

SAVING POWER, ENERGY Austerity steps in the works

BAHARAM KHAN and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government is weighing a set of austerity measures, including extending weekends and introducing work-from-home options, as mounting global uncertainties put pressure on the energy sector.

Adjusting office hours and taking classes partially online are also being considered.

Officials from the Cabinet Division and the Prime Minister's Office said all agencies have been asked to prepare proposals on saving energy, which would be placed at the next cabinet meeting.

They said a three-month short-term plan is being drafted, with mid- and long-term strategies under consideration if the US-Israel war on Iran grinds on.

The move comes amid tight fuel supplies, kilometre-long queues at filling stations, and rising import costs.

Officials said at least eight measures were under discussion.

These include adding an extra day to the weekend or allowing officials to work from home for two days a week.

Office hours may be adjusted, either by starting earlier or reducing working time.

To cut fuel and power use in educational institutions, half of the weekly classes may be held online.

Officials said no final decision has been made, and the cabinet would determine which steps to adopt.

Beyond energy savings, the government is also seeking to ease pressure on foreign currency reserves as energy import bills are expected to rise further in the coming days.

Proposals to save foreign currency include restricting overseas trips by officials and avoiding unnecessary government borrowing.

A proposal to raise fuel prices may also be placed at the meeting, although officials said it remains uncertain, as the government has repeatedly said it does not want to hike prices at this stage.

"If the global situation worsens, we may need to move beyond short-term steps," a senior official said, pointing to possible six-month and one-year plans.

Several ministries have already begun drafting their own austerity measures, sources said.

The government has already taken steps in recent days to curb fuel hoarding.

Officials say demand-side control may now be necessary to ease the pressure.

Demand-side control, or Demand-Side Management (DSM), refers to utility-driven strategies aimed at influencing, reducing, or shifting electricity consumption patterns, particularly during peak demand periods.

None of the officials contacted for this story agreed to speak on the record.

A senior public administration ministry official, requesting anonymity, argued that faster action is needed.

"We have experience from the Covid period. Decisions could have been taken earlier. If required, a special cabinet meeting can be called," the official said.

Another official said that many in the current cabinet are new in governing, which may slow down the decision-making process during a crisis. The official suggested involving those who handled past crises.

The Daily Star yesterday tried several times to contact Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku and State Minister Anindya Islam Amit, but none of them picked up the calls. Energy Secretary Mohammad Saiful Islam's phone was found switched off.

Meanwhile, the public administration ministry yesterday asked offices to strictly follow energy-saving instructions issued earlier this month.

These include using natural light during the day, keeping air conditioner temperature at 25 degrees Celsius or higher, and turning off electrical equipment when not in use.

Offices have also been asked to avoid unnecessary lighting and ensure efficient use of energy.

Each office will form a vigilance team to monitor whether the instructions are being followed.

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East is exerting growing pressure on global energy markets, with Bangladesh among the countries feeling the strain as disruptions in fuel and liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies begin to affect electricity generation.

At the centre of concern is the Strait of Hormuz, a vital route for oil and LNG shipments. Any disruption there directly impacts import-dependent nations like Bangladesh, where power plants rely heavily on overseas gas and fuel supplies.

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Army personnel were called in after people from local auto repair shops started protesting at a filling station over long queues of vehicles, particularly motorcycles, in front of their shops on Kalshi road in the city's Mirpur yesterday afternoon. The protesters left shortly afterwards. The queues stretched for nearly a kilometre amid a fuel supply crunch linked to the US-Israel war on Iran. The other side of the "closed" sign displays "open". PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

At least 38 children dead in measles outbreak

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

At least 38 children have died of measles and related complications this year as the infectious disease is spreading in the capital and several other districts.

Of the deaths, 32 occurred this month -- 21 of them at the Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH) in the capital's Mohakhali, including three yesterday, as the facility struggles with a surge of patients arriving from across the country.

Six children died at Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute, five died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), four victims were from Chapainawabganj, and one died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH), officials said.

Several media outlets, including Prothom Alo, reported that 12 measles patients died at RMCH.

Meanwhile, two patients from Pabna died in Dhaka last month, including one at Shishu Hospital and one at Padma General Hospital, said the Civil Surgeon Office, Pabna.

If the numbers are included, the total number of deaths this year would rise to 46. The number could be even higher as the health authorities do not have comprehensive data on measles-related deaths.

Doctors and health officials said the number of measles patients started to rise from December last year but increased sharply this month. Apart from Dhaka, a growing number of cases have been reported in Mymensingh, Chapainawabganj, Pabna, Natore and Rajshahi.

As most of the admitted measles patients were found to be unvaccinated, experts and health officials blamed gaps in immunisation, particularly

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- » Around **80%** deaths related to measles this year occurred in March
- » Toll likely higher as there is no comprehensive documentation
- » Babies under **6 months** old admitted with symptoms is unusual
- » Outbreak due to disruption in vaccination drive
- » Political situation, health workers' strikes, funding shortage disrupted vaccination drive
- » Vaccination campaign expected to start soon

CONSTITUTION REFORM COUNCIL JS discussion set for tomorrow

House witnesses heated exchange between treasury and opposition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-hour discussion on convening the Constitution Reform Council will be held in parliament tomorrow.

Deputy Speaker Kayser Kamal, who was presiding over the House yesterday, made the announcement after heated exchanges between members of the treasury and opposition benches.

The debate began after opposition leader and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman submitted a notice seeking a discussion on convening the Constitution Reform Council.

Officials at the Parliament Secretariat said it has been rare for the speaker to allow discussion on such a notice since the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991.

After the question and answer session, Shafiqur took part in the unscheduled discussion and said he had raised an issue of public importance. He noted that the speaker had advised him on March 15 to submit the notice in proper form.

"We have done so. Now, through you, I am placing this notice before parliament. The subject of the notice is the July National Charter Constitution Reform Implementation Order 2025," said the Jamaat-e-Islami ameer.

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ICT prosecutor links ex-army officers with grave crimes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chief prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) Aminul Islam yesterday said two recently arrested retired senior military officers were involved in activities that fall within the definition of crimes against humanity, including secret detention, killings, and enforced disappearances.

He described former Director General of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) Lt Gen (ret'd) Sheikh Mamun Khaled and another former army officer Lt Gen (ret'd) Masud Uddin Chowdhury as "accomplices of the fascist Awami League regime" and "perpetrators involved in serious crimes".

Hereferred to alleged links to clandestine detention facilities, including the so-called "Aynagar", where detainees were reportedly held and tortured.

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People hold signs and flags as they march during the 'No Kings' national day of protest in Chicago, Illinois, US on Saturday. Nationwide demonstrations against US President Donald Trump drew millions, with protesters denouncing what they see as his authoritarian tendencies and law-trampling governance. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: AFP

US is plotting ground attack

Says Iran as US Marines begin to arrive in ME; Houthis again target Israel amid raging war

AGENCIES

Iran said it was ready to respond to any US ground attack, accusing Washington of preparing a land assault while seeking talks, as regional powers met in Pakistan yesterday to try to bring the two sides together.

The war, launched on February 28 with US and Israeli strikes on Iran, has spread across the Middle East. Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthis joined the fray Saturday by launching missiles at Israel, promising one more front in the complex war.

The strikes point to a potential new threat to global shipping, already hit by the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, previously a conduit for about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies.

"The enemy publicly sends messages of negotiation and dialogue while secretly planning a ground attack," Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said in a statement carried by the official IRNA news agency.

"Our men are waiting for the arrival of the American soldiers on the ground to set them on fire and punish their regional allies once and for all," he added.

"As long as the Americans seek Iran's surrender, our response is that we will never accept humiliation," he said in a message to the nation.

The Trump administration has deployed US Marines to the Middle East as the war in Iran stretches into its fifth week.

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PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED, ORCHID CHAKMA

A wishful architect’s whimsies on Dhaka city

TASMIAH RAHMAN

A city that never sleeps, a buzzing metropolis sheltering millions grappling with the race against time -- Dhaka might pose as an architect's dizziest dilemma.

When I was in architecture school, the city seemed like an artist's canvas. Beautiful mosques, shiny skyscrapers, and luxe residences: a student of architecture could barely wait to get a license and a chance to design the city!

However, practicing architecture in this chaotic megacity can make a young professional feel as if they are back in the first year of university: constantly learning, unlearning, and relearning.

Dhaka is busy, Dhaka is uncaring, and Dhaka leaves you with too little time to wonder if it could be beautifully planned and strategically designed. Here, spaces grow underneath flyovers and tall trees, tiny balconies desperately seek out a piece of sky, and tight plots define the urban lifestyle. Where is the room for imagination? How can an aspiring architect dream?

Our past is fascinating. Take, for example, Ahsan Manzil by the Buriganga. As a student, I once visited the palace. I saw those column capitals, arched windows, and views of how river life unfolded. The stories of foreign traders on boats, royal Nawabs, zamindars in the grand halls, and



'suited-booted' Englishmen came alive from the books.

The grandeur is long gone; shiny palaces are now replaced by a modernist language. From Old Dhaka's Armenian Church, Tara Masjid, or Lalbagh Fort -- the northern part of the city's architecture poses a stark contrast. The newer part is exciting, brimming with youth, and the prime architectural symbol of Bengali modernism, to me, remains the Fine Arts building of Dhaka University by Muzharul Islam.

Charukala draws you in without trying; it does not intimidate. Unlike the rest of the city, Charukala is down-

to-earth. You do not walk inside; you wander about and find yourself walking upward with the spiral staircase. The deliberately preserved greenery naturally befriends you and snaps you out of the chaos in your head!

The openness in the main building, a tribute to our tropical climate -- and how the facade is made private with wooden louvres -- draws an iconic image that stays in an architect's head. Moreover, how lucky are we to possess one of the masterworks of architect Louis I Kahn?

Standing at the complex, witnessing the wisdom behind the masterplan of

the National Assembly Building, I once watched the surrounding waterscape, then the sharp cuts of concrete meeting the soft sprawl of the delta, our roots.

Once surrounded by rivers, Dhaka now yearns for water. From dreamy Sher-e-Bangla Nagar to the posh avenues of Kemal Atatürk: architecture seems to grow taller in height and style. Some buildings may read as exaggerated showcases; some appear all too mechanical, and some play with form and space with perfect harmony -- an ode to 21st-century Dhaka.

Commercial high-rises parade, some circular, some twisted or modular, some wrapped in shiny glass facades. Among all the showcases, Ninakabbo, located in Tejgaon, is bound to catch the eye with verses of poems written on concrete walls. Truly, a stunning example of how architecture can depict a perfect marriage between poetry and business!

As Dhaka struggles to provide spaces to live, to slow down: gazing at the sleek towers, the perfectly articulated residences, an aspiring architect can wish to design a beautiful house someday. A quietly luxurious living -- one with a large balcony filled with lush green -- a house where users can hear the birds chirp instead of traffic honks, where monsoon drenches, and a full moon can be found despite the layers of dust in our beloved city!

Dreams of Europe end in saltwater

FROM PAGE 12

being put on the boat, he got nothing to eat. My son died," Gani said.

Tarapasha village is grieving for another loss.

Nuruzzaman Sardar Moyna, 30, also perished. His elder brother Helal said Nuruzzaman left home on January 15 and reached Libya a week later. After that, the family was repeatedly told he had not yet been put on a vessel.

"For two months and eight days, they [traffickers] kept giving excuses. Then they said he had been sent on the crossing. The next day, they said he had already reached Greece. Later, we came to know my brother had died on the boat," Helal said.

The family had agreed to pay Tk 12 lakh to broker Jasim from Habiganj, now based in Libya, and had already paid

Tk 6 lakh after Nuruzzaman reached Libya.

"They said he would be sent on a big ship or steamer. But they kept him in the game ghar for 16 days without anything to eat and later put him on the boat without food or water."

Helal urged other families not to let their loved ones fall into the hands of local brokers of trafficking rings, saying they did not do what they promised and were still demanding money even after the failed journey.

Two more men from the same village, Mohammad Sahanur and Rohan Mia, were also on the boat. Sahanur was initially reported dead, but his brother Md Zakaria now believes he may be alive and in critical condition at a hospital.

Elsewhere in Sunamganj, families are grieving Mehedi

Hasan Tayef and Sohanur Rahman.

Sohanur, born after four sisters, had left without informing his family.

His father, Salikur Rahman, said an agency had been processing his son's journey to Serbia under a Tk 13 lakh deal.

The agency had kept his passport, which Sohanur retrieved after leaving home, and later called from Dhaka to say he was heading to Greece via Libya.

Salikur said his son had struck a deal with broker Saleh Ahmed of Jagdal village.

"A month after leaving, my son called and said he had been stranded in the desert and asked us to contact the broker. After we paid some money, they sent him to the game ghar," he said.

At least 11 of the dead

were from Sunamganj, with others from Habiganj and Kishoreganj, according to families and law enforcers.

A video circulating online shows a survivor claiming 43 people were on the small boat, including 38 Bangladeshis and five Sudanese.

He alleged the group had been promised passage on a bigger boat but was instead put on a smaller one without a satellite phone, GPS device or any means of communication. He said those who died began decomposing in the salt water and were later thrown into the sea.

The survivor also named several alleged brokers and traffickers, claiming many were from Sylhet.

He said some migrants had spent months in Libyan camps before the crossing.

The boat left Tobruk in eastern Libya on March 21. Late Friday, the Greek coastguard said 26 people, including a woman and a minor, were rescued off Crete by a European border agency vessel.

Bangladesh has long been among the top source countries for irregular migration to Europe, said Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's Migration Programme. The latest deaths are alarming, he added, as thousands more Bangladeshis are believed to be waiting in Libya for the same journey.

He urged stronger government action at home and abroad with Libya, Greece and Italy to stop such crossings.

"These deaths are very sad and unexpected," said state minister Nur, adding that

the Bangladesh mission is contacting Greek authorities. The government, with the International Organisation for Migration, is supporting survivors and exploring ways to bring back bodies.

Those responsible must be punished under domestic or international law, said Shama Obaed Islam, state minister for foreign affairs. Missions have been asked to identify how the trafficking was carried out and who is behind it.

"The perpetrators, whether Libyan or Bangladeshi, must be brought to justice."

She said the immediate priority is treatment of survivors, followed by nationality verification before repatriation. Embassies in Athens, Lebanon and Libya are working on the matter.

Austerity

FROM PAGE 1

In recent weeks, supply constraints have forced Bangladesh to scale back imports under long-term contracts and turn to the spot market, where prices have surged. Efforts to secure adequate volumes are also hampered due to the war.

In this situation, the power sector is also relying on costlier alternatives such as furnace oil, officials said. Meanwhile, refined fuel is being bought at higher prices due to the country's limited refining capacity.

