প্রার্থী একটি User ID, ছবি এবং স্বাক্ষরযুক্ত একটি Applicant's Copy পাবেন। উক্ত Applicant's Copy প্রার্থী প্রিন্ট অথবা ডাউনলোড করে সংরক্ষণ করবেন। Applicant's Copy-তে একটি User ID নম্বর দেওয়া থাকবে এবং User ID নম্বর প্রার্থী নিম্নোক্ত পদ্ধতিতে যে কোনো টেলিটক প্রি-পেইড মোবাইল নম্বরের মাধ্যমে SMS করে নিম্নবর্ণিত পদ/গ্রেডসমূহের জন্য সরকার নির্ধারিত পরীক্ষার ফি বাবদ Teletalk এর সার্ভিস চার্জসহ ৭২ (বাহাত্তর) ঘণ্টার মধ্যে জমা দিবেন। বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখ্য যে, অনলাইনে এ আবেদনপত্রের সকল অংশ পূরণ করে Submit করা হলেও পরীক্ষার ফি জমা না দেওয়া পর্যন্ত অনলাইনে আবেদনপত্র কোনো অবস্থাতেই গৃহীত হবে না।

ক্র.নং	গ্রেড	পরীক্ষার ফি	সার্ভিস চার্জ	সর্বমোট
০১.	১১তম থেকে ১২তম	১৫০/- (একশত পঞ্চাশ)	১৮/- (আঠারো)	১৬৮/- (একশত আটষট্টি)
০২.	১৩তম থেকে ১৬ তম	১০০/- (একশত)	১২/- (বারো)	১১২/- (একশত বারো)
০৩.	১৭তম থেকে ২০তম	৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ)	৬/- (ছয়)	৫৬/- (ছাপ্পান্ন)
০৪.	সকল গ্রেডে (অনগ্রসর নাগরিক)	৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ)	৬/- (ছয়)	৫৬/- (ছাপ্পান্ন)

প্রথম SMS:
PID<Space>User ID লিখে Send করতে হবে 16222 নম্বরে।
Example: PID ABCDEFGH
Reply SMS: Applicant's Name, Tk. 168/- Will be charged as Application fee. Your PIN is 12345678. To Pay fee Type PID<space>Yes <space>PIN and send to 16222.

দ্বিতীয় SMS:
PID<space>YES <space>PIN লিখে Send করতে হবে 16222 নম্বরে।
Example: PID Yes 12345678 and send to 16222.
Reply SMS: Congratulation Applicant's Name, payment completed successfully for PID application for the post of xxx, User ID: (ABCDEFGH) and Password (XXXXXXXX).

ক. প্রবেশপত্র প্রাপ্তির বিষয়টি https://pid.teletalk.com.bd অথবা তথ্য অধিদফতরের অফিসিয়াল ওয়েবসাইটে https://pressinform.gov.bd/ এ এবং প্রার্থীর মোবাইল ফোনে SMS এর মাধ্যমে (শুধু যোগ্য প্রার্থীদেরকে) যথাসময়ে জানানো হবে। অনলাইন আবেদনপত্রে প্রার্থীর প্রদত্ত মোবাইল নম্বরে পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় যোগাযোগ সম্পন্ন করা হবে বিধায় উক্ত নম্বরটি সার্বক্ষণিক সচল রাখা, SMS পড়া এবং প্রাপ্ত নির্দেশনা তাৎক্ষণিকভাবে অনুসরণ করা বাঞ্ছনীয়।

খ. SMS এ প্রেরিত User ID এবং Password ব্যবহার করে পরবর্তীতে রোল নম্বর, পদের নাম, ছবি, পরীক্ষার তারিখ, সময় ও ভেন্যুর নাম ইত্যাদি তথ্য সংবলিত প্রবেশপত্র প্রার্থী ডাউনলোডপূর্বক প্রিন্ট (সম্ভব হলে রঙিন) করে নিবেন। প্রার্থী এই প্রবেশপত্রটি লিখিত পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের সময় এবং উত্তীর্ণ হলে ব্যবহারিক (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে) ও মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় অবশ্যই প্রদর্শন করবেন।

গ. শুধু টেলিটক প্রি-পেইড মোবাইল ফোন থেকে প্রার্থীগণ নিম্নবর্ণিত SMS অনুসরণ করে নিজ নিজ User ID এবং Password পুনরুদ্ধার করতে পারবেন।
i. User ID জানা থাকলে: PID<space>Help<space>User<space>User ID and Send to 16222.
Example: PID HELP User ABCDEFGH and send to 16222.
ii. PIN নম্বার জানা থাকলে: PID<space>Help<space>PIN<space>PIN No and send to 16222.
Example: PID Help PIN 1234567.

ঘ. অনলাইনে আবেদন করতে সমস্যা হলে alljobs.query@teletalk.com.bd অথবা টেলিটক নম্বর থেকে 121 নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করা যাবে। এছাড়া বাংলাদেশের একমাত্র রাষ্ট্রীয় মোবাইল অপারেটর টেলিটকের জব পোর্টাল ফেসবুক পেইজে https://www.facebook.com/alljobs.bd এ প্রবেশ করে মেসেজ এর মাধ্যমে যোগাযোগ করা যাবে অথবা alljobs.query@teletalk.com.bd এই ই-মেইলে যোগাযোগ করা যাবে।

৭. বিজ্ঞপ্তিটি তথ্য অধিদফতরের অফিসিয়াল ওয়েবসাইট (https://pressinform.gov.bd/) এবং টেলিটক বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড এর ওয়েবসাইটে (https://pid.teletalk.com.bd) পাওয়া যাবে।

[পর্যাপ্ত সময় নিয়ে অতি সতর্কতার সাথে নির্ভুলভাবে নিজে আবেদনপত্র পূরণ করুন এবং নির্ধারিত তারিখ ও সময়ের পূর্বেই ফি জমাদানসহ আবেদন প্রক্রিয়া সম্পন্ন করার জন্য পরামর্শ দেওয়া যাচ্ছে]

Azaman
১০/০৩/২০২৬
মো:মনিরুজ্জামান খান
সিনিয়র তথ্য অফিসার (প্রশাসন)
ও
সদস্য-সচিব, বিভাগীয় নিয়োগ কমিটি
তথ্য অধিদফতর, বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা।

GD-591

Global health milestone: single-dose pill for sleeping sickness gains EU support

A new oral drug that could simplify treatment for sleeping sickness has received a positive scientific opinion from the European Medicines Agency (EMA), raising hopes for faster elimination of the deadly disease in Africa.

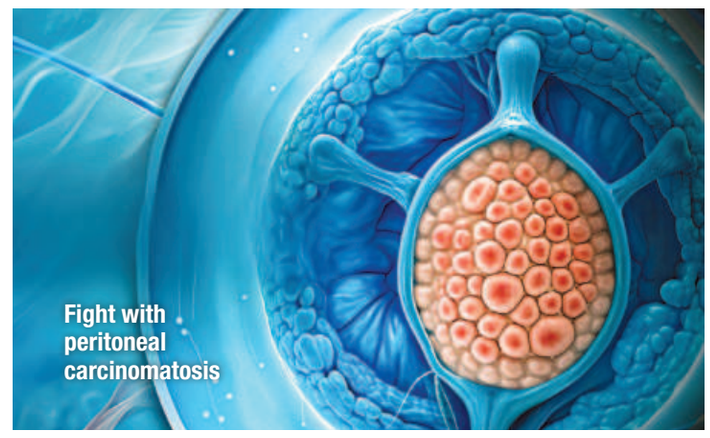
The medicine, Acoziborole Winthrop, developed by the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) in partnership with Sanofi, is designed to treat gambiense human African trypanosomiasis, the most common form of sleeping sickness. The EMA's Committee for Medicinal

Products for Human Use recommended the drug as a single-dose oral treatment of three tablets for adults and adolescents aged 12 years and older.

Sleeping sickness, transmitted by infected tsetse flies, can be fatal if untreated as the parasite eventually invades the central nervous system.

Experts say the single-dose therapy could replace longer, complex treatment regimens and support the World Health Organisation's goal of eliminating the disease by 2030. Sanofi has pledged to donate the medicine to WHO for distribution in affected countries.

The growing challenge of rare tumours — and the centres built to treat them



DR TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

Rare cancers are often overshadowed by more common malignancies such as breast, lung, or colorectal cancer. Yet collectively, these uncommon diseases represent a significant portion of the global cancer burden. At the 3rd SingHealth Peritoneal Surface Oncology Conference in Singapore, specialists gathered to discuss advances in the treatment of complex abdominal and rare tumours.

Among the key speakers was Associate Professor Johnny Ong, Head and Senior Consultant of the Department of Sarcoma, Peritoneal and Rare Tumours (SPRinT) at the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) and Singapore General Hospital (SGH). In an interview with The Daily Star, Dr Ong explained why rare cancers require specialised expertise and how dedicated centres are improving patient outcomes.

Rare cancers are typically defined as those affecting fewer than six people per 100,000 population. However, when all rare tumour types are considered together, they account for roughly 20 to 25 percent of all cancers, creating what Dr Ong describes as a paradox: individually uncommon but collectively widespread. Because each specific tumour is encountered infrequently, many physicians may see only a few cases in their careers, making diagnosis and management particularly

Associate Professor Johnny Ong, Head of SPRinT Programme at the NCCS and SGH

challenging. To address this gap, SingHealth established the SPRinT programme in 2019, bringing together surgeons, oncologists, researchers, and allied specialists to focus on the treatment and research of rare cancers through coordinated multidisciplinary care.

The programme treats a wide spectrum of complex cancers, including soft tissue sarcomas, peritoneal surface malignancies, skin cancers, gastrointestinal stromal tumours, and advanced abdominal cancers. Unlike many other cancer services that are organised by organ systems, rare tumour care often crosses anatomical boundaries. Surgeons treating these diseases must therefore be comfortable operating across multiple organs and working closely with other specialists. Research has shown that patients with rare cancers achieve better outcomes when they are referred early to expert centres that see these conditions regularly.

One of the major cancers treated by the SPRinT team is sarcoma, a tumour arising from connective tissues such as fat, muscle, or blood vessels. Sarcomas can occur almost anywhere in the body and often present as a painless lump. Because they may initially resemble benign growths, they are sometimes overlooked until they become large or symptomatic. Dr Ong emphasises that the first surgery is crucial. If a tumour is not removed properly at the initial operation, the chances of recurrence increase and subsequent treatment becomes far more difficult.

Another important area of focus is peritoneal surface malignancy, a condition in which cancers spread to the lining of the abdominal cavity. The peritoneum acts like a thin membrane surrounding the organs of the abdomen, and tumours from many organs—including the stomach, colon, ovaries, and liver—can spread to this surface. According to data presented by the SPRinT team, about 40 percent of gynaecological cancers, 25 percent of gastric cancers, and roughly 15 percent of colon cancers may eventually spread to the peritoneum. Because these tumours originate from different organs, their treatment requires highly specialised surgical and oncological expertise.

Early detection remains one of the greatest challenges. Many patients visit multiple doctors before receiving the correct diagnosis. To help primary care physicians recognise potential sarcomas, the SPRinT team encourages referral if a lump is larger than five centimetres, grows rapidly, lies deep within tissues, or causes pain. Investigating suspicious lumps early, Dr Ong notes, is always safer than waiting until the disease progresses.

Research and innovation are also central to the programme's work. The team collaborates with laboratory scientists and pharmaceutical partners to explore new drug targets, conduct clinical trials, and better understand tumour biology. Because rare cancers have historically attracted less research attention, these efforts are essential to expanding treatment options.

Beyond treating patients in Singapore, the programme also serves as a regional training hub. Surgeons from across Asia participate in workshops, fellowships, and conferences to learn specialised techniques for managing rare tumours. For Dr Ong, increasing awareness among both doctors and the public is key.

Rare cancers may be individually uncommon, but together they represent a large group of patients who deserve specialised care, early diagnosis, and access to the latest advances in cancer treatment.

E-mail: tareq.salahuddin@thedailystar.net

STUDY FINDINGS

Obesity linked to higher risk of severe infections

Adult obesity significantly increases the risk of severe infections and infection-related deaths, according to a large international study published in The Lancet. The research suggests that around one in ten infection-related deaths globally may be linked to obesity, highlighting a growing but often overlooked public health concern.

The multicohort study analysed data from more than 540,000 adults from Finnish population studies and the UK Biobank, tracking hospitalisations and deaths related to infectious diseases over more than a decade. Researchers examined the relationship between body mass index (BMI) and the risk of severe infections caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi.

Results showed a clear dose–response relationship, meaning the risk increased with higher levels of obesity. Individuals with severe obesity faced nearly three times the risk of hospitalisation or death due to infections compared with people of healthy weight.

The findings were consistent across a wide range of infections, including respiratory, gastrointestinal, and skin infections. Scientists say obesity may weaken immune defenses through chronic inflammation and metabolic disturbances.

With global obesity rates continuing to rise, experts warn that addressing obesity could also reduce the burden of infectious diseases worldwide.

Child Health Research Foundation
CHRF Prevent Infections, Save Lives

Bangladesh's CHRF wins prestigious Wellcome grant to study severe viral pneumonia in children

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Bangladesh's Child Health Research Foundation (CHRF) has received a prestigious Wellcome Discovery Award to investigate severe viral pneumonia in children, marking a significant milestone for the country's biomedical research landscape.

The award, funded by the UK-based charitable foundation the Wellcome Trust, will support an ambitious seven-year study examining how respiratory viruses interact with immune cells in the nose; the body's first line of defense against infection.

Pneumonia remains one of the leading causes of child mortality in Bangladesh. A key focus of the research will be Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV), a major driver of hospitalisation and severe illness among young children.

Led by Senjuti Saha of CHRF, the project will collaborate with researchers from Boston Children's Hospital to study virus–host interactions using advanced tools such as single-cell genomics and nasal mucosal organoid models.

Researchers hope the findings will shed light on why some children develop life-threatening pneumonia while others experience mild illness; insights that could inform better prevention, diagnosis and treatment strategies for respiratory infections in Bangladesh and globally.

Empty clinics, ailing villages: Bangladesh's quiet rural health crisis

PROFESSOR DR MOHAMMAD ANISUR RAHMAN FORAZY

Bangladesh is widely recognised as a global success story in public health. Over the past few decades, the country has made remarkable progress in reducing maternal and child mortality, expanding immunisation coverage and increasing life expectancy. International organisations often cite Bangladesh as a model for community-based healthcare initiatives. Yet beyond these achievements, a quieter crisis continues to unfold across rural Bangladesh.

Across thousands of villages, community clinics and rural health centres stand as symbols of an ambitious healthcare vision. Built with substantial public investment, these facilities were meant to bring essential medical services closer to people living far from urban hospitals. Each community clinic was designed to serve roughly 6,000 villagers, providing primary consultations, maternal and child health services, immunisation, family planning counselling and treatment for common illnesses.

On paper, the model aligns closely with global public health principles such as Primary Health Care (PHC) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC). If fully functional, these clinics could form the backbone of Bangladesh's rural healthcare system.

In reality, however, many clinics remain closed for long periods or operate only sporadically. Residents in several rural

A closed non-functional community clinic

areas report that healthcare personnel are frequently absent. Doctors rarely visit, and trained nurses or health assistants are often unavailable. Even when clinics open, shortages of medicines and basic diagnostic tools limit the services that can be offered.

For villagers, the consequences are serious. When illness strikes, the nearest functioning health facility may be several kilometres away, often requiring costly transport to reach an upazila health complex or district hospital. For low-income rural families, such journeys can be both financially and physically burdensome.

The situation is particularly challenging for vulnerable groups. Pregnant women may miss essential antenatal check-ups, elderly patients struggle to manage chronic illnesses and children with infections risk delayed treatment. Minor health problems that could have been treated locally often escalate into more severe conditions.

Bangladesh has invested heavily in rural healthcare infrastructure, but buildings alone cannot deliver care. A functioning system requires trained health professionals, reliable medicine supplies, diagnostic services, effective supervision and community engagement.

International experience shows that strengthening the role of nurses and community health workers can significantly improve primary healthcare delivery. In countries such as Thailand, Brazil and Rwanda, nurse-led clinics have successfully expanded access to essential health services.

Bangladesh has already demonstrated its ability to innovate in public health. Revitalising community clinics through better staffing, consistent medicine supply and stronger accountability could transform these facilities into vibrant healthcare hubs.

After all, healthcare systems should be judged not by the buildings they construct, but by the care they deliver to the people they serve.

The writer is a Senior Nursing Educationist & Research Consultant. E-mail: forazy@gmail.com

Global partners launch $54m effort to boost maternal nutrition in Africa

A new multi-country initiative aimed at improving maternal health and nutrition across Africa has been launched with an initial investment of $54 million from the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF).

The programme, named NOURISH, was unveiled in Addis Ababa during the African Union Summit and is being led by Nutrition International in partnership with UNICEF, Sight and Life and several African governments.

NOURISH aims to strengthen antenatal care systems and expand access to essential micronutrients for pregnant women across the continent. The initiative will initially focus on eight countries, beginning with Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Health experts say improved maternal nutrition is critical in sub-Saharan Africa, where about one in three pregnant women suffers from anaemia and low birthweight remains a leading cause of newborn deaths.

By aligning financing, technical expertise and service delivery behind national health plans, the programme seeks to reach at least four million women directly by 2030 while strengthening health services for millions more.

Study links e-cigarettes to higher blood pressure risk

STAR HEALTH DESK

Smoking traditional cigarettes or using e-cigarettes may significantly raise the risk of high blood pressure, according to new research that adds to growing concerns about nicotine use. The study suggests that people who smoke or vape are more likely to develop both elevated blood pressure and clinical hypertension compared with those who avoid nicotine products.

The research, published in The American Journal of Physiology – Heart and Circulatory Physiology, analysed health data from 6,262 adolescents and adults aged between 12 and 80 years in the United States. Participants were part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey conducted between 2021 and 2023.

Scientists found that individuals who smoked or vaped had a 34 per cent higher risk of abnormally high blood pressure and a 46 per cent greater risk of hypertension than those who used neither product. Among participants, about 19 per cent reported using nicotine products: 12.6 per cent smoked cigarettes, 4.1 per cent used e-cigarettes, and 2.3 per cent used both.

Researchers also observed that nicotine users tended to have higher cholesterol levels, more body fat and greater levels of inflammation; factors that can worsen heart health. The findings suggest nicotine exposure, whether from cigarettes or vaping devices, may influence blood pressure partly through its effect on cholesterol and blood vessel function.

While the association was strongest for traditional smokers, the study noted that vaping alone may still carry cardiovascular risks, although the smaller number of exclusive vapers in the sample limited statistical certainty.

Health experts say the results challenge the common belief that vaping is a harmless alternative to smoking. The World Health Organisation has previously warned that the growing popularity of e-cigarettes is fueling a new wave of nicotine addiction, particularly among young people worldwide.

Researchers say further studies are needed to understand the long-term health effects of vaping. However, the findings highlight the importance of stronger public health measures to reduce nicotine use and protect young people from potential cardiovascular harm.

Star SPORT
DHAKA SUNDAY MARCH 15, 2026, CHAITRA 1, 1432 BS

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
Women's Asian Cup
Japan vs Philippines
Live from 11:00 am
Bangladesh vs Pakistan
Third ODI

Live from 2:15 pm
SONY SPORTS 1
New Zealand vs South Africa
First T20I
Live from 12:15 pm
STAR SPORTS

SELECT HD1
Premier League
Man United vs Villa
Live from 8:00 pm
Liverpool vs Tottenham
Live from 10:30 pm

Tigers hope batters step up in series decider

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will desperately hope their batters finally produce their A game when they take on Pakistan in the series-deciding third and final ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur today.

Although the Mirpur wicket usually comes under scrutiny for making batting difficult with its slow nature, the surface in the ongoing series has, for the first time in years, consistently provided even pace and bounce.

Despite getting a rare batting-friendly track in Mirpur, Bangladesh's batters faltered badly in the second ODI on Friday, which they lost by 128 runs under the DLS method.

They had earlier won the opening game by eight wickets, meaning today's match will decide the fate of the series.

The victory in the opening match was largely orchestrated by a brilliant bowling display along with Pakistan's poor batting effort. Nahid Rana claimed his maiden five-wicket haul as Pakistan were bowled out for just 114 runs, a target that did not pose a challenge for the Bangladeshi batters.

However, Bangladesh's batting frailties were exposed in the second game while chasing 275 under lights.

For a large part of Pakistan's innings, it seemed that they would be posting in excess of 300 but they lost wickets in clusters at the final stretch and eventually failed to play out their full 50 overs.

Despite staging a strong comeback with the ball in the latter part of Pakistan's innings, the failure of the top-order, with Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Saif Hassan and Najmul Hossain Shanto all departing within the first five overs, effectively pushed them out of the contest.

After a lengthy interruption due to a hailstorm, Bangladesh were set a revised target of 243 in 32 overs, but the way the batters approached the chase suggested the target was always out of reach.

Litton Das looked in control until his dismissal, but Tawhid Hridoy, Afif Hossain and even skipper Mehidy Hasan Miraz appeared uncomfortable during their time at the crease.

Apart from the batting concerns, Bangladesh's Powerplay bowling will also be an area of focus. In both matches they struggled to make early breakthroughs. In the first match Pakistan reached 41 for 1 in the opening 10 overs, while in the second game Pakistani openers Maaz Sadaqat and Sahibzada Farhan smashed 85 runs in the Powerplay.

Meanwhile, the ICC ODI rankings will also be in focus. If Bangladesh defeat Pakistan, they will move up to ninth place with 79 points, gaining a two-point lead over West Indies.

However, a defeat would see Bangladesh remain 10th, fractionally behind the Caribbean side in rating points.

To qualify directly for the 2027 ICC World Cup, Bangladesh must remain at least ninth in the rankings. Although several ODI series are scheduled ahead, a win in the decider could ease some immediate pressure.

Pakistan, meanwhile, will be aiming to win their first ODI series against Bangladesh in 11 years. The last time the two sides met in a bilateral ODI series was in 2015, when Bangladesh secured a historic 3-0 sweep on home soil.

If Bangladesh defeat Pakistan, they will win the series 2–1 and move up to 9th place in the ICC ODI rankings with 79 points, two points ahead of the West Indies. If Bangladesh lose, they will remain 10th with 77 points, fractionally behind the Caribbean side in rating points.

A captain searching for his place

ASHFAQ-UL-ALAM

Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple, had famously said that individuals who contribute the most in the workplace often end up becoming the best managers.

While selecting who would manage a cricket team on the field as its captain, sides often go by the same logic and hand the mantle to the best performer or at least someone whose position in the side is indisputable.

For a captain, the trouble begins when either their performances don't match expectations or when their team starts to underperform.

Almost nine months into his tenure as Bangladesh's ODI captain, Mehidy Hasan Miraz is facing both.

The ODI team has been inconsistent for a while now, a fact that has been on full display in the ongoing ODI series against Pakistan, where they decimated the visitors in the first ODI before getting outplayed in the following game.

In both games, skipper Miraz excelled with the ball, picking up five wickets in total and conceding around three runs per over.

His performances as a bowler more than justifies his place in the side. The problem, however, is that he is in the side not as a bowler, but an all-rounder.

In the absence of Shakib Al Hasan, Miraz is Bangladesh's main all-rounder in the ODI setup, and is expected to bowl 10 overs in most games and score runs while batting in the top 7.

Since becoming the ODI skipper on June 12, 2025, Miraz has batted 10 times in 50-over affairs at four different positions -- five times at No.5, thrice at 6, and once each at 7 and 9.

Even before he was named captain, Miraz, who had spent the first six years of his ODI career as a lower-order batter, was getting opportunities in the middle-order.

Since 2024, he had batted at No.4 in seven straight matches and even came out at one-down against New Zealand in the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy.

Although he averaged close to 40 at No.4, his strike rate was below 70, which is abysmal by modern ODI standards.

After becoming captain, he demoted himself in the batting line-up, but his returns remained disappointing.

In this period, his average tanked to 19.33 and his scoring rate is just a shade above 70.

This can't just be cast off as a dip in form either. He has batted 21 times at No.6 or 7 in his ODI career so far, amassing 281 runs at a paltry average of 14.05 at a strike rate of 70.6

There are 11 Bangladeshi batters who have scored more runs at these positions with a better strike rate and average than Miraz.

On Friday's second ODI against Pakistan, Miraz came out at No.7, with Bangladesh needing 148 runs in 93 deliveries.

He took a single off the first four balls he faced and then skied the ball against pacer Faheem Ashraf and got caught at deep midwicket. Just five overs after his dismissal, Bangladesh were bundled out.

Miraz has around three months left in his 12-month contract as the Bangladesh skipper and is set to get a few more opportunities, including today's series-deciding third ODI against Pakistan in Mirpur, to curve out a place in the batting order. Otherwise, he stands at risk of not just losing his captaincy, but also his place in the side, just like he has in the T20I format.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

HISTORIC SHARED T20 STAGE

[L-R] Keshav Maharaj, Mitchell Santner, Laura Wolvaardt and Amelie Kerr pose at the beach as South Africa and New Zealand's men's and women's teams gear up for a five-match T20I series in New Zealand. The tour marks the first time both national teams will contest full series side by side against the same oppositions. South Africa women last faced their New Zealand counterparts in the 2025 T20 World Cup final, while the men's sides locked horns in the semifinal of the recently concluded T20 World Cup, with New Zealand winning on both occasions. The five-match double-headers will take place across Mount Maunganui to Christchurch from March 15 to 25.

PHOTO: NZC

88 DAYS TO GO

Argentina trail only Brazil and Germany

Defending champions Argentina have featured in 88 matches in the World Cup so far. Of these, the Albiceleste have secured 47 wins against 24 defeats, while the remaining 17 matches ended in draws. In the history of football's showpiece event, only two teams have played more matches than Argentina. Record five-time champions Brazil lead the pack with 114 matches, followed by four-time winners Germany (including the former West Germany), who have taken the field 112 times.

*** Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Maradona of the Desert'*

PHOTO: AFP

CHINA, SOUTH KOREA QUALIFY FOR WORLD CUP

China players celebrate an extra-time goal by Shao Ziqin during their 2-0 victory against Chinese Taipei Taiwan in their AFC Women's Asian Cup quarterfinal at the Rectangular Stadium in Perth yesterday. The fiercely-contested match, with political undertones, went into extra time before Ziqin's strike and an own goal later settled it in favour of the defending champions, who will meet hosts Australia in one of the semifinals. Meanwhile, South Korea thrashed Uzbekistan 6-0 in the other quarterfinal on the day. Both China and South Korea ensured their places in next year's World Cup.

Title-race thriller as Dorielton hattrick sinks Fortis

SPORTS REPORTER

Matchday 11 of the Bangladesh Football League (BFL) delivered a day of high-stakes drama and significant movement in the standings as leaders Bashundhara Kings edged Fortis FC 3–2 in what proved to be a classic encounter in Dhaka yesterday.

The victory kept Kings atop the standings with 24 points from 11 matches, while Fortis remained on 21 points after suffering only their second defeat of the season.

At the Bashundhara Kings Arena, the match was a truly topsy-turvy battle and a heated affair from the opening whistle, characterised by a physical intensity that kept the crowd on the edge of their seats throughout the ninety minutes.

Fortis drew first blood in the 19th minute when Pa Omar Babou threaded a perfectly timed pass through the Kings' backline for Onyekachi Okafor, who finished with composure to give the visitors an early advantage. Kings, undeterred, responded swiftly: Rakib Hossain charged down the right flank only to be felled inside the box by Abdulla Omar, and Dorielton Gomes calmly converted the resulting penalty to restore parity in the 26th minute.

The second half saw the Kings assert themselves more aggressively. Dorielton struck again in the 52nd minute, meeting a precise cross from Foysal Ahmed Fahim to guide the ball past the goalkeeper with a volley. Fortis, however, refused to capitulate, with Dawa Tshering delivering a dangerous corner in the 75th minute that defender Ananta Tamang slotted home to level the scores, setting the stage for a tense finale.

PHOTO: BFF

Brazilian forward Dorielton, however, had the final say, completing his hattrick in the 78th minute to seal the win and take his tally to 12 goals, further solidifying his position as the league's leading scorer.

In the day's other fixture, Abahani secured a 2–1 away win over Brothers Union in Munshiganj.

Nigerian forward Emeka Ogbugh gave Abahani an early lead in the fifth minute and doubled it in the 70th at Shaheed Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium. Pakistani forward Shayak Dost pulled one back for Brothers in the 87th minute, but the late surge was insufficient to earn a point.

The victory moved Abahani up to third with 19 points from 11 matches, while Brothers remained seventh.

Elsewhere, Arambag beat PWD SC 3-0, courtesy of a first-half double from Ghanian forward Kwame Kizito and his compatriot Shadrach Lantei-Mills putting the game to bed in the 73rd minute at Shaheed Barkat Stadium in Gazipur.

The BFL will resume on April 10 after a near four-week break, with the Abahani-Mohammedan fixture headlining Matchday 12.

REFORM COUNCIL

Jamaat, allies threaten street agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11-party electoral alliance has urged the BNP-led government to convene a session of the Constitutional Reform Council by today.

The bloc would be compelled to take to the streets with public support if swift steps are not taken to implement the July National Charter, said Hamidur Rahman Azad, assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami and coordinator of the alliance.

The alliance's top leaders would soon hold a meeting to announce agitation programmes, he said at a press briefing yesterday following a meeting of the alliance at Jamaat's central office in Moghbazar, Dhaka.

The winners of the 13th parliamentary election were sworn in as lawmakers on February 17. On the same day, elected members from the Jamaat-led alliance also took oath as members of the proposed Constitutional Reform Council.

However, the BNP lawmakers refrained from doing so, arguing that the council has no provision in the Constitution.

The new parliament began its journey on Thursday. On that day, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker were elected, the panel of chairpersons and several parliamentary committees, including the Business Advisory Committee, were formed, and the session was adjourned following the president's address.

Members of the opposition alliance, led by Jamaat,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Preparations underway for the parade to observe Independence Day on March 26. The photo was taken on the Tejgaon Parade Ground in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

BNP unmoved by Jamaat's threat

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The ruling BNP is not bothered about the opposition Jamaat-e-Islam's warning of street protests if the session of the Constitutional Reform Council is not convened as forming the council is not on its priority list.

Besides, establishing a Constitutional Reform Council outside the parliamentary framework, in line with the July charter implementation order, could lead to legal complications, The Daily Star has learnt from several BNP leaders involved with the party's deliberations on the matter.

"Rival parties are raising the issue loudly, but they are not presenting arguments on constitutional grounds," said a BNP lawmaker asking not to be named to speak candidly on the issue.

The Jamaat-led 11-party alliance has threatened to take to the streets if a session of the Constitutional Reform Council is not convened in the parliament today.

Pressure from the rival parties is not significant enough to alter the BNP's approach to constitutional reforms, said the party leaders, adding

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

US-ISRAEL WAR ON IRAN

Flight chaos, high fares shatter Eid hopes of migrants

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladeshi migrants' aspiration to return home for Eid-ul-Fitr has turned into a nightmare with the large-scale cancellations of flights to and from the Gulf countries amid the US-Israeli war on Iran.

Only those in well-paid jobs or facing emergencies at home are flying via alternative routes, but paying excessively high airfares. Others, living in fear amid Iranian attacks in the Gulf, are unable even to consider returning home for Eid, which is just a week away.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, about 447 of the 895 scheduled flights on migrant-heavy Middle Eastern routes were cancelled until March 13 after the war broke out.

Mohammad Emon, a businessman in the Bahraini capital Manama, said he had purchased a March 16 Gulf Air ticket to return home. However, he has now shelved his plan to fly with no flight operating from Manama towards Bangladesh.

Some people are taking an alternative route through Riyadh from Bahrain, but the air ticket is too expensive, he told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

"Whereas the airfare from Manama to Dhaka and back is 250 Bahraini Dinars [Tk 80,000], the one-way ticket to Dhaka via Riyadh is 300 Bahraini Dinars [Tk 97,000]," Emon said.

He said he was worried over his clothing and air ticketing businesses that experienced drastic drop in sales due to the impacts of war. "At this moment, I cannot go home and celebrate the Eid with my family. I'm trying to get the money back from the Gulf Air."

After the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, Iran has been responding by striking the US bases in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Jordan, and Lebanon.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Rains pile misery on potato farmers in North

Waterlogging hits fields as growers already reel from low market prices

MOSTAFA SHABUJ, S DILIP ROY, *and* QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

Heavy rains on Wednesday and Thursday nights submerged Rabi-season crops, including potatoes, across several northern districts.

The Rabi season in Bangladesh is the dry winter cropping season, typically lasting from mid-November to mid-March.

Potato farmers in the region, who were hit hardest, said they were already incurring losses since the beginning of the year due to low market prices. Now, sudden waterlogging in their fields has doubled their financial burden.

On Friday, visits to Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila, Joypurhat's Kalai upazila, and Bogura's Shibganj upazila found hundreds of acres of potato fields waterlogged, many fully submerged. Meanwhile, farmers were seen struggling to harvest their crops amid mud and standing water.

The most significant damage occurred in Joypurhat's Panchbibi, Khetlal, and Kalai upazilas as well as Bogura's Shibganj.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Joypurhat, crops on 141 hectares of land in the district have been affected by the sudden rain and Nor'wester storms.

This includes 90 hectares of potato fields, 13 hectares of vegetables, five hectares of paddy, 23 hectares of wheat, and 10 hectares of maize.

Md Momin, a farmer in Kalai upazila's Dudal village, said, "The rain over the last two days was so heavy that potatoes on one acre of my field are now submerged. At least 100 acres in my village are in the same condition."

"I can neither store these potatoes at home nor keep them in cold storage. I will now be forced to sell them at a very low price."

the harvested potatoes in the field. The sudden rain submerged all the potatoes on my 1.5-acre field."

Gobindaganj Upazila Agriculture Extension Officer Md Mehedi Hassan noted that about five hectares of fields belonging to late-harvesting farmers were affected by the rain.

PHOTO: STAR

Shahjalal, a farmer in Udaypur village in the same upazila, said his potatoes on nearly two acres were underwater. "I couldn't get enough farmhands to harvest in time. It cost me Tk 1,200 per decimal to cultivate potatoes. Even good quality potatoes are not selling; where will I find a buyer for these wet, damaged potatoes?"

Firoz Kabir, another farmer from Rajosh village in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj, said, "All the cold storages in my area are full, so I left

In Bogura's Shibganj upazila, farmer Abdul Goffar from Kichak Bazar said, "I hadn't harvested potatoes on two bighas of land because I intended to save them for seeds. I never imagined there would be this much rain.... My field is now under knee-deep water, and there is no way to pump it out because the surrounding areas are also flooded."

Farid Uddin, sub-assistant agriculture officer of Bogura DAE,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

HADI KILLING

Man who helped key accused flee held in India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Special Task Force (STF) of West Bengal Police has arrested Bangladeshi broker Philip Sangma, who is accused of helping the two key suspects flee the country after the killing of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, spokesperson for Inqilab Moncho.

According to Indian media reports, the STF, acting on a tip-off, arrested Sangma near the Shantipur bypass in Nadia district early yesterday.

Preliminary interrogation revealed that Sangma had long been involved in facilitating illegal cross-border movement in exchange for money.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Matiur, Shahidullah elected president, vice president of Noab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Matiur Rahman

Shahidullah Khan

Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, editor-in-chief of Manab Zamin, has been elected president of the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) for the 2026-2027 term.

He succeeds AK Azad, publisher of Samakal, who served as the Noab president for three consecutive terms.

The members of the executive committee of the association were elected unopposed at a meeting held yesterday. M Masrur Reaz, chairman of the Noab election

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

HASANAH
ISLAMI BANKING
البنكية الاسلامي
Prime Bank

PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 15

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-55	12-45	4-30	6-09	7-45
JAMAAT	5-05	1-15	4-45	6-14	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MAR	SEHRI	IFTAR
25	15		6:09
26	16	4:51	6:10
27	17	4:50	6:10

ROOPPUR POWER PLANT UNIT-1

Fuel loading to begin April 7

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Fuel loading at Unit-1 of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) is scheduled to begin on April 7, marking a major milestone toward starting electricity production at Bangladesh's first nuclear facility by mid-year.

Fuel loading is the process of placing nuclear fuel rods into the reactor core. These rods contain uranium pellets that, once inside the reactor, will start the chain reaction that produces heat. That heat is then used to make steam, which spins turbines to generate electricity.

According to senior officials at the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Russian contractor overseeing

the project has officially notified the government of the schedule.

Preparatory work on Unit-1 is expected to finish by March 27, after which the government will formally announce commissioning of the plant.

"The Russian contractor officially informed the government last week

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
প্রবাসী কল্যাণ ও বৈদেশিক কর্মসংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয়
প্রবাসী কল্যাণ ভবন, ইস্কাটন গার্ডেন, রমনা, ঢাকা-১০০০
কল্যাণ-০১ শাখা
www.probashi.gov.bd

গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

ইরান-ইসরাইল যুদ্ধের প্রেক্ষাপটে মধ্যপ্রাচ্যের বিভিন্ন দেশ হতে বাংলাদেশে ছুটিতে আসা প্রবাসী কর্মীদের ভিসার মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধি সংক্রান্ত

ইরান-ইসরাইল যুদ্ধ পরিস্থিতির প্রেক্ষাপটে বাংলাদেশে ছুটিতে অবস্থানকালে যেসব কর্মীর ভিসার মেয়াদ ইতোমধ্যে উত্তীর্ণ হয়েছে বা শিগগিরই উত্তীর্ণ হতে যাচ্ছে এবং এ মুহূর্তে সংশ্লিষ্ট দেশে গিয়ে ভিসা নবায়ন করা সম্ভব হচ্ছে না, তাঁদের বিষয়ে সংশ্লিষ্ট দেশসমূহ নিম্নরূপ পদক্ষেপ গ্রহণ করেছেঃ

(১) সৌদি আরব, কুয়েত, সংযুক্ত আরব আমিরাত, ওমান এবং বাহরাইন হতে বাংলাদেশে আসা কর্মীগণের ভিসা নবায়নের জন্য কর্মীর নিয়োগকর্তা, স্পন্সর বা কফিলের মাধ্যমে যোগাযোগ/ অনলাইনে আবেদন করতে হবে;

(২) কুয়েত, কাতার এবং সংযুক্ত আরব আমিরাত সরকার ইতোমধ্যে যে সকল ভিসার মেয়াদ শেষ হয়েছে বা শেষ হওয়ার পথে এমন সকল এন্ট্রি ভিসার মেয়াদ ১ মাস বৃদ্ধি করেছে।

সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতি ও কার্যার্থে গণবিজ্ঞপ্তিটি জারি করা হলো।

কর্তৃপক্ষ
প্রবাসী কল্যাণ ও বৈদেশিক কর্মসংস্থান মন্ত্রণালয়

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