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"This war has nothing to do with Nato. It's not Nato's war."

German Chancellor **Friedrich Merz**

Shady pilot licences expose Biman to risk

Probe by nat'l carrier finds two of its senior pilots obtained licences thru fraud; discrepancies detected in licences of three others

RASHIDUL HASAN *and* **ZYMA ISLAM**

Forged flight records and a blatant disregard for safety protocols have revealed a deep-seated rot within Biman Bangladesh Airlines, where the very pilots entrusted with passengers' lives appear to operate without accountability.

A Biman investigation has uncovered a pervasive culture of impunity and systemic licence fraud, showing that senior captains advanced their careers through forged flight records.

This lack of accountability appears to extend beyond paperwork. Pilots remained in the cockpit despite a near-catastrophic operational error or proven cases of sexual harassment.

The impetus for these revelations came early this year. Biman formed a committee on January 28 to investigate five of its pilots over forged flying licences.

The committee, which submitted its report on February 3, found that two senior aviators -- Captain Abdul Basit Mahtab and Captain Abdur Rahman Akhand -- wilfully submitted forged documents to obtain licences. It also pointed out discrepancies in the licences of three others.

The probe body recommended grounding four of the five pilots while the investigation was ongoing. The authorities, however, allowed the pilots to fly, disregarding immediate safety concerns.

The gravity of the findings triggered an external enquiry -- the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) initiated its own audit of the pilots. However, barely a month after the launch of the audit, CAAB transferred the only official with the technical expertise to probe the complex licensing fraud.

At the centre of the investigation is Mahtab, who was elected president of Bangladesh Airline Pilots' Association in February 2025. He was tasked with advocating for the rights, welfare, and development of the country's commercial pilots and upholding aviation safety standards in the national carrier.

"Captain Mahtab obtained a Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) in 1993. He served in the Bangladesh Air Force but was suspended from conversion/advanced flying training owing to his slow progress," said the Biman probe report.

"Captain Mahtab's flying certificate, issued on April 16, 1992, shows that at the time of obtaining his CPL, he had only 33 hours and 45 minutes of solo/pilot-in-command experience, including three hours and 30 minutes on the Bell 206-L4 helicopter; the remainder of his flying time was as a co-pilot (listed as dual hours in the official BAF record)."

Referring to another document dated June 10, 1992, the report pointed out that a certificate issued by the BAF Academy in Jashore shows that Mahtab had accumulated 155 hours as pilot-in-command (solo hours). "It directly contradicts the other flying hours certificate issued by the same officer from the same academy on April 16, 1992."

The BAF Academy certificate with the increased flying hours was issued several months after he had been taken out of flying.

The Daily Star has independently verified Mahtab's documents.

A document signed by Group Captain Ataur Rahman, the then Air Secretary, on April 25, 1992, stated, "This is to certify that M Abdul Basit Mahtab was commissioned (on probation) in flying branch as a pilot officer on January 3, 1991. He was suspended from subsequent conversion and advance flying training owing to his slow progress. Since the officer was on probation, his commission was terminated as a normal procedure." They cleared him for commercial flying.

In his application to CAAB for obtaining CPL,

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We wrote to CAAB [Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh] but are yet to get any response from them. That is why we still do not know what action we should take against the pilots.

Humaira Sultana
Managing Director of Biman Bangladesh Airlines

- Probe body recommended grounding 4 of the 5 pilots but authorities allowed them to continue flying
- Findings prompted CAAB audit, but the regulator transferred its only technically qualified investigator

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman formally inaugurates the nationwide canal restoration programme in Kaharol upazila of Dinajpur yesterday. PHOTO: PID

CANAL RESTORATION

Goal is to boost agro economy

Says PM after launching programme in 54 dists

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday pledged to transform Bangladesh into an economically and politically strong nation with the support of its people.

At a rally near Sahapara canal in Dinajpur's Kaharol upazila after inaugurating a canal restoration programme, he said, "We want to build a Bangladesh where people can assert their own rights.

"Many of you have relatives abroad. When you speak to them, they often praise other countries and say how beautiful those places are. But it is the people of those countries who have built and developed their nations, not outsiders. If they could do it, why can't we? Inshallah, we can do it too."

The prime minister recalled the heroic efforts of the people who fought for independence in 1971 and of the students who ended dictatorship through the 2024 mass uprising.

"It was the people of this country who doubled food production through efforts like irrigation and canal-digging during the rule of martyred president Ziaur Rahman. If they could achieve so much, we too can build the Bangladesh of the future."

He said public support and proper planning are key to moving the country forward.

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Cap lifted, but city pumps still short on fuel

ASIFUR RAHMAN *and* **MOHAMMAD SUMAN**

The government has managed to curb the drain on national fuel stocks by imposing restrictions on purchases for 10 days straight, bringing daily demand back to near last year's levels.

On Sunday, the cap on fuel purchases was withdrawn, but many filling stations in Dhaka continued operating on a limited scale yesterday, with some closed and others rationing supplies. Queues, however, have begun to shorten.

In Chattogram, pumps operated smoothly yesterday after receiving fresh supplies, with motorists refuelling without difficulty.

Officials concerned and pump owners in the capital said the government is supplying fuel based on last year's demand, leading to some shortages, but expected the situation to improve soon.

As of yesterday, diesel stock stood at 1.25 lakh tonnes, while petrol and octane stocks were 16,000 tonnes each, which is enough for 10–14 days.

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Meta must act against online incitement

Says Amnesty citing attacks on Star, Prothom Alo

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International has warned that Bangladesh could face serious human rights abuses unless Meta, the parent company of Facebook, takes timely and effective action to address harmful content on its platform.

"Bangladesh is not yet in a human rights crisis, but the warning signs are visible," Alia Al Ghussain, head of Big Tech Accountability at Amnesty International, said in a statement published on the organisation's website yesterday.

"The combination of cross-border harmful content, political tension, sectarian narratives, and algorithmic amplification creates a volatile environment that could put freedom of expression and the rights of minority communities at risk," she said.

Amnesty said there has been a rise in harmful online content in the lead-up to the February 12 parliamentary election, some of which originated outside Bangladesh.

The rights body cited the December

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

"This is a moment for prevention and taking responsibility for the power that social media companies wield in this space."

ALIA AL GHUSSAIN
Head of Big Tech Accountability at AI

Iran vows to fight on 'wherever it leads'

Strikes hit Gulf transport, energy hubs; Trump 'not happy' as allies push back on his call for help to reopen Hormuz

- **Israel eyes at least three more weeks of war, launches ground ops in Lebanon**
- **Trump warns of 'very bad' future for Nato if allies refuse to help**
- **Iran war, not trade, may delay Trump-Xi summit: US**
- **Iran 'fired some 700 missiles and 3,600 drones'**

Emergency personnel work at the site of a strike on a residential building in Tehran yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

AGENCIES

Iran said it was ready to take the Middle East war "as far as necessary" as it launched strikes across the region yesterday, while US President Donald Trump piled pressure on world powers to help reopen a vital shipping lane.

Israel, meanwhile, yesterday said it has detailed plans for at least three more weeks of war as its military pounded sites across Iran overnight.

The US-Israeli war on Iran is now in its third week, with no clear end in sight, shutting down the Strait of Hormuz through which 20 percent of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas flow, pushing up oil prices and raising fears of a renewed spike in global inflation.

Nato allies and other Western nations yesterday pushed back on Trump's demand that alliance members help reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

On Sunday, Trump called for a coalition of nations to help reopen the vital shipping route and warned that the Nato alliance faces a "very bad" future if its members fail to come to Washington's aid.

However, US allies voiced support for diplomatic efforts to reopen the route but signalled caution about the possibility of military action.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Myanmar's parliament convenes

Leader of army-backed party chosen as lower House Speaker

REUTERS

Myanmar's parliament convened yesterday for the first time since a coup five years ago, in one of the final steps in a nominal return to democracy where its powerful military retains tight control.

The gathering of the new parliament comes after a recent phased election dominated by the army-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party amid low voter turnout and no viable opposition.

USDP chairman and retired Brigadier-General Khin Yi was elected lower House Speaker yesterday. Reuters had earlier reported Khin Yi had been touted for the role, which is seen by some analysts as pivotal for the military in advancing its agenda.

Myanmar has been plagued by civil war and a humanitarian crisis affecting millions of its people since its generals staged a 2021 coup against the government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, just as it was preparing for a second five-year term in office following a landslide election win.

Traders dismantled their makeshift shops near Sughandha Point after receiving directives from the Cox's Bazar district administration, which managed to have over 500 structures cleared from the sea beach on Sunday. Dependent on tourism ahead of Eid, traders voiced uncertainty over livelihoods, while authorities pushed on to remove illegal structures and gradually restore the natural landscape. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Husband sent to jail over JU student murder

Students form human chain demanding justice

STAR REPORT

Husband of slain Sharmin Jahan, a student of Jahangirnagar University, was sent to jail following his arrest yesterday in a case filed over the murder.

Fahim Al Hasan, prime accused in the case, was arrested and produced before a court yesterday with a five-day remand prayer. The court fixed March 24 for remand hearing and ordered Fahim to be sent to jail.

Sharmin's uncle Monirul Islam filed a case with Ashulia Police Station on Sunday night, accusing Fahim and several unidentified individuals.

Sharmin was rescued from her rented house in the Islamnagar area of Savar at around 4:30pm on Sunday in a bloodied and unconscious state and was taken to Enam Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared her dead.

Meanwhile, JU students formed a human chain and brought out a protest march yesterday demanding justice for Sharmin, a student of the 51st batch of JU's Public Administration Department.

The human chain and protest march were organised in front of JU's Shaheed Minar under the banner of Jahangirnagar University Research Sangsad around 2:00pm.

Protesting students demanded exemplary punishment for those involved in Sharmin's brutal murder through a fair and impartial investigation.

Shady pilot licences expose Biman to risk

FROM PAGE 1

Mahtab said, "I got released from Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) on April 1, 1992, due to my unwillingness to serve in Ground Branch. In BAF, I have flown a total of 210 hours and 30 minutes..."

He submitted his flying hours certificate along with the application dated May 3, 1992.

A document signed by the then director of flight standards and regulations at CAAB on May 9, 1992, noted that Mahtab had 33 hours and 45 minutes of solo flying. "It should be stated here that no application with such a short tenure of service in the Air Force and so little flying experience has ever been received by this authority before."

Even when he applied for an instrument rating, he had half the required flying hours. An instrument rating is an advanced qualification that allows a pilot to fly an aircraft solely by reference to the cockpit instruments in cases of poor visibility or adverse weather.

"Upon reviewing his experience, it appears that, according to the Civil Aviation Rules, he must complete 15 hours of flying within six months from the date of application. In this case, it is seen that Mr Mahtab has only seven hours and five minutes of flying time. Therefore, issuing the rating in this situation seems to be against the regulations. However, the chairman may relax this requirement at his discretion," said a document signed on March 23, 1993.

A CAAB member (operations and planning) allowed a waiver for him in "public interest" the same day.

Since then, Mahtab has renewed his CPL year after year and passed all his checks and tests.

"It should be mentioned that CPL is the starting point for all pilots' commercial airline flying careers. All other licences and ratings are obtained later. As such, any issues with CPL negatively impact all further licences and ratings and calls into question the validity of all other licences and ratings," said the Biman probe report, concluding that Mahtab wilfully provided false documents to obtain his licence.

When asked, Mahtab claimed that the investigation was biased.

"We have filed a complaint with Biman, stating that this investigation is not fair. This was done to vilify Biman and destroy the aviation industry. We were not even interviewed by the committee," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

In an interview with this newspaper earlier last year, he had said that his flying hours were less on paper than his actual experience because flying hours are counted differently in the air force.

"During civil flying, taxi hours are counted as flying whereas this is not the case with jet fighters. I believe I have the required hours," he had pointed out.

The Biman probe also found preliminary evidence against Rahman.

"Allegations against Captain Abdur Rahman Akhand were previously known, and Biman Bangladesh Airlines sent a letter to CAAB on August 6, 2025, seeking clarification from the regulator. To date, no reply has been received from CAAB regarding this issue," said the report.

Terming the allegations "very serious in nature", it said the documents "allege a gross violation of the law" and indicate that he "wilfully provided false documents" to obtain a licence.

The Daily Star had previously reported on this pilot after scrutinising his flying hours.

According to this newspaper's own scrutiny, at the time of getting his CPL, he had 26 hours and five minutes of flying time as a pilot-in-command unsupervised and another 128 hours and 30 minutes of flying time under supervision. All these hours were logged during his time in the air force.

A legal notice sent to Biman on December 14, 2025, stated that in addition to his flying hours in the air force, he had logged seven hours and 40 minutes at the Bangladesh Flying Club, when he applied for CPL.

According to aviation rules, a candidate must log 250 flying hours, of which 70 hours must be unsupervised, while the rest can be completed under supervision. In case of failure to log 70 hours of unsupervised flying, the candidate has to fly 500 hours as a pilot-in-command under supervision.

Rahman flew neither 70 hours unsupervised nor the alternative of 500 hours under supervision.

The legal notice said Rahman had submitted a forged No Objection Certificate (NOC) while leaving his previous job at Regent Airways. Dated December 20, 2014, a Regent Airways letter attached to the legal notice said Rahman had not obtained any such certificate before joining Biman.

"It is assumed that they all have submitted fake and improper NOC to your company which falls within the purview of a criminal offence," wrote Regent.

The probe body concluded that Rahman wilfully provided false documents to obtain his licence.

The investigation into administrative fraud took on a new sense of urgency following a near-catastrophic operational error. While Biman's committee was investigating Rahman's licence, he taxied a Biman aircraft onto an incorrect runway in Guangzhou, China -- an error that could lead to a fatal accident.

A letter sent by Biman's counterpart in Guangzhou said the incident occurred during take-off at 8:13am on January 23, 2026, at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport.

The air traffic control "directed it to taxi along the standard Yellow 3, waiting outside Y20. The crew acknowledged correctly," read the letter.

Despite confirming the route verbally, the pilot went down the wrong path. "At 08:14 am, the controller noticed the aircraft had executed a right turn onto Taxiway Q instead of the required left turn. The controller immediately halted the aircraft and inquired about the reason. The crew responded that they had misread the standard taxi route," it stated.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China demanded that Biman urgently investigate the error, threatening to cancel Biman's slot allocation at the Guangzhou airport. Biman formed a probe committee on February 22.

A couple of months before the incident, Rahman was shortlisted by Biman for the position of deputy chief of flight operations and flight safety department.

Another aviator, Captain Anisur Rahman, also failed to meet licensing standards, according to the probe report.

"Allegations against Captain Anis are that he received his CPL licence with [flying] hours which were below the requirement at the time of his licence issuance. A logbook copy is provided showing him having 162 hours 40 minutes only from the Bangladesh Air Force, which is less than the required 200 hours for CPL prevalent at that time."

The report said it was not clear whether "he wilfully provided false documents to obtain his licence". It, however, said he had fewer flying hours than needed.

When contacted, Anis said that following his stint in the air force, he logged hours at a flying academy before getting his licence, and that made up the 200 hours.

The committee also investigated Captain Yousuf Mahmud for licence fraud but could not find anything conclusive.

However, Yousuf's time at Biman has been marked by allegations of sexual harassment of cabin crew members.

He was served a show-cause letter on March 11, 2025, over sexual harassment in the cockpit.

On April 13, 2025, a departmental case was filed against him, and the probe report was submitted on November 5, 2025, concluding that there was undeniable proof of sexual harassment.

The report said the pilot touched an air hostess inappropriately; made unprofessional comments while she was serving beverages, initiated conversations on topics unsuitable for the workplace, forced a piece of fruit into her mouth, and pursued her for a date during their layover.

The pilot refuted all the allegations, but his co-pilot, a witness, said the pilot's behaviour amounted to sexual harassment.

In a testimony, the co-pilot said that Yousuf, in addition to verbal harassment, had forcefully pushed food into the mouth of an air hostess and grabbed her hands.

Alarmingly, while the investigation was ongoing, Biman allowed Yousuf to conduct flights, owing to a "shortage of pilots in the Hajj season".

The other pilot investigated was Captain Fariel Bilkis Ahmed, with the committee pointing out improper logging of flying hours. "It needs to be assessed whether this was a simple error or a deliberate attempt to increase the hours."

It recommended grounding Fariel while the verification was being completed.

When asked, Fariel said the probe committee worked with fabricated evidence, and that the flying hours in her logbook accurately represent her flying experience.

"I was never called or interviewed by this committee. They did not ask me for evidence," Fariel told The Daily Star.

Rahman and Yousuf could not be reached despite multiple attempts over phone and WhatsApp.

When contacted, Biman Managing Director Humaira Sultana said, "We wrote to CAAB but are yet to get any response from them. That is why we still do not know what action we should take against the pilots."

Boshra Islam, the spokesperson for Biman, said they are waiting for CAAB's audit before deciding on any action.

While Biman claims to be waiting for CAAB, the regulator's own process appears to have been derailed from within. Transfer documents show that just a month into the audit, CAAB sidelined the investigator, moving him to a largely redundant administrative role.

On March 12, Saiful Haq Shah, director of personnel licensing, was transferred and attached to the chairman's office as an "officer on special duty".

Sources confirmed that Saiful was the only investigator in the division with the technical qualifications needed to oversee licensing.

Asked whether the move would compromise the integrity of the entire external audit, the CAAB Chairperson, Air Vice Marshal Md Mostafa Mahmood Siddiq, said the investigation into the pilots' anomalies is being conducted transparently, and Saiful's transfer will not affect the process.

He, however, admitted that CAAB could not complete the investigation within the stipulated two-week timeframe.

"Once completed, we will make the report public," he added.

Iran vows to fight on 'wherever it leads'

FROM PAGE 1

Despite the unprecedented bombardment, Iran yesterday took a more defiant tone and struck targets across the region and Israel.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards yesterday said they had targeted Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Airport in Israel, as well as military bases used by US forces in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

"By now they have... understood what kind of nation they are dealing with, one that does not hesitate to defend itself and is ready to continue the war wherever it may lead, and take it as far as necessary," Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters in Tehran.

A drone sparked a fuel tank fire near Dubai airport, disrupting travel, while a missile killed a civilian in their car in Abu Dhabi, and another drone sparked a blaze in an area housing oil infrastructure in the eastern emirate of Fujairah.

"It has been a difficult few weeks hearing explosions regularly, but the Iranian attacks followed me in my last hours before I could fly back home," a witness at Dubai airport told AFP, adding that passengers had been evacuated to a lower floor after the attack.

Explosions hit the Iranian capital on Monday as air defence systems were activated, an AFP journalist said, and Israel said it had also targeted the cities of Shiraz and Tabriz.

A loud blast rang out over Jerusalem as well, after the military detected incoming missiles.

Meanwhile, Israeli military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani said the country's war with Iran may continue for at least the next three weeks, with additional plans extending beyond that.

The military has framed its aims as limited to weakening Iran's capacity to threaten Israel by striking ballistic missile infrastructure, nuclear facilities, and the security apparatus.

"We want to make sure that they are as weak as possible, this regime, and that we degrade all their capabilities, all parts and all wings of their security establishment," Shoshani said.

The military has said it still has thousands of targets to hit inside Iran.

On Sunday, Trump told the Financial Times it would be "very bad for the future of Nato" if they refused, and he has threatened to delay a planned summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.

Several European governments rejected the idea outright, with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's spokesman saying the war had "nothing to do with Nato". Japan and Australia said they would not be deploying warships.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said London was working with allies to craft a "viable" plan to reopen the waterway, but ruled out a Nato mission.

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski noted the country's president had already "ruled out the participation of the Polish Armed Forces in this operation" as Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles said Madrid was "absolutely not" mulling a military contribution.

European Union foreign ministers, after a meeting, showed "no appetite" for extending the bloc's Red Sea naval mission to help reopen the strait.

Amid the snub, Trump slammed US allies yesterday. He called for more "enthusiasm" from other countries, as he said he believed France and Britain would somewhat reluctantly get involved.

The US president lashed out at others who were not "enthusiastic."

"For 40 years, we're protecting you, and you don't want to get involved," Trump said.

On Sunday, Trump told the Financial Times he may postpone a meeting with President Xi Jinping scheduled for later this month if China does not help to unblock the Strait. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, however, said that if the trip is rescheduled, it will be because of logistical issues due to the war, and not related to the strait.

Meanwhile, a Pakistani oil tanker was able to transit the Strait of Hormuz yesterday with its location transmitter activated -- suggesting it may have negotiated safe passage.

On another key front in the wider war, Israel announced "limited ground operations" against Iran-backed Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, aimed at enhancing the forward defence area".

Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war on March 2 when Hezbollah attacked Israel in response to the killing of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

There were fresh Israeli strikes on Sunday on the southern suburbs of Beirut, a Hezbollah bastion usually home to hundreds of thousands of people.

Israel has ordered evacuations on an unprecedented scale across vast areas of Lebanon since the war began, and Defence Minister Israel Katz said the displaced "will not return" until northern Israel is no longer threatened.

The war has engulfed much of the region, with Iran striking at least 10 countries that host US forces. Its Revolutionary Guards say it has fired some 700 missiles and 3,600 drones.

Saudi Arabia intercepted more than 60 drones overnight, its defence ministry said yesterday, and Iraqi authorities said rockets wounded five people the day before at Baghdad's airport, which houses a US diplomatic facility.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Emirati President Mohamed bin Zayed expressed solidarity against "the continued and blatant Iranian attacks" in a call yesterday, without mentioning US-Israeli strikes, according to a statement published by Emirati media.

Despite the violence and 17 days of internet blackout, some Iranians have sought to restore a sense of normalcy, with cafes and restaurants reopening and the popular Tajrish bazaar busy over the weekend ahead of the upcoming Persian New Year.

There is little sign of a popular uprising within Iran, where security forces killed thousands during protests in January. Judiciary chief Gholam Hossein Mohseni yesterday said there must be no leniency in issuing "final verdicts" against regime opponents during the war.

More than 1,200 Iranians have been killed by US and Israeli strikes, according to the last toll from Iran's health ministry on March 8, which could not be independently verified.

The UN refugee agency says up to 3.2 million people have been displaced in Iran.

Cap lifted, but city pumps still short on fuel

FROM PAGE 1

Officials said additional fuel shipments are due, including 60,000 tonnes of diesel.

According to data from the state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, the average daily diesel demand between March 1 and 15 was 13,000 tonnes, compared to 12,000 tonnes last year. Petrol and octane demand averaged 1,300 tonnes, similar to last year.

Demand spiked after the US-Israel war on Iran broke out on February 28, with diesel use rising to 24,000 tonnes and petrol/octane exceeding 2,000 tonnes in early March.

In response, the government imposed a cap on fuel purchases: 2–5 litres for motorcycles and 10 litres for cars per day. The restriction was lifted Sunday ahead of Eid.

This newspaper visited a total of 14 pumps in Dhaka city and four on the outskirts. The four pumps on the outskirts, located on the Banasree–Demra road, were not selling until the evening, citing fuel shortage.

In the city area, two stations were found shut and one partially closed, while 11 operated smoothly. Long lines were reported at Trust Filling Station (Bijoy Sarani), Clean Fuel (Mohakhali), Southern Automobiles (Tejgaon), and Ideal Filling Station (Tejgaon–Gulshan Link Road).

Employees at those pumps told The Daily Star that the queues, though long, were shorter than in recent days.

At Trust, cars stretched only to the PMO gate, compared to Jahangir Gate the previous day. Southern's queue remained on the main road, not spilling into alleys.

Some stations, including Satata and City in Tejgaon, reported running out of octane or closing temporarily. Sikder station limited sales for vehicles.

Outskirts stations -- Banasree Filling Station, Keeco Filling Station, Moon Filling Station and Shikder Filling Station -- declined service, citing delayed tanker deliveries.

Keeco staff told customers at 3:00pm they had failed to secure fuel from the depot. Shikder staff said supplies would arrive in the evening.

Keeco, Shikder, Satata and City stations are dealers of the state-owned fuel distributor company Padma Oil PLC.

Contacted, Haris Ahmed Sarker, assistant general manager (sales) at Padma Oil's Dhaka office, said Padma supplied fuel as per demand, but congestion delayed tanker deliveries.

"If fuel runs out quickly after supply, there is little we can do," he said.

"Keeco received fuel yesterday and also today. Why they said they would not get fuel today or did not receive it needs to be examined. City and Satata are also receiving sufficient fuel, but it is running out quickly."

Meanwhile, in the port city, fuel supply at filling stations began returning to normal, with queues thinning out.

Several filling stations that remained closed a day earlier due to a lack of fuel were found operating normally yesterday after receiving fresh supplies. As a result, motorists are now able to purchase fuel without facing the long lines.

Ayub Ali, a sales staff member at Tigerpass Agencies, one of the busy fuel outlets in the city, said they received fuel after a four-day gap and resumed regular operations yesterday. "Today there is no limit on sales. We are supplying as per customers' demand."

Country lost Tk 21,000cr to digital scams in 2006-21

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said Bangladesh lost an estimated Tk 21,000 crore to digital scams, MLM Ponzi schemes, and corporate fraud between 2006 and 2021.

He made the remark while speaking at the Global Fraud Summit 2026 in Vienna.

Participating in a high-level roundtable on the Global Fraud Response Mechanism, Salahuddin stressed the need for coordinated international action and AI-driven technological solutions to combat fraud.

He expressed concern over recent incidents where ordinary people lost billions of taka through platforms such as MTFE and controversial e-commerce ventures.

Quoting a Global Financial Integrity report, he said an average of $8.27 billion was syphoned out of Bangladesh annually between 2009 and 2018 through trade misinvoicing. He noted that the Penal Code of 1860 is inadequate for tackling

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Homebound passengers crowd the Sadarghat Launch Terminal in Dhaka yesterday as they rush to board launches for their destinations ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. With Eid less than a week away, thousands are leaving the capital each day to celebrate the festival with their loved ones back home.

Cancel trade deal with US

Demands Gonotantrik Juktafront, warns of nationwide protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Gonotantrik Juktafront yesterday demanded the immediate cancellation of the trade agreement signed with the United States and called for the trial of those involved in signing it, including Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman.

They claimed the agreement is unfair and goes against Bangladesh's national interests.

The alliance warned that if the government continues to honour the agreement, they will launch a nationwide protest movement involving workers, farmers, students and progressive groups.

They made the call at a protest rally and march in front of the Jatiya Press Club, criticising the "Reciprocal Trade Agreement (RTA)" signed on February 9, 2026, during the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus.

According to them, a true reciprocal trade agreement should ensure equality between both countries. However, in the 32-page document, the phrase "Bangladesh shall" appears 158 times, while "United States shall" appears only nine times.

Abdullah Al Kafee Ratan, general

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

BANGLADESH-JAPAN EPA

Need coordinated policies to fully utilise potential: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Policymakers and analysts yesterday stressed the need for coordinated policies to help Bangladesh fully utilise the opportunities created by the Bangladesh–Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA).

They made the remarks at a seminar titled "Maximising the Opportunities of the Bangladesh–Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)", organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue in partnership with the Embassy of Japan in Bangladesh, according to a press release.

Speakers said the EPA is expected to expand trade, strengthen investment links, and support industrial upgrading while helping Bangladesh integrate more deeply into regional and global value chains.

They also said translating the EPA's potential into tangible economic gains will require coordinated policy

> **The EPA provides an opportunity to deepen and move Bangladesh–Japan economic relations beyond traditional aid-driven cooperation to focus more on trade, investment, and technology collaboration.**
>
> **FAHMIDA KHATUN,** executive director, CPD

reforms, stronger institutions, and continued collaboration between government, industry, and development partners.

Attending as the guest of honour, Saida Shinichi, ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh, said the agreement goes beyond tariff reductions and sets out rules and procedures to facilitate trade and investment in a framework that would encourage greater foreign direct investment in Bangladesh and strengthen the country's industrial capabilities.

CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun, who chaired the programme, said the EPA provides an opportunity to deepen Bangladesh–Japan economic relations beyond traditional aid-driven cooperation and focus more on trade, investment, and technological collaboration.

Presenting CPD's analysis, Fahmida said improved market access and deeper economic cooperation could help diversify Bangladesh's exports and attract greater foreign

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

EID JOURNEY

Long route bus fares hiked by Tk 200-800

Passengers allege; minister claims otherwise

SHAMIMA RITA

Mujibur Rahman Sharif, who lives and works in Dhaka, planned to travel home to his family in Barguna for Eid-ul-Fitr.

He said he found that ticket sales at Meghna Paribahan in Sayedabad had been suspended due to uncertainty over fuel supply. Later, he purchased four tickets from Shyamoli Paribahan at the Kalyanpur counter.

Although the normal non-AC fare on the route ranges between Tk 650-700, he said he had to pay Tk 1,200 per ticket. "In total, they charged about Tk 2,000 extra for four tickets from me."

Mujibur also alleged the operator had issued a token instead of a ticket to conceal the additional charge.

"The actual tickets will have to be collected from the bus counter 30 minutes before departure by showing this token. Many others like me have fallen into this trap," he said.

Like him, many passengers said they are being forced to pay Tk 200-800 extra per ticket at different bus terminals and on online platforms for long-distance routes from Dhaka ahead of Eid, significantly higher than the rates approved by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

However, Road Transport, Railways, and Bridges Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam yesterday claimed he had received no complaints in the past week about transport operators charging extra fares.

The minister added that while fares generally do not exceed the official rates, in some cases, passengers may have to pay around Tk 100 more. "Rather, some operators are offering Tk 20-100 discounts to attract passengers ahead of Eid," he said.

Earlier, on March 13, after visiting BRTC bus terminals in Gulistan, Rabiul Alam said that any transport operator charging even one taka extra would face punishment.

> **Some operators create an artificial ticket shortage by booking tickets through their agents before releasing them to the public. For Dhaka-Shatkhira route, the AC fare on Green Line was Tk 1,000 earlier. Now they are charging Tk 1,600. Other operators were selling tickets for Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,200 on the same route.**
>
> **SRABONTI AKTER,** a passenger

"There will be no shortage of oil for public transport during Eid journey. Fares will not increase," he said.

However, the scenario at the different bus terminals in the capital -- including Sayedabad, Arambagh, Kalyanpur, and Gulistan -- tells a different story.

This correspondent spoke with more than a dozen passengers who alleged they had to pay additional fares.

They also alleged that ticket prices have been strategically increased: first citing higher demand ahead of Eid, and then using the rise in global oil prices amid tensions in the Middle East.

Despite the change in government, the practice of collecting extra fares during the Eid journey has remained much like in previous years, they lamented.

A passenger, Srabonti Akter, alleged that some operators create an artificial ticket shortage by booking tickets through their own agents before releasing them to the public.

"For Dhaka-Shatkhira route, the AC fare on Green Line was Tk 1,000 earlier. Now they are charging Tk 1,600," she complained.

She added that other operators, such as Dhaka Line and Golden Line, were selling tickets for Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,200 for AC and sleeper coach on the same route.

Nazmul, a ticket seller at Green Line Paribahan in Arambagh, however, denied charging extra fares.

"Our fare is Tk 1,000 for economy class and Tk 1,600 for business class. We are not charging more than that," he said.

Mohammad Sumon, a ticket seller at Shyamoli Paribahan's Kalyanpur counter, said, "The BRTA-fixed fare for Dhaka–Barguna route

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Uttara mall vandalised over rickshaw-puller death rumour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A shopping mall in Dhaka's Uttara was attacked and vandalised late Sunday night over a rumour that a rickshaw-puller had been beaten to death inside the compound, police said.

The attackers vandalised the ground floor of "Uttara Square" and blocked the road in front of the building. As police attempted to intervene, sporadic clashes broke out, prompting law enforcers to fire sound grenades. The situation was brought under control around 4:00am yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Over 100 migrants unpaid in Malaysia for six months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 100 Bangladeshi workers employed by a Malaysian company in Johor Baru have not been paid their wages and overtime claims for the last six months, according to an investigation by the Malaysian labour department.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Human Resources of Malaysia said upon media reports on the issue, the country's Department of Labour conducted an investigation into the allegations of delayed salaries involving Pasir Gudang-based Esstar Vision Sdn Bhd, a company involved in construction and civil engineering.

The probe found that the company employs a total of 169 workers, including 104 workers from Bangladesh.

"Investigations revealed that salary payments have been delayed starting from September 2025

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Will explore market-based power trade with India: PM's adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is exploring market-based electricity trade with India and reviewing existing energy and power agreements with the country to ensure they serve Bangladesh's interest, said Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, the prime minister's adviser on finance and planning, yesterday.

Speaking to reporters after separate meetings with the Indian ambassador and the Chinese envoy in Dhaka, Titumir said the government is reassessing past arrangements in the energy sector while seeking new cooperation frameworks based on market mechanisms and investment rather than loan dependence.

He said Bangladesh may explore joining India's power exchange, which operates on a market-based pricing system.

"If we connect to that grid, the price paid by Nepal, Bhutan, or even a state in India could serve as benchmarks. That means it is a market-based system," he said, adding that no decision has yet been taken.

Titumir said the government is reviewing energy and power agreements signed during the previous administration, as some were found to be unequal.

The meeting also discussed projects financed under India's lines of credit.

Titumir said both sides will review the status of those projects, including completed and ongoing ones, and assess whether they align with Bangladesh's current development roadmap.

"We will review whether the projects taken earlier should continue. India also wants a review. It will be an open-minded process," he said.

He added that Bangladesh wants to strengthen regional cooperation in power and energy among South Asian countries, particularly India, Bhutan and Nepal.

Titumir said the discussions were part of the government's efforts to increase investment to revive an economy it claims was left in a "devastated condition" by the ousted Awami League government.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Customers crowd to purchase fresh and crisp banknotes, sold at inflated prices, in Dhaka's Gulistan area yesterday. Keeping Eid in mind, people usually rush to buy such notes to give them as 'salami' to their loved ones during the festival. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Form ad hoc committees for private institutions

Govt directs education boards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday directed education boards to form ad hoc committees for the governing and managing bodies of private educational institutions at the lower secondary, secondary, and higher secondary levels.

The Secondary and Higher Education Division of the Ministry of Education issued a circular under the Regulations for Governing Bodies and Managing Committees of Private Educational Institutions, 2024, amended on August 31, 2025.

The circular states that the chairman of an ad hoc committee must hold at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent qualification. In special cases, the ministry may appoint a chairman based on contributions to education or other relevant qualifications.

27th death anniversary of Asiruddin Ahmed today

CITY DESK

The 27th death anniversary of Asiruddin Ahmed, former co-operative inspector of Rangpur, will be observed today.

To mark the occasion, Quran Khwani, special prayers, and an iftar mehfil will be held after Asr prayers at the deceased's residence, "Ahmed House", House No. 3, Road No. 228, Mulatole, Rangpur.

Relatives, neighbours and well-wishers have been requested to attend the programme and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

Cancel trade deal

FROM PAGE 3

secretary of CPB, said Bangladesh must give tariff concessions on 6,710 American products, while it would receive benefits for only 1,638 products in the US market.

Citing a CPD research, he said Bangladesh could lose about Tk 13.27 billion in annual import duty revenue.

Bazlur Rashid Firoz, general secretary of the Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, said the benefits for Bangladesh are limited.

Firoz also alleged that the agreement would force Bangladesh to buy certain products from the US at higher prices, including wheat, cotton, chemicals, industrial goods, liquefied natural gas and defence equipment.

He criticised another deal signed the same day with the American company Boeing to buy 14 aircraft.

The leaders also said one clause requires Bangladesh to follow US trade restrictions if Washington imposes sanctions on another country for national security reasons.

They argued this could force Bangladesh to join sanctions against countries such as China or Russia, contradicting its neutral foreign policy.

Another clause, they said, restricts Bangladesh from signing digital trade agreements that could harm US interests. If Bangladesh signs a free trade agreement with China or Russia that conflicts with this deal, the US could cancel the agreement and reimpose punitive tariffs.

Gonotantrik Biplobi Party General Secretary Mosharrefa Mishu accused Khalilur Rahman -- who served as national security adviser during the interim government -- of playing the main role in signing the agreement and demanded his removal.

She also urged the BNP government to clearly state its position on the deal, saying agreements related to national sovereignty should be approved by parliament.

Referring to a ruling by the US Supreme Court -- which ruled that tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act by the Trump administration were illegal -- they said Malaysia had already declared its similar trade agreement with the US ineffective following the ruling and questioned why Bangladesh could not do the same.

Uttara mall

FROM PAGE 3

At least three policemen were injured in the clashes, Uttara West Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Kazi Rafiq Ahmed told The Daily Star.

Police have detained 12 people for interrogation, and the process of filing a case is underway, the OC said. "We have not found any truth to the claim that a rickshaw-puller died or was injured," the OC added.

Police sources said the unrest began after an altercation between a rickshaw-puller and a mall security guard. Following this, rickshaw or auto-rickshaw pullers, along with a group of people, launched the attack.

Md Sakib, an employee of a clothing store on the first floor, said the mall was bustling with Eid shoppers around 11:30pm when a woman spread the rumour of the death.

"The mall's central PA system announced that the front gate was broken and urged everyone to use the rear exit. Many of us managed to escape, but some were trapped as the mob moved towards the back," Sakib said, noting that ground-floor shops suffered extensive damage.

Following the vandalism, the shopping mall authorities decided to keep all shops closed yesterday.

Will explore market

FROM PAGE 3

He also said the government aims to move away from a "culture of loans" and focus on investment-driven industrialisation.

"If investment increases, production will increase. That will boost employment and revenue," he said.

The adviser also said Bangladesh is moving toward a "One Citizen, One Card" system through initiatives such as farmer and family cards. In this context, the government discussed Aadhaar and India's experience with the system.

Titumir said his meeting with the Chinese envoy focused largely on investment and industrialisation.

He noted that during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Bangladesh in 2016, projects worth about $20 billion were discussed. However, projects worth only around $8.2 billion have progressed so far.

The two sides discussed the status of those projects and ways to accelerate their implementation.

Bangladesh is interested in more Chinese investment, particularly in industrial sectors, he said.

Discussions were also held on forming a working group involving the Bangladesh government, the Chinese government and Chinese companies to explore ways to boost investment, he added.

Over 100 migrants

FROM PAGE 3

until February 2026. A portion of the salaries for September 2025 was only paid in instalments," said the statement.

It said in 2025, a total of 14 labour cases were filed involving 29 local workers, with total claims amounting to RM 263,076.79 (Tk 82 lakh).

This year, 14 new labour case files have been opened involving 86 foreign workers and six local workers, with total claims amounting to RM 636,414.65 (Tk 199 lakh).

Following the findings, Malaysian Human Resources Minister R Ramanan directed the authorities to take swift action against the Johor-based company, reports Free Malaysia Today.

The minister has directed immediate action and further investigation into this company to ensure all aspects of non-compliance are thoroughly examined and appropriate action is taken in accordance with the law.

Long route bus

FROM PAGE 3

is Tk 900. There is no question of charging Tk 1,200. However, during Eid, if someone willingly pays extra, we may accept it."

A ticket seller from Taqwa Paribahan in Mirpur-10, requesting anonymity, said, "The fare is a little higher because there are fewer buses and demand is high during Eid."

Saiful Alam, general secretary of Dhaka Bus Owners Association, said operators cannot charge fares higher than the BRTA-approved rates for non-AC buses, while there is no fixed fare for AC buses.

He hopes the situation will improve and more buses will operate with the fuel rationing system being lifted since Saturday night.

Need

FROM PAGE 3

investment. She called for coordinated policies focusing on trade facilitation, industrial upgrading, and supportive fiscal measures.

Monzur Hossain, member of the General Economics Division of the Planning Commission, discussed Bangladesh's policy challenges as it prepares for graduation from the least developed country category.

Kenichi Ohno, emeritus professor at National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, stressed for strong institutions, policy learning, and government-industry coordination to sustain industrial growth.

Yasushi Ueki, president of the Bangkok Research Centre of IDE-JETRO, discussed lessons from industrial development in ASEAN and East Asia, noting the role of infrastructure development, foreign investment, and supplier networks in integrating countries into global production systems.

Country lost Tk 21,000cr

FROM PAGE 3

modern white-collar crime, and reforms are underway.

The minister proposed four measures to curb global fraud: wider research and strategic information-sharing, stronger global and regional cooperation platforms, AI-based monitoring systems, and enhanced judicial and law enforcement capacity for swift punishment.

"We have adopted a zero-tolerance policy to ensure financial and digital security. But because of the global nature of these crimes, it is not possible to eradicate them without cross-border cooperation," the home minister said.

The two-day summit is being attended by home ministers, policymakers, and heads of international organisations. Salahuddin is scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting today with the UK minister of state for the Home Office.

Pureit Service Update for Our Esteemed Community

pureit

Dear Pureit Family,

We would like to inform you that, our service may experience slight delays up to July 2026 due to unavoidable circumstances. Please be assured that we are working diligently to resolve the situation as early as possible.

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and appreciate your continued trust and understanding.

Thank you for being a valued member of the Pureit family.

Digital Entrepreneurship and Innovation Eco-System Development Project (DEIEDP)
Bangladesh Hi-Tech Park Authority (BHTPA)
Information and Communication Technology Division
Ministry of Post, Telecommunication and Information Technology
F-20/B, Bangladesh Copyright Bhaban,
West Agargoan, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

Issue no. 56.02.0000.028.07.213.26- Date: 16/03/2026

An e-tender has been invited in the national e-GP System Portal (http:/www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of Works (Establishment of University Innovation Hub in Atish Dipankar University of Science and Technology) following Open Tendering Method (OTM). The Tender details are as below:

Sl.	Tender ID	Package No. and Name	Location	Tender Document last selling date and time	Tender closing and opening date and time
01	1247057	DEIEDP-BHTPA-WD-6-3	Atish Dipankar University of Science and Technology	06-04-2026, 17:00	07-04-2026, 14.30

This is an online tender, where only e-tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hand copies will be accepted. To submit e-tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)(0176265528-3)(http://www.eprocure.goc.bd).

Monjur Mohammad Shahriar
Project Director
Telephone: +88 02 223314941

GD- 624

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক
প্রধান কার্যালয়
মিরপুর-২, ঢাকা-১২১৬।

সতর্কীকরণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি তারিখ: ১৭/০৩/২০২৬ইং

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, সম্প্রতি কিছু অসাধু ব্যক্তি গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক অনলাইন লোন সার্ভিস শিরোনামে ফেসবুকে পেইজ খুলে লোনের অফার দিয়ে জনসাধারণকে প্রতারিত করছে। এ প্রতারক চক্র বিভিন্ন অ্যাপ/ লিংকের মাধ্যমে গ্রামীণ ব্যাংকের নাম ব্যবহার করে ঋণ প্রদানের প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়ে জনসাধারণের নিকট থেকে বিভিন্ন অংকের টাকা হাতিয়ে নিচ্ছেন বলে ভুক্তভোগীদের নিকট থেকে অভিযোগ পাওয়া যাচ্ছে।

উল্লেখ্য যে, গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক অনলাইন বা অ্যাপভিত্তিক ঋণ বিতরণ কর্মসূচি পরিচালনা করে না। গ্রামীণ ব্যাংকের সংশ্লিষ্ট শাখা হতে গ্রাহকের উপস্থিতিতে ঋণ প্রদান করা হয়। এ ধরনের প্রতারক চক্র থেকে সতর্ক থাকার জন্য সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলকে অনুরোধ করা হচ্ছে। এরপরও যদি কেউ এ ধরনের বিজ্ঞাপনের মাধ্যমে প্রতারিত হন তার দায়-দায়িত্ব গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক কর্তৃপক্ষ বহন করবে না এবং ভুক্তভোগী ইচ্ছা করলে এ বিষয়ে স্থানীয় আইন শৃঙ্খলা রক্ষাকারী বাহিনীর সহায়তা নিতে পারেন।

আদেশক্রমে,
গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক কর্তৃপক্ষ।

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Kushtia
Email: eekus@rhd.gov.bd
Reference No. 35.01.5000 439.07.003.25-650(9) Date: 15-03-2026

e-Tender Notice

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Package Reference No.	Name of work	Last date & time of selling	Date & time of closing and opening
01	1246539	e-GP/R/W-10/KURD/2025-26	Hydro-Morphological and Feasibility Study of Kushtia (Trimahoni)-Meherpur-Chuadanga-Jhenaidah Road (R-745) Khalishakundi Bridge (Ch. 23+352 & Bheramara-Daulatpur Road (2-7411) Hisna Bridge (Ch. 4+162) under Road Division Kushtia during the year 2025-2026.	29-03-2026 at 17:00 hours	30-03-2026 at 11:30 hours

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.
The fees for submission the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any Member of Schedule Banks for GP.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Nayemur Rahaman
Assistant Engineer (AC), RHD
Road Division, Kushtia

Md. Monzurul Karim
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Kushtia

GD-621

LEGAL NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
MATTER NO. 173 OF 2026
IN THE MATTER OF: Azmat Rahman. ------ **Petitioner**
Versus
Mohona Television Ltd and another. ------- **Respondent**
Notice is hereby given that an application under Section 81(2) and 85 (3) read with Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 has been filed before the High Court Division of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of Bangladesh for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting for calendar years 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 & 2025 of the Mohona Television Ltd. Upon preliminary hearing Mrs. Justice Kazi Ziant Haque has been pleased to admit the same on 01.03.2026. Anyone desirous of opposing the said application may appear before the Hon'ble Court either personally or through an authorized advocate on the date fixed. Copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of prescribed charges.
M. Shakhawat Hossain, Bar-at-Law, Advocate, Appellate Division, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, Room No. 6047 (HSSB), Supreme Court Bar Association, Mob: 01711136115

NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 118 of 2026
Shahed Ahmed Mazumder .....**Petitioner**
Vs.
Mohona Television Limited PLC. and others. .....**Respondents**
Notice is hereby given that an application under section 81(2), read with section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994, has been filed by the Petitioner to condone the delay of Respondent No. 1-Company in holding its annual general meetings for the years 2014 to 2025, and to call or direct the calling of the general meetings of Respondent No. 1-Company. The petition was presented to the Hon'ble High Court Division on 01.03.2026 and was admitted by the Court. Any concerned party desirous of opposing the application should appear at the time of hearing in person or through an Advocate for that purpose; and a copy of the petition will be furnished by the undersigned to anyone requiring the same, on payment of a prescribed charge for the same.
Sd/- **Saqeb Mahbub,** Barrister-at-Law, Advocate for the Petitioner, Room 2020 (Annex), Supreme Court, Shahbag, Dhaka – 1000.

STATUTORY NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 313 OF 2026
IN THE MATTER OF:
MEAH & CO. LIMITED. .....**Petitioner**
-VERSUS-
Registrar, Joint Stock Companies and Firms and Another.
----------**Respondents**
Notice is hereby given to all concerned that an application for winding up of the company namely **MEAH & CO. LIMITED** under section 241 read with section 245 of the Companies Act, 1994 along with Rule 8 and 263 of the Companies Rules, 2009 has been filed before the High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Upon preliminary hearing. **Mr. Justice Sikder Mahmudur Razi** was pleased to admit the application by an order dated 16.03.2026 and also directed to submit the affidavit in compliance. Anyone interested may appear before the Hon'ble Court. Copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of charges.

Ruhul Amin
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
16, Darus Salam (9th Floor) Purana Palton, Dhaka-1000.
Contact-01716-801309

STATUTORY NOTICE
In the Supreme Court of Bangladesh
High Court Division
(Statutory Original Jurisdiction)
Company Matter No. 2167 of 2025
In the matter of:
Mr. Pranav Mehta ..... **Petitioner**
-Versus-
Integrated Beverage Services (Bangladesh) Ltd. .... **Respondents**

Notice is hereby given that an application under section 81(2) read with section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994 was moved before the Company Bench of the Hon'ble High Court Division for condonation of delay in holding its Annual General Meetings for the financial years ending from 2004 to 2025 of **Integrated Beverage Services (Bangladesh) Ltd.** Upon preliminary hearing, **Madam Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque** was pleased to admit the application on 19.02.2026 and the matter will be taken up for hearing in due course. Anyone desirous in opposing the said application may appear before the Hon'ble Court either personally or through duly authorized Advocate. Copy of the application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of prescribed fees.

Moyeen Firozee
Barrister
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
ABC House (4th Floor), 8, Kemal Ataturk Ave., Banani, Dhaka

পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি
POWER GRID BANGLADESH PLC
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)
Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd
স্মারক নং- ২৭.২১.০০০০.০০০.৬২৪.০৭.২০৭.২৬.২৬৩ তারিখঃ ১৬/০৩/২০২৬খ্রিঃ

e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের গ্রিড সার্কেল, ঢাকা (উত্তর) দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টালে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Title of Works
1246114	Tree Trimming works of 400kV Kaliakair-Bibiyana and 230 kV Kaliakair-Aminbazar/ Kaliakair-Tongi Transmission Line at Kaliakair 400/230/132kV Grid Substation under Grid Circle, Dhaka (North).
1244743	Repair, Maintenance and Painting work of Security duty room, Duty post, Main Gate, Ansar Camp, Main Control Room, Parts of GMD building of Kaliakoir 400/230/132 kV Grid Substation Under Grid Circle Dhaka (North).

আগ্রহী ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোঃ শামিম হোসেন
তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলী, গ্রিড সার্কেল, ঢাকা (উত্তর)

৬ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়ন
সিলেট সেনানিবাস, সিলেট
দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১। ৬ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়নের অনুকূলে ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বছরের বরাদ্দকৃত বাজেট দ্বারা তালিকাভুক্ত সামরিক মালামাল (যেমনঃ Microwave Wireless Link Eqpt, Ethernet Voice Mux and related items) ক্রয় কার্যক্রম বাস্তবায়নের নিমিত্তে এতদ্‌সংক্রান্ত ব্যয় নির্বাহ করা হবে। বর্ণিত কাজ সম্পন্নের জন্য বাংলাদেশ সেনাবাহিনীর তালিকাভুক্ত আগ্রহী ঠিকাদারদের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরযুক্ত প্যাডে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

২। সিডিউল এবং বিস্তারিত তথ্যের জন্য ৬ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়ন, সিলেট সেনানিবাসে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো। প্রতিটি সিডিউলের মূল্যে ৫০০.০০ (পাঁচশত টাকা মাত্র) টাকা হারে বিক্রয়ের জন্য প্রস্তুত থাকবে।

৩। আগ্রহী ঠিকাদারদের আগামী ১৮ মার্চ ২০২৬ তারিখ ১০০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে ৬ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়ন এর আরপি গেইটে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার বাক্সে দরপত্র জমা করতে হবে।

৪। সর্বনিম্ন দরদাতাকে ১০% সিকিউরিটি মানি (ফেরত যোগ্য) দরপত্র গৃহীত হবার পর কার্যাদেশ গ্রহণের পূর্বে পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফটের মাধ্যমে অধিনায়ক, ৬ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়ন বরাবর জমা করতে হবে।

আইএসপিআর/সেনা/২৫০

অধিনায়ক
৬ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়ন
সিলেট সেনানিবাস

GD-628

রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি
RUPALI BANK PLC
উত্তম সেবার নিশ্চয়তা
মাধাইয়া বাজার শাখা, কুমিল্লা

শাখা স্থানান্তর

রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি'র মাধাইয়া বাজার শাখা, কুমিল্লা ১৫/০৩/২০২৬ রোজ রবিবার থেকে নতুন ঠিকানায় স্থানান্তরিত হয়ে ব্যাংকিং কার্যক্রম শুরু করছে।

পুরাতন ঠিকানা	নতুন ঠিকানা
রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি মাধাইয়া বাজার শাখা সালাম ভবন (২য় তলা) (কাঁচা বাজার সংলগ্ন) মাধাইয়া বাজার, চান্দিমা, কুমিল্লা।	রূপালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি মাধাইয়া বাজার শাখা সাহা সুপার মার্কেট (২য় তলা) (কাঁচা বাজার সংলগ্ন) মাধাইয়া বাজার, চান্দিনা, কুমিল্লা।

সম্মানিত গ্রাহক, পৃষ্ঠপোষক এবং শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের ব্যাংকিং সেবা গ্রহণের জন্য নতুন ঠিকানায় যোগাযোগের অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

Iran fires 'dancing missile' for first time

AGENCIES

Iran on Sunday launched a series of advanced missiles targeting Israeli and US positions, including the Sejjil missile, which has been used for the first time since the war began on February 28, Iranian news outlet PressTV reported.

The Sejjil is an indigenously designed and developed two-stage ballistic missile powered by solid propellant. It is also known by other names, including the Sajjil, Ashoura, and Ashura missile.

Iran's Sejjil-2 is a two-stage, solid-fuel medium-range ballistic missile with an estimated range of about 2,000 kilometres and a payload capacity of roughly 700 kilograms. Because of its high-altitude manoeuvring ability, it has been nicknamed the "dancing missile", a reference to its capability to evade missile defence systems such as the Iron Dome.

According to the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the missile is around 18 metres long, has a diameter of about 1.25 metres, and weighs roughly 23,600 kilograms.

Its solid-fuel design offers a strategic advantage, allowing it to be prepared and launched more quickly than older liquid-fuel systems like the Shahab series. Work on designing the Sejjil missile began in the early 1990s.

According to CSIS, the first test launch took place in 2008, when the missile reportedly travelled around 800 kilometres. A second launch was carried out in May 2009 to evaluate improved guidance and navigation systems.

Four additional flight tests have been conducted since 2009.

Smoke plumes rise after Israeli bombardment of the village of Khiam in southern Lebanon, near the border with Israel, as seen from nearby Marjayoun yesterday. Israel warned that displaced Lebanese driven from their homes by its military would not be able to return until the safety of Israelis living near the border was ensured. PHOTO: AFP

Talks with Cuba ongoing: Trump

Warns of possible action after Iran

REUTERS

US President Donald Trump said on Sunday that the United States could soon reach a deal with Cuba or take other action, signaling that developments in the long-strained relationship may come quickly.

"Cuba also wants to make a deal, and I think we will pretty soon either make a deal or do whatever we have to do," Trump said to reporters on Air Force One. "We're talking to Cuba, but we're going to do Iran before Cuba."

The comments come as tensions between Washington and Havana remain elevated following years of sanctions, diplomatic friction and disputes over migration and security, with regional allies and investors watching closely for signs of a policy shift.

Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel said on Friday that the country opened talks with the United States as the island faces one of its most severe economic crises in decades.

"These talks have been aimed at finding solutions through dialogue to the bilateral differences we have between the two nations," Diaz-Canel said in a video aired on state television.

Iran wants 'serious review' of Gulf ties

Tehran's envoy to KSA denies role in Saudi oil attacks

REUTERS, *Riyadh*

- **Gulf states suffer over 2,000 missile and drone attacks since war began**
- **Iran and Saudi Arabia mended ties in 2023 after years of enmity**

Iran's relations with Gulf states will require a "serious review" in light of the US-Israeli war on Iran, limiting the power of external actors so the region can become prosperous, Tehran's ambassador to Saudi Arabia told Reuters on Sunday.

Asked if he was concerned that relations would be harmed by the war, Ambassador Alireza Enayati said: "It's a valid question, and the answer may be simple. We are neighbors and we cannot do without each other; we will need a serious review."

"What the region has witnessed over the past five decades is the result of an exclusionary approach [within the region] and an excessive reliance on external powers," he said in a written response to questions, calling for deeper ties between the Gulf Cooperation Council's six members, along with Iraq and Iran.

Gulf Arab states have faced more than 2,000 missile and drone attacks since the outbreak of the war on February 28, with targets including US diplomatic missions and military bases but also critical Gulf oil infrastructure, ports, airports, hotels and residential and office buildings.

The United Arab Emirates, which normalized relations with Iran's arch-foe Israel in 2020, has faced the brunt of the attacks. But all Gulf Arab states have been impacted, and all have condemned Iran.

Behind the scenes, analysts and regional sources say there is also growing frustration at the US, long their security guarantor, at dragging them into a war they did not endorse but for which they are paying a hefty price.

In Saudi Arabia, attacks have been concentrated on the eastern region where most of the kingdom's oil is produced, as well as the Prince Sultan Airbase hosting US forces east of Riyadh, and the Diplomatic Quarter on the Saudi capital's western edge, according to Saudi defense ministry statements.

Saudi Arabia and Iran re-established full diplomatic relations in 2023 after years of enmity that saw them back rival political and military factions across the region.

Israeli strike on Gaza police vehicle kills 9 officers

AFP, *Gaza City*

Gaza's Hamas-run interior ministry said an Israeli air strike on a police vehicle Sunday evening killed nine officers in the centre of the Palestinian territory, updating an earlier hospital toll of eight.

The strike came as a Hamas delegation was due to meet with Egyptian officials in Cairo.

Gaza's civil defence agency had also reported another four people killed in an earlier Israeli strike. When asked by AFP about both incidents, the Israeli military said it was looking into the reports.

The Gaza interior ministry, which operates under Hamas authority, accused the Israeli military of committing a "heinous crime this afternoon when it targeted a police vehicle carrying several officers and personnel in the central governorate".

"The attack resulted in the killing of nine officers and personnel," it said in a statement, listing the victims, among them the police chief for the central governorate, Colonel Iyad Abu Yousef. Earlier, th Al-Aqsa hospital in Deir el-Balah said it had received the bodies of "eight martyrs" killed in the strike on the town of Zawaida in central Gaza.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Jhalakathi
E-mail: eejha@rhd.gov.bd

Memo No. 35.01.4240.432.04.012.23-422(3) Dated: 16/03/2026

Invitation for e-Tenders (OTM)

Sl. No.	Name of works	Tender ID No.	Tender security	Last selling date & time	Closing/ opening date & time
01	04/e-GP/PMP-Roads/JRD/2025-2026 Strengthening by Base Type-I & Dense Bituminous Surfacing-Wearing Course Work at Ch.15+000 (Manosita Women's College) to Ch.30+000 (Amua Zero Point) km of Rajapur-Kathalia-Amua-Bamna-Patharghata Zila Road (Z-8708) (Jhalakathi Part) under Jhalakathi Road Division during the year 2025-2026.	1247036	45,00,000/-	07-04-2026 05-00pm	08-04-2026 12-00pm

01. These are online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal.
02. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd).

Shahriar Sharif Khan
ID No. 602247
Executive Engineer, RHD (c.c)
Jhalakathi Road Division

GD-625

China leads in patents on anti-drone tech: study

AFP, *Paris*

China is far outstripping other countries in patents filed for anti-drone technologies, a specialist law firm said yesterday, as the defences' key place in modern warfare is highlighted anew in Middle East fighting.

With 82 patents filed of a total 126 worldwide in the year to March 2025, China dominated the rankings from intellectual property experts Mathys and Squire.

The US accounted for just 22 anti-drone patents and South Korea six. Expanding interest in the field was clear from its growth, up 27 percent from the 99 filed in the previous period.

"It's not surprising that we're seeing a lot of innovation in that area from China," said Mathys and Squire partner Andy White.

Beijing has been making a "concerted effort" to encourage patent-filing by businesses and individuals over the past decade, including with financial incentives, White noted. Most of the patents -- 49 in 2024-25 -- were related to interference and jamming.

But the "next generation" is already in development, the law firm found, highlighting anti-drone lasers (39 patents) and microwave systems (24). "I wouldn't be surprised if in another one or two years, we see (the overall number) increase massively," White said.

The data halting in March 2025 means any developments following the outbreak of war between the US, Iran and Israel are not yet captured.

Drones play a central role in the current Middle East fighting and the past four years of war between Russia and Ukraine. Iranian-designed Shahed drones have been widely deployed in both conflicts and can be tricky to counter.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Department of Environment
Poribesh Bhaban, E/16 Agargaon
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.
www.doe.gov.bd

Memo No. 22.02.0000.008.07.041.25-150 Date : 16/03/2026

e-Tender Notice

The following e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd):

Sl No	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Package Description	Tender Document Last Selling Date & time	Tender Closing/Opening Date & time
1.	1209598	DoE/eGP/2025-26/GR-4	Supply of Refreshment & Lunch packet for meeting, training seminer, workshop etc. organized by DoE, Head office (Framework Agreement)	06 Apr 2026 17:00 Hrs.	07 Apr 2026 14:00 Hrs.

This is an online Tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

16/3/2026
(Parvez Chawdhury)
Director (Administration)
Phone: 02223375050
E-mail: diradmin@doe.gov.bd

GD-632

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Rangamati Road Division, Rangamati
Phone: 02333304971
E-mail: eeranga@rhd.gov.bd

Memo No. 35.01.8400.466.15.03.25-762 Date: 16-03-2026

Re-Tender Notice (OTM)

This is to notify for all concerns that e-Tenders is invited and will publish on 16 March 2026 in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for procurement of works for the following Tender. Interested persons/firms can see details by visiting the website www.eprocure.gov.bd.

SL.	Tender ID	Tender Reference No.	Name of work	Date & time
1	1237101	e-GP/PMP Road/RRD-03/2024-2025	Surfacing Work by DBS Wearing Course at Ch. 09+000 (Islampur) to Ch. 18+740 (Rajasthali) km at Bangalhalia-Rajasthali-Farua-Bilaichhari-Barkal Road Zilla Highway (Z-1814) under Rangamati Road Division.	Last selling 16.04.2026, 12:00 Closing 16.04.2026, 14:00

16.03.2026
Sabuj Chakma
ID No. 602314
Executive Engineer (CC). RHD
Road Division, Rangamati

GD-623

The Daily Star
FOUNDER EDITOR: **LATE S. M. ALI**

Unclogging the country's arteries

Canal-digging drive must resist partisan influences

Rivers and canals are to Bangladesh what arteries are to the human body. The country is uniquely blessed with a vast, intricate capillary network of waterways, including rivers and canals. Yet its natural circulatory system has suffered severe sclerosis for decades, falling victim to myopic development. Siltation, rampant illegal encroachment, and chronic institutional neglect have choked these channels. In their absence, farmers have been forced to relentlessly draw down the country's precious and finite groundwater reserves to keep agricultural production afloat.

The formal inauguration of a nationwide canal excavation and re-excavation programme by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is thus a necessary intervention. By breaking ground on a 12-km stretch of the Sahapara canal in Dinajpur, the government has taken aim at a mounting environmental and economic threat. The launch—coordinated with simultaneous excavation efforts led by ministers and lawmakers in 54 districts—marks the first phase of the implementation of a colossal election manifesto pledge made by BNP to restore 20,000 km of rivers and canals across the country.

The economic and ecological rationale behind the initiative is compelling. Redirecting the agricultural burden back to surface water will strengthen rural water management. A freely flowing canal network serves a dual purpose: it functions as a drainage system to mitigate severe monsoon waterlogging while also acting as a reservoir to combat drought. Officials at the water resources ministry are right to note that better use of stored surface water could improve irrigation, boost agricultural productivity, and create employment opportunities for rural communities. More importantly, it could halt the dangerous depletion of the water table in northern districts.

Yet embedded within the DNA of this ambitious initiative is a political risk that the government must carefully navigate. Infrastructure and environmental projects in Bangladesh endure only when they achieve broad social consensus. If this colossal excavation effort is treated merely as a partisan agenda, it will inevitably fall short of its potential. The government must ensure that excavated canals do not fall into familiar traps: corruption, lack of maintenance, and swift re-encroachment by the politically connected. For the project to achieve genuine transformation, the effort must be deliberately and visibly depoliticised. It should evolve from a top-down government directive into a truly nationwide civic campaign. The state possesses the heavy machinery, initial capital, and hydrological expertise needed to break ground. But the long-term stewardship of these waterways must ultimately return to the communities that rely on them.

This requires fostering a profound sense of collective ownership. When a farming community feels that a canal belongs to them—rather than to a distant bureaucracy in Dhaka or a local political patron—they will be more inspired to protect its banks from encroachers and ensure its waters remain clear. The government has taken a commendable first step in recognising the crisis and mobilising the state's apparatus to address it. The next step is to ensure that the effort grows into a shared national mission—one in which citizens, regardless of political creed, help carry the work forward.

False cases must not undermine justice

Govt must expedite the process of clearing innocent people's names

A report published in Prothom Alo has once again exposed the existence of arbitrary and harassing cases filed in connection with the July uprising killings. An investigation into 100 such cases has revealed that, alongside political leaders and activists, many ordinary citizens were also indiscriminately named as accused. These accusations were often driven by ulterior motives, ranging from property disputes and business rivalries to extortion and personal vendettas. Reports also suggest that some political activists, dishonest lawyers, police personnel, and case-filing syndicates may have been involved in inserting the names of innocent people, which is deeply worrying.

Take, for instance, the case of businessman Ismail Hossain Pradhania. Arrested from a hospital shortly after the birth of his daughter on May 5, 2025, he was accused of involvement in a murder linked to the uprising. Police statements even identified him as a leader of Jubo League—a claim that was later proved baseless. His name, as it transpired, had been inserted in some cases due to a dispute over control of a shopping complex and an apartment building. The fact that he was shown arrested in a new case immediately after obtaining bail in another raises serious questions about due process. Overall, Pradhania spent 109 days in jail before securing bail finally.

In 32 cases, as per investigations, plaintiffs themselves admitted that they had included the names of people they did not even know, saying the lists were supplied by others. There were also instances where the same incident led to multiple cases in different police stations, and in two cases, three deceased individuals were listed as accused. Applications have reportedly been filed in at least 47 cases seeking to remove more than 600 names from the lists of accused. Allegations have also surfaced that money ranging from Tk 20,000 to Tk 400,000 was exchanged in connection with removing names or securing relief from such cases. This is deeply concerning.

We therefore urge the new government to ensure that every case related to the July uprising is carefully reviewed to determine its credibility. According to police sources, a total of 1,841 cases have been filed, including 791 murder cases, in connection with the uprising. However, among the murder cases, charge sheets have been submitted in only 46 so far. The process therefore must be expedited to ensure justice for the victims. While individuals against whom there is no evidence should be cleared without delay, those responsible for filing or facilitating false cases must be held accountable. Justice for the victims of the uprising cannot be ensured if the legal system is misused to pursue personal vendettas or financial gain.

Why we need a balanced fuel pricing policy

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

FAHMIDA KHATUN

The global energy market is again in turmoil, this time because of the US-Israel war in Iran. The Middle East has long been the central hub for worldwide energy supply. About a quarter of the global seaborne oil trade is carried through the Strait of Hormuz alone, according to UNCTAD. At the same time, Qatar and the UAE are major suppliers of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Any military escalation in this region therefore threatens the stability of the entire global energy supply chain.

This situation is especially worrisome for countries like Bangladesh that are heavily dependent on imported energy. Our electricity, industry, transportation, and agriculture sectors all rely on imported energy such as crude oil, refined petroleum, and LNG from the Middle East. The ongoing war has caused significant swings in global oil prices. Fears of supply outages led Brent crude to temporarily rise to about $119 per barrel before falling back slightly. These price hikes put immediate economic strain on import-dependent nations like Bangladesh. A prolonged conflict in the region could severely impact the country's energy security, put pressure on foreign exchange reserves, increase inflation, and threaten long-term economic stability.

The immediate effect on the country's economy would likely be an inflation spike. In February, overall inflation stood at 9.13 percent. A spike in fuel prices means transportation, agricultural costs, electricity production, and industrial processes becoming more expensive. This leads to higher food prices and consequently a higher inflation rate. This impact is felt quickly in Bangladesh because diesel is extensively used for food transport, irrigation, and power generation in a number of industries.

A second significant impact involves import costs and forex reserves. As of March 12, our gross reserves stood at $29.64 billion (according to the BPM6 method). A sharp increase in international oil prices could rapidly raise the country's import costs, further straining the reserves and risking exchange rate instability. The trade deficit, on the other hand, might expand even more, adding to the already deteriorated export performance in the July-January period of FY2026 which registered a negative year-on-year growth of (-)1.93 percent.

The fiscal implications are significant as well. Bangladesh has historically used energy subsidies to shield consumers from volatile global prices. Such subsidies come at a cost. They put significant strains on the government budget, and the fiscal deficit might also grow, limiting financial flexibility. Indeed, the government's fiscal space has been shrinking over the last several years. As a result, the tax-GDP ratio dropped to 6.8 percent in FY2025 from 7.4 percent in FY2024.

At the same time, the total subsidy expenditure stayed high, estimated at around 2.2 percent of GDP in FY2025. The energy sector—mainly the state-owned Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB)—received most of these subsidies. Increasing fuel import costs raised electricity generation costs, yet end-user tariffs remained unchanged to prevent further inflation. The government also paid off some overdue amounts owed to independent power producers. Additionally, fertiliser subsidies continued to be substantial and remittance incentives were expanded amid rising inflows.

Given the current high energy prices in the international market, if Bangladesh adjusts domestic fuel prices to match global rates, it could cause a quick increase in inflation and living costs. Therefore, policymakers must carefully balance maintaining the country's fiscal health with ensuring price stability.

Commuters wait in long queues at a refilling station in Dhaka, amid the government's decision to ration fuel in the face of global energy supply disruption, on March 12, 2026. PHOTO: **MEHEDI HASAN**

In this context, it is crucial to seek alternative energy sources. We primarily import oil and LNG from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, and Qatar. Diversifying these sources can help reduce reliance on geopolitical stability. In the short term, importing refined diesel from India and China could be viable, especially with the Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline providing key infrastructure support.

Financing high-cost energy imports may also become a major challenge for Bangladesh. In this regard, international trade finance mechanisms could play an important role. The Islamic Trade Finance Corporation has been providing trade finance support to the country, particularly for oil and gas imports. The financial capacity of Petrobangla and Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) is a key factor here. Petrobangla is not fully self-funded and has occasionally struggled while importing LNG due to forex issues. Meanwhile, despite being relatively strong financially, the BPC has also experienced periods of foreign currency shortages, resulting in significant payment arrears to international suppliers.

As a result, sustained high energy prices could put considerable pressure on these organisations. In this context, a $350 million support from the World Bank to help Petrobangla with LNG imports starting in 2026 will be beneficial. This funding will be provided through a World Bank-backed guarantee, allowing commercial banks to offer finance. Additionally, Bangladesh might explore government-to-government credit agreements with supplying countries.

Given these realities, implementing a balanced fuel pricing policy is crucial. A sharp increase in fuel prices by the government could rapidly drive up inflation in the transportation, agriculture, and food supply sectors. On the other hand, keeping prices artificially low through extended subsidies would increase fiscal deficits. A better solution might be a gradual price adjustment system, where luxury fuel users encounter larger price hikes while vital sectors like agriculture and public transportation receive targeted support.

Understanding Bangladesh's specific energy usage is vital. Diesel predominantly powers agricultural irrigation, transportation, industrial generators, and certain power plants. Petrol and octane are mainly for private vehicles and motorcycles. Furnace oil is used in specific power plants, whereas LNG and natural gas are crucial for electricity, industry, and fertiliser production. Consequently, an interruption in diesel supply could quickly affect agriculture, transportation, and food distribution systems. In this context, Bangladesh must implement several immediate and medium-term policy actions. Short-term measures should include increasing strategic fuel reserves, securing alternative supply sources, and prioritising energy distribution for essential sectors. Simultaneously, reducing reliance on the unpredictable spot market by expanding long-term supply agreements would improve supply stability. Over the medium term, strengthening energy storage infrastructure, promoting energy efficiency, and boosting investment in renewable energy are key steps to enhance resilience.

The current crisis also underscores another key issue: lack of domestic energy exploration efforts. It is crucial to expand exploration activities in the country, particularly in the Bay of Bengal, including joint projects between Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (Bapex) and international energy firms. The government has already announced plans to drill several exploration wells in the coming years. If these plans are carried out effectively, they could help reduce the country's reliance on imported energy.

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has once again exposed the weaknesses in Bangladesh's energy security. An energy infrastructure that relies heavily on imports, coupled with limited forex reserves and tight fiscal capacity, makes the economy vulnerable to global energy market fluctuations. This crisis should be viewed not just as a temporary issue but also as a prompt to revisit the country's long-term energy approach. By diversifying energy sources, enhancing financial mechanisms, and increasing investment in domestic exploration and renewable energy, Bangladesh can strengthen its energy independence and economic resilience against possible global energy disruptions in the future.

Piety, protest, and the search for a sacred public life

Maruf Ahmed
is an architect and lecturer at Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet).

MARUF AHMED

I do not think the contemporary public mood in Bangladesh can be explained only through the old argument between secularism and religion. Something else is going on, and it feels deeper. Across campuses, in political speeches, in reform talks, even in everyday frustration with corruption and disorder, I sense a search for moral seriousness. People are seeking a public life that feels cleaner, weightier, more answerable to conscience. That is why the language of this moment so often sounds ethical before it sounds ideological.

Andrew Samuels had a name for this kind of atmosphere: resacralisation. He did not mean a simple return to religion, but a broader attempt to move a sense of holiness, dignity, and ethical meaning back into the ordinary world of politics and institutions. He saw it as a response to collective disgust with public life and as a search for a new ethical basis for society. I find that idea useful in Bangladesh, because what many people seem to want now is not merely a change of rulers, but politics that can recover some moral gravity.

You can hear this most clearly in the generation shaped by July. When The Daily Star spoke to students at Begum Rokeya University ahead of the election, they did not speak in the tired vocabulary of patronage. They spoke about democracy, merit, justice, freedom of speech, unfinished trials, and the feeling that the spirit of July had not yet been honoured in practice. One student answered the question of what mattered most after graduation with a single term: "A job." That combination matters to me. It shows that idealism here is not abstract. It is moral and material at once.

The same longing now appears in formal politics. The ruling party's recent orientation for MPs and ministers focused on parliamentary rules, legislative procedure, and governance priorities suggests an awareness that power must be taught to behave differently this time. The health minister's drive to remove "dalal syndicates" from public hospitals, with visible help desks and accountable officials, carries the same moral charge. These are administrative measures, yes. Yet, they also speak to a deeper public hunger for institutions that do not humiliate ordinary people.

Ramadan has exposed the contradiction with unusual clarity. A recent opinion piece published by The Daily Star put it bluntly: in much of the Muslim world, the month brings discounts and solidarity, while in Bangladesh it often brings a predictable surge in prices. A season meant to cultivate restraint becomes, in practice, a season of extraction. That detail matters far beyond the market. It tells us that public piety on its own does very little unless it is matched by a moral economy. Otherwise, holiness stays in speech while daily life remains organised by opportunism.

Still, this search for a sacred public life can fail. It fails when moral language floats above institutions. It fails when purity becomes more important than procedure. It fails when reform speaks in noble tones while old habits slide quietly through the back door.

Dhaka University's appointment of yet another unelected vice-chancellor is one such warning. An recent editorial by The Daily Star noted Transparency International Bangladesh's claim that, after the uprising, key university appointments were divided among major political actors and influenced by public pressure. That is exactly how moral aspiration gets emptied out.

It also fails when the language of national renewal leaves whole constituencies outside the room. Only around four percent of the candidates who contested the 13th national election were women, and only seven women were elected. So, I cannot take any rhetoric of ethical rebirth seriously unless it widens participation, especially for those who helped carry the country through its hardest moments. A sacred public life, if the phrase is to mean anything, has to be more inclusive, more procedural, and more patient than the politics we already know.

I am not calling for sanctimonious politics. I am saying that Bangladesh is clearly searching for a public sphere that people can respect again. July gave that search a new urgency. Ramadan has shown its contradictions. Reform debates are giving it institutional language. The real question now is whether we can build a politics where dignity is not ceremonial, morality is not selective, and conscience does not end where power begins. That, to me, is the real struggle underneath the noise.

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Stories from a delayed flight: Migrant anxieties amid the Middle East crisis

Shariful Hasan
is associate director of the Migration Programme and Youth Platform at BRAC.

SHARIFUL HASAN

The flight from the Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram to Dhaka was scheduled to depart at 8:30 pm on March 12. Normally, the journey takes about 50 minutes, but when I went to collect my boarding pass, I was told the flight would be delayed by at least three hours. The reason was that the incoming flight from Dubai had departed late. Although my flight was domestic, the US-Bangla Airlines aircraft had arrived from Dubai via Chattogram before continuing on to Dhaka. There was little to do except wait.

Once I boarded the flight, I met many passengers who had come from Dubai, and I spoke with several of them. Some were irritated by the delay; many were simply relieved to have returned home. Some shared stories of anxiety about the changing situation in the Gulf countries amid the ongoing US-Israel war against Iran.

One of the travellers I met was Mohammad Yasin from Cumilla. He looked exhausted as he stood in line at the baggage collection carousel. During our brief conversation, he told me he had returned home after six years. When asked about the situation in Dubai, he described it as both "good and bad."

"One good thing," he said, "is that Dubai has managed to prevent most missiles from reaching the ground." When I asked how Bangladeshi migrants were coping, he said, "There is definitely concern; we have never seen people in the UAE so frightened before."

Another migrant, Moinul Hossain, said that people from Europe and America appeared even more anxious about the war. "They are leaving Dubai," he said, adding that Bangladeshis are also worried and a lot of stories and rumours are circulating among them.

When I asked my fellow travellers if they would be willing to share short video statements about their experiences in the war, everyone politely declined. "Please don't record videos," they said. "In Arab countries we are not allowed to talk about the war, especially on social media."

They explained that migrant workers across the Middle East had been advised not to post anything about the war online, including photos or videos. Some even claimed that several Bangladeshis had already been detained for violating such restrictions.

Another passenger on the same flight was travelling with his wife and newborn. He introduced himself as Sultanul Islam. According to him, one reassuring aspect was that authorities would inform residents in advance whenever there was a potential risk so they could remain vigilant.

After a brief pause, I asked if anyone knew about the situation in Saudi Arabia. Several passengers said there was no major panic in Jeddah. However, they mentioned some incidents in Riyadh and Dammam. They also spoke about the deaths of two Bangladeshi nationals in Saudi Arabia.

Yet beyond the fear of war, what worried them most was the uncertainty about their livelihoods. There are good reasons for such anxiety. Around five million Bangladeshis live across the Middle East and send remittances back home. Any crisis in the region, therefore, becomes a crisis for them as well.

FILE PHOTO: **RASHED SHUMON**

'Typically, large numbers of Bangladeshis leave the country for the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, and Lebanon. With the escalation of tensions centred on Iran and Israel, concerns about these labour markets are increasing.

Those already working in the region are naturally worried, but perhaps even more anxious are those who have not yet been able to travel. Due to security risks amid the ongoing conflict, several Middle Eastern countries—including Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Jordan—temporarily closed their airspace from February 28. According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, a total of 447 flights from Dhaka were cancelled between February 28 and March 13 because of these restrictions.

As a result, many people who had spent nearly five lakh taka or more to migrate for work could not leave the country. Many now worry about their visas expiring, not knowing when they will be able to travel.

Official projections indicate that between 1976 and 2022, some 1.48 crore Bangladeshis migrated abroad as migrant workers, among whom around 10 lakh were female workers. Typically, large numbers of Bangladeshis leave the country for the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, and Lebanon. With the escalation of tensions centred on Iran and Israel, concerns about these labour markets are increasing. If the conflict continues and flight operations remain disrupted, Bangladesh's overseas labour market could shrink, potentially affecting remittance flows.

The conflict has already disrupted the deployment of new workers. Those preparing to migrate may face delays and uncertainty. Workers who came home on leave may also struggle to return to their jobs abroad. The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment has already opened a hotline to assist migrants whose visas expired due to flight cancellations.

Much of the Middle Eastern economy depends on energy, construction, and infrastructure projects. If the conflict persists, such projects could slow down or be suspended. Since many Bangladeshi migrants work in construction, recruitment may decline, and some workers might even return home. So, the government should begin preparing now—coordinating with public, private, and international organisations—to respond to potential challenges.

There is no doubt that remittances are vital for Bangladesh's economy. In 2025, migrant workers sent home over $30 billion, most of which came from the Middle East. If employment or income among migrants declines because of the conflict, the impact will be felt not only by individual families but also by rural economies and national reserves. However, past experience suggests that during crises migrants often send more money to support their families. Therefore, remittance flows may not immediately decline, especially during the Eid season.

Despite the risks, crises sometimes create new opportunities. Once the conflict ends, reconstruction and infrastructure projects may generate fresh demand for workers. At the same time, Bangladesh must diversify its labour markets beyond the Middle East. Expanding opportunities in Europe and Japan holds significant promise. But entering these markets requires higher levels of language skills and technical training.

At this moment, however, the most urgent priority is safety. Missile attacks linked to the conflict have already killed four Bangladeshis—two in Saudi Arabia and one each in Bahrain and the UAE—while several others have been injured. Bangladeshi embassies across the Middle East have urged migrants to remain indoors unless absolutely necessary until the situation stabilises. They have also advised people to refrain from uploading any photos or videos related to the war on social media.

When I left the airport and drove through the illuminated streets of Dhaka, I kept thinking of how, behind this brightly lit city and Bangladesh's development, lies the immense contribution of migrant workers. We often talk about remittances and foreign reserves. But how often do we truly think about the lives, worries, hopes, frustrations, and human stories of millions of migrants working quietly behind the scenes? They give so much to the state, but how much does the state give back to them—especially during crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic or the ongoing war?

As I reflected on these questions, I silently wished that this violent conflict would end soon. That dawn would come again. Until then, may the millions of migrants living far from home remain safe—those who carry Bangladesh carefully in their hearts, even from thousands of miles away.

Bangladesh desperately needs a Habermas

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JANNATUL NAYM PIEAL

Germany had a Jürgen Habermas, who died on March 14, 2026. He was not just a philosopher writing for academics; he was a public intellectual, someone who used ideas to help society understand itself, confront its own mistakes, and imagine a better future. He believed a country cannot move forward unless its people openly discuss the past, debate their values, and reason together. Habermas helped Germany face the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust. He argued that societies must address historical atrocities not only with laws or politics but also through open, honest conversations among citizens. He emphasised the importance of a public sphere—an independent space where people could debate freely and influence decisions. Democracy, he believed, thrives when citizens can deliberate collectively about what is just, ethical, and fair.

Habermas also developed the idea of communicative rationality, which means that understanding comes not from authority or propaganda, but from dialogue aimed at mutual comprehension. Through discussion, societies can confront moral failures, challenge dominant narratives, and make reasoned collective judgements. Habermas did not confine himself to abstract philosophy. His writing, including The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, examined how public debate could shape politics and hold authority accountable. Beyond books, he wrote essays, gave interviews, and participated in public debates, engaging directly in discussions about Germany's past, the Cold War, European integration, and global conflicts. By connecting theory to public life, he encouraged newspapers, educators, and civic institutions to foster spaces for discussion, gradually creating a culture where confronting history became a shared responsibility rather than a partisan or taboo topic.

Bangladesh, by contrast, has never had a figure like Habermas. From its beginning, the country needed someone who could combine intellectual insight with public engagement to help the nation make peace with its past. But no such figure emerged.

In 1971, Bangladesh gained independence after a brutal war that killed millions. Some groups, including Jamaat-e-Islami, collaborated with the Pakistani army in committing atrocities. Yet after independence, the nation did not engage in sustained public discussion to process these events. Unlike Germany, where intellectuals guided citizens in reflecting on Nazi crimes, Bangladesh largely avoided confronting the moral and structural questions of its own history. Today, some of the same political actors involved in the 1971 genocide receive a posthumous condolence motion in parliament, leaving ordinary citizens frustrated that the wounds of history have been sidelined.

FILE PHOTO: **AFP**

German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who passed away on March 14.

Habermas would argue that this lack of public deliberation is the core problem. Without spaces for citizens to reason together, discuss past wrongs, or critically examine governance, society cannot form a shared understanding of its values or history. Memory becomes partisan, debates polarised, and historical wounds lie festering beneath the surface. Democracy remains like a half-built bridge spanning only part of the river, with legitimacy suspended over citizens' reasoned judgement.

The need for a Habermas in Bangladesh is as urgent today as it was 55 years ago. Recent crises, especially the government-led brutalities during the 2024 July uprising and the 15 years of Awami League rule preceding it, have left behind deep political and social fractures. Efforts to reshape narratives or rehabilitate despised outfits through some "refined" actors are neither enough nor effective. What is needed are spaces where citizens can reason together, debate openly, and reflect on mistakes, accountability, and ethics. Symbolic gestures, slogans, or partisan narratives cannot replace this kind of public discussion.

South Africa engaged in debates about apartheid even as Archbishop Desmond Tutu led the formal Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In Argentina, intellectuals guided discussions about the "Dirty War" and its moral consequences. Rwanda, after the 1994 genocide, demonstrates the power of collective deliberation as community-based Gacaca courts let ordinary citizens testify, discuss, and reckon with atrocities under the guidance of local leaders, journalists, and civic intellectuals. In each case, progress depended not only on formal tribunals but on reasoned public discussion that helped societies confront structural failures and restore moral balance.

Bangladesh, while home to a sea of intellectuals, policy analysts, commentators, subject-matter experts, and so-called senior journalists, has rarely fostered spaces for the kind of inclusive public discussion Habermas envisioned. Even in the post-2024 context, debates remain polarised, performative, or politically controlled. Possibilities of victims-led truth commissions—bodies that investigate past injustices, document experiences, and promote accountability while fostering dialogue and healing—fell through. There is also no genuine public sphere where citizens can collectively reflect on history or evaluate contemporary politics critically. Without it, unresolved history and political tensions persist, leaving society like a ship adrift in turbulent waters, vulnerable to repeating past mistakes.

For Habermas, reflecting on history was more than just about assigning blame. It was about understanding systemic causes, recognising ethical failures, and learning lessons to prevent repetition. In Bangladesh, citizens feel injustice deeply, yet few forums allow them to examine why events happened, which structural problems persist, or what lessons can be learned. Indeed, why did certain political forces dominate for decades? Why were the atrocities of 1971 left unaddressed? How can citizens reason together about accountability today? These are precisely the conversations Habermas would urge, grounded in reason, ethics, and inclusivity.

Today, Bangladesh desperately needs a Habermas—not to dictate what people should think, but to cultivate a culture of engaging in public reasoning, discussion, and reflection. This should not mean the emergence of a single individual of Habermas' stature. What Bangladesh needs, in a very practical sense, is a collective force: a network of civic institutions, independent media forums, grassroots dialogue initiatives, and civic education programmes that nurture deliberation. Independent media can host reasoned debates free from political control, civic education can teach young citizens critical reflection and ethical responsibility, and community dialogue initiatives can give victims and marginalised voices a meaningful role in engaging with history and governance. In short, if Bangladesh truly wants to strengthen its democracy, it had better learn to listen to itself.

Government of the People Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Commandant (Additional DIG), RRF-Dhaka Office
Milberak Police Line, Genderia, Dhaka.

Memo No. 89/Ration

Date: 09 March, 2026

e-Tender Notice

e-tender is invited in the National e-GP system Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of goods as follow.

Tender ID No.	Package name	Online Tender Notice publication Date & Time	Online Tender closing Date & Time	Method of Tender
1247202	Masor Dal (Lentil)	16-March-2026 15:00 PM	01-April-2026 12:30 PM	OTM
1247345	Edible oil (soybean)	16-March-2026 15:00 PM	01-April-2026 12:30 PM	OTM
1247493	Polao Rice	16-March-2026 15:00 PM	01-April-2026 12:30 PM	OTM
1247506	Fire Wood	16-March-2026 15:00 PM	01-April-2026 12:30 PM	OTM
1247661	Wheat Crushing	16-March-2026 15:00 PM	01-April-2026 12:30 PM	OTM
1247712	Porter Works (Ration Commodities Loading and unloading)	16-March-2026 15:00 PM	01-April-2026 12:30 PM	OTM
1247780	Transport (General Transport From all Dhaka CSD/LSD and Sugar Transport From all Mills)	16-March-2026 15:00 PM	01-April-2026 12:30 PM	OTM

This is an online Tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-tender registration in the National e-GP portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is requered.
The fees for last downloading e-tender Document from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches up to date & time.
Further information and guidlines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

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GD-622

OSCARS 2026
'One Battle After Another' and 'Sinners' dominate

The cast of 'One Battle After Another' celebrates its Best Picture win at the Oscars. PHOTOS: REUTERS

Jessie Buckley celebrates Best Actress Oscar win for 'Hamnet'.

Rei Ami, EJAE, and Audrey Nuna from KPop Demon Hunters perform on stage.

Autumn Durald Arkapaw, the director of photography for 'Sinners', has made history by becoming the first woman to win an Oscar for Best Cinematography.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The 98th Academy Awards delivered a night full of surprises, memorable speeches, and historic wins as two of Hollywood's most anticipated films, ***One Battle After Another*** and ***Sinners***, dominated on Monday (Bangladesh time).

Paul Thomas Anderson's ***One Battle After Another*** emerged as the night's big winner, taking home six Oscars, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Supporting Actor, and the inaugural Best Casting award. Anderson, who earned his first Best Director Oscar, expressed gratitude in his acceptance speech: "Thank you very, very much. You make a guy work hard for one of these. I really appreciate it. I share this with a friend of mine on the other side of the shadows."

Ryan Coogler's ***Sinners*** also shone brightly, winning four awards out of its 16 nominations. The film secured Best Actor, Best Original Screenplay, Best Cinematography, and Best Original Score. Michael B Jordan, who received his first Oscar nomination this year, accepted the Best Actor award, reflecting on the trailblazing performers who came before him: "I stand here because of the people that came before me: Sidney Poitier, Denzel Washington, Halle Berry, Jamie Foxx, Forest Whitaker, Will Smith... Thank you for keeping betting on me."

Irish actress Jessie Buckley celebrated her first Academy Award for her portrayal of Shakespeare's wife in ***Hamnet***, winning Best Actress. Speaking from the stage, Buckley dedicated the award to "the beautiful chaos of a mother's heart" and acknowledged the lineage of women creating against all odds. She thanked her director Chloé Zhao and writer Maggie O'Farrell for their contributions to the film.

Sean Penn earned his third Oscar, winning Best Supporting Actor for his role as an obsessed military officer in ***One Battle After Another***. Known for occasionally skipping award ceremonies, Penn was not present at the Dolby Theatre to accept the honour, joining the ranks of male actors with three Oscars alongside Jack Nicholson, Walter Brennan, and Daniel Day-Lewis.

Animated powerhouse ***KPop Demon Hunters*** also made history, winning Best Animated Feature and Best Original Song for ***Golden***. The film's accolades extended beyond the Oscars, including wins at the Golden Globes, Critics' Choice Awards, PGA Awards, and ten Annie Awards, marking an unstoppable awards season streak.

While the evening largely revolved around the three-way contest between ***One Battle After Another, Sinners***, and Guillermo del Toro's ***Frankenstein***, several high-profile films were snubbed. Timothée Chalamet's ***Marty Supreme*** left empty-handed despite nine nominations, while ***Hamnet*** earned only the Best Actress award out of its eight nominations.

Autumn Durald Arkapaw, the director of photography for ***Sinners***, has made history by becoming the first woman to win an Oscar for Best Cinematography. Of Filipino and African American Creole heritage, Arkapaw also marks the first woman of colour to receive this prestigious award.

Autumn Durald Arkapaw

Host Conan O'Brien performs during the opening of the show.

The ceremony also featured standout moments of solidarity and advocacy. Actor Javier Bardem, presenting Best International Feature Film, wore a 'No to War' pin and declared, "No to war and Free Palestine", drawing enthusiastic applause from the audience. The award went to the Norwegian film ***Sentimental Value***.

Host Conan O'Brien opened the show with his signature humour, joking that he was honoured to be "the last human host" in an era where Hollywood frets over artificial intelligence taking jobs. Highlighting the global reach of the nominees, he noted that films hailed from 31 countries across six continents and encouraged viewers to celebrate resilience and hope in "frightening times."

Beyond the trophies, the evening also revealed how cinema itself is evolving. From bold, director-driven storytelling to films influenced by global voices and genre-defying ideas, the 98th Academy Awards also showed the growing range of stories being told on screen. The night's winners celebrated individual achievements while suggesting a future where diverse narratives and unconventional storytelling increasingly claim a stronger place on Hollywood's biggest stage.

Read the full list online.

NEWS

Meta must act against online incitement

FROM PAGE 1

18, 2025, attack on the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo as an example of how online incitement can translate into violence.

Investigations by The Daily Star and Dismislab found that threats against the two media outlets had circulated on social media for months before the attacks.

According to Amnesty, many social media users portrayed the outlets as "Indian agents" and "anti-national forces", reflecting a broader online narrative accusing them of serving Indian interests and undermining Bangladesh. Some posts also called for burning or attacking their offices.

The investigations suggested a direct link between online incitement and the mob attacks.

Bangladeshi authorities reportedly warned Meta about delays in addressing posts calling for violence and raised concerns about the impact such content could have on public security and minority communities.

Amnesty said harmful content ahead of the polls included misleading and inflammatory narratives about political parties and minority groups, as well as sectarian messaging exaggerating divisions between religious or community groups.

Most of the content originating outside Bangladesh came from India, Amnesty said, citing media reports.

The pre-election events, including attacks on media outlets, mirror a dangerous trajectory seen in several countries, Amnesty said.

It said online incitement, misinformation, disinformation, and coordinated harassment campaigns can quickly spill offline into violence and other human rights abuses, especially when amplified by platforms' algorithms.

"The risk is clear that online harms do not remain in the digital space. They can shape public perception, inflame tensions and enable real-world violence and unrest," Alia Al Ghussain said.

"This is a moment for prevention and taking responsibility for the power that social media companies wield in this space. The world has seen too often how harmful online content can evolve into real-world violence."

There is still an opportunity to stop that trajectory in Bangladesh and it is up to Meta to take action now, she added.

Meta itself has acknowledged that heightened safeguards -- sometimes referred to as "break the glass" measures -- may be necessary in such situations, Amnesty said.

The warning signs currently visible in Bangladesh make such measures urgent, it added.

Amnesty wrote to Meta on February 10 ahead of the polls asking what steps the company would take to ensure Facebook did not pose a human rights risk and whether it had identified cross-border content affecting Bangladeshi users.

The first two floors of The Daily Star in flames in the early hours of December 19. A mob first vandalised the office, then set fire to it and obstructed the rescue of newspaper employees trapped inside, and looted valuables. FILE PHOTO

The rights body also pointed to previous cases where Facebook was linked to human rights abuses, including its role in promoting violence against the Rohingya in Myanmar and during the Tigray War in Ethiopia.

Bangladesh is at a critical juncture where timely preventive action from Meta could reduce the risk of escalation, said Amnesty, criticising Meta's surveillance-based business model, which relies on maximising engagement and can incentivise the amplification of sensational, polarising or harmful content.

Even when such content is not unlawful, it may still pose significant human rights risks when amplified by recommendation systems, the organisation said.

Meta replied that it would not be able to respond within the two-week timeframe provided.

Amnesty said companies have a responsibility under international standards to respect human rights and ensure their operations do not contribute to abuses.

This includes taking proactive measures to identify, prevent, and mitigate human rights risks linked to their platforms through continuous risk assessments, transparency, and effective safeguards, the organisation added.

Goal is to boost agro economy

FROM PAGE 1

"We must, however, remain alert and vigilant against those who try to create disorder through false narratives and misleading remarks. We need to be careful, as many speak sweet words but seek to confuse and mislead people."

Tarique stressed that the government's plans are aimed at benefiting farmers, empowering women, ensuring better healthcare, improving education for the next generation and creating employment opportunities in agriculture and industry.

Once completed, the Sahapara canal will supply water to around 31,000 farmers and benefit nearly 350,000 people. About 1,200 hectares of land will receive irrigation, potentially enabling farmers to produce 60,000 tonnes more crops than at present.

Tarique said the canal will also support fish farming, conserve water during the dry season, and create opportunities for tree planting along its banks. "Once the re-excavation is complete, I will return to see the canal again."

Noting the importance of excavation, a BSS report quoted him as saying, "Across Bangladesh, many canals that existed before have been filled up. In some places, even rivers have been filled."

He added that excavating canals would allow excess rainwater to be stored during the monsoon and used for a-gricultural purposes later.

The prime minister also highlighted other election pledges, including the Family Card programme, waiving of agricultural loans (up to Tk 10,000 with interest), the Farmer's Card programme and creating employment opportunities.

"Do you think these initiatives will change people's lives? We believe they will. The BNP's politics is about improving people's lives. We want to take steps that will double people's income. This is the aim of our politics -- the politics of martyred president Ziaur Rahman, of Khaleda Zia, and of this government that you have elected."

Most of Bangladesh's nearly 200 million people live in rural areas, and agriculture is their main livelihood, making it essential to place the sector on a strong footing.

He also mentioned plans to develop agro-based industries in the agriculture-dependent northern region.

The rally was jointly organised by the water resources ministry and the local BNP.

Earlier, Tarique inaugurated the canal excavation programme at Sahapara canal. The event marked the launch of the initiative in 54 districts.

The nearly 12-kilometre Sahapara canal was originally excavated by Tarique's father and the then president Ziaur Rahman in 1977.

Like Zia, the prime minister personally cut the soil with a spade to launch the programme at around 12:27pm yesterday.

Wearing a piqué shirt, denims and sneakers, he also donned a red-and-green cap inscribed with the slogan "Bangladesh First".

After reaching the canal bank, he first looked at a map of the canal and then moved forward to cut the soil to begin the work.

Later, he planted several trees along the canal banks.

Meanwhile, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman inaugurated canal excavation in Jhenaidah; Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Abdul Awal Mintoo in Feni; and Md Ismail Zabiullah, public administration affairs adviser to the prime minister, did so in Noakhali.

State Minister for Planning Zonayed Saki inaugurated the programme in Brahmanbaria and State Minister for Social Welfare Farzana Sharmin did so in Pabna.

Ten dead in India hospital fire

AFP, *New Delhi*

A fire at a government-run hospital in eastern India killed at least 10 critically ill patients who were admitted in the trauma care unit, officials said yesterday.

Building fires are common in India due to a lack of firefighting equipment and a routine disregard for safety regulations.

The fire broke out early yesterday on the first floor of the SCB Medical College and Hospital in Odisha state's Cuttack city, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi told reporters.

"A short circuit caused the fire in the trauma ICU ward where patients were being treated," he said, adding that 23 patients were present on the floor at the time of the incident.

Ten people died following the blaze, while the remaining patients were moved to other wards, he added.

At least 11 staff members suffered burn injuries as they tried to rescue the patients.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the incident "deeply painful" in a post on social media and offered his condolences to the families of the victims.

He also announced compensation of $2,160 to affected families.

Electrical short circuits, often caused by poorly maintained wiring, remain the leading cause of fire incidents in India.

In 2024, a fire at a private hospital in the southern state of Tamil Nadu killed at least six people and injured more than two dozen.

The same year, 10 newborns were killed when a fire engulfed a hospital in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

PHOTO: REUTERS

A resident surveys the damage at the site of buildings struck by a Russian drone attack in Southeast Ukraine yesterday.

Iran war an 'abject lesson' on fossil fuel dependence

Says UN climate chief

REUTERS, *Brussels*

The disruption to energy markets caused by the Iran war is an "abject lesson" in the risks of relying on fossil fuels, and underscores the case for governments to wean their economies off oil and gas, the UN climate secretary will tell EU policymakers yesterday.

While geographically far from the crisis in the Middle East, the European Union has felt its disruption through surging global energy prices. European gas prices have jumped by 50 percent during the two-week war.

"Fossil fuel dependency is ripping away national security and sovereignty, and replacing it with subservience and rising costs," Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of the UN climate change arm UNFCCC, will tell EU officials and government ministers at an event in Brussels.

"Europe is more reliant on fossil fuel imports than almost any other major economy," Stiell will say, in prepared remarks that warned reliance on fossil fuels was leaving consumers "at the mercy of geopolitical shocks and price volatility".

The EU imports more than 90 percent of its oil and 80 percent of its gas.

EU leaders are hurriedly drafting emergency measures to shield consumers from the energy price spike, and avoid a repeat of Europe's 2022 energy crisis, when Russia slashed gas deliveries, sending prices to record highs.

In the longer term, the European Commission says its climate change strategy to replace fossil fuels with locally-produced renewable and nuclear energy will secure countries' energy security, and cut them free from volatile fuel prices.

But governments including Italy and Hungary are urging Brussels to weaken its climate change policies, to provide short-term cost relief for industries.

20 Thai sailors return home after vessel attacked in Gulf

AFP, *Bangkok*

Twenty Thai crew members of a cargo ship attacked in the crucial Strait of Hormuz arrived in Thailand yesterday, with three of their colleagues still stranded on the vessel in the Gulf.

The Thai-registered Mayuree Naree was hit by two projectiles on Wednesday while transiting through the Gulf waterway, after departing a port in the United Arab Emirates.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had struck the Thai ship, as well as a Liberia-flagged vessel, in the strait because they had ignored "warnings".

The 20 sailors landed at Thailand's main international airport early yesterday morning and were immediately escorted away by officials without speaking to gathered media.

The wife of one of the returned crew, who gave her name as Bass, told reporters she was still waiting to see her husband after the ordeal.

"We are all afraid, but they are employees -- if they refuse to go (out to sea), they won't get paid," the 32-year-old woman said.

"I don't know where they went or when they will return home. The company hasn't told me anything," she added.

Bass said she had only spoken with her husband over Facebook Messenger and had brought their one-year-old son to the airport at her husband's request.

AFP journalists saw the returning crew members board a bus after arriving at the airport.

When the Mayuree Naree was struck last week, Bass's husband was only able to grab his phones before fleeing, she told reporters.

He had apologised to his wife for leaving onboard a token from his son -- a small pillow.

"I want (the company) to be sure during this war situation that the ship will be safe when it goes out," she said.

"I want them to look at the employees like their own family. If one of them were their family, how would they decide?"

The vessel's owner Precious Shipping said yesterday that the firm would provide "welfare support for the crew, including medical examinations and mental health assessments", according to a statement.

Govt appoints VCs at 7 univs

FROM PAGE 12

affiliated socio-cultural body.

Earlier yesterday, the incumbent UGC chairman SMA Faiz, appointed on September 5, 2024, sought to be relieved from his post citing health reasons.

The government has appointed ABM Obaidul Islam, current vice-chancellor of Bangladesh Open University and a professor of physics at DU, as the next VC of Dhaka University.

Obaidul Islam previously served as convener of DU Sada Dal and currently holds the post of education affairs secretary of the BNP central committee.

He is also president of the University Teachers' Association of Bangladesh, aligned with the BNP bloc.

Mohammad Faridul Islam, a professor of the marketing department at Rajshahi University, has been appointed VC of RU. He currently serves as general secretary of Zia Parishad at the university.

At Jagannath University, Prof Rais Uddin, chairman of the Islamic Studies Department, has been appointed VC. He is president of the Jagannath University Teachers' Association and general secretary of Sada Dal -- the pro-BNP teachers' alliance -- at the university.

Following Obaidul's appointment, Mohammad Siddiqur Rahman Khan has been selected as VC of Bangladesh Open University. He was also associated with DU Sada Dal.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Nurul Islam, pro-VC of National University of Bangladesh, has been appointed VC of Dhaka Central University, a newly established institution formed by integrating seven colleges in the capital.

He previously served as general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Shikkhak Forum, a pro-BNP teachers' organisation, at Jahangirnagar University.

Prof Mohammad Al Forkan, founding chairman of Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Department at Chittagong University, has been appointed VC of the university. He currently serves as senior vice-president of the Chittagong University Jatiyatabadi Teachers' Forum.

In addition, Prof Mohammad Masud has been appointed VC of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology. He was earlier appointed KUET VC following the July uprising but was removed from the post in April last year amid student protests.

Asked whether political affiliations influenced the appointments, Milon said involvement in politics does not disqualify a candidate.

"Is it a crime if a person is involved in politics?" he said.

He said the government reviewed candidates' research output, publications, citations, academic qualifications, PhD and post-doctoral work before making the appointments.

An investigation by this newspaper in December 2024 found that during the interim government, at least 30 of 47 vice-chancellors and 18 pro-vice-chancellors and treasurers appointed across 40 positions had links to pro-BNP and pro-Jamaat teachers' organisations.

With the latest eight appointments, the newly formed BNP-led government has also selected academics with similar affiliations.

Bangabandhu's 106th birth anniv today

FROM PAGE 12

activist politician, driven by his involvement in the formation of the Awami Muslim League in June 1949.

Following Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy's death in 1963, he revived the Awami League in January 1964. In February 1966, he unveiled the Six-Point Programme for regional autonomy during a conference of Pakistan's opposition parties in Lahore.

In May that year, he was arrested under the Defence of Pakistan Rules. While in prison, he was charged, in January 1968, with conspiracy to break up Pakistan through what was given out as the Agartala Conspiracy Case.

A mass upsurge forced the withdrawal of the case on February 22, 1969. The next day, at a huge rally at the then Race Course Maidan, Sheikh Mujib was bestowed with the title "Bangabandhu" -- the Friend of Bengal.

Bangabandhu led the Awami League to a decisive victory in Pakistan's first general elections in December 1970.

On March 7, 1971 he delivered the historic speech, which united the entire nation for the Liberation War.

As the Pakistan army launched its genocidal crackdown on Bangalees on March 25, 1971, Bangabandhu was arrested shortly afterward. He was flown to West Pakistan, where he faced trial on charges of treason.

Pakistan's defeat and the emergence of an independent Bangladesh saw him return home on January 10, 1972.

During his rule, Bangabandhu made several controversial moves, including establishing the Rakkhi Bahini, introducing a one-party rule called Baksal, and banning or closing all but four state-owned national newspapers.

On August 15, 1975, he along with most of his family members was assassinated by a group of disgruntled army men.

Rab, SB, CID

FROM PAGE 12

Special Branch has been transferred to the Chattogram Range.

Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam resigned after the BNP came to power. Later, Ali Hossain Fakir filled the vacancy.

DMP commissioner Sazzat Ali also stepped down. Additional Commissioner (Admin) Md Sarwar has been given the charge.

According to police headquarters sources, the new DMP commissioner will be appointed very soon.

Strengthen human rights

FROM PAGE 12

government to strengthen rights protections, particularly commitments to investigate enforced disappearances and strengthen state institutions.

However, they noted that many challenges remain.

At least 1,569 people were subjected to enforced disappearance during the rule of former PM Sheikh Hasina. Of those, 287 people remain missing and their families are still awaiting answers.

The organisations also raised concerns about allegations of extrajudicial killings and the deaths of about 1,400 people during the protests that toppled Hasina's government in August 2024, with many reportedly shot by security forces.

They urged the government to ensure credible investigations into these incidents and to hold perpetrators accountable through fair trials.

Various commissions set up by the interim government have made valuable recommendations that would help achieve the government's promise to strengthen institutions.

A strong and independent National Human Rights Commission is essential to investigate cases and prevent future abuses, the letter said.

The rights bodies criticised continued arbitrary detentions and the use of laws such as the Special Powers Act and Anti-Terrorism Act, which they said have long been used for politically motivated arrests.

They called on the government to review cases filed under past cybercrime laws, including the Information and Communication Technology Act, the Digital Security Act and the Cyber Security Act, arguing that many of the cases undermine freedom of expression.

Highlighting that press freedom was a major concern, the rights bodies said journalists, artists and writers in Bangladesh continue to face threats, violence and legal harassment.

They urged Tarique Rahman to ensure that law enforcement authorities carry out prompt, thorough, impartial and independent investigations into attacks on journalists, media and cultural organisations, including the offices of Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and Chhayanaut, and to take proactive steps, in line with the government's obligations under international human rights law and standards, to prevent further incidents.

The rights groups called for reforms in the security sector, including the disbanding of the controversial Rapid Action Battalion, which has long faced allegations of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

They recommended limiting the role of military intelligence agencies in civilian affairs and introducing independent oversight mechanisms for law enforcement operations.

The letter highlighted concerns about minority rights and rising mob violence, warning that religious and ethnic minorities remain vulnerable.

Indigenous communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts were also cited as facing ongoing abuses, including harassment and violence.

The rights bodies urged the government to fully implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord and to demilitarise the region while protecting indigenous land rights.

The letter called for stronger implementation of laws protecting women and girls and for the repeal of provisions that allow child marriage under certain circumstances.

The groups also raised the issue of the nearly 1.2 million Rohingya refugees currently living in camps in Cox's Bazar and on Bhasan Char, while calling for the government not to forcibly repatriate the Rohingya to Myanmar.

They suggested expanding access to education, livelihoods and freedom of movement.

Despite the lengthy list of recommendations, the groups emphasised that the reforms were necessary to ensure respect for human rights and democratic governance.

The organisations said they look forward to working closely with the government to support reforms aimed at strengthening human rights protections in the country.

US panel urges sanctions on RSS, RAW

FROM PAGE 12

conditions in India continued to deteriorate as the government introduced and enforced new legislation targeting religious minority communities and their houses of worship.

"Several states undertook efforts to introduce or strengthen anti-conversion laws to include harsher prison sentences. Indian authorities also facilitated widespread detention and illegal expulsion of citizens and religious refugees and tolerated vigilante attacks against religious minority communities," it said.

The USCIRF recommended to the US government that India be designated as a "country of particular concern," or CPC, for "engaging in and tolerating systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations".

CONCERNS OVER BANGLADESH

The USCIRF report also raised concerns about arrests over alleged blasphemy, attacks on religious sites, violence against minority groups, and broader humanitarian challenges affecting Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

It noted several cases where individuals were arrested or prosecuted for allegedly offending religious sentiments.

In February, authorities arrested poet Sohel Hasan Galib for "hurting religious sentiment". The following month, police arrested a Hindu man over a similar allegation, which resulted in his conviction and sentencing to an indeterminate term in prison.

In October, authorities arrested a university student accused of desecrating the Qur'an. Following the circulation of videos on social media accusing him of the act, a mob surrounded his home.

In November, police arrested a Baul singer on allegations of blasphemy and hurting religious sentiment during a musical performance.

In December, a mob attacked a Hindu man after rumours circulated that he had made blasphemous comments, hurting religious sentiment. According to reports, the mob tied his body to a tree and set it on fire.

The report also documents attacks targeting religious institutions.

In November, police in Dhaka arrested a man in connection to homemade bomb attacks at two Catholic churches and a Catholic school.

BNP begins delivering

FROM PAGE 12

minister also announced that his government has begun work on the Farmer's Card -- another key pledge by the BNP.

The Farmer's Card will be launched on a pre-pilot basis by April 14 this year, with around 25,000 farmers in nine upazilas of eight districts set to receive the benefit, officials said.

The subsidy amount is still under discussion but is expected to be around Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,500 for a specific category of farmers for crop production during the upcoming Kharif season (mid-March to mid-November).

Around 2.5 crore farmers will benefit from the programme, according to the BNP manifesto.

On March 14, Tarique also kickstarted a monthly honorarium scheme for imams, muazzins, and khadems of mosques, as well as heads and assistant heads of other religious institutions across the country, in its first phase under a pilot programme.

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

Government sources have also indicated that cards for expatriates and an e-health card system are in the pipeline.

Tarique's decision to forgo VVIP protocol, his directive requiring all officials to be present at their offices on time, and his own practice of working even on Saturdays -- traditionally a holiday -- have drawn widespread praise.

His post-election visits to the homes of opposition leaders, including Jamaat-e-Islami's Ameer Shafiqur Rahman and National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam, have further earned him accolades for setting a rare example of political courtesy in Bangladesh.

Contacted, political analyst and Jahangirnagar University Government and Politics Prof Al Masud Hasanuzzaman said, "What seems most significant after the formation of the government is the prime minister's focus on certain initiatives that can be described as a good start."

He said that although full implementation of programmes such as the Family Card or Farmer Card will take time, the fact that he has already launched them is important.

"These were electoral commitments, and by initiating them early, he has shown sincerity in fulfilling his pledges."

However, some of the government's early decisions drew sharp criticism.

One of the key concerns was the appointment of Khalilur Rahman, who served as the national security adviser under the interim government, as foreign minister.

Opposition Chief Whip and National Citizen Party Convenor Nahid Islam had said, "For the sake of neutrality, student advisers were asked to resign, and they did so. But Khalilur Rahman joining the BNP cabinet proves that he had been working for a particular party while serving in the interim government."

Similarly, the sudden removal of Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur and his replacement with a corporate accountant who owns a garment company also drew flak.

Mansur left the bank on February 25 amid calls for his resignation from central bank employees. The finance ministry had already fast-tracked the appointment of his successor, 59-year-old Mostaqur Rahman, Managing Director and CEO of Hera Sweaters Ltd.

Later, Mansur's adviser was also ousted following mob pressure inside Bangladesh Bank -- both incidents widely described as setting a bad precedent for the institution.

Many, including Transparency International Bangladesh, expressed deep concern over what they described as an attempt by Road Transport, Rail, and Water Transport Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam to legitimise a serious criminal offence by characterising roadside extortion as a form of consensual transaction.

The government also faced backlash over arrests made for playing the March 7 address of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Reports of police excesses during raids in Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital further fuelled public anger.

No lottery

FROM PAGE 12

mechanisms may be introduced.

Responding to concerns about coaching and private tutoring, the minister said the government would ensure that the new system does not encourage such practices.

He also said the decision followed extensive discussions with stakeholders and internal research by the ministry.

"Our research did not begin today. We have been working on this issue for a long time," he said.

He said the new admission system is expected to be introduced from next year.

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
Company Matter no. 191/2026
An application under section 81(2), 85(3) read section 396 of the Companies Act 1994
AND IN THE MATTER OF
Mr. C.M Aminul Bahar, shareholder and Managing Director, AB Consultancy Ltd. of Level-19, Unique Trade Centre (UTC), 8 Pantha Path, Dhaka-1215, Dhaka **-------Petitioner**
VERSUS
AB Consultancy Ltd. having its address at Level-19, Unique Trade Centre (UTC), 8 Pantha Path, Dhaka1215, Dhaka and another.
------Respondents

Take notice that an application under section 81(2), 85(3) read section 396 of the Companies Act 1994 was filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named petitioner for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting of AB Consultancy Ltd. for the calendar year 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 & 2025 and to give necessary direction for holding the said Annual General Meetings. Upon hearing the application on 22.02.2026 the Hon'ble Company Judge Madam Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque was pleased to admit the application. Interested person may appearbefore the Hon'ble Court on or before the date fixed for hearing of the matter. Copy of the applicationmay be obtained on payment of necessary cost.

Ripan Barai
Advocate, Supreme court of Bangladesh, Eastern Arzoo, 61, Bijoynagar, Dhaka, Cell: 01705-074227

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

১। প্রতিষ্ঠানের নামঃ ৯ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়ন।
২। কাজের বিবরণঃ ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থবছরে প্রশিক্ষণ (এটিজি সাধারণ) খাতে সুষ্ঠু প্রশিক্ষণ নিশ্চিতকল্পে প্রশিক্ষণ মাঠ, এ্যাসল্ট কোর্স গ্রাউন্ড প্রশিক্ষণ এলাকা প্রস্তুতকরণ ও সংস্কার/মেরামত, রেঞ্জ নিরাপত্তার সরঞ্জামাদি ক্রয়, টার্গেট প্রস্তুতকরণ ও মেরামত, প্রশিক্ষণ সহায়ক সামগ্রী ক্রয় ও মেরামত, প্রশিক্ষণ মাঠ প্রস্তুতকরণ ও সংস্কার, প্রশিক্ষণ ও ফায়ারিং প্রতিযোগিতা সংশ্লিষ্ট ব্যয়ভার বহন, অস্থায়ী ক্যাম্প এলাকা ভাড়া, প্রশিক্ষণ সহায়ক স্টেশনারী ক্রয়, খেলাধুলার বিভিন্ন দলের সংগঠন ও বিবিধ প্রশিক্ষণ ব্যয় নির্বাহ বাবদ।
৩। দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের তারিখঃ ২৪ মার্চ ২০২৬।
৪। দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখঃ ২৯ মার্চ ২০২৬।
৫। দরপত্র খোলার তারিখঃ ০২ এপ্রিল ২০২৬।
৬। বিস্তারিত তথ্যের জন্য ভিজিট করুনঃ www.army.mil.bd

আইএসপিআর/সেনা/২৫৭

অধিনায়ক
৯ সিগন্যাল ব্যাটালিয়ন
সাভার সেনানিবাস

1971 IN LITERATURE

INDEPENDENCE in Bangladesh, crisis in Pakistan

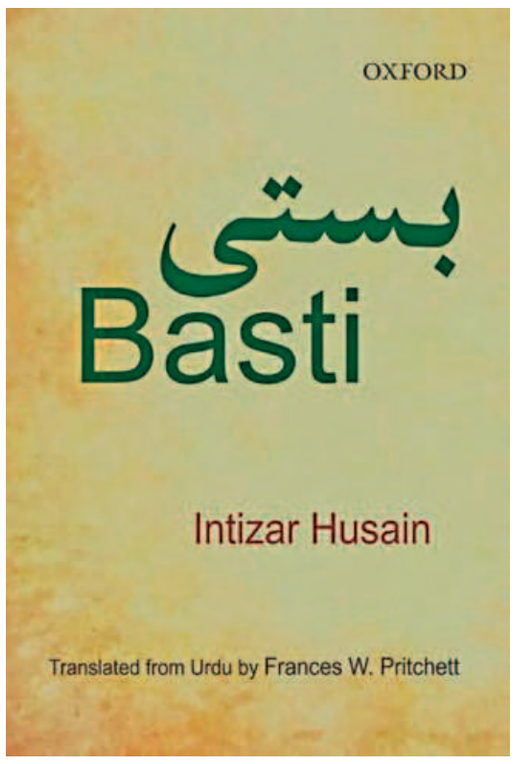
MADHURIMA SEN

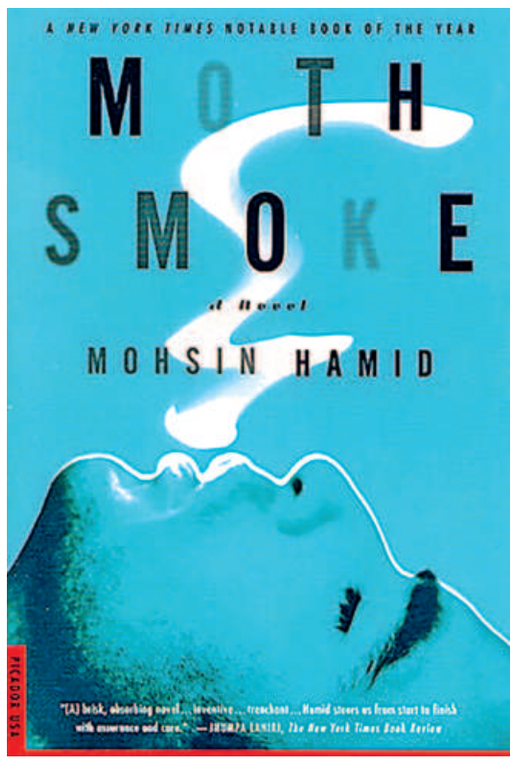
In seconds, the night was altered. Strobes of light flashed from the mouths of the tanks, igniting the dorms in brilliant snapshots before the shell ripped off another piece of the building. The shelling suppressed the shrieking of the students... The tanks kept their aim steady for an amount of time that seemed endless.

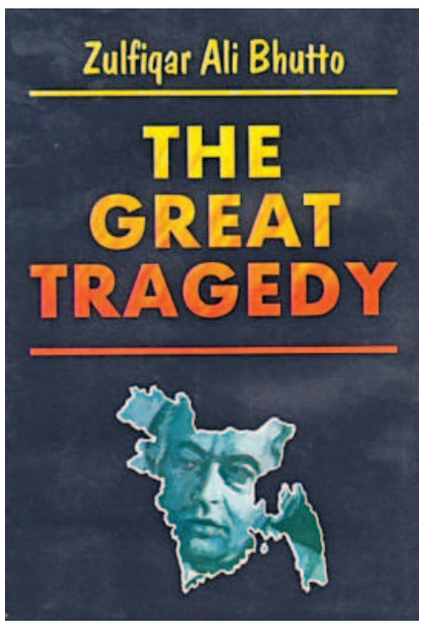
This is Operation Searchlight as described by Bangladeshi-American writer Nadeem Zaman in his novel In the Time of the Others (2018). The night of March 25 1971 marked a point of no return. Almost nine months after this night, Pakistan officially conceded defeat and signed the Instrument of Surrender. Understandably, Bangladeshi fiction has made it central to its narrative imagination. From Mahmudul Haque's novella Jiban Amar Bon written in the immediate aftermath of the war to Numair Atif Choudhury's magical-realist novel Babu Bangladesh! (2019), Operation Searchlight has been imagined and reimagined in Bangladesh across decades. In Pakistan, the story has been much more difficult to tell.

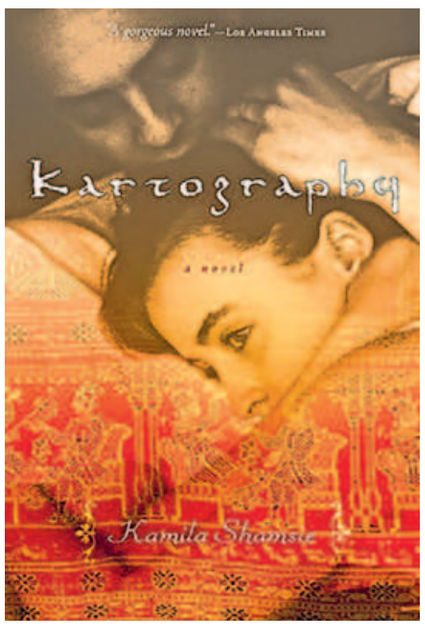
To discuss with a Bangladeshi readership how the war percolates through media, films, and advertisements would be redundant. Setting aside this ritual preface for readers beyond the subcontinent, I find a more interesting question to be how 1971 lives (or does not live) beyond Bangladesh's borders. Bangladesh won its liberation against overwhelming odds, fighting against the might of West Pakistani military and its formidable state apparatus. As the victors, it is but natural to commemorate the history of that spectacular emergence. But what of the other side? What about those who suffered this shattering defeat? How do they come to terms with 1971 in their cultural memory?

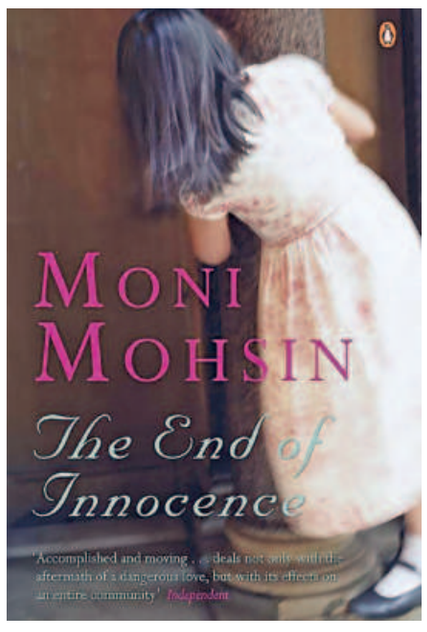
The war between the two wings of Pakistan was a watershed moment in the geopolitics of South Asia, the aftershocks of which we continue to feel across the subcontinent. Compared to the protracted wars of our present moment, which drag on for years without resolution, 1971 was relatively swift and decisive in its outcome. At a single stroke, Pakistan was cut down from five provinces to four; it lost its entire eastern wing and more than half of its population. With the creation of the populous nation of Bangladesh, the balance of power was fundamentally reconfigured in South Asia, bringing in its wake a long-drawn-out aftermath. Given the political significance of the war, why have there been remarkably few cultural productions beyond Bangladesh that engage with it?











This is not to suggest that no one else has written about 1971 — quite the contrary. What I wish to juxtapose is the scale: the density and weight of cultural production in Bangladesh vis-à-vis the limited engagement in Pakistan and India, where we often find cultural industries reluctant to cross the temporal boundary of 1947. In comparison to the bookshelves heaving under the weight of 'Partition literature' and university courses specifically dedicated to its study, the relative marginality of 1971 is evident. A detailed discussion of India's cultural engagement with 1971, especially the Hindi film industry's interpretation of it as another India-Pakistan war, merits separate consideration. For now, let us focus on Pakistan.

In Pakistan, a shroud of uncomfortable silence has long surrounded the war. Much like other South Asian nations, Pakistan has developed a solid reputation for censorship and ideological repression of writers. One need only think of Saadat Hasan Manto, Habib Jalib, Ahmed Faraz or Faiz Ahmed Faiz for well-known confrontations between writers and the Pakistani state. 1971 marked one of the most dramatically severe periods of state control over information. Censorship reached its peak with media blackouts, distorted propaganda, and a tight leash on foreign press. A constant barrage of dehumanising narratives about the Bengali 'other' — 'separatists' and 'heathens' all — further alienated many from the Bengali cause. Thus, it's no surprise that, on December 16, 1971, with the news of their army's surrender, many ordinary citizens were stunned, unable to reconcile it with months of bombastic rhetoric. The creation of Bangladesh and the resignation of Yahya Khan, who, until a day earlier, had been professing certain victory, unfolded at a dizzying speed for citizens carefully kept in the dark for months.

The literary vacuum surrounding 1971 in the initial years is hardly surprising in retrospect. Yet, given Pakistani writers' long history of taking on uncomfortable topics, one must still ask: why? The Partition, with all its blood, gore, and ideological complexities, finds recurrent, unflinching representation. Why, then, not 1971? There is no single, easy answer to this question, and we must resist every impulse to reduce it to a judgment on national morality. A range of overlapping factors is at play here. Silence in the official sphere and media deception had much to do with this. Selective amnesia in state narratives was echoed in Pakistani cultural productions, where references to the war are, at best, sporadic, and often peripheral. Furthermore, state and public discourse surrounding the war was often framed as a narrative of 'betrayal' by 'secessionist' Bengalis. Pointing accusatory fingers took precedence over national introspection about war crimes or scrutiny of the state's conduct towards East Pakistan that precipitated the demand for Bangladesh. In a Pakistan still licking its wounds from what was perceived as a strategic blow delivered by an India intent on permanently crippling it, there was little room at the national table for those with an appetite for self-critical reflection. Propaganda is rarely the stuff of which enduring cultural productions are made. Then there is also the question of time. Often, it takes years before a nation can fully reflect on a rupture of this magnitude. Pakistan was imagined as a homeland for all South Asian Muslims; this is the idea on which the nation came into existence. Being shorn of its entire eastern territory and having a substantial portion of its population opt out of the union was a blow that shook the very foundations of its creation.

A paucity of representation there may be, but it would be incorrect to claim that there was absolutely no literary engagement with the war in Pakistan. As you may easily surmise, a considerable portion of the mainstream representation initially toed the ideological line of the state, with official vocabulary permeating literary productions. First, we have the 'betrayal' and 'surrender' narratives authored by Pakistani army officers, where the focus is on political and military miscalculations. We also have works like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's tellingly titled The Great Tragedy, published during the war itself. What is celebrated as 'liberation' in Bangladesh is simultaneously mourned in these narratives as the 'fall of Dhaka' and lamented as a national tragedy — understandable responses of a nation grappling with collective psychological disorientation and crisis of national identity.

School textbooks are one of the most telling indicators of state-sanctioned memory. How a nation chooses to narrate itself and fashion its past before its young citizens reveals much about the ideological temper of the times. It will not come as a surprise that 1971 appears in entirely different garbs in the school curricula of Bangladesh and Pakistan. The brave, politically awakened Bengalis of Bangladeshi textbooks often appear in Pakistan as misled separatists, mere pawns lured into larger geopolitical conspiracies. In Bangladesh, 1971 is a people's war, in which ordinary citizens band together in a bid for self-determination. However, in much of Pakistani state-engineered narratives, 1971 is a war primarily between India and Pakistan, with Bangladesh treated as little more than a subsidiary actor in its own story. Accounts of atrocities and war crimes committed by the army are carefully skirted. An honest reckoning in school curricula would inevitably prompt difficult questions from young learners about why the army attacked unarmed civilians in university campuses or committed acts of sexual violence. Narratives of treachery more easily account for defeat.

Literature has also often come to the aid of propaganda — a reality not unfamiliar to readers in Bangladesh. It is little wonder that, amidst the existential crisis through which the Pakistani nation was reeling, we find literary works that unabashedly disseminate state propaganda. To give an example, Parveen Sarwar's Urdu short story "Ghar Ãngan" (1973) shows how insidiously state narrative infiltrates works of art. I will leave the full appreciation of this exemplary piece of statist fiction to the interested reader but let me briefly outline the plot. This is a story about a West Pakistani girl who marries an East Pakistani Muslim man against her family's wishes. She is determined to disbelieve all the negative stereotypes about Bengalis, adopts the Bengali ways of her in-laws, and is also made to fraternise with their Hindu neighbours — a plot point that is, shall we say, hardly accidental. However, as the political heat rises preceding the war, her husband, and in-laws inexplicably change their mind, suddenly hating all things Urdu and West Pakistani; interestingly, no explanation or context is provided for this transformation. Are we surprised that the story ultimately concludes with most of her in-laws being murdered at the hands of their Hindu neighbours? No rationale is provided for this double-crossing either, except for an implied assumption of innate villainy among minorities and the all-too-familiar conflation of minorities with hostile neighbouring nations — a pattern that remains regrettably common across South Asia. As per the narrative logic, separation results in disaster for East Pakistanis — a seemingly justified outcome for their obstinate rebellion and a more palatable story than confronting the reality of Bangladesh's emergence as a viable independent state.

This is not to suggest that no one else has written about 1971 — quite the contrary. What I wish to juxtapose is the scale: the density and weight of cultural production in Bangladesh vis-à-vis the limited engagement in Pakistan and India, where we often find cultural industries reluctant to cross the temporal boundary of 1947. In comparison to the bookshelves heaving under the weight of 'Partition literature' and university courses specifically dedicated to its study, the relative marginality of 1971 is evident.

However, not all Pakistani fiction is unsympathetic towards the Bengali cause. As an optimist about the power of literature and the remarkable courage often demonstrated by writers, I would like to present some instances in Pakistani writing that dared to confront a conflict that the state was determined to forget or deflect blame for. Many will be familiar with Intizar Husain's novel Basti (1979), which initially faced criticism in Pakistan for its refusal to single out Bengalis as the primary culprits in the war. Let me present another example from one of Husain's lesser-discussed short stories: "Shahr-e-Afsos" (1973), a fascinating instance of surrealism deployed as a literary strategy to engage with a history that became taboo. Despite being inherently political, the story's surrealist mode ensures that nothing in it can be specifically tied to the events of 1971. The dystopian city of sorrows, with devastated buildings and corpses lying around, closely mirrors the reality of wartime East Pakistan. While there is no single direct reference to the war itself, the hints are difficult to miss. The story features three nameless men, grappling with the meaninglessness of the actions they committed. For a war fought with a 'higher purpose' of protecting the integrity of the nation, to even suggest the absurdity of those actions is already a political act. In recent years, we find an increasing number of Pakistani writers returning to 1971 and probing the collective amnesia surrounding it. As Kamila Shamsie writes in Kartography (2001), "What terrible things we must have done then to remain silent about it. Is it shame at losing the war, or guilt about what we did to try to win that mutes us?" Her novel, alongside Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke (2000), Moni Mohsin's The End of Innocence (2006) and Sorayya Khan's Noor (2004), marks a turn in Pakistani fiction for its engagement with questions of guilt and forgiveness, and its invitation to readers for personal and national self-examination.

Defeat may lead to a discursive vacuum; it may resist narration. Yet, as some Pakistani literary reflections on 1971 show, when reckoned with honestly, defeat can also produce works of enduring historical insight. Often in history, defeat has served as a wellspring of intellectual progress. Often, defeat, and the introspection it inspires among reflective segments of society, proves more artistically productive than celebrations of victory. When a people are compelled to confront the hard lessons of history, their art may acquire an unforgiving clarity. With the Pakistani state struggling to articulate such insight, as evidenced by the absence of official apology or reparations, literary reckonings ensure that 1971 remains narratable in Pakistan beyond the confines of state-sanctioned scripts.

Madhurima Sen *is a researcher at the University of Oxford. Her work focuses on literary representations of the 1971 war in literary and cultural memory.*

Star SPORT
DHAKA TUESDAY MARCH 17, 2026, CHAITRA 3, 1432 BS

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
AFC Women's Asian Cup
Australia vs China
Live from 4:00 pm
SONY SPORTS 1, 2, 5
Champions League
Sporting Lisbon vs Bodo/Glimt
Live from 11:45 pm
Live from 2:00 am (Wednesday):
Man City vs Real Madrid
Chelsea vs PSG
Arsenal vs Leverkusen
STAR SPORTS SELECT HD1
Premier League
Brentford vs Wolves
Live from 2:00 am (Wednesday)

Win brings relief but exposes conservative mindset

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh's 11-run victory over Pakistan in the series-deciding third ODI on Sunday brought much-needed relief, helping them climb to ninth in the ODI rankings, but even in victory, the team's conservative batting approach raised concerns.

Sent to bat, Bangladesh appeared well on course for a big total. However, poor execution towards the latter stages meant they finished with 290 for five, once again falling short of 300 -- a familiar pattern in ODIs for the Tigers in recent years.

Openers Tanzid Hasan Tamim and Saif Hassan gave an ideal start with a 105-run stand. Tanzid went onto score a run-a-ball 107 -- his maiden ODI century and at the time of his dismissal, Bangladesh were well placed at 194 for three in the 37th over and looked well placed to cross the 300-run mark comfortably.

However, after his departure, Bangladesh added only 96 runs from the remaining 82 deliveries.

More concerningly, they managed just 39 runs in the final five overs despite having seven wickets in hand and two set batters -- Litton Das and Tawhid Hridoy -- at the crease. During that period, they struck only two boundaries.

Litton scored a sluggish 41 off 51 balls with one four and a six, while Hridoy remained unbeaten on 48 from 44 deliveries with four boundaries, further exposing Bangladesh's lack of firepower in the death overs.

Afif Hossain, recalled to the side after 15 months, also had the opportunity to accelerate late in the innings but managed only five runs from eight balls after arriving in the 47th over.

A similar situation had unfolded during Bangladesh's home ODI series against the West Indies in last October. In the third ODI, a blistering 176-run opening stand between Saif Hassan and Soumya Sarkar had set the platform for a big total, yet, Bangladesh ended up with 296 for eight, failing to capitalise in the latter stages.

These failures are indicative of a conservative approach, which could be sensed from what captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz had said at the toss of the third ODI against Pakistan.

"I think 260 is a very good score in these conditions because we have a very good bowling attack," said the skipper.

This assessment might have been justified on the typical slow and low surfaces at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, but the wickets for the Pakistan series were noticeably different, offering genuine pace and bounce which allowed batters to play their shots freely.

In that context, Miraz's target of 260 reflected a conservative and outdated mindset.

ODI cricket has evolved with the influence of T20 cricket, as totals exceeding 350 or even 400 are no longer rare.

Since the 2023 ICC World Cup in India, teams have scored 300 or more 69 times in ODIs, including three scores above 400 and 19 above 350.

In contrast, Bangladesh have crossed the 300-run mark only once during this period in 25 matches -- posting 321 for five against the West Indies in Basseterre in 2024 in a losing cause.

These statistics underline Bangladesh's continued struggle to adapt to the evolving demands of modern 50-over cricket.

The hosts nearly paid the price for their cautious approach in the third ODI against Pakistan.

Even after reducing Pakistan to 82 for five, the match went down to the last over owing to a fighting century from Salman Agha and a late surge from captain Shaheen Shah Afridi, which nearly snatched the match away from the hosts.

Rishad Hossain held his nerves in the final over defending just 14 runs to seal the win but the match once again highlighted that Bangladesh's ODI mindset is in need of a rethink.

Venues for NZ's white-ball tour of BD revealed

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Monday announced the itinerary of the three-match ODI and three-match T20I series against New Zealand at home. The Blackcaps are set to arrive in Dhaka on April 13. Bangladesh lost their last ODI series against New Zealand at home prior to the 2023 ODI World Cup. The three-match series ended 2-0 in favour of the visitors after the first ODI yielded no result.

NEW ZEALAND'S WHITE BALL TOUR OF BANGLADESH

Match	Date	Time	Venue
1st ODI	Apr-17	2:00 PM	Dhaka
2nd ODI	Apr-20	2:00 PM	Dhaka
3rd ODI	Apr-23	2:00 PM	Ctg
1st T20I	Apr-27	6:00 PM	Ctg
2nd T20I	Apr-29	6:00 PM	Ctg
3rd T20I	May-02	2:00 PM	Dhaka

SHORT CORNER

PCB complains over Bangladesh's late DRS call

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) put up a verbal complaint to match referee Neeyamur Rashid over Bangladesh reviewing a leg-before decision in the penultimate ball of the Pakistan innings in the third and final ODI in Mirpur on Sunday, which the hosts won by 11 runs. "There was a verbal complaint regarding the review since the replay was shown on the big screen," a source informed The Daily Star.

Chelsea fined £10.75m and hit with suspended one-year transfer ban

Chelsea were fined £10.75 million and received a suspended one-year transfer ban in relation to historical breaches of Premier League rules, it was announced on Monday. The sanctions relate to information shared with the league by the consortium led by American businessman Todd Boehly following their takeover of Chelsea from Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich in 2022.

Rajshahi, Sylhet to host Bangladesh-Sri Lanka women's series

Rajshahi and Sylhet will host the upcoming white-ball series between the Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, scheduled to begin on April 20 with a three-match WODI series. The visitors will arrive in Dhaka on April 17 before travelling to Rajshahi the same day. The touring side will be accompanied by former Bangladesh men's head coach Jamie Siddons, who was recently appointed as Sri Lanka women's head coach.

*** Read full stories on The Daily Star's website*

86 DAYS TO GO

Hand, magic, glory

The 1986 FIFA World Cup, held in Mexico, was defined by Diego Maradona. With five goals -- including the famous 'Hand of God' goal and the 'Goal of the Century', both scored in the quarterfinal against England -- he played the biggest role in guiding Argentina to their second title. He also provided five assists. Altogether, Maradona contributed to 10 of Argentina's 14 goals in the tournament.

***** Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Immortality washed away in the rain of Bern'***

'Anything can happen' as City chase Real

STAR SPORTS DESK

Pep Guardiola said he does not need to convince his Manchester City players that a comeback against Real Madrid is possible, insisting that "many things can happen" in football as his side prepare to overturn a 3-0 deficit in the UEFA Champions League for a place in the quarters of the competition.

City face a daunting task at home against the record 15-time European champions, who have eliminated them from the past two editions of the competition.

"After 10 years you have to convince some of my players about their belief? They know me quite well," Guardiola told reporters on Monday. "Every single game we try. This will be no exception. They have to."

"Of course most of them are new to experiencing such situations. We are not the same group we had for many years but, at the same time, it is an incredible experience and an incredible opportunity to try it," he said.

"It's a football game, many things can happen. You have to focus and first try to win the game, then we will see what happens during the match. I don't have a specific plan. Just try it."

Guardiola cancelled Monday's training session and gave his players a day off ahead of the decisive clash, with the squad set to train on Tuesday.

Asked if the break would help mentally, the Spaniard said confidence and performance go hand in hand.

"The way you play, if you play well mentally you will be strong. I'm not too concerned about the chances we will create. At home we are always able to do that. It's more about how well we defend," he said.

"The task is massive. To score more than three goals against Real Madrid is not easy. The first-leg result is not perfect but this is football, everything can happen."

Elsewhere, Liam Rosenior faces a similarly daunting challenge as his Chelsea side attempt a dramatic comeback against defending champions PSG. The teams meet at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday for the second leg of their last-16 tie after PSG stormed to a 5-2 victory in Paris last week.

Meanwhile, Sporting Lisbon welcome Bodø/Glimt to the Estadio Jose Alvalade needing a comeback after a 3-0 first-leg defeat in Norway.

Bodø/Glimt's impressive debut Champions League campaign has already featured notable results, including a draw at Borussia Dortmund and victories over Manchester City and Atlético Madrid, before eliminating Inter Milan in the playoff round.

Asian Games hockey qualifiers set to be shifted to Thailand

SPORTS REPORTER

The Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) all but decided shifting the venue for the Men's Asian Games Qualifiers from Oman to Thailand after cancelling the event in Muscat amid escalating geopolitical tensions involving Iran, Israel and the United States, a top official of the Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF) said.

The nine-nation qualifiers, including Bangladesh, were originally scheduled to be held in Muscat from March 28 to April 5, with the top four teams earning qualification for September's Asian Games.

"We received a letter from the Asian Hockey Federation last Thursday stating that the Men's Asian Games Qualifiers venue in Oman has been cancelled and that the new venue will be announced soon," BHF general secretary Riazul Hasan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Hasan added that Thailand is being considered as a potential new venue and an official announcement is expected within a couple of days. A coach of the team, however, said that the shift to Thailand is all but certain.

Bangladesh have been placed in Pool B alongside Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei and Uzbekistan, while Pool A comprises Oman, Hong Kong, Thailand, Kazakhstan and Indonesia.

"The tournament is likely to be deferred by about a week as the AHF must inform the Olympic Council of Asia about the number of participating teams in the Asian Games by May," Hasan said.

It has been learnt that the tournament will now start on April 2 instead of March 28.

The BHF will, meanwhile, continue its training camp until the completion of the qualifiers. However, players will be given a five-day break during the Eid period from March 19 to 23 before rejoining camp on March 24.

Bangladesh had initially planned to play two warm-up matches against Thailand and Kazakhstan in Oman before the qualifiers, but due to the imminent change of schedule, the federation is looking to rearrange practice matches, once the fixtures and arrival of the teams are officially confirmed.

Oman has also postponed the Women's Junior AHF Cup, which was scheduled to begin in Muscat from April 6. Bangladesh's junior women's team, originally set to participate in that event, will instead compete in the Women's Asian Games Qualifiers, scheduled to start on April 20 in Indonesia.

Italy's Jannik Sinner poses with the championship trophy after defeating Daniil Medvedev in the final of the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Sunday. The world number two surged home to beat the Russian 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/4) to capture his first Indian Wells ATP Masters 1000 crown. Sinner didn't face a break point in the one-hour 55-minute contest, winning 43 of the 47 points on which he put his first serve in play. PHOTO: AFP

Rab, SB, CID get new chiefs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has made a major reshuffle in the top ranks of Bangladesh Police, bringing changes to the leadership of key units including the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Special Branch (SB), Criminal Investigation Department (CID), and Armed Police Battalion (APBN).

The move comes as part of a continuing re-organisation of the administration after the BNP-led government assumed office last month.

Ahsan Habib | Nurul Amin | Mosleh Ahmed

The changes were announced in an order issued by the home ministry yesterday.

According to the order, Deputy Inspector General of Chattogram Range Ahsan Habib Palash has been appointed Rab director general, Additional Inspector General at Police Headquarters Sardar Nurul Amin SB chief, and Additional Inspector General at PQ Mosleh Uddin Ahmed CID chief.

Current CID chief Additional Inspector General Md Sibgat Ullah has been transferred to PQ.

Hasib Aziz, Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) commissioner and additional inspector general, has been made APBN chief. He was replaced by DIG Hasan M Shawkat Ali of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Deputy Inspector General Moniruzzaman of the

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

A toddler, cradled in his father's arms, beams as his mother adjusts his newly purchased tupi (prayer cap) while shopping at the bustling Baitul Mukarram market in the capital yesterday. Alongside clothing, stalls selling attar and prayer caps are also seeing big crowds, with shoppers making their final purchases ahead of the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Bangabandhu's 106th birth anniv today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 106th birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On this day in 1920, the architect of the nation's independence was born in Tungipara under the then Gopalganj subdivision.

Through his astute leadership, Mujib mobilised the Bangalee nation to rise against exploitation and repression by the Pakistani rulers. This movement culminated in the creation of an independent Bangladesh after a nine-month-long bloody war in 1971.

Mujib's political journey began as a humble activist during his student years. After completing his studies at Islamia College in Calcutta in 1947, he enrolled in law at Dhaka University. However, his involvement in politics ultimately led to his expulsion from the university in 1948. That same year, he was imprisoned twice.

By 1954, he had evolved into an

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

No lottery in school admission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to withdraw the lottery system used in school admissions and introduce a system based on admission tests, Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon said yesterday.

"Lottery cannot exist in any education system. We have withdrawn the lottery system," he said at a press conference at the education ministry, adding that the decision was taken after discussions with stakeholders.

Noting that the ministry reviewed the issue over the past one month, he said, "Lottery does not allow proper evaluation of merit."

The minister said the government does not intend to introduce a highly competitive admission test for young children.

"We will not introduce any examination that is inappropriate for the students of class one. The process will be simple," Milon said.

He said the new system would initially involve a basic test. If the number of applicants exceeds the available seats, additional

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

FIRST MONTH IN OFFICE

BNP begins delivering on key campaign pledges

Draws flak over some appointments, police excesses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A month into office, the BNP government has begun implementing its electoral pledges, with efforts underway to energise the administration, reinforce law and order, stabilise the economy, and rebuild public confidence in governance.

After two decades out of power, the party secured an absolute majority in the February 12 polls, winning 209 seats in parliament, and forming the government on February 17.

Though national elections are constitutionally held every five years, the 13th general election was called just 26 months after the January 2024 polls, following the ouster of the Awami League government in August that year.

Among the commitments being implemented, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday inaugurated a nationwide programme to excavate and re-excavate rivers, canals, and other water bodies in Dinajpur. The initiative aims to improve irrigation, boost agricultural production, and strengthen water management.

In line with the BNP's election manifesto, the government plans to excavate and re-excavate about 20,000 kilometres of rivers, canals, reservoirs, and other water bodies over the next five years.

The first phase has been launched simultaneously in 54 districts.

"What seems most significant after the formation of the government is the prime minister's focus on certain initiatives that can be described as a good start."

Prof Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, political analyst

The programme echoes the legacy of late president Ziaur Rahman, who introduced a similar initiative to boost the rural economy and agricultural output. The current effort is widely seen as a continuation of that vision.

At its first formal cabinet meeting on February 26, the government approved a proposal to waive agricultural loans of up to Tk 10,000, including interest. Liabilities arising from the waiver will be settled through budget allocations, with Tk 1,568 crore earmarked in the revised budget for the current fiscal year.

One of the most talked-about pledges of the BNP's campaign was the introduction of the Family Card.

On March 10, Tarique launched the pilot programme in his Dhaka constituency.

Under the scheme, over the next five years, about 4 crore selected households will receive Tk 2,500 directly through the government-to-person digital payment system, deposited into women's mobile financial service or bank accounts.

At the launch, the prime

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Strengthen human rights

9 global rights bodies urge PM

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Nine international rights bodies have urged Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to prioritise sweeping reforms to strengthen human rights protections in Bangladesh, warning that the new government faces a critical moment to shape the country's democratic future.

In a joint letter dated March 12 and published yesterday, they congratulated Rahman on his recent election victory and said his administration has a "time of opportunity to write a new chapter" in the country's history.

The letter was signed by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the Committee to Protect Journalists, ARTICLE 19, CIVICUS, the International Federation for Human Rights, Fortify Rights, Robert F Kennedy Human Rights and the Tech Global Institute.

The organisations acknowledged pledges by the new administration and steps taken by the interim

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Govt appoints VCs at 7 univs, new UGC chief

All of them have ties to BNP-affiliated bodies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed new vice-chancellors to seven universities, including Dhaka University, Rajshahi University, and Jagannath University, and named a new chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC).

"Involvement in politics does not disqualify a [vice chancellor] candidate. Is it a crime if a person is involved in politics?

Ehsanul Hoque Milon, education minister

Education Minister Ehsanul Hoque Milon announced the decisions at a press conference at the ministry yesterday.

All the new appointees have past or current links with BNP-aligned teachers' organisations, including Sada Dal, Zia Parishad and Jatiyatabadi Shikkhak Forum, while some hold positions in BNP bodies.

Mamun Ahmed, pro-vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, has been appointed chairman of the UGC.

Prof Mamun, a teacher of the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Department at DU, was associated with Sada Dal and contested the 2022 DU Senate election from its panel.

He is also a member of the advisory council to the BNP chairperson and previously served as president of the Jatiyatabadi Samajik-Sanskritik Sangstha, a BNP-

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

US panel urges sanctions on RSS, RAW

Also flags concern over Bangladesh situation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A US federal government commission has recommended that the US impose targeted sanctions on the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) for the worsening of religious freedom in India.

In its annual report unveiled earlier this month,the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) also called for linking Washington's future security assistance and bilateral trade to improvements in New Delhi's record on the issue.

It cited RAW and RSS for their "responsibility and tolerance of severe violations of religious freedom" and urged "freezing of individuals' or entities' assets and/or barring their entry into the United States".

India has rejected the "motivated and biased characterisation" of the country.

"We have taken note of the latest USCIRF report. We categorically reject its motivated and biased characterisation of India," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said yesterday, reports PTI.

The report said that in 2025, religious freedom

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A man dozes off while waiting for fuel at a city filling station that had run dry yesterday. With his vehicle (visible in the background), he joined the queue around 5:00am, but by the time he reached the pump three hours later, supplies had already run out. By 2:00pm, fuel had yet to arrive. The plight was not his own but for many who were in the queue that stretched from the Asad Gate pump to the July Revolution Memorial Museum. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Bangladesh's cement producers reject US 'overcapacity' claims
B1

HASANAH ISLAMI BANKING البنكية الاسلامي
Prime Bank

PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 17

	Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-53	12-45	4-30	6-10	7-45
JAMAAT	5-03	1-15	4-45	6-20	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MAR	SEHRI	IFTAR
27	17		6:10
28	18	4:49	6:10
29	19	4:48	6:11