Md Zahurul Islam, member (generation) at the Bangladesh Power Development Board, said Petrobangla has warned that gas supply may decline in the coming months, potentially affecting electricity production.

"But if the recently purchased LNG arrives on schedule, there will be no impact in April," he added.

US is plotting ground attack

FROM PAGE 1

On Saturday, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said about 3,500 additional soldiers arrived in the Middle East on board the USS Tripoli. Reports suggest that the US is planning to send thousands of soldiers from the army's 82nd Airborne to the region.

The statement from Ghalibaf came after the Washington Post reported the Pentagon was preparing plans for weeks of ground operations, though US President Donald Trump has yet to approve any deployment.

Officials speaking to The Washington Post on condition of anonymity said discussions within the administration over the past month have touched upon the possible seizure of Kharg Island, a key Iranian oil export hub in the Gulf, and raids into other coastal areas near the Strait of Hormuz to find and destroy weapons that can target commercial and military shipping.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said the US could achieve its aims without ground troops but was deploying forces to the region to give Trump "maximum" flexibility.

It was not clear whether Ghalibaf was responding to the Post report.

On Wednesday, Ghalibaf had warned that intelligence reports suggested that "Iran's enemies" were planning to occupy an Iranian island with support from an unnamed country in the region.

He said any such attempt would be met with targeted attacks on the "vital infrastructure" of the regional country -- which he did not name -- that assists in the operation.

Meanwhile, Iran's navy chief Shahram Irani yesterday said that the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier would be targeted if it came within range.

Trump has repeatedly spoken of diplomatic contacts with Iran, although

these claims have been denied by Tehran.

Pakistan, acting as a go-between for Washington and Tehran, hosted foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt in Islamabad for talks on the crisis.

The four-way meeting between the top diplomats of the Muslim nations was slated to discuss "a range of issues, including efforts to de-escalate tensions in the region", Pakistan's foreign ministry has said.

More talks will be held today. The US said last week it had offered a 15-point ceasefire plan to Iran, with a proposal to reopen the waterway and restrict Iran's nuclear programme, but Tehran has rejected the list and put forward proposals of its own.

As efforts to find a negotiated end to the war inched forward, Israel's military continued its relentless air assault on

Iran, saying yesterday its forces had targeted Tehran's weapons manufacturing infrastructure, including dozens of storage and production sites.

Five people were killed in a strike on a pier in the southern port city of Bandar-e Khamir that also destroyed two vessels, Iranian state media reported.

Israel also hit targets in Lebanon as part of its campaign against Iran-backed Hezbollah, killing three Lebanese journalists in a strike on a media vehicle, Lebanon's Al Manar TV reported, as well as a Lebanese soldier.

Early yesterday, it said one of its soldiers had been killed during combat in Lebanon.

A building housing Qatar's Al Araby TV in Tehran was struck by Israel yesterday, the semi-official Mehr news agency reported, showing an excavator taking rubble away from a damaged multi-storey block.

Iran also continued its

attacks on Israel and several Gulf states.

Iranian forces said they had fired a volley of missiles and drones at plants belonging to two of the world's largest aluminium producers in Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, targeting what they described as industries linked to the US military.

At least 4 people were wounded in Israel's Beersheba following an Iranian missile attack on a chemical plant. Authorities there have warned residents nearby to remain indoors because of fears over a hazardous leak.

Nine others are being treated for anxiety, said Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency service.

Meanwhile, at least ten military personnel have been injured in an Iranian attack on an army camp in Kuwait. Over the past 24 hours, 14 ballistic missiles and 12 drones were launched into Kuwaiti airspace, the Kuwaiti defence ministry said.

ICT prosecutor links

FROM PAGE 1

"There are serious allegations against them. They set up safe houses where many victims were tortured, leaving some permanently disabled," Aminul later told The Daily Star.

He added that many victims taken to such facilities remain unaccounted for.

Describing the abuses as systematic, the chief prosecutor said individuals were reportedly detained, transferred between locations, and killed in an organised manner. In many cases, he said, deaths were later portrayed as outcomes of gunfights or operations to recover firearms.

Earlier, while briefing reporters, the chief prosecutor said the two retired officers were associated with multiple activities that fall under the definition of crimes against humanity.

He made the remarks around half an hour after he filed petitions before International Crimes Tribunal 2 seeking to show Mamun and Masud arrested in two separate cases of crimes against humanity.

Following the prosecution's plea, the tribunal ordered relevant jail authorities to produce both accused before the tribunal on April 7.

A prosecutor told The Daily Star that Masud has been accused in connection with killings during the 2024 July mass uprising, while Mamun faces allegations of enforced disappearances.

Earlier on March 24, police detectives arrested Masud, widely known as one of the key architects of the 1/11 political changeover in 2007,

from his residence in the capital. He is currently on a five-day remand in a human trafficking case filed with Paltan Police Station.

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Masud on a fresh six-day remand in a case over human trafficking and forgery of documents.

The case was filed with Paltan Model Police Station on September 3, 2024, by a proprietor of Aha Overseas against 103 individuals, including former minister Imran Ahmed.

Masud previously served as general officer commanding (GOC) of the 9th Infantry Division in Savar during the state of emergency declared on January 11, 2007. Later, he was appointed chief coordinator of the National Coordination Committee on Serious Crimes and Corruption, promoted to lieutenant general, and posted to the National Defence College on June 2, 2008.

The detectives also arrested former DGFI chief Mamun from his residence in Mirpur DOHS on March 26. He is now being interrogated in custody after a court placed him on a five-day remand in a murder case filed with Mirpur Police Station in connection with the July mass uprising.

Aminul said further details could not be disclosed due to the ongoing investigation but said, "We expect that, based on the investigation findings, the former senior army officers will face trial before the tribunal," he said.

He also expressed hope that, if proven, the accused would receive appropriate punishment to deter future abuses by public servants.

JS discussion

FROM PAGE 1

Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni, taking the floor, said parliamentary practice requires that such matters be raised only after the starred questions and Rule 71 discussions are completed.

"I would request the leader of the opposition to wait until the rules are finished," he said.

Amid desk-thumping from Prime Minister and Leader of the House Tarique Rahman, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed also questioned which provisions of the rules of procedure applied to the matter.

Shafique again took the floor, saying, "In line with the speaker's instruction, I rose after the question and answer session. This is both my right and my responsibility."

Kayer Kamal, after a debate between treasury bench and opposition members, said a decision on the matter would be announced later in the day's proceedings.

After nearly an hour and a half, Shafique took the floor and placed the notice, which said that following the referendum's decisive "Yes" vote win, members elected to the 13th parliament are legally obligated to take two oaths -- one as members of parliament and another as members of the Constitution Reform Council.

MPs from the BNP-led alliance refused to take oath as members of the Constitution Reform Council. Meanwhile, 77 MPs from the Jamaat-led 11-party alliance took both oaths.

According to the July National Charter (Constitution Reform) Implementation Order, 2025, the first session of the council should be convened in the same manner as the first session of parliament -- within 30 calendar days of the election results being declared. However, this has not yet been done.

After the opposition leader placed the proposal, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman said that such an important matter requires debate and requested the speaker to set a time for discussion.

Immediately after the law minister's speech, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed rose on a point of order.

He said the opposition leader's notice was not in line with Rule 62 of the Rules of Procedure and should instead have been submitted under Rule 68. He added that the speaker could, if he wished, ask the opposition leader to correct it.

His statement prompted opposition MPs to stand up in protest, creating uproar in the House. Opposition members loudly voiced their objections, while the speaker repeatedly requested them to sit down.

Addressing the speaker, the home minister said, "I seek your protection. You may

give the floor to opposition members, no problem. But let me speak. We must not return to the old culture. If you do not give me time, I will sit down; that is the rule."

The speaker then asked him to continue.

Salahuddin said, "If the notice is accepted, it must be accepted in amended form. Under Rule 63, no proposal can be brought for discussion if its remedy can only be through legislation. In this case, the remedy lies in constitutional amendment and legislation. Generally, adjournment motions are brought on issues like price hikes or deterioration of law and order."

The minister then made a proposal: "We want to amend the constitution, and some opposition members also want reforms. In parliamentary language, the constitution may be enacted, repealed, suspended, or amended."

He proposed forming a committee comprising members from both the government and the opposition, aiming to amend the constitution.

He added that the committee could, if it wished, invite constitutional experts, eminent citizens, stakeholders, and newspaper editors to provide opinions. "We want to amend the constitution through consensus."

He clarified that he was not opposing the July charter. "This document has not directly changed the constitution, nor has any provision been altered. According to the July charter, constitutional amendments will be made. Parties that mentioned other issues in their manifestos have received mandates accordingly. BNP can therefore bring forward those manifesto issues that touch the constitution."

After hearing the statements of the opposition leader, the law minister, and the home minister, Deputy Speaker Kayser Kamal made his announcement.

"Under Rule 65(2) of the Rules of Procedure, I am setting aside two hours for discussion on March 31 after the day's agenda is completed."

Salahuddin Ahmed again took the floor despite objections from opposition MPs.

At that point, the deputy speaker said, "I have already given my decision. Please sit down."

The home minister continued speaking even after his microphone was switched off.

Later, the deputy speaker gave the floor to the opposition leader.

He said, "Once you have given your ruling, no further words on the matter are valid. You remain firm in your position, and we are with you."

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Farmers manually pollinate onion flowers in the Naldanga area of Natore, as excessive pesticide use has driven away bees and butterflies, disrupting natural pollination. Despite this, growers say seeds are forming and will be harvested after drying, with hopes of good prices. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

CITY POLLS

NCP picks Asif for Dhaka South, Adeeb for North

3 other candidates announced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party (NCP) yesterday announced mayoral candidates for five city corporations.

For Dhaka South, the party nominated its spokesperson and former interim government adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan.

Senior Joint Convener Ariful Islam Adeeb, who previously contested the Dhaka-18 seat, was named for Dhaka North.

The party also unveiled a five-point demand, including completing all local government elections within six months, barring administrators from contesting, and holding polls without party symbols.

The announcements came at an emergency press briefing at the party's Banglamotor office last night.

For other cities, Jubo Shakti Convener Tarikul Islam was nominated for Cumilla, Rajshahi metropolitan Convener Mobassher Ali for Rajshahi, and Sylhet metropolitan Convener Abdur Rahman Alfar for Sylhet.

NCP Convener and Opposition Chief Whip Nahid Islam expressed concern over the Election Commission, criticising the government's appointment of administrators to city corporations. "The BNP government is politicising local government institutions, bringing them under its control," he said.



Asif



Adeeb

Make ministers answer for policy, output

Tarique directs ruling BNP lawmakers at parliamentary party meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has instructed the health minister to visit hospitals even on government holidays to ensure uninterrupted healthcare services for the public.

He gave the directive at a time when the Infectious Diseases Hospital (IDH) struggles to cope with a surge in measles cases, with infections rising since January and putting additional pressure on already stretched healthcare services.

Tarique also asked ruling BNP lawmakers to work in coordination, remain united in addressing problems, and stay active in their constituencies to ensure prompt service delivery and address public concerns.

The directives came at a parliamentary party meeting of the ruling party held yesterday morning at the Jatiya Sangsad, according to meeting sources.

The country's fuel and energy situation, as well as the law and order situation, was also discussed at the meeting.

Tarique told lawmakers to remain active in their areas so that no one can create artificial crises by exploiting local weaknesses or poor coordination, sources said.

Several MPs stressed the need for close monitoring of supply and stock to

prevent shortages, according to those present at the meeting.

The meeting also discussed ordinances issued during the interim period and matters related to the July Charter.

A proposal was placed to form a committee comprising ruling party MPs, opposition lawmakers, and academics to examine the issue further, sources said.



Leader of the House Tarique Rahman at a meeting of BNP parliamentary party in the parliament yesterday.

PHOTO: BNP

The leader of the House also underscored the need for accountability in the way ministries function.

He told those present that ministers must remain answerable not only for policy decisions but also for the overall performance of their offices.

Meeting sources said this was the first time ministers were being made directly

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Fuel crisis deepens amid persistent hoarding

Tanker workers' strike halts supply across 8 northern districts

STAR REPORT

The ongoing fuel crisis has continued to worsen public suffering across the country, even as the government keeps carrying out drives against fuel stockpiling to tackle the situation.

Mobile courts in different districts have recovered large quantities of fuel from hoarders and fined them.

In Gazipur, a mobile court fined Abul Hossain, 65, a fuel trader, Tk 20,000 for illegally stockpiling around 3,000 litres of diesel at a roadside shop along the Dhaka-Tangail highway in Kaliakair upazila early yesterday.

Besides, police seized 880 litres of diesel from a shop at Uttar Salna Porabari area of Gazipur city and detained shop owner Abdur Razzaq, 35, yesterday morning.

In Chattogram, Bangladesh Coast Guard (East Zone) personnel yesterday detained 10 people and seized a fishing trawler from the outer anchorage near Chattogram carrying 22,500 kilogrammes of potatoes and 230 litres of diesel while the items were being smuggled to Myanmar.

In Jashore, a mobile court seized 875



I am unable to till my cropland, as none of my three tractors is operational amid the diesel shortage. I have been going from one filling station to another, but I am yet to get any fuel.

MD JAHID HASAN, a farmer of Islamgati village in Pabna

litres of fuel and 850 litres of lubricant from an unauthorised storage facility in Manirampur upazila on Saturday night.

In Bagerhat, a joint team of the district administration, Bangladesh Navy, Coast Guard and police detected a significant discrepancy in fuel stock at the Mongla Oil Installation of Jamuna Oil Company Limited, leading to the temporary

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

MOB VIOLENCE

Interim govt failed to curb it due to weakness

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said the interim



government had failed to control mob violence because it was weak, adding that since the elected government took office, there have been no such incidents except one or two isolated cases.

"The government is not giving any space to mob violence or disorder," he said, adding that political parties would be allowed to hold meetings and express democratic views through regular means without causing public suffering.

He made the remarks during a courtesy meeting with French Ambassador to Bangladesh Jean-Marc Séré-Charlet at the Secretariat, according to a home ministry release.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Army chief leaves for US on official visit

UNB, Dhaka

Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman left Dhaka on Saturday for the United States on an official visit.

During the trip, he will attend a special lecture in the Senate Chamber and accept an award presented by the Georgia State Capitol in recognition of the commendable contributions of Bangladeshi peacekeepers to United Nations missions, said an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) press release yesterday.

He is also scheduled to participate in bilateral meetings with US officials concerned.



BTV, Betar, BSS to collaborate with Turkish media

Dhaka, Ankara to sign MoU

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh and Türkiye have reached a decision in principle to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for knowledge sharing, information exchange and technical cooperation in modern information management.

The decision was made during a bilateral meeting between Professor Burhanettin Duran, director of Türkiye's Presidential Communication Directorate and Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapan, held on the sidelines

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

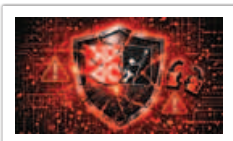
Shwapno files GD 7 months after cyberattack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shwapno, a supermarket chain, has filed a GD with Tejgaon Industrial Area Police Station, seven months after its customer database was compromised in a cyberattack.

The GD was lodged on March 28 by Md Masum Billah, head of administration and crisis management at ACI Logistics Limited, Shwapno's parent company.

Police confirmed the GD has been transferred to the Detective Branch Cyber Unit.



According to the GD, before August 2025, international cybercriminal groups, including the Qilin ransomware syndicate and LockBit 5.0, targeted Shwapno employees with phishing emails containing malicious links.

On August 19, 2025, around 2:00pm, computers at the head office of ACI Logistics Limited were locked down by ransomware, with attackers from Qilin

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8

'Police threatened crossfire, shot him'

July survivor recounts friend's death in Jatrabari at ICT-2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A survivor of the July uprising yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal-2 that police opened fire "like rain" on protesters in Dhaka's Jatrabari before allegedly shooting his friend at close range after threatening to stage a "crossfire".

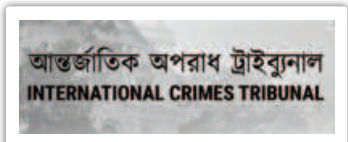
Testifying as the first prosecution witness in a case over the killing of Imam Hasan Bhuiyan Tayim, a 12th grader, on July 20, 2024, Md Rahat Hossain described how he narrowly escaped death while his friend was fatally shot.

Earlier, the tribunal framed charges against 11 former police officers in connection with the killing.

Rahat told the court that he and two friends -- Tayim and Shahriar -- had joined a protest near the Kajla foot overbridge

during a brief relaxation of a nationwide curfew imposed amid the anti-discrimination student movement.

According to his testimony, hundreds of police advanced from both sides of the road, some in armoured vehicles and others on foot, firing live rounds at protesters.



"Bullets were falling like rain," Rahat said, recalling how people around him screamed and collapsed while trying to flee.

Terrified and disoriented, the three friends ran for cover and took shelter in a roadside tea stall, but it lasted only moments.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

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Mohammad Selim passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mohammad Selim, a former office assistant of The Daily Star, passed away at a hospital in Lakshmipur on Saturday. He was 63.

He is survived by his mother, siblings, and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

According to his Daily Star colleague Mohammad Yusuf, Selim suffered a brain stroke at his home in Lakshmipur around 6:00am on Saturday. He was immediately taken to a local hospital, where he breathed his last around 7:00pm the same day.

His namaz-e-janaza was held yesterday morning at his village, Palpara. He was later buried at his family graveyard at Palpara at 10:30am.



Pedestrians navigate around rickshaw vans parked illegally in the middle of a busy stretch of Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in Dhaka's Kawran Bazar area. Such obstruction eats into road space and worsens traffic congestion amid lax enforcement by authorities. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Man killed as train runs him over in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

An elderly man was killed after being run over by a train in Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila yesterday morning, police said.

The victim, Ayub Ali, 60, of the same area, died on the spot after a Lalmonirhat bound train from Burimari ran over him in the Sukandighi rail gate area in Chalbala union.

According to police and locals, Ayub Ali had gone to the railway track beside his house and was lying on it when the train approached.

Locals later took the body back to his home.

Lalmonirhat Railway Police Station OC Pradip Kumar Sarkar told The Daily Star that family members said the victim had intellectual disability.

Gen Z no longer wants 1972 Constitution

Hannan Masud tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party lawmaker Abdul Hannan Masud yesterday told the Parliament that those belonging to Generation Z (Gen Z) no longer want the Constitution of 1972.

Identifying himself

as someone who belongs to Gen Z, Hannan said, "If you ask what Gen Z wants, they want an answer to why, despite being born 30 years after independence, they have not had the right to vote," he said.

While speaking in the Parliament during the discussion on the President's address,

Hannan said, "We received a new flag, a map, and boundaries. Our forefathers shed blood in 1971 to build a safe Bangladesh for us. But have we received a safe Bangladesh? We have not."

Referring to the referendum, he asked, "The Prime Minister campaigned in favour of the referendum. Why must there be any debate about it now?"

The NCP leader recalled attacks on him during

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Interim govt failed to curb

FROM PAGE 3

Salahuddin said restoring law and order was a top priority, outlining short, medium, and long-term plans to strengthen policing and rebuild public trust.

"We are working on police reform with utmost importance. But this development cannot happen overnight; through continuous and phased improvement, we want to build a people-friendly police force," he

said.

On Rab reform, the minister said an elite force was necessary in any state structure. According to him, the force would be retained effectively through legal review, with its name revised and its existing manpower and logistics used.

The French ambassador said France wants to take bilateral relations to a new height by expanding cooperation, noting steps already taken to support

capacity-building at the CID's forensic lab.

Salahuddin also sought French technical assistance to strengthen anti-riot forces, directing the police's Anti-Terrorism Unit and DMP's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit to engage with the embassy, and said the ministry had approved requests for meetings with the inspector general of police and chiefs of BGB, Coast Guard and Ansar.

Fuel crisis deepens amid

FROM PAGE 3

suspension of its depot manager Md Al Amin Khan and a halt to fuel supply.

According to an investigation report seen by The Daily Star, two tanks had excess fuel while one showed a shortfall. In total, a mismatch of 12,613 litres was identified, said officials.

In Pabna, Narayanganj, and Narsingdi, long queues were noticed daylong at all filling stations, with many compelled to return without getting fuel.

Md Jahid Hasan, a farmer of Islamgati village in Pabna Sadar, said, "I am unable to till my cropland, as none of my three tractors is operational amid the diesel shortage."

"I have been going from one filling station to another, but I am yet to get any fuel," he said yesterday noon.

In the coastal districts of Khulna, Satkhira, and Bagerhat, where motorbikes serve as a major mode of transport, road communication is being disrupted amid the severe crisis of fuel.

"I used to earn around Tk 1,000 daily by carrying passengers. But now my income has dropped to around Tk 150-200 due to the fuel crisis," said Alokesh Goldar, a resident of Khulna's Batiaghata upazila.

Nazrul Islam, a

motorcycle rider in Narsingdi, said, "I have been standing in the queue for four hours, and I still haven't received fuel."

In Kushia Sadar, farmer Mohammad Ali of Sonadanga village said he had to travel over 15 kilometres to get only two litres of fuel for the irrigation pump.

Another farmer, Enamul Mollah, of Ghonshgati village under Gopalganj Sadar, said, "Since filling stations are not selling fuel, we have to buy it from retail shops at higher prices."

In Shariatpur Sadar, farmers demonstrated on Saturday night, demanding fuel in front of a filling station in the Monohorpur area

Meanwhile, tanker workers in eight northern districts began an indefinite strike yesterday morning to protest the imprisonment and fines imposed on three of their co-workers in Nilphamari on Saturday, reports UNB.

Due to the strike, no diesel, petrol or octane was transported from the Railway Head Oil Depot in Parbatipur.

Leaders of the Rangpur Divisional Tanker Workers Union called the strike, demanding the release of the detained workers within 24 hours and the removal of Nilphamari Nezarat Deputy Collector

(NDC) Niaz Bhuiyan.

It halted fuel supply across Dinaipur, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat.

According to sources, the incident occurred when a tanker carrying fuel from Parbatipur Railway Head Depot developed a mechanical fault near Nilphamari jail gate while on its way to a filling station.

A mobile court later arrested filling station manager Ekramul Haque, tanker driver Sri Krishna and his assistant Rifat, accusing them of stealing 13 litres of fuel. They were sentenced to six months in prison and fined Tk 1 lakh.

(Our respective district correspondents contributed to the report.)

Police threatened

FROM PAGE 3

"About 25 to 30 police came and shouted, 'Put everyone in crossfire,'" he told the tribunal.

Police then forced open the shop's shutter, dragged them outside, and beat them with firearm butts.

According to Rahat, officers ordered Tayim to run. Moments later, a plainclothes officer shot him from behind. "He fired twice," Rahat said. "Tayim fell immediately."

Rahat said he tried to reach his friend but was shot in the foot. Despite his injury, he survived.

Video footage presented before the tribunal reportedly captured parts of the incident, including officers firing repeatedly and warning bystanders

not to approach the wounded.

Rahat later learned that Tayim had died from his injuries.

He urged the court to ensure accountability for what he described as a brutal crackdown on unarmed protesters.

In the case, the accused include former Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner Habibur Rahman; former DMP joint commissioner Sudip Kumar Chakraborty; former Wari Division deputy commissioner Iqbal Hossain; former Jatrabari police station OC Abul Hasan; Inspector (investigation) Md Zakir Hossain; and six others.

Only Hasan and Zakir are in custody, while the rest are on the run.



Memo: SKS/2026/12 Date: March 30, 2026

TENDER NOTICE

SKS Foundation has undertaken a project named **"Lighting the Poor and Disadvantaged Families Living in Char Areas Project"** supported by **Andheri- Hilfe Bonn, Germany**.

SKS Foundation, Head Office Invites open tender for below works.

SL #	Name of Work	Location	Quantity
01	Supplying and installation of Solar Home System	Bharatkhalai, Saghata, Gaibandha	300 Sets

Tender Schedule: The interested and experienced company/organization are invited to collect **Tender Schedule** can be downloaded from SKS Foundation website: www.sks-bd.org in **EOI/Tender** Section or requesting email through the following address firoi@sksbd.org

Date of Tender Schedule Collection	Last Date of Submission
30 March 2026 – 15 April 2026	15 th April 2026 by 5:00 P.M

Tender Submission:
Only PDF/SCAN copies Tender Schedule along with the required documents sent to the Email IDs: procurement@sksbd.org



গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
নৌপরিবহন অধিদপ্তর
এফ-১২/সি-১, আগারগাঁও, শেরেবাংলা নগর, ঢাকা-১২০৭
ওয়েব সাইট : www.dos.gov.bd

E-Gp Invitation no: 18.17.0000.016.99.0006.25.230 Date: 29/03/2026

E-TENDER NOTICE

E-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the following procurement:

SI	Tender ID	Package Name	Method	Date & Time		
				EOI Publication	EOI Closing	EOI Opening
01	1246822	Invitation of tender for ensuring to arrange written test, physical test, eye test, oral test for organizing the Integrated Sailor (Rating) Admission Test (Winter Session-2026) and supply related necessary materials.	Open tendering method (OTM)	29-03-2026 18:00 PM	09-04-2026 13:30 PM	09-04-2026 13:30 PM

This is an online Tender where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for more details, please contact support desk contact numbers.
Documents can be downloaded till deadline of Tender/Application/Proposal submission.

Capt. Sayed Ahmed
Controller of Maritime Education (C.C.)
Department of Shipping

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH, HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 235 OF 2026

IN THE MATTER OF: An application under Section 81(2) read with Section 85(3) and Section 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 and Rules 8 & 263 of the Companies Rules, 2009, AND

IN THE MATTER OF: _____ Petitioner
-VERSUS- _____ Respondents

Abdul Hamid Sardar
The Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms and another

Dear Mr/Ms,
Please take notice that on behalf of the Petitioner namely Abdul Hamid Sardar one of the Members and President of Khulna District Importers Group, having his address at 32, Tulapaty, Clay Road, Khulna, Bangladesh, that an application under 81(2) read with section 85(3) and 396 of the Companies Act, 1994 along with Rules 8 & 263 of the Companies Rules, 2009 for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting of **Khulna District Importers Group** for the calendar years of 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 has been filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh. Upon preliminary hearing, the Hon'ble Company Bench, comprising **Madam Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque** vide order dated 09/03/2026 was pleased to admit the application & directed to publish notice about the application in the newspapers and file an affidavit-in-compliance before the said Court within 23rd April, 2026. Any person or persons having interest in the said application may appear either personally or through duly authorized Advocate before the Court. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the office of the undersigned on payment of required costs. Yours faithfully
D.M. Saiful Islam, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, LAW ZONE, Akram Tower (3rd Floor), Suite-03, 15/5, Bijoy Nagar, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.



চট্টগ্রাম বন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষ

নৌ-বিভাগ

দপ্তরাদেশ নং-৭৮/২০২৬ তারিখঃ ২৮/৩/২০২৬

গুরুত্বপূর্ণ গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

১। চট্টগ্রাম বন্দর চ্যানেলে নিরাপদ নৌ-চলাচল নিশ্চিত করণের লক্ষ্যে অত্র দপ্তরের দপ্তরাদেশ নং-২২৮/২০১৯, তারিখঃ ২৯/০৭/২০১৯ মোতাবেক কর্তৃক চ্যানেল ও বহিঃনোঙ্গর এলাকায় বান্ধেড চলাচল সম্পূর্ণভাবে নিষিদ্ধ করা হয়। অভ্যন্তরীণ নৌ চলাচল বিধিমালা-২০০১ মোতাবেক চট্টগ্রাম বন্দর সীমায় বান্ধেড চলাচলের কোন সুযোগ নেই। ইদানিং লক্ষ্য করা যাচ্ছে যে, উক্ত নিষেধাজ্ঞা অমান্য করে অননুমোদিত বান্ধেড সমূহ বহিঃনোঙ্গর ও কর্তৃক চ্যানেলে চলাচল করছে। বর্তমানে মৌসুমী বায়ুর প্রভাবে কালবৈশাখীসহ বিরূপ আবহাওয়ায় সাগর উত্তাল থাকায় এধরণের অননুমোদিত বান্ধেডসমূহ বহিঃনোঙ্গরে ও কর্তৃক চ্যানেলে যে কোন সময় নিমজ্জিত হওয়ার আশঙ্কা রয়েছে, যা বাণিজ্যিক জাহাজের নিরাপদ চলাচলে প্রতিবন্ধকতা সৃষ্টিসহ দেশের বৃহত্তম সমুদ্রবন্দরটির পোর্ট লিমিটসহ কর্তৃক চ্যানেলকে মারাত্মক ঝুঁকিপূর্ণ করে তুলছে।

২। এমতাবস্থায়, বাণিজ্যিক ও অভ্যন্তরীণ রুটে বিদেশী বাণিজ্যিক জাহাজ হতে মালামাল পরিবহন কাজে নিয়োজিত অভ্যন্তরীণ কোষ্টার/লাইটার/ট্যাংকারসহ পোর্ট লিমিটে সকল জাহাজের নিরাপদ চলাচলের স্বার্থে বহিঃনোঙ্গরসহ চট্টগ্রাম বন্দর চ্যানেলে অননুমোদিত বান্ধেড চলাচল সম্পূর্ণভাবে নিষিদ্ধ ঘোষণা করা হলো।

৩। এই আদেশ অমান্যকারীদের বিরুদ্ধে কঠোর আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।

স্বঃ /
ডেপুটি কনজারভেটর (অঃ দাঃ)
চট্টগ্রাম বন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষ

জিডি-৩৬১



বাংলাদেশ ইন্সটিটিউট অব গভর্নেন্স এন্ড ম্যানেজমেন্ট (BIGM)

(ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় অধিভুক্ত)



স্কিলস্ ফর ইন্ডাস্ট্রি কম্পিটিটিভনেস এন্ড ইনোভেশন প্রোগ্রাম (SICIP)

অর্থ বিভাগ, অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়, গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার।

“Rise to Lead: Developing Future Leaders” শীর্ষক প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্স - ৩য় ব্যাচের প্রশিক্ষণার্থী আহ্বান

অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়ের অর্থ বিভাগের অধীনে SICIP প্রকল্পের আওতায় BIGM উচ্চ ও মধ্যম পর্যায়ের সরকারি ও বেসরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের স্ব-স্ব প্রতিষ্ঠানের মধ্য ও দীর্ঘ-মেয়াদি লক্ষ্য অর্জনের জন্য গভীর্ণা, ইতিবাচক, কার্যকরী, সংস্কারমুখী এবং দূরদর্শী নেতৃত্ব দক্ষতা বৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্যে ৩ সপ্তাহ মেয়াদি “Rise to Lead: Developing Future Leaders” শীর্ষক বিশেষ প্রশিক্ষণের আয়োজন করছে। SEIP/SICIP-এর আওতায় বিভিন্ন Industry Association (IAs)-এর অধীনে একটি শর্ট কোর্স অথবা SEIP/SICIP-এর আওতায় BIGM-এ অনুষ্ঠিত একটি কোর্সে অংশগ্রহণকারী প্রশিক্ষণার্থীরা আবেদন করতে পারবেন। তবে SEIP/SICIP-এর আওতায় EDC-এর অধীন কোন কোর্সে অংশগ্রহণকারী প্রশিক্ষণার্থীরা আবেদন করার প্রয়োজন নাই।

সরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের জনস্বশাসন মন্ত্রণালয়ের (www.mopa.gov.bd) ওয়েবসাইটে “সর্বশেষ খবর” শিরোনামের অধীন গত ৯ মার্চ ২০২৬ তারিখে প্রকাশিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি অনুসরণক্রমে আবেদন করতে হবে। বেসরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের আবেদনের নির্দেশনা নিম্নরূপঃ

কোর্স সংক্রান্ত তথ্য	আবেদনকারীর যোগ্যতা
- মোট ৩০ টি আসন - বেসরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের জন্য ৩০ শতাংশ আসন - নারী প্রশিক্ষণার্থীদের অসুবিধার প্রদান - শনিবার হতে বুধবার পর্যন্ত সেশন পরিচালনা (সকাল ৯:০০ টা হতে বিকাল ০৫:০০ টা) - যাত্রাসহ ভাতা বাবদ প্রতিদিন ৬০০ টাকা বরাদ্দ, দুপুরের খাবার ও চা-চকনের ব্যবস্থা - প্রশিক্ষণার্থীকে বা তাঁর প্রতিষ্ঠানকে কোন কোর্স ফি দিতে হবে না - কোর্স শুরু তারিখ: ২ মে ২০২৬	- উচ্চ বা মধ্যম পর্যায়ের চাকুরিতে কর্মক্ষে ৫ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা - বয়সসীমা ৩০ থেকে ৫২ বছর পর্যন্ত - ন্যূনতম স্নাতকোত্তর। অন্তত ২য় শ্রেণীতে উত্তীর্ণ
	আবেদনের নিয়ম
	- প্রশিক্ষণার্থীকে তাঁর নিয়ন্ত্রণকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমতি গ্রহণক্রমে আবেদন করতে হবে এবং প্রশিক্ষণে যোগদানের পূর্বে এ সংক্রান্ত অনুমতি পর দাখিল করতে হবে ২ কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজ ছবি, হাতকোত্তর সনদ ও জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের অনুলিপি দাখিল করতে হবে - BIGM-এর ওয়েবসাইট-এ News Update অপশনে গিয়ে Rise to Lead: Developing Future Leaders কোর্সের আবেদন ফর্ম Download করে পূরণ করতে হবে। পূরণকৃত ফর্ম উল্লিখিত সংযুক্তিসহ scan করে bigm.sicp@bigm.edu.bd-এই ই-মেইলে পাঠিয়ে দিতে হবে - BIGM-এ ব্যক্তিগতভাবে উপস্থিত হয়েও আবেদন করা যাবে - বেসরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের আবেদনের শেষ তারিখঃ ১৯ এপ্রিল ২০২৬

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Department of Mathematics, HEAT-ATF W3(a) PIN: 13186
University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi-6205

Date: 29/03/2026

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SI No.	Tender ID	Ref No.	Name of works	Last selling date & time	Tender closing date & time
01	1226170	RU-MATH-ATF-PIN-13186/35-2026	Procurement of laboratory Equipment	09-Apr-2026 11:00	09-Apr-2026 14:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks tender last selling time.
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G. Paul
29. 03. 2026

Professor, Dr. Gour Chandra Paul
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GD-660

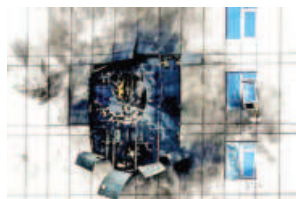
Ending war not enough

Gulf states tell US Iran's capabilities must be degraded

REUTERS, Dubai

Gulf Arab states are telling the US that any deal with Tehran should do more than end the war, and must permanently curb Iran's missile and drone capabilities and ensure global energy supplies are never again "weaponised", four Gulf sources said. **TRUCE 'ISN'T ENOUGH'** Gulf officials, whose countries have been repeatedly fired on by Tehran during the US-Israeli war on Iran, have told Washington in private meetings that the Islamic Republic has left them no diplomatic "off-ramp", the sources said.

The officials want any deal to lock in enforceable restraints on missile and drone attacks on energy and civilian assets, threats to oil and shipping routes,



and proxy warfare, the sources added. Any agreement must rewrite the rules of engagement by providing guarantees that the Strait of Hormuz is never again used as a tool of war and Gulf states must be written into the architecture of what comes next, they say.

SECURITY GUARANTEE Abdulaziz Sager, chairman of the Saudi-based Gulf Research Center, said the Gulf states' message to Washington was no longer implicit but explicit - that any agreement with Iran must directly address and guarantee the security of the Gulf states."

That message was reinforced by the Gulf Cooperation Council, a group including Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and the UAE, which has signalled a unified front against any settlement that sidelines Gulf security.



Mourners carry the body of one of the journalists killed a day earlier in an Israeli strike in south Lebanon, during a funeral in the Choueifat area on the outskirts of Beirut yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Iran has a new demand to end Middle East war

Analysts say recognition of Tehran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz could bring in billions in annual revenue

CNN ONLINE

When an Iranian official this week laid out a list of demands to end the war started by the United States and Israel, he added an item that hadn't been on Tehran's list before: recognition of Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

The narrow waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) ordinarily passes has emerged as the Islamic Republic's most potent weapon. And it is now seeking to turn into both a source of potentially billions of dollars in annual revenue and a pressure point on the global economy.

Iran has long threatened to close the strait in case of an attack, but few expected it to follow through - or for it to prove so effective in disrupting global trade flows.

"Iran has been a little taken aback by how successful its (Hormuz) strategy has been - by how cheap and how comparatively easy it is to hold the global economy hostage," said Dina Esfandiary, Middle East lead at Bloomberg



Economics.

Washington is acutely aware of that risk. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned Friday that one of the immediate challenges following the war would be Tehran's attempts to establish a tolling system at Hormuz.

In a nod to the growing strategic weight of the Strait of Hormuz, Mojtaba Khamenei used his first purported address as Iran's new supreme leader to say that the leverage of blocking the waterway "must continue to be

used."

In previous rounds of talks with the US, Iran pushed for sanctions relief and recognition of its right to peaceful nuclear technology but not control over the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran is now signaling that this leverage could be formalized. Iranian lawmakers are considering a bill that would require countries using the strait for shipping fuel and goods to pay tolls, while an adviser to the supreme leader has spoken of a "new regime for the Strait of Hormuz" after the war.

This new system would allow Tehran to impose maritime restrictions on adversaries and effectively tie access to one of the world's most critical shipping lanes to its geopolitical disputes.

"Imposing transit fees is a violation of the rules of transit passage," said James Kraska, a professor of international maritime law at the US Naval War College. There is no legal basis under international law for a coastal state to charge fees in an international strait like Hormuz, he added.

At least 38 children dead in measles outbreak

FROM PAGE 1 the long interval between special measles vaccination campaigns, as well as the cyclical pattern of outbreaks after a few years, among other factors.

Measles patients often develop pneumonia, diarrhoea, ear and brain infection; they often lose their immunity, and those with comorbidities are at higher risk of death.

Children aged nine months and 15 months receive measles vaccination twice under the regular immunisation programme, said Shahriar Sajjad, director of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI). The vaccination rate is 90 to 92 percent, so special vaccination campaigns are usually carried out every four years, with the latest one held in 2020. The planned special campaign in 2024 could not be conducted due to unrest in the country, he said.

Besides, the regular vaccination programme was disrupted at least three times last year due to strikes by health assistants who administer vaccinations in rural areas.

Additionally, a funding crisis following the suspension of the sector programme, which provides funds for vaccination, also disrupted services.

The regular Vitamin A and deworming campaigns were not held last year. These campaigns are related to children's nutrition, and malnourished children are more prone to measles, he added.

Since around 10 percent of the children remain unvaccinated each year, a cyclical pattern of measles outbreaks occurs every few years, said Halimur Rashid, director (disease control) of

the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The central stock of measles vaccine has already been exhausted and only a month's supply remains at the field level, according to DGHS officials.

EPI's Sajjad, however, said they have already received the vaccines in time for the planned special vaccination campaign in mid-April.

But several preparations are needed to ensure its success, he said, adding that a meeting of the National Technical Committee on Immunisation (NTCI) will be held today to finalise many of the related issues.

However, DGHS officials said the funds for carrying out the special campaign would come from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the public-private global health partnership that helps vaccinate children in the world's poorest countries, and negotiations for funding are still ongoing.

If everything goes according to plan, the special campaign is expected to start before Eid-ul-Azha. Otherwise, it would be held after Eid, they said.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain said the cabinet committee on government purchase approved a Tk 604 crore proposal for procuring vaccines last week.

All major hospitals have been instructed to open special wards for measles patients, he told reporters after a programme in Purbachal yesterday.

As of yesterday, the 100-bed IDH in Mohakhali has received 560 suspected measles patients so far this year compared with 69 cases last year. Of them, 448 were admitted in the 29 days of this month.

A total of 22 patients died at the hospital this year, including 21 this month and one in February, said hospital superintendent Tanzina Jahan.

As of yesterday, 45 suspected measles patients remained admitted to the hospital.

The number of measles patients at the hospital has come down a little as many patients are being admitted to Shishu Hospital, DNCC hospitals and some other facilities, she said.

During a visit to the hospital on March 17, the correspondent found many patients in the corridors and near staircases, but no such patients were seen yesterday.

At wards 3 and 4, this correspondent found seven measles patients, with eight-month-old Samir Ahmed Sarfaraz being one of them.

His parents brought him to IDH with measles and high fever from a Tangail hospital on Saturday, said his mother, Lima Akhter.

Almost all the measles patients admitted were unvaccinated, said ARM Sakhawat Hossain Khan, a consultant at the hospital.

Besides, many patients under six months old also got admitted, which is not very common, he added.

Reaz Mubarak, acting director of Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute, also found many patients aged less than six months coming to the hospital. "This is unusual," he said.

A total of 42 measles patients remained admitted to the hospital yesterday, and six have died this year, with the most recent death taking place on March 23, he added.

A total of 105 measles patients were admitted to MMCH this month, said the

hospital's director Brig Gen Md Zakir Hossain.

Of them, five children died, including two on Saturday, he said, adding that 66 patients remained admitted to the hospital as of yesterday.

A total of 250 suspected measles patients got admitted to the Sadar Hospital as of yesterday, said Chapainawabganj Civil Surgeon AKM Shahab Uddin. Four patients died, but they died at the RMCH outside the district, he said.

Several media reported that a total of 12 measles patients died at RMCH this month, but according to the hospital's spokesperson, Shankar K Biswas, so far there has been a single death of a patient suspected to have measles.

At RMCH, 230 suspected cases have been reported. As cases spiked, RMCH set up an isolation centre for measles patients.

Over in Sylhet, 20 were admitted to hospitals with measles-like symptoms, with four later confirmed positive, said Mohammad Nure Alam Shamim, assistant director (disease control) at the divisional health office.

In Noakhali, more than 300 children have been infected in the last 15 days, according to Civil Surgeon Maryam Simi. As of yesterday, 15 remained hospitalised at the 250 bed General Hospital, Noakhali.

[Our correspondents from Rajshahi, Pabna, Sylhet, Noakhali and Mymensingh contributed to the report.]

Govt, opposition clash

FROM PAGE 12 changes, while others would require amendments.

Salahuddin noted that time constraints would prevent parliament from addressing every ordinance in the current session.

"For some ordinances, we may not get enough time for discussion, bringing them as bills, or amending them. Because only 11 to 12 days are left," he said.

"The ordinances we want to pass will be placed in parliament in the form of bills in the next session."

He added that the committee's report would reflect dissenting views where disagreements remained.

Once the ordinances are brought as bills, relevant ministers will place them before the House, and lawmakers will have the opportunity to speak during the first, second, and third readings before the legislation is passed or rejected.

Asked how many ordinances would eventually be turned into bills, Salahuddin said he could not specify.

"I cannot say the number," he said, urging patience until April 2.

On the referendum ordinance, he explained, "The fate of ordinances is decided within 30 days [from forming the government]. But this ordinance's fate has already been decided. Under this ordinance, the referendum has already taken place. Now it has no further obligation."

He added that ordinances not placed within the 30 day deadline would automatically lapse, though some could later be reintroduced as bills in future sessions if the government wished to retain them as law.

GAZA CHECKPOINTS

Six Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes

REUTERS, Cairo

Two Israeli air strikes on two checkpoints of the Hamas-led police force killed at least six Palestinians including a child, local health officials said, in the latest round of violence despite a US brokered ceasefire that is now more than five months old.

Medics said Israeli planes attacked two police checkpoints in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, killing three policemen and three civilians, including a girl, and wounding four others.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the recent strikes. The military has killed over 680 Palestinians in Gaza since a ceasefire with Hamas came into effect in November, local health officials say.

More than 72,000 have been killed since the war started in October 2023. Israel is now also waging a war, alongside the US, against Iran, and is carrying out a new campaign against Hezbollah in which Israel forces have invaded southern Lebanon.

Violence in Gaza has persisted despite the ceasefire and amid Israel's war with Iran. Health officials in the territory say at least 50 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli forces since the Iran conflict began a month ago.

An international media association on Saturday condemned what it described as a "violent assault" by Israeli soldiers who detained a CNN crew in the occupied West Bank this week.

PARIS HEADQUARTERS

2 new arrests over bomb bid outside Bank of America

AFP, Paris

French police have arrested two more people over an apparent bid to set off a homemade device outside the Paris headquarters of Bank of America, prosecutors said yesterday.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said Saturday that the war in the Middle East might have motivated the foiled attack.

Police detained the first suspect, a minor, in the early hours of Saturday just after he placed a device containing five litres of a liquid believed to be fuel and an ignition system outside the bank, a source close to the investigation said.

The suspect was accompanied by a second person, who appeared to be taking photos and videos with a mobile phone but who fled when police arrived. Two further arrests were made on Saturday night. According to a police source, the first suspect said he had been recruited through the Snapchat app to carry out a bombing in exchange for 600 euros (\$692).



Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development in Bangladesh Project (LCUD)		
Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA)		
Level 9 & 10, Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), Ramna, Dhaka		
Expressions of Interest (EoI) for Services		
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh		
1.	Ministry/Division	Power Division
2.	Agency	International Organization
3.	Name of procuring entity	Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh
4.	Title of service	Individual Consultant-Project Manager-Time Based
5.	Procuring entity district	Dhaka
6.	Expression of Interest for Selection of	Individual Consultant
7.	EoI Ref. No.	27.02.0000.000.023.14.0008.26.17
8.	Date	30 March 2026
KEY INFORMATION		
9.	Procurement sub-method	Selection of Individual Consultants (SIC)
FUNDING INFORMATION		
10.	Budget and source of funds	Development Budget
11.	Development partner	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), GEF
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
12.	Project/programme code	224417700
13.	Project/programme name	Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh
14.	EoI closing date and time	20 April 2026, Time: 15:00 (BST)
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT		
16.	Brief description of the assignment	Overall management and coordination of all activities for Promoting Energy-Related Low Carbon Urban Development (LCUD) Bangladesh
17.	Qualification and experienced required	Details is in the ToR, which is in SREDA website, (Notice Section & Project Box). SREDA website: www.sreda.gov.bd
18.	Other details	Details is in the SREDA website, (Notice Section & respective Project Box). SREDA website: www.sreda.gov.bd
19.	Association with foreign firms is	Not applicable
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
20.	Name of the official inviting EoI	Engr. Md. Muzibur Rahman
21.	Designation of the official inviting EoI	Project Director, LCUD Bangladesh
22.	Address of the official inviting EoI	Level 9 & 10, IEB, Ramna, Dhaka
23.	Contact details of the official inviting EoI	02-55110343, lcud2024@gmail.com
The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any all EoI(s).		
GD-663		
Sd/- Engr. Md. Muzibur Rahman Project Director, LCUD		

An inspiring case of empowerment

Nepal's appointment of women ministers sets example for South Asia

We congratulate Prime Minister Balendra Shah, who was sworn in on Friday, for ushering in the promise of restoring political stability and creating jobs for the poor—aspirations of the Gen Z uprising that led to this new government in Nepal. Its formation marks a decisive political shift in Nepal that is both generational and institutional. It is heartening that Shah has appointed five women ministers in his 15-member cabinet, ensuring, for the first time, 33 percent female representation and thus fulfilling Nepal's constitutional requirement. Encouragingly, the women ministers have been given important portfolios—law, agriculture, general administration, justice and parliamentary affairs, health and population, and women and children affairs.

Moreover, 96 women became members of parliament—the highest so far in Nepal's history—though only 14 were directly elected, reflecting the age-old male chauvinism of political parties with regard to nominations. There are criticisms regarding the low number of candidates nominated by the winning party and the choice of women candidates for the proportional representation seats. But the presence of a significantly higher number of women in parliament is certainly encouraging.

This is even more apparent when we compare Nepal's case with the state of women's representation in Bangladesh's new parliament—also formed through a free and fair election following a people's uprising that was largely led by students. However, unlike Nepal's parliament, we have only seven elected women MPs, with only three in a cabinet where 94 percent of the posts are filled by men. Most of the political parties participating in the elections failed to nominate even five percent of women candidates, despite pledging to do so under the July National Charter. Even BNP nominated only 10 women candidates; 30 out of 50 parties did not nominate a single candidate.

For a parliament that has evolved from a people's uprising, with anti-discrimination being the key driving philosophy, it has failed miserably in increasing women's political participation. This reflects Bangladesh's entrenched patriarchal culture that has excluded women from real empowerment, especially in the political arena. Political parties, in particular, have not lived up to our democratic expectations in terms of gender inclusivity. Bangladesh's parliament has yet to appoint MPs for the 50 women's reserved seats. We hope that the selections will be based on merit and capability rather than party loyalty or connection and that, unlike in the past, these seats will not be examples of tokenism. Women MPs' voices must be heard and their opinions given importance while passing legislation. In the case of Nepal's parliament, only time will tell whether the appointments of women ministers and the selection of women MPs through PR have been prudent. But just the fact that there is 33 percent representation in the Nepali cabinet with women ministers holding important portfolios is something the rest of South Asia should appreciate and emulate in the future.

Compensation a right, not a privilege

Urgently dispose of the 2003 MV Nasrin-1 case, ensuring fair compensation

It is unacceptable that the victims of the country's most devastating launch capsizes are still awaiting fair compensation even after 23 years. Reportedly, a compensation case was filed by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) on behalf of the victims in 2004 and finally won in 2017. But the execution case is still awaiting a decree, with a petition against the 2017 verdict remaining pending before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court to this day.

The lethargy and disregard for ordinary lives as shown through this protracted development have been evident throughout the MV Nasrin-1 saga. A report published in *The Daily Star* noted that the triple-deck launch, licensed to carry 300 passengers, sank with more than 700 people on board in the Meghna River near Chandpur on July 8, 2003. A government probe later blamed faulty design, overloading, and the skipper's inadequate skills. While media reports at the time suggested around 600 people were missing, no official death toll was published. The then Chandpur deputy commissioner listed 400 affected individuals, and the shipping and disaster trustee boards initially disbursed Tk 15,000-20,000 to families of the injured and deceased.

The 2004 BLAST case sought over Tk 28.93 crore in compensation for 171 deceased, which was the total number of bodies recovered from the Meghna River after four days. A verdict came 12 years later, in February 2016, when a Dhaka court ordered the government to pay Tk 17.11 crore to the families of 170 deceased and one injured within 60 days.

However, the victims did not receive compensation within that timeframe. Instead, eight months later, in October 2016, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and the launch owners' association filed a revision petition in the High Court, which in 2017 upheld the lower court's verdict. They then filed a leave-to-appeal petition with the Appellate Division in 2019, seeking a stay. In 2020, the matter was sent to a full bench, where it remains pending.

The MV Nasrin-1 case shows how Bangladesh's protracted legal process continues to deny people not only justice but even the basic right to fair compensation. Although laws change on paper, victims rarely receive justice in practice. Too often, individuals and institutions responsible evade accountability—both financial and punitive—through prolonged legal battles. This is not unique to the MV Nasrin-1 case; the same pattern has been visible in many other transport-related fatalities. We, therefore, urge the authorities to resolve the MV Nasrin-1 case without delay and to ensure that such cases are expedited so that victims can at least receive compensation in time.

An election manifesto, an economic blueprint, and a war

How an economic task force report provides architecture for BNP's manifesto



Dr KAS Murshid is an economist who served as chairman of the Task Force on Re-strategising the Economy and Mobilising Resources for Equitable and Sustainable Development under the interim government.

KAS MURSHID

The BNP government has inherited a country at an unusual inflexion point, with a strong electoral mandate, a technically credible reform roadmap, and an international community broadly aligned on what needs to be done. It has also inherited an economy that grew just 3.97 percent in FY2025—well below historical averages and far short of the pace needed. Private investment has fallen to 22.48 percent of GDP, the lowest in five years, and barely a fortnight after the election, a war erupted in the Gulf that is already shaking the foundations of Bangladesh's external account.

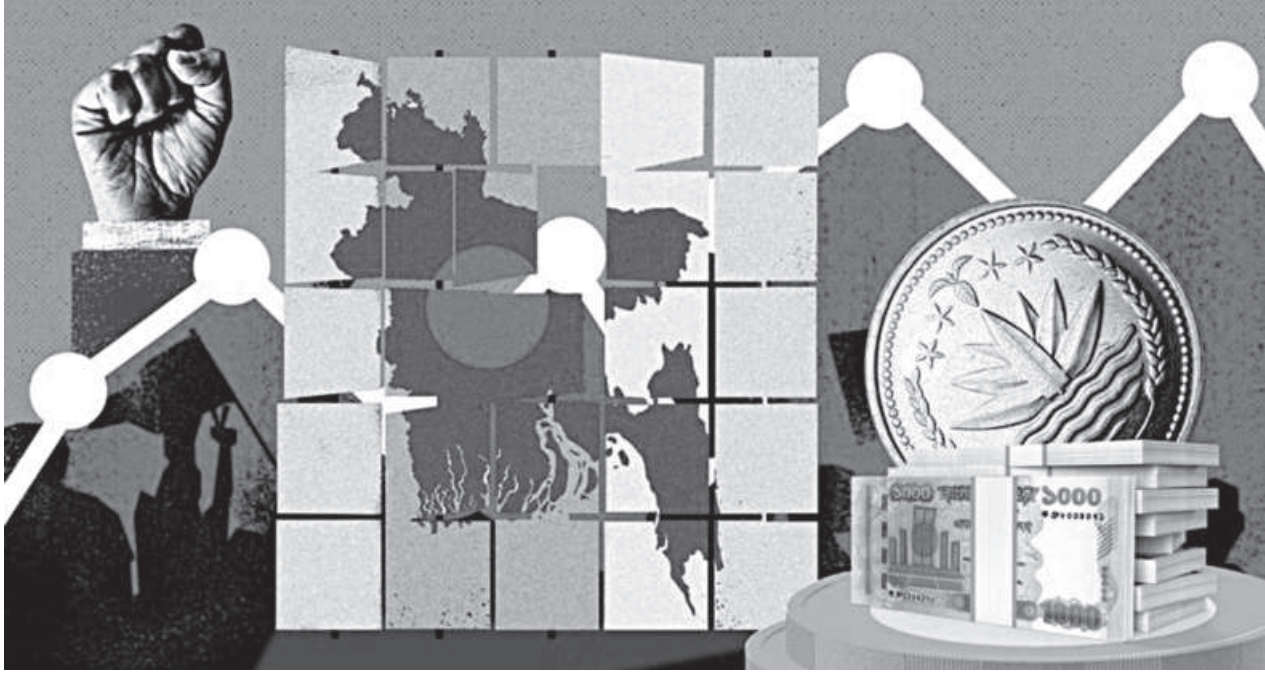
It would be worthwhile now to recall BNP's ambitious 44-page election manifesto, which has already received reasonable executive attention. The manifesto promised a \$1 trillion GDP by 2034, a tax-to-GDP ratio of 15 percent by 2035, one crore new jobs, universal Family Cards for four crore marginalised households, a transition from consumption-driven to investment-led growth, etc. These are serious commitments for a turbulent time, and they deserve an equally serious implementation plan.

The good thing is that the plan already exists, ready for execution. The report prepared by the Task Force on Re-strategising the Economy and Mobilising Resources for Equitable and Sustainable Development, submitted to the interim government in January 2025, provided 550 pages of technical architecture across 18 thematic areas. The manifesto and the report can be two halves of a single policy document—the first supplies the political legitimacy; the second supplies the engineering drawings.

The alignment between the two documents is striking, both identifying revenue mobilisation as foundational. Bangladesh's tax-to-GDP ratio fell to just 6.8 percent in FY2025—among the lowest in the world and less than half the government's 15 percent target. The task force provides the institutional machinery to close that gap: restructuring the National Board of Revenue (NBR), eliminating tax expenditures estimated to nearly equal actual tax collection, and digitising compliance. Both documents recognise private investment stagnation as the central constraint on growth, and point to regulatory reform and a functional banking sector as the prerequisites for unlocking it. Both endorse a regulatory reform commission to systematically dismantle the bureaucratic obstacles to investment.

But the task force also fills critical gaps the manifesto leaves open. The

most glaring is the LDC graduation. Bangladesh, as things stand now, exits LDC status in November 2026. This transition will withdraw preferential trade access currently covering approximately 70 percent of Bangladesh's global exports. The manifesto, however, does not mention LDC graduation, while the task force makes it the central context for its entire export strategy, recommending urgent trade diplomacy for Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+)



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

equivalents, Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations, and a targeted programme to build non-RMG export champions before the preference window closes.

The banking sector is the second critical gap. The manifesto promises to “restore confidence” in Bangladesh's banks. But the scale of the problem demands specificity. Non-performing loans (NPLs) peaked at 35.73 percent of total disbursed credit in September 2025—the highest in Asia and, by several assessments, the world. The task force's blueprint to address this challenge—asset quality reviews for all systemically important banks, an asset management company to handle NPL portfolios, and operationalisation of the Bank Resolution Ordinance 2025, which was already passed by the interim government, pending parliamentary approval—gives the new government a ready-made programme. The question is about political will, as banking sector reform requires imposing real

Approximately 75 percent of Bangladesh's overseas workforce is employed across five Gulf states, all directly affected by Iranian strikes, airspace closures, and regional economic disruption. Bangladesh received a record \$32.82 billion in remittances in 2025. A sustained Gulf economic contraction could reduce that figure by \$4-\$7 billion annually, withdrawing the primary income source of millions of rural households and materially worsening the country's external account. These are not abstract projections. Over 335 flights connecting Bangladesh to the Gulf have already been cancelled, leaving workers stranded and outbound migrants unable to depart despite having spent their savings on recruitment and medical fees.

The war does not invalidate the reform agenda; it sharpens it. Bangladesh's extreme dependence on Gulf labour markets, identified

signal to the IMF, the World Bank, the ADB, and investors that it knows what it is doing and intends to do it properly. True, Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves have recovered to \$34.06 billion—the strongest position since November 2022. But the breathing room this has allowed is not unlimited.

Bangladesh has navigated Covid, the post-pandemic inflation surge, the Ukraine commodity shock, and the taka depreciation of 2022–2024. It has the institutional resilience, the development partnerships, and now the political mandate to manage the current moment. What it needs is the clarity to prioritise—LDC graduation first, banking reform in parallel, energy sector restructuring now rather than later—and the discipline to keep moving through the turbulence.

The window for the first hundred days' agenda that actually changes the country's trajectory is short. It must not be wasted.

Better legal remedies needed for online shoppers



Nafiur Rahman Naypurno is undergraduate student of the Department of Law at North South University (NSU).

NAFIUR RAHMAN NAYPURNO

Just as e-commerce has made it easier for people to shop, there are also newer challenges facing consumers. Often, customers receive items that are defective or which they purchased but never received. They may see advertisements which are misleading and rarely receive refunds. Such instances are further complicated by the fact that legal remedies available for consumers vary across regions in Bangladesh due to insufficient or unclear consumer protection laws.

The main channel for ensuring consumer protection is the Consumers' Right Protection Act, 2009. This law provides consumers with protection against unfair business practices, but relies primarily on the Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection (DNCRP) for law enforcement rather than consumers' own right to take action based on the law. Usually, consumers cannot file independent lawsuits seeking compensation from a business, because complaints filed with

regulators only lead to an investigation and administrative fine, not an individual consumer's compensation.

As more and more consumers shop online, recent examples demonstrate how difficult it is for those who do not receive the products they paid for to get a refund because the system for resolving disputes with businesses over online sales is deficient. This is a universal problem, but many nations have adopted separate laws for regulating e-commerce platforms and ensuring consumer redress.

In India, the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 recognises e-commerce transactions and enables the Indian government to enforce the act through the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2019. According to these rules, online marketplaces are required to appoint grievance officers to manage consumer complaints, acknowledge consumer complaints within 48 hours, and resolve consumer complaints within 30 days from the date they were

received. The e-commerce platform in question will also be required to provide consumers with specific seller information, refund and return policy details, and delivery conditions prior to the completion of the purchase. As a result of these provisions, consumers have access to a defined process for liabilities, which allows them to pursue a resolution when an issue arises during an online transaction.

Furthermore, there are many legal protections available to consumers online in the European Union thanks to the Consumer Rights Directive 2011/83/EU. Under this directive, online shoppers in the EU have 14 days from the time of a completed purchase to withdraw from said purchase without needing to provide a reason and in turn receive a full refund. Sellers are also required to provide clear and accurate information about product characteristics, prices, delivery methods, and frequency of delivery, as well as how to withdraw from an online purchase. These legal protections help provide increased levels of transparency to consumers, which in turn increases consumers' level of confidence when making online purchases.

In the US, consumer protection laws are enforced by both the federal government and also each of the 50 states. The Restore Online Shoppers' Confidence Act (ROSCA) prohibits deceptive marketing of merchandise over the internet, including but

not limited to hiding subscription charges and publishing misleading advertisements. In addition, the Federal Trade Commission has regulations in place to protect consumers from fraud and other unethical business practices. Consumers who believe they have been victimised may seek relief through chargebacks on their credit cards, or through lawsuits against sellers.

E-commerce laws across much of the world have developed clear, specific ways of dealing with consumer rights issues to provide an avenue of direct relief for consumers. Bangladesh could create a stronger legal environment for consumer protection by adding specific e-commerce regulations to the existing Consumers' Right Protection Act, 2009, such as requiring e-commerce platforms to provide complainants with channels for filing grievances and information related to all e-commerce vendors selling through said platform.

Last year, the interim government had moved to amend the Consumers' Right Protection Act in response to incidents of large-scale e-commerce fraud. The current government carrying this forward would help create an ideal environment by adopting global best practices in terms of ensuring consumer protection. Without additional regulations, the growth of the digital economy in Bangladesh may decrease due to a loss of consumer confidence in e-commerce channels.

‘Policies must align financial services with farming cycles’

Agriculture remains the backbone of Bangladesh’s economy, contributing about 11 percent to the country’s GDP and employing nearly 40 percent of the population. Yet the sector faces persistent structural challenges alongside new global pressures from the ongoing war in the Middle East. In this interview with Porimol Palma of The Daily Star, Professor AHM Saiful Islam of Bangladesh Agricultural University discusses the sector’s realities, vulnerabilities, and key policy priorities.

The war in the Middle East has raised concerns about energy and fertiliser supplies. How does it affect agriculture in Bangladesh?

The war has impacted the supply of all types of fuel. When diesel prices rise, it creates a chain reaction across the agricultural sector. The cost of irrigation and fertilisation increases, directly raising production costs. This contributes to inflation, which is already close to double digits. Ultimately, this affects everyone’s livelihood, especially the poor, who spend a large share of their income on food. When people spend most of their income on staple foods like rice, they cannot afford nutritious items.

The government has yet to increase fuel prices, except for jet fuel, though global prices have gone up. What would be your suggestion?

The duration of the war is an important factor. In the short term, I would suggest not increasing prices for agriculture-related fuels like diesel because the impact on the poor would be significant. If the war continues, the government will need to maintain subsidies, creating pressure on public finances. Therefore, it is crucial that we strengthen our domestic production capacity of both fertiliser and energy. We should explore our own resources, such as gas in the Bay of Bengal, and diversify import sources. We should also diversify our import basket.

There are also issues of efficiency in irrigation and fertiliser use in Bangladesh. How can farmers improve such practices? Farmers often use more water than necessary through flood irrigation. But research shows that keeping fields continuously flooded is unnecessary. Smart card systems, introduced by the Barind Multipurpose Development Authority in the Barind tract, are helping

address this issue. Under the traditional flat-rate system, farmers paid a fixed amount for unlimited water, so they had no incentive to conserve it. With usage-based pricing, farmers use only the amount of water they actually need. If the loopholes are addressed and the system is expanded further, it will be beneficial. At the same time, the government is trying to expand climate-smart irrigation methods such as Alternate Wetting and Drying for paddy cultivation, which improves the efficiency of both water and fertiliser use.

This system also has implications for groundwater levels and diesel-dependent irrigation.

Exactly. When more water is extracted, more diesel is required, especially as groundwater levels fall. In places like Rajshahi and Rangpur, it is already difficult to lift water using tube wells. Even with submersible pumps, it now takes much longer to fill tanks than before. Since we are currently in the Boro season, the situation may worsen in the coming weeks. There have already been reports of water crises, particularly in Rajshahi. If we relate this to the Middle East war, the situation could worsen further because irrigation in Bangladesh is largely diesel-dependent, making it highly sensitive to global fuel price fluctuations.

The new government has planned to introduce Farmers’ Cards. What is your view on this?

It can bring all subsidies under a formal “one-stop” system. Currently, subsidy distribution suffers from targeting errors—either deserving farmers are excluded or undeserving individuals receive benefits. Proper targeting and timely delivery will make the system more effective.

You have researched agricultural supply chains. What are the major issues here?



AHM Saiful Islam. PHOTO: COURTESY

Sometimes there is surplus production, but products are not available in the market. Many blame middlemen, but our research shows they are necessary. The problem is not their existence but inefficiency. Direct selling without intermediaries is often not cost-effective due to the lack of economies of scale. What we need is a competitive market structure. However, that is largely absent. Perfect competition requires many buyers and sellers, but in reality, a few large players dominate the market. This leads to collusion and prevents efficient price formation. In such situations, government intervention becomes necessary. However, in Bangladesh, by the time action is taken, prices have already spiked or harvest seasons have passed, harming producers. Efficient planning is therefore crucial.

How can this planning be made more efficient?

A major problem is the lack of reliable data on demand and supply. Without accurate statistics, we cannot determine deficits or make informed decisions. We need an early

warning system that provides production and demand estimates before harvest seasons so that timely decisions can be taken. Such a system would improve market efficiency and reduce volatility.

Small-scale farmers often complain about difficulties in accessing loans. Many depend on informal lenders charging high interest.

Banks often have funds available to lend, but farmers avoid them due to complex procedures. By the time loans are approved, the cropping season may already be over. Formal loans involve high transaction costs, collateral requirements, and often insufficient loan amounts. Repayment schedules also do not align with agricultural cycles, which include a gestation period. For example, rice farming requires at least three months before returns, while cattle fattening may take six months. However, many lenders demand immediate repayments, which is unrealistic. Although some NGOs have introduced flexible loan structures, most still do not align with agricultural cycles. In contrast, informal lending provides quick access through personal networks. Therefore, policies must align financial services with farming cycles.

As Bangladesh is an agrarian country, shouldn’t our industries also develop surrounding agriculture?

Yes, certainly. While we can develop other industries, we have a natural comparative advantage in agro-based industries. There is strong potential for such industries in economic zones, but they have not received sufficient emphasis. Exporting processed and value-added products instead of raw materials can generate higher returns. For instance, dried fish has strong export potential, but food safety and nutrition standards must be ensured to access global markets. There

is also significant potential in livestock and fruits if efficient processing and packaging industries are developed. Our export basket can become more diversified through these efforts. I strongly suggest investing in cold chains and cold storage for perishable products. Public private partnerships can play a key role. Additionally, ICT and AI can help attract youth to agriculture and support domestic production of import-dependent items such as spices.

What level of priority should agriculture receive from policymakers, given the importance of food security?

Agriculture should receive the highest priority. Despite its importance, no dedicated commission has been formed for the sector during the tenure of the interim government. Although total allocations may increase, agriculture’s share in the budget relative to GDP is declining. Given global uncertainty and Bangladesh’s dependence on imports, strengthening agriculture is essential for ensuring long-term food security and economic stability.

What would be your concluding remarks?

Agriculture is the backbone of the country. From the shocks during the Covid pandemic to the ones from the Russia-Ukraine war, agriculture has sustained us. We often say our agriculture is resilient, but it is also vulnerable to both external and internal shocks. Over the last 10 to 15 years, agriculture has supported the economy at several critical moments compared to other sectors. Had it performed poorly during Covid and the early phase of the Russia-Ukraine war, the country’s situation would have been far worse. However, the sector still faces vulnerabilities, and we are not fully utilising its potential. We must take deliberate steps to harness it more effectively and ensure its long-term sustainability.

A rebuttal to rebuttal: ‘Evidence, not assumptions, should guide education reform’



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

MANZOOR AHMED

There is much to be said for evidence-based decision-making, but it is not a fool-proof formula. I am happy that Dr Shamsul Arifeen Khan Mamun has taken the time to read my op-ed piece on education reform (“We need education reforms that actually work,” *The Daily Star*, March 15) and wrote a rebuttal (“Evidence, not assumptions, should guide education reform,” *The Daily Star*, March 19).

The title suggests the main argument of his rebuttal. The writer asserts that my points about education reform were based on assumptions, not supported by research evidence. First, the writer objects to the contention that the main reason for students in our schools resorting to private coaching is poor teaching and learning in our classrooms. He cited examples of Singapore and Korea, where private tutoring is common and contributes to “educational success.” He cited the evidence of a study which showed that private lessons improved students’ educational outcome, but omitted the second conclusion of the same study that private coaching induced students to

resort to “rote memorisation” and impaired students’ critical thinking.

My original argument was that the much-discussed policy prescription of banning or severely restricting private coaching was not the solution; rather, attention is needed to improve classroom instruction and rethinking examinations which encourage memorised answers. In any event, the ban and restriction could not be enforced because the conditions supporting the practice were not addressed. The rebuttal missed this point and ignored the context of our schools.

The author objects to the suggestion that a holistic system view—analysing the connections between inputs, processes, and outputs—is needed in education reform, because piecemeal, ad hoc and fragmented actions did not produce desired results. The writer cites some critiques of the systems approach, but ignores others providing contrary conclusions. In fact, the seminal Coleman study in the US, which he cites, concludes that students’ socio-economic background mattered as much or more in

students’ school performance as actions taken in school. The inference drawn by researchers and policy-makers is that student socio-economic background should be seen as a critical input factor.

The writer also cites studies of production function (how inputs relate to outputs in education) and implies that these studies indicated an abandonment of the systems approach in educational reform. Production

The main argument of my original article was that we need to adopt a holistic and systemic view and move away from partial, fragmented and ad hoc actions in a fire-fighting mode to initiate sustainable and effective reform. To continue with the analogy, the aim should be to prevent the risk of fire by taking necessary steps, rather than dousing the fire after it happens.

function analysis is a specific application of systems thinking. Actually, the studies pointed out the difficulties of applying the industrial model of production function in education, but suggested adopting a nuanced approach in analysing the relationship. One study he cited (Wenglinsky, 1997) considered

that the production function analysis is “salvageable” when applied with care. The other study (Hanushek, 2020) reaches the logical conclusion that how resources are used is more important in influencing educational outcomes than how much resource is provided. Neither suggested an abandonment of the production function analysis nor had any specific observation about the system approach. The writer’s conclusion is an example of the dangers of selection bias, faulty analysis, and misinterpretation of evidence.

The writer also objects to the suggestion that scholarship examinations at the end of class five and class eight in our schools are not helpful to the majority of students. These exams divert attention and effort of teachers from the majority of poorly performing students in a class to a small number of better performing students who would sit for the scholarship exam and earn a name for the school. Plain logic and sufficient empirical evidence show that scholarship exams did nothing to improve instruction for the majority of students. Talented students should be encouraged to do even better, but any action that benefits a few at the cost of many cannot be an acceptable solution.

There is no basic disagreement with the proposition that evidence should guide reform. There is more to it than this statement implies. To begin with, who determines what the problem is, how do they make that decision, and what evidence do they choose to look for. Do policy-makers selectively pick evidence to justify a pre-determined political agenda, ignoring research that does not support a

preferred position? This is indeed a risk that is present in decision-making in a complex and sensitive area as education reform. Absence of a holistic system view also increases the risk of picking and choosing isolated problems and partial solutions or no solutions.

The writer’s rebuttal itself illustrates the danger of decontextualised and technocratic picking of evidence to justify policy decisions. Logic, common sense, and democratic participation of stakeholders mediated by a guiding framework of moral and ethical principles have to be applied in defining problems and making evidence-based decisions.

The main argument of my original article was that we need to adopt a holistic and systemic view and move away from partial, fragmented and ad hoc actions in a fire-fighting mode to initiate sustainable and effective reform. To continue with the analogy, the aim should be to prevent the risk of fire by taking necessary steps, rather than dousing the fire after it happens.

The discussion of specific policy actions in my article was to illustrate the importance of a system view as opposed to isolated actions. The key action recommendation was the recognition of the need for a policy-making and decision-making culture and mechanism that permits a dedicated team of professionals with relevant competence and experience to be engaged in designing the reform and guiding its implementation. This would include seeking relevant evidence and analysing its pertinence. I hope the policy-makers see the logic of this approach.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

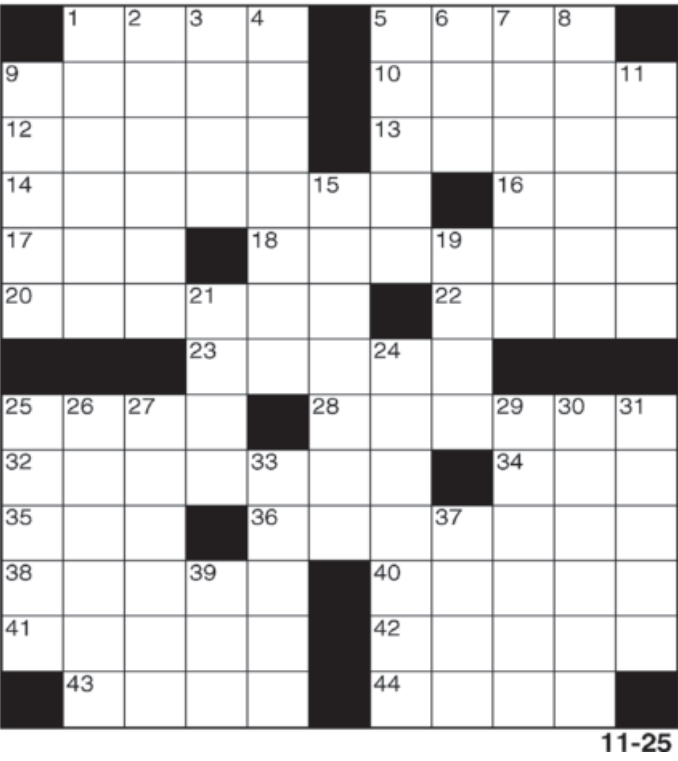
- 1 Dr’s orders
- 5 “Art of the Fugue” composer
- 9 Parking pro
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- 12 “Thereby hangs---”
- 13 Blow away
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- 16 Spotted
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- 18 Peach canners gadgets
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- 22 Water whirl
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- 25 Superfruit berry
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problem

- 32 Clay workers
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 - 6 Cash dispenser

7 Pursued

- 8 Danger
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- 11 Full of info
- 15 British pop star
- 19 Final, e.g.
- 21 Hand or foot
- 24 Cattle thief
- 25 Kitchen wear
- 26 Confine
- 27 Duds
- 29 To-do list
- 30 Ate greedily
- 31 Moved carefully
- 33 Foils’ kin
- 37 Air
- 39 Secretive govt. org.



YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS



Write for us. Send us your opinion pieces to dsopinion@gmail.com

Zayed Khan's COMEBACK

Once a target of online trolls and infamous for over-the-top interviews, Zayed Khan has reinvented himself after finding his own niche in the USA. The Daily Star talks to the hardworking star about his life, latest work, and future plans.

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

How did you spend this Eid?

I've lived in the United States for the past two years. I celebrate Eid here with friends and acquaintances, but I miss Bangladesh dearly. I think of my family, my parents' graves, and my colleagues all the time. Being here feels like I'm just living for the sake of survival. Life is what it is, and one must accept it and move forward. The Almighty has kept me well.

The audience was pleasantly surprised to see you in 'American Dream'.

I just did my best. People tend to forget that I have spent over two decades in this industry and have shared the screen with the likes of Nayak Raj Razzaq *bhai* and Kabori *apa*. This was a chance to show my acting chops.

Honestly, everything I have done after joining Thikana has been a blessing for me—and the credit goes to Mushrath Shaheen, Rubin Hossain, Saad Al Amin, and the entire team at Thikana. The director of *American Dream*, Jon Kabir, also deserves appreciation. Their vision has turned the platform into a multifaceted success. I finally have the confidence to pursue my dreams seriously, with the love of the people and the blessings of the Almighty.

Some of your comments in various interviews were often the target of trolls when you were in Bangladesh.

I am a very media-friendly person; I have never misbehaved with a journalist in any situation

whatsoever. Most of those comments were either taken out of context or I was simply joking around with the reporters. I won't lie—it did really feel bad when people made fun of me. After all, I am human! But I have turned that sorrow into strength for now.

Your body transformation is also something that takes people aback. How did you manage it?

Sacrifice. Ninety percent of bodybuilding is the sacrifice of your previously favorite foods—I avoided *polao*, *shemai*, and *payesh* even on Eid, though it almost killed me to do so. Combined with working out earnestly, I could achieve the results that I had desired for a long time.

What contribution to the Bangladeshi film industry are you the proudest of?

When I was a panelist at the Chalachitra Shilpi Samiti, we gave it our all to aid the people of the industry during COVID-19. We sent food, provided support, and even carried the bodies of fellow artists on our backs when there were few who were willing to come forward. I will always consider those times a reflection of who I am.

Since you already reside in the US, do you wish to try out for their film industry?

Why not? Dreams should be limitless. At the risk of repeating myself, the support that I got from Thikana has boosted my confidence, and featuring in a Hollywood film is nothing that can't be achieved. I just want to be myself and move forward. I urge my fans and the people of Bangladesh to pray for me.



'DOMM' set for US release following Australia run

After its release in Australia, *Domm*, starring Alran Nisho and directed by Redoan Rony, is set for a wider international rollout in North America. The film will premiere in New York and Los Angeles on April 10, followed by a broader release across the United States and Canada on April 17.

Since its Eid-ul-Fitr release, *Domm* has seen strong audience response in Bangladesh, with many screenings running houseful.

Producer Shahriar Shakil and distributor Raj Hamid confirmed the expansion, noting growing interest among overseas audiences.

Director Redoan Rony expressed hope that the film's story, inspired by real events, will resonate with expatriate viewers.

Produced by SVF Alpha-i Entertainment Limited and Chorki, the film continues its successful run.

NEWS

Labour migration hits a wall

FROM PAGE 12

Saudi Arabia. In fiscal 2024-25, Bangladesh received \$30.32 billion in remittances, of which \$4.26 billion or 14 percent came from migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, according to Bangladesh Bank data.

Experts say such heavy reliance on a single market raises economic risks for Bangladesh.

Industry insiders have pointed out several key reasons for the weakening of Bangladesh's labour migration system – fraudulent practices in the migration process, aggressive recruitment, bribes for visas and syndicate control.

MALAYSIA: NO BREAKTHROUGH Nearly 450,000 Bangladeshi workers migrated to Malaysia between August 2022 and April 2024 after the country reopened its labour market in 2021.

However, more than 18,000 workers missed their departure deadline and remain stranded.

Upon taking office, the interim government held a series of talks with the Malaysian authorities and urged them to resume recruitment. During a visit to Malaysia, the then adviser Asif Nazrul said the country would recruit a large number of workers from Bangladesh.

Instead, Malaysia imposed 10 stringent conditions for recruiting workers.

Several high-level meetings, including one involving Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim during his Dhaka visit in October 2024, produced assurances but no concrete results.

Expressing his frustration, one of the stranded workers, Khijir Islam from Manikganj, said, "We have been hearing promises for months. How long are we supposed to wait?"

UAE RESTRICTIONS

The UAE, Bangladesh's second-largest labour market in the Middle East,

has remained largely shut since 2013. Unofficial estimates suggest that around 12 lakh Bangladeshis currently work there.

In July 2024, the UAE quietly restricted both work and visit visas after some migrants protested there in solidarity with the quota reform movement in Bangladesh.

During the World Governments Summit in Dubai last year, Muhammad Yunus, the then chief adviser, urged UAE ministers to lift the ban, but no progress followed.

An official from the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry confirmed that no visit or work visas were issued last year, indicating that the restrictions remain in place.

Many workers aspiring to go the UAE are on the verge of losing hope. One of them is Abdul Hashim from Khulna.

"I submitted my passport more than a year ago, but my application for a work visa has not been processed yet," he told this correspondent.

SHRINKING MARKETS

Over the past decade, Oman, Bahrain, the Maldives, Libya, and Brunei have periodically closed their labour markets to Bangladeshi workers.

Oman suspended recruitment in September 2024 due to document forgery and violations of visa conditions, while the Maldives halted visas, citing irregularities.

Prof Tasneem Siddiqui, acting executive director of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, said there should be a proper study to identify the causes of these closures.

"Accountability must be ensured if recruiting agencies send workers abroad without job confirmation."

She underscored the need for strengthening pre-migration training and aligning workers with suitable jobs.

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's Migration and Youth Initiatives Programme, said Bangladesh's

labour market is shrinking day by day due to fraud, visa "trade", and poor governance.

He further said that geopolitical tensions in the Middle East could further disrupt labour demand.

"If conflicts involving Iran, Israel and the US escalate, it could affect regional economies and reduce labour recruitment in Gulf countries," he warned.

Pointing out Bangladesh's heavy dependence on Saudi labour market, he said, "Any shock to that market would put enormous pressure on Bangladesh's labour sector and remittance flow."

Ali Haider Chowdhury, former secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, said that during the interim government's tenure, no meaningful steps were taken to reopen closed markets.

"Promises were made, but the final result was zero," he said.

GOVT PLAN

Md Nurul Haque, state minister for expatriates' welfare and overseas employment, said the government is making diplomatic efforts to reopen overseas labour markets, including Bahrain, Oman and the UAE.

Regarding the Malaysian labour market, he said a list of companies, which have met the recruitment conditions, has already been sent to the Malaysian authorities, but they are yet to respond.

The government will step up efforts to expand opportunities for skilled migration, he said, citing an agreement to send 100,000 workers to Japan over five years.

However, experts warn that unless Bangladesh reforms its overseas recruitment system and diversifies labour destinations, ongoing geopolitical instability and market closures could place even greater pressure on the country's overseas employment sector.

provide compensation, though without specifying when.

Attempts to reach the alleged broker, Habibur Rahman Khondakar, for comment were unsuccessful despite repeated phone calls and text messages.

Contacted, Md Jahangir Alam, Additional Superintendent of Police in Madaripur, told The Daily Star, "We've learnt that two men from the district had died in Libya after torture."

"No family member has contacted us yet, but we are taking the matter seriously. Local police have been sent to speak with the families, and legal action will follow based on the investigation."

'We, the people, will rule

FROM PAGE 12

"Nobody's attacking us," Taylor said. "We don't need to be there."

In Minnesota, a flashpoint in Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration, a massive rally was held outside the state capitol in Saint Paul. Many held aloft posters bearing photos of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, US citizens fatally shot by federal immigration officers in Minneapolis this year.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, the Democratic vice presidential nominee in 2024, told the crowd that their resistance to Trump and his policies makes them "the heart and soul" of everything good about the U.S.

"They call us radicals," Walz said. "You're damn right we've been radicalised – radicalised by compassion, radicalised by decency, radicalised by due process, radicalised by democracy, and radicalised to do all we can to oppose authoritarianism."

US Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, a Trump critic who

sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 2016 and 2020, also addressed the event in Minnesota. Musician Bruce Springsteen performed his song "Streets of Minneapolis" – a ballad criticising Trump's immigration crackdown and lamenting the deaths of Good and Pretti.

"We will not allow this country to descend into authoritarianism or oligarchy in America," said Sanders, an independent. "We, the people, will rule."

The National Republican Congressional Committee criticised Democratic politicians and candidates for supporting the rallies.

"These Hate America Rallies are where the far-left's most violent, deranged fantasies get a microphone, and House Democrats get their marching orders," committee spokesperson Mike Marinella said in a statement.

In New York, a crowd that police estimated at tens of thousands stretched more than 10 blocks in midtown Manhattan. Actor Robert

De Niro, one of the organisers, said that no president before Trump has posed "such an existential threat to our freedoms and security."

Holly Bemiss, 54, said she and other New York rally attendees were acting in the same spirit as her ancestors who fought in the American Revolution.

On the National Mall in Washington, the crowd chanted pro-democracy slogans and held anti-Trump signs. Outside a high-rise assisted-living centre in Chevy Chase, Maryland, a group of elderly people in wheelchairs held signs encouraging passing cars to "Resist tyranny," "Honk if you want democracy," and "Dump Trump."

Thousands attended a Dallas event that had clashes between No Kings demonstrators and counterprotest groups, including one led by Enrique Tarrio, the former leader of the far-right organisation the Proud Boys.

Minor scuffles erupted when counterprotesters blocked streets. Dallas police eventually made several arrests.

Two aid boats safely reach Havana

REUTERS, HAVANA

Two sailboats carrying humanitarian aid from Mexico arrived safely in Havana on Saturday, the Mexican Navy said, concluding a journey in which the vessels were delayed by bad weather and briefly reported missing.

The navy confirmed the sailboats docked safely in the Cuban capital after authorities monitored their final approach to the port.

After being reported missing on Thursday, a maritime surveillance aircraft spotted the sailboats on Friday, approximately 80 nautical miles (148 km) northwest of Cuba, the Mexican Navy said earlier on Saturday. The crews reported they were in good health but had been slowed by unfavorable weather, particularly winds.

The two boats are part of a convoy seeking to deliver food, medicine, baby formula and other supplies to the Caribbean's largest island, amid a U.S. blockade on shipments of oil and other supplies that has worsened power outages and led the state to ration services.



Pantho Kanai will be seen with Shakib Khan in 'Rockstar'

Renowned musician Pantho Kanai is set to share the screen with Shakib Khan for the first time in the upcoming film *Rockstar*, marking a new step in his acting career. Although he confirmed his involvement, the singer declined to reveal further details.

Directed by Azman Rusho, the film has already begun shooting in Malaysia. It stars Sabila Nur and Tangia Zaman Mithila alongside Shakib Khan, with Tariq Anam Khan and Rosey Siddique playing his on-screen parents.

The first look of the film was unveiled on Shakib Khan's birthday, showcasing the actor in a striking new avatar.

Rockstar is slated for release during Eid-ul-Azha.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Golmatha ar Chokhamatha'

Spardha Academy's inaugural acting batch steps onto the stage with *Golmatha ar Chokhamatha*, a sharp Brechtian satire that interrogates power, identity and social conditioning.



Directed by Mohsina Akhter, the production turns a training milestone into a poised, politically alert debut shaped by discipline, ensemble craft and critical inquiry.

Date: Friday-Saturday | April 17-18, 2026

Time: 7:30 pm onwards

Venue: Bangladesh Mohila Samity

Does South Asia need secularism?

Could the Partition of India have been avoided in 1947 if the earlier partition of Bengal in 1905 had not been reversed?

In conversation with Akeel Bilgrami, Sidney Morgenbesser Professor of Philosophy and a faculty member of the Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University, and a renowned scholar of political philosophy.

The Daily Star (TDS): Could you elaborate on the origins of secularism in Europe? How did the idea evolve there?

Akeel Bilgrami (AB): ‘Secularism’, first of all, should be distinguished from ‘secularisation’. Both emerged initially in Europe. Secularisation is the name of a process of change—part intellectual, part societal. In the simplest terms, it can be described as a decrease in both religious belief and religious practice, that is, a decrease in belief in God and the myths of creation, as well as a decrease in various practices such as church-going, rituals, habits of religious dress, diet, etc. By contrast, secularism is the name of a political doctrine that sought to usher religion out from having the kind of direct bearing that it so often had on the polity and the state. Your question is about the origins of secularism, not secularisation. But I mention this distinction because there are subtle ways in which these two distinct notions get run together, which, for the sake of clarity, they should not be.

So, for instance, in my view, Kemalist Turkey (or indeed, the Soviet Union) adopted not just secularism but also a kind of state-enforced secularisation, and France, to a much less comprehensive degree, also did that when, for instance, it banned the hijab from being worn in some public places such as schools. In countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, in which there is not as much secularisation as there is in Europe—nor does one expect there to be in the foreseeable future—the point of focus is on secularism.

So now let me answer your question about secularism. It has its origins in some of the developments around European nationalism, which itself



Lord Mountbatten meets with leaders of the Indian National Congress and the All-India Muslim League during crucial negotiations over the Partition of British India. From left to right: Abdul Rab Nishtar, Sardar Baldev Singh, Acharya Kriplani, Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lord Mountbatten, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, and Liaquat Ali Khan.

saying ‘the nation is ours, not theirs’. Much later, this came to be called ‘nationalism’.

And when numerical and statistical forms of discourse were introduced in the study of society, and notions of ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ were coined, this method came to be called ‘majoritarianism’, and since the criteria for defining majorities and minorities were very often religious, it was often a ‘religious majoritarianism’. All of this,

especially during the acrimonies around the Partition period, that secularism as a doctrine began to loom larger in their thinking and in their speeches and writings. Why? Why not earlier?

Gandhi’s position (as also Nehru’s in his book, *Discovery of India*) was that India’s history was a history of an unselfconscious pluralism in which Hindus and Muslims (as well as Sikhs, Christians, and others) lived side by side in a culture that had both shared elements and diversity. It had not suffered the damage induced by the kind of nationalism, the nation-building exercises I mentioned in my answer to your first question, which characterised European history. Our nationalism, they said, was not that kind of European nationalism; it was an anti-colonial nationalism embodied in a movement which they claimed would reflect that plurality, bringing together Muslims and others along with the Hindus. Regarding the Muslims in particular, they sought to implement this claim in such efforts as the Khilafat movement, which explicitly and specifically mobilised poor Muslims and Muslim kisaans (unlike the Muslim League, which by and large represented the urban, careerist, relatively educated Muslim), as well as the shorter-lived Muslim Mass Contact Campaign, whose leadership they actually put in the hands of a communist-leaning Muslim leader, K. M. Ashraf.

Now, one might say that we can infer from the very fact of Partition that that claim on Gandhi’s part was incorrect as a description of the national movement he led. I think, to some extent, that inference is right. But it is interesting to analyse exactly how those efforts

Muslim leaders felt they were being treated as mere minorities, especially in the politics of key regions like Uttar Pradesh. And it is then that Congress began to lose some of its hold on Muslim support. In fact, Nehru and Gandhi realised this by the late 1930s, and that is why Nehru (with Gandhi’s assent) started another mass mobilisation that was focused on Muslim involvement, the Muslim Mass Contact Programme. But that mobilisation was much more short-lived than the Khilafat movement. In any case, you asked what Gandhi’s thinking on the subject of secularism was. The short answer is that he thought secularism was not relevant in the Indian context, since the damage it is intended to repair had not occurred in India, and that adopting it would merely be slavish mimicry of Europe. Of course, if he were alive today, he would recognise that the very grounds on which he thought secularism was not relevant in India then would be the grounds for thinking that it is highly relevant and necessary today, since it is exactly European nationalism that Hindutva is mimicking today.

TDS: How do you assess Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s political trajectory? He was once regarded as a champion of Hindu-Muslim unity and was not particularly interested in the Khilafat Movement, yet he later became the principal advocate of the Two-Nation Theory, which ultimately led to the creation of Pakistan. After independence, however, he did not emphasise Hindus and Muslims as two separate nations within Pakistan but rather spoke in terms of citizens. How would you describe the evolution of his views on religion, secularism, and political action?

AB: Jinnah, too, went through various stages of thinking in the long period of the freedom movement. His anti-imperialism was much stronger in the early phase. The Khilafat movement unnerved him, since his temperament as a leader was much more lawyerly and not attuned to or comfortable with mass movements. From the late 1920s onward, his focus was much more on protecting the future of Muslims than on opposing the British. I also think it is important to keep in mind that he and the Muslim League leadership, as I have said, basically represented urban, middle-class, relatively educated Muslims, not poor Muslims, not the Muslim kisaan. This was actually a trajectory that went from Sir Syed to Jinnah. Maulana Azad was clear-eyed in seeing Jinnah and the Muslim League as belonging to this trajectory and said so quite early on.

In your question, you say Jinnah was the principal advocate of the Two-Nation Theory—but you have to ask when this became a total commitment of his. I think historians like Ayesha Jalal (and even other less academic biographers of Jinnah, like H. M. Seervai and Stanley Wolpert) have argued convincingly that, until almost the very end, Jinnah’s talk of Pakistan (and there was much talk of that kind) was a bargaining weapon, and his sights were really set on a unified India with radical provincial autonomy (and, of course, his deepest concern was the regions of the north-west and the east, where there were concentrations of large Muslim populations). As everyone knows, there were complicated and

intense negotiations on this issue towards the end, and things came to a head with the Cabinet Mission proposals. It was a complex matter with different considerations in play.

Gandhi’s entire political outlook, which was one of a highly decentralised polity (and economy), was of a piece with the idea of radical regional autonomy, but he had deep anxieties about the compulsory groupings clause in the proposals, fearing that they would be preludes to partition. The real opposition to the idea of provincial autonomy came from Nehru, who wanted a strong centre because that was needed to implement the ideas that he had been developing with Mahalanobis and others for central planning in an independent India, which they envisioned would adopt policies of Soviet-style industrialisation. (Subhas Chandra Bose was an ally of Nehru’s on this issue of a strong centre, something that became clear as early as 1938 when Bose set up the National Planning Committee and made Nehru its chair. Gandhi’s ideas, represented on the committee by Kumarappa, were pooh-poohed in the proceedings by the other members.)

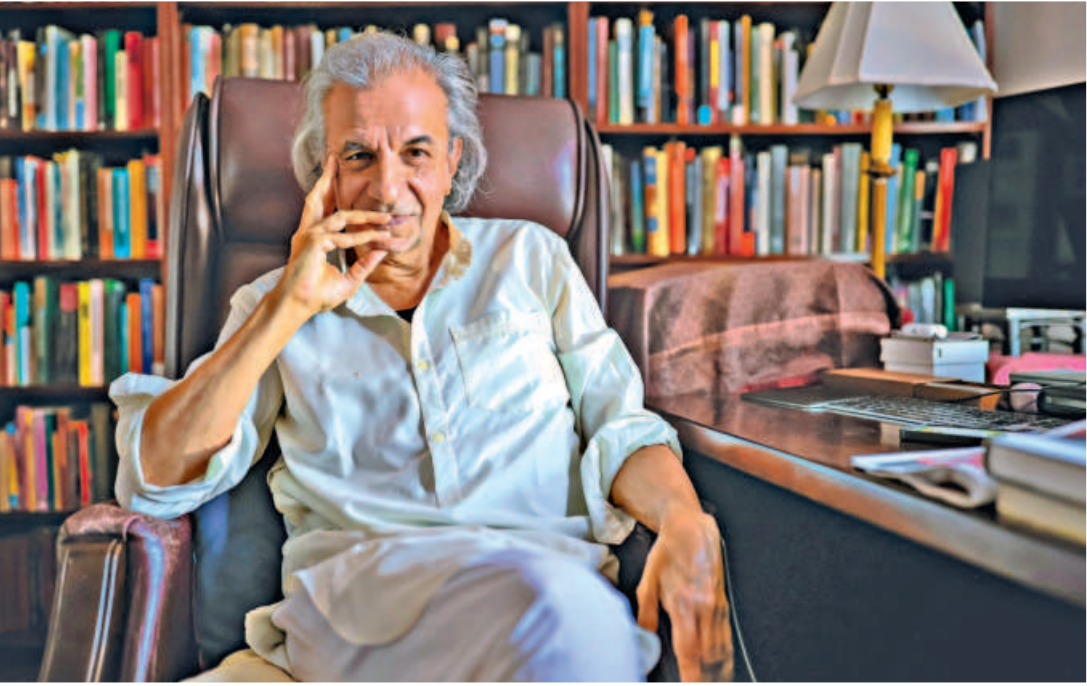
I suspect Nehru also was seriously worried that it would be hard to get rid of the Princes if there was the kind of regional autonomy Jinnah was demanding. Moreover, the emerging interests of capital in India were also for a strong centre, since big capital, in general, does not like fragmented markets; so its interest in a strong centre coincided with Nehru for quite the opposite reasons. Nehru’s position carried the day, as you know, and then partition began to look inevitable once Jinnah’s demand for regional autonomy was rejected.

Now, if this understanding of Jinnah’s motives and role is right, then it is quite unsurprising that, after Pakistan was created, he would have articulated a secularist vision of governance for it, as he indeed famously did. That articulation would only be surprising if you accept the occasional Congress caricature of Jinnah as a man of outsize ambition or a sort of Muslim counterpart to Hindu Mahasabhaite ideologues. But I think that the scholars I mentioned earlier (especially Jalal) have definitively shown, with documentation, that that understanding of his role and motives during the previous decade is quite wrong.

However, even when it was looking as if Partition was inevitable as a result of the considerations I have just mentioned, the question remained whether Bengal province should be partitioned or not. That question was not settled just by the deliberations of the Muslim League and northern Congress politicians and the British; it was something that was pushed by the Bengali Hindu upper castes, represented by the regional Hindu political leaders of Bengal, who were jittery about the prospect of being a minority in a united Bengal with a majority Muslim population.

And this, of course, raises the further question, a counterfactual one: could the Partition of India have been avoided in 1947 if the earlier partition of Bengal in 1905 had not been reversed? The what-ifs of history have no easy answers.

The interview was taken by Priyam Paul



Akeel Bilgrami

originated as a result of large changes in the seventeenth century.

With the rise of modern science, certain longstanding theological forms of legitimization of state power—such as the divine right of the monarch who personified the state—began to lose their hold. New forms of justification for it were therefore sought, not in theology, but in political psychology. At just about the same time, after the Westphalian peace, there were two political developments on the ground: first, a new form of entity had emerged (the nation); and second, power, which hitherto had rather scattered locations, began to be increasingly centralised. These were not miscellaneous parallel developments; they were deeply integrated developments, so much so that the nation and the state became completely fused, a fusion expressed by a hyphen (the ‘nation-state’).

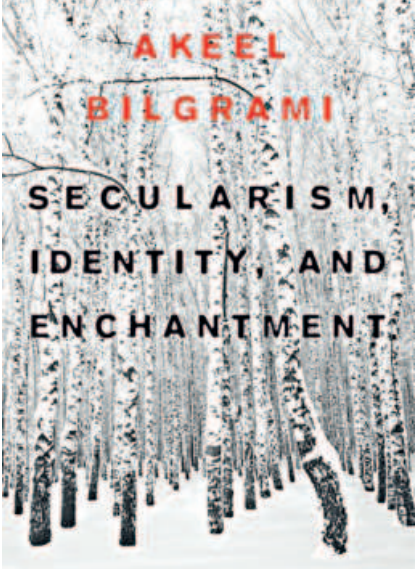
And the reason why I say the new justification of state power invoked political psychology is that it took the form of generating a feeling for what was named by the first half of the hyphenated conjunction (the nation), and this thereby—because of the fusion—legitimated what was named by the second half of the hyphenated conjunction (the state). The interesting and crucial question is: how was this feeling generated? Everywhere in Europe, it was done by a standard method: finding an ‘external enemy within’ the nation (the Jews, the Irish, Protestants in Catholic countries, Catholics in Protestant countries), despising it and subjugating it, and

in turn, quite naturally caused religious minoritarian backlashes against it, thus generating, in general, a great deal of religion-based domestic strife. And secularism emerged as a doctrine because it was felt that the only way to stop such strife was to steer the polity to be free of all direct religious influence, whether majoritarian or minoritarian.

So, secularism, you might say, was first formulated as a way of repairing the damage caused by nation-building exercises in Europe some centuries ago.

TDS: During the anti-colonial movement in undivided India, intense religious rivalry, tension, and violence—particularly between Hindus and Muslims—ultimately culminated in the Partition along religious lines. You have argued that Gandhi was not a proponent of secularism. What, then, was his actual understanding of religion and religious divisions within society and the nation?

AB: The anti-colonial movement was a very protracted affair over four decades, and it had many complex elements and developments. Gandhi’s position (indeed even Nehru’s position) on the question of secularism changed over this period in response to these developments. Gandhi’s only really systematic piece of writing was *Hind Swaraj*, published in 1909. In it, there is no mention of secularism. Nor did Nehru make much mention of it in the early decades of the freedom movement. It is really only in the very last decade at most of the freedom movement, and



on his and Nehru’s part went wrong. My own view is that while the freedom struggle Gandhi led involved Muslims in mass mobilisations, such as those I mentioned, Muslims tended to be driven primarily by anti-imperialism and not along religious or communal lines. Khilafat, in particular, had a tremendously dynamic and progressive effect on Muslim politics in many states like Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Assam, and these lasted until fairly late in the 1920s. It is only when the freedom movement involved Muslims, not in mass movements but in formal negotiations with the British, with Hindu and Muslim leaders representing the interests of each community, that

Govt to probe BCB irregularities

STAR SPORTS DESK

State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque told the parliament yesterday that the government will launch an investigation into officials and employees of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) involved in irregularities during the Awami League regime.

"We will take actions against the people involved in the irregularities after the probe," he said while replying to a supplementary question from BNP MP Mosharraf Hossain (Bogura-4).

The state minister said that those who were "illegally recruited through political favouritism" since 2008 would be investigated by a committee, and the names of those involved would be revealed.

"You will be surprised to know that BCB's funds and manpower were used to support a group in depriving people of voting rights. Officials and employees involved in such misconduct will face investigation and subsequent action," he said.

Mosharraf Hossain had asked whether BCB officