

JU student found dead in her home Husband detained

JU CORRESPONDENT

The body of a female student of Jahangirnagar University was recovered yesterday from her home in Savar's Islamnagar area, adjacent to the campus.

Deceased Sharmin Jahan was a student of the 51st batch of the Public Administration Department, said JU Proctor AKM Rashidul Alam.

Sharmin's husband Fahim Al Hasan told neighbours that he returned home in the afternoon and found the door locked from the outside. He said he later entered the house and found his wife lying on the floor in a bloodied state.

Later, with the help of his landlord, Sharmin was taken to Enam Medical College Hospital in Savar, where doctors declared her dead, added Fahim.

The body was later taken to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College in Dhaka for an autopsy, said Rubel Howlader, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station.

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STARLINK ON TRAINS... A passenger on the Bonolota Express scans a QR code to access free onboard Wi-Fi, made possible for the first time through Starlink -- a satellite-based internet service provider. Bangladesh Railway launched the service experimentally on March 13 in collaboration with Bangladesh Satellite Company.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

Two die minutes after pre-surgery injection

Families accuse nurses of negligence; SBMCH suspends 2 nurses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Two patients died following alleged negligence by on-duty nurses at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barisal yesterday.

The deceased are Helena Begum, 45, wife of the late Babul Hawlader of Sarsi village in Barisal, and Shefali Begum, 60, wife of Mannan Talukder from Dalbuganj village in Kalapara, Patuakhali.

The incident occurred around 8:30am at the female ward of ENT department, on the third floor of the hospital.

Relatives of the deceased said they would seek legal action over the deaths.

Hospital administration sources and family members said Helena was admitted on February 23 for thyroid complications, while Shefali was admitted on March 8 for a surgery to remove a tumour in her mouth.

Speaking to reporters, Helena's relative Monir alleged that the patient was scheduled to undergo surgery at around 8:30am yesterday.

However, around 7:00am, a nurse administered

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Iran, US snub negotiation

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As Washington has brushed aside attempts by Middle Eastern allies to open talks, three sources told Reuters, and Iran's Revolutionary Guards said on Sunday they had fired more missiles at Israel and three US bases in the region, including Saudi Arabia's Al-Kharrj.

"This war will end when we are certain that it will not be repeated and that reparations will be paid," Araghchi yesterday told Arabic language news platform Al-Araby Al-Jadeed.

Trump responded by urging "China, France, Japan, South Korea, the UK and others" to send warships to escort tankers, while the US military continues to pound drone, boat and missile launch sites in Iran on the north shore.

But the countries he listed have given only guarded responses, and Araghchi, in a call with French

counterpart Jean-Noel Barrot, warned them to "refrain from any action that could lead to escalation and expansion of the conflict".

The UK defence ministry was non-committal, saying "we are currently discussing with our allies and partners a range of options to ensure the security of shipping in the region".

Britain's minister for energy security, Ed Miliband, told the BBC the "plan now has to be to de-escalate the conflict... We are talking to our allies. There are different ways in which we can make maritime shipping possible."

South Korea said it was monitoring Trump's remarks on social media, while the policy chief of Japan's ruling party, Takayuki Kobayashi, said the bar for sending Japanese navy ships to the region under existing laws was "extremely high".

Global oil prices have surged by

40 percent as Iran has choked off the vital sea passage and attacked energy and shipping industry targets in its Gulf neighbours.

The strikes were in retaliation for the US and Israeli air campaign that killed its supreme leader, triggering a war across the Middle East.

Meanwhile, Iran's Revolutionary Guards yesterday vowed to target Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"If this child-killing criminal is alive, we will continue to pursue and kill him with full force," said the Guards on their website Sepah News.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday claimed that Russia was supplying Iran with Shahed drones to use against the US and Israel.

Zelenskiy told CNN's Fareed Zakaria that it is "100% facts" that Iran has used Russian-made Shaheds to attack US bases.

As the war drags on, Israel

yesterday approved an \$827-million emergency budget allocation for military purchases, Israeli media reported.

Despite the hardline talk from all sides, residents of Tehran were able to go about their work week in the most normal atmosphere since the start of the war on February 28.

Traffic was busier than last week, and some cafes and restaurants had reopened. Some shoppers queued at ATMs to withdraw cash. It was a similar story outside the capital.

More than 1,200 people have been killed by US and Israeli strikes, according to Iranian health ministry figures that could not be independently verified.

The UN refugee agency says up to 3.2 million people have been displaced in Iran. The Pentagon says more than 15,000 targets in Iran have been hit by US and Israeli forces.

Why new US trade weapon

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powerful law gives the US president massive leeway to punish other countries for "unfair" trade practices, and it doesn't require approval from Congress or the courts.

Dr Deborah Elms, head of trade policy at the Hinrich Foundation, explains that the US is keeping this investigation on a very short leash. "The USTR's goal is to replace these [expiring] tariffs with new measures by July," she wrote in an article on her organisation's website on March 12. Because they are in such a rush, the US government is throwing everything at the wall to see what sticks, accusing these 16 countries of a wild variety of offences just to justify new taxes.

Washington's use of Section 301 has mutated over the years. For decades after the World Trade Organization (WTO) was formed in 1995, Section 301 was mostly a bureaucratic stepping stone. The US government primarily used it to gather evidence before politely taking a formal trade dispute to the international WTO courts.

That polite era ended during the first Trump administration. Washington stopped asking the WTO for permission and turned Section 301 into a unilateral sledgehammer. The most famous example was the 2018 trade war, when the US bypassed global courts and slapped punishing tariffs -- ranging from 7.5 percent to 25 percent -- on \$370 billion worth of Chinese goods over intellectual property theft, according to the US Congress website. They also briefly used it to tax European goods in 2020 over a dispute involving airplane subsidies. When the Biden administration took over, it didn't put the weapon away. In May 2024, after a formal review, Biden not only kept those Trump-era China tariffs but actively spiked some of them (like jacking up taxes on Chinese electric vehicles).

Now, by scooping up 16 incredibly diverse economies -- lumping a vulnerable, developing garment hub like Bangladesh into the same regulatory basket as China, Germany, and India -- the US is breaking all historical precedents. Washington is no longer using Section 301 to fix specific, targeted trade violations; it is using it as a frantic, sweeping dragnet to replace the universal tariff revenue it just lost in the Supreme Court.

Stephen Lamar, the president of the American Apparel & Footwear Association, said that his group was discouraged by the proposed tariffs and that the administration should slow down and work with various stakeholders, including Congress, according to a New York Times report. He likened the process to the administration trying to "glue together shattered glass in a messy fix."

"We understand the administration is hurriedly trying to recreate the tariff rates it had sought to establish under a scheme now deemed illegal by the Supreme Court," he said. "In this effort, the process increasingly feels like answers in search of an investigation rather than an investigation in search of answers."

However, in recent days, some commentators in Bangladesh have gone on social media to downplay the threat as a non-event. Their logic is: Because we are on a list with 15 other countries like China and India, we are safely hidden in the crowd. Don't panic and don't go into a frenzy.

This is a dangerous mindset.

Simply put, Section 301 is not a group punishment. The US can use this law to slap high taxes directly on Bangladeshi exports. As Dr Elms warns, the current US administration "appears keen to retaliate first and discuss mostly later," and any penalties they apply "are likely to be long-lasting."

If the US slaps new taxes on Bangladeshi clothes just as the country loses its special LDC trade privileges, it could be a fatal blow to factory margins and millions of jobs.

Because this is a rushed political scramble, the US government's arguments for targeting Bangladesh are economically unreasonable. They accuse Bangladesh of overproducing goods and using government cash incentives to dump cheap products on the world.

So why don't accusations against Bangladesh make no sense?

1. You can't "overproduce" made-to-order shirts

The US treats Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) sector as if it were a Chinese steel mill churning out metal to oversupply the market. But the garment industry doesn't work that way. It is entirely made-to-order. A factory in Dhaka doesn't sew a thousand shirts unless an American brand like Target or Walmart explicitly places an order for them. You cannot accuse Bangladesh of "overproducing" goods that American companies specifically asked for.

2. The arbitrary cement logic

In its official complaint, the US literally pointed to unused capacity in Bangladesh's cement industry as proof of unfair trade. This shows how little homework Washington did. Cement is heavy and expensive to ship. Bangladesh makes cement strictly to build its own local bridges and roads; it doesn't ship it to California. Suggesting that cement mills in Dhaka are a threat to American workers is arbitrary.

3. Bangladesh is following the rules

The US is seemingly unhappy about the cash incentives the Bangladeshi government gives to its exporters. But under global trade rules, poor countries (Least Developed Countries, or LDCs) are legally allowed to use these incentives to grow their economies. Furthermore, because Bangladesh is graduating from LDC status in 2026, it is already in the process of cutting these subsidies anyway. The US is basically trying to penalise Bangladesh for a completely legal programme that Dhaka is already shutting down.

With public hearings starting on May 5 in Washington, and a tight mid-April deadline for written defences, Dhaka has to move fast. Relying on friendly diplomatic chats or just complaining that the US is being unfair will not work. To survive this trade trap, Bangladesh needs to show up with hard data and a clear strategy: Bangladeshi diplomats should confer with American CEOs and immediately team up with major US clothing brands, if possible. Those executives need to say: If you tax Bangladesh, you aren't bringing factory jobs back to America. You are just forcing American families to pay more for their kids' school clothes.

Bangladesh must focus on the "made-to-order" reality. Show the US the paper trail proving that every garment leaving the port was explicitly requested by a US buyer. Instead of hiding the export cash incentives, Bangladesh should proudly show the data proving they are perfectly legal under international law, and highlight the exact timeline of how the country is already phasing them out.

The US's main target right now is China. Bangladesh needs to politely remind Washington that it is a friendly, developing nation helping American companies diversify their supply chains. Punishing Bangladesh only pushes global trade back into Beijing's hands.

Bangladesh's representatives shouldn't get emotional or play the victim. They need to show up with a factual takedown of the US government's flawed math.

Govt, opposition MPs spar over reform council

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"Today [yesterday] is the 30th calendar day since the publication of the results, but the session has not been convened. That is my concern."

He argued that the session of the Constitution Reform Council should also be convened on the prime minister's advice to the president, similar to a parliamentary session.

Under the July Charter Order, members of the 13th parliament are expected to perform dual roles -- as lawmakers and as members of a Constitution Reform Council tasked with addressing 48 constitutional provisions outlined in the July charter within 180 working days.

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

After Shafiqur's remarks, Speaker Hafiz Uddin said he expected a response from the ruling party.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed then took the floor and explained that while the president can issue ordinances when parliament is not in session, constitutional amendments or changes cannot be made through such ordinances.

He further argued that the July National Charter Implementation

Order is neither an ordinance nor a law, but something in between, raising legal concerns over what he described as an imposed order.

"I am not denying anything. The people's verdict must be respected, but it has to be done constitutionally -- it has to be done legally. There is no place for emotion here. A state does not run on emotion. A state runs on the constitution, on law, on rules."

The home minister added that the president cannot convene a session of the Constitution Reform Council, as such a body does not exist under the constitution.

"Since the Constitution Reform Council does not exist, the prime minister cannot advise the president on it, and the president also cannot summon that session of the council; therefore, he did not convene it."

Salahuddin said opposition lawmakers had taken oaths as members of the Constitution Reform Council in an unconstitutional manner and were now demanding that the president convene its session.

He emphasised that while the people's mandates should be respected, reforms must be implemented through constitutionally recognised processes, and any constitutional change must be introduced and

passed through the proper legislative procedure.

Salahuddin said the current parliamentary session was required to settle 133 pending ordinances, making it difficult to immediately introduce a constitutional amendment bill.

However, he indicated that the issue could be taken up during the upcoming budget session, when the Business Advisory Committee may decide on forming a committee and placing a constitutional amendment bill before parliament.

The home minister said the government wants the full implementation of the July charter. "But whether the constitution can be amended through any imposed order outside the July National Charter, through any unlawful order, is a major legal and constitutional question. That too we should debate and discuss. We should discuss it in the Business Advisory Committee and bring forward a bill for constitutional amendment."

He said the bill will be adopted in this great house on the basis of consensus.

"We have followed the constitution till now and we will continue to do so."

Later, addressing Opposition Leader Shafiqur, Speaker Hafiz Uddin

said, "You have presented a matter of great public importance. Such important issues cannot be resolved on the spot. For this, you will need to submit a formal notice. Once I receive the notice, I will give my decision."

Speaking to reporters after the sitting, Shafiqur said, "We will now submit a notice."

He said the opposition wants to resolve the issue within parliament itself. "But if, for any reason, the expectations or aspirations of the people are not realised inside parliament, then naturally we will have to take to the streets."

Meanwhile, all 133 ordinances issued during the interim government have been sent to a special committee of the National Parliament for review, tasked with examining them and submitting a report by April 2.

The ordinances were referred to the committee following a proposal by Law Minister Asaduzzaman in parliament.

Earlier, on March 12, during the first sitting, he placed the ordinances, and on the same day, a special committee was formed to scrutinise them.

The 50-hour-long discussion on the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech also began yesterday.

Caretaker govt system

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petitions filed against the 2011 verdict.

The appellants and petitioners are BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami; rights organisations Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik, and Human Rights Support Society; and freedom fighter Mofazzal Islam from Naogaon.

On November 20 last year, the apex court delivered a short verdict overturning its judgment that had scrapped the caretaker government system in May 2011. Then chief justice ABM Khairul Haque led the seven-member bench that declared the 13th Amendment to the constitution null and void by a majority view.

After the verdict was announced, the 15th amendment to the constitution was passed by the National Parliament on June 30, 2011, bringing several changes, including the abolition of the caretaker government system. A gazette notification was published to this effect on July 3, 2011.

The caretaker government system was introduced in 1996 through the 13th amendment, which aimed to safeguard democracy by ensuring free and fair elections under an NPCG that would remain in power for only 90 days.

The full text of the verdict said the caretaker government system cannot be applied while a parliament is still in place, nor can it be

applied retroactively to an interim government that began without it -- such as the one led by Prof Muhammad Yunus.

In the verdict, Chief Justice Syed Rezaat Ahmed, the author of the judgment, observed that although the NPCG mechanism stands automatically restored, such provisions cannot be activated immediately.

"Therefore, the restored provisions shall lie dormant until enabling circumstances as specified in the restored provisions themselves come into play," the verdict read.

Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam, a senior judge of the Appellate Division, agreed with the verdict.

He noted that the 13th amendment was passed in good faith under article 7 of the constitution. He added that the doctrine of necessity justified the caretaker government as a temporary safeguard for democracy, and that it preserved, rather than destroyed, the constitution's basic structure.

About the judgment of the then Chief Justice Khairul Haque, who signed the verdict 16 months after his retirement, Justice Ashfaqul said, "In the full text of the verdict, Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque, the author of the majority decision, sought to anchor his reasoning upon an expanded and somewhat personalised interpretation of the 'basic structure', confining it to

a narrow vision of democracy and the rule of law.

"But this exposition, instead of preserving the constitution's spirit, distorted the framers' original intent. It unsettled the delicate constitutional balance that was meant to harmonise democratic governance with people's supremacy. The judgment, in essence, subverted the inbuilt dictum of the constitution that democracy derives legitimacy not merely from form, but from the people's effective participation in government through a transparent electoral process."

Contacted, SC lawyer and constitutional expert Barrister Imran Siddiq told this correspondent that there is no need to amend the constitution or enact a new law to give effect to the caretaker government, as the SC judgment states that the relevant provisions will be automatically restored.

"The restored provisions will remain dormant until the dissolution of the 13th parliament, since only a dissolution can trigger the NPCG provisions as stipulated under Articles 58B [1] and 58C [2]."

"However, the apex court judgment does not bar parliament from amending the form of the caretaker government system without undermining or dismantling the mechanism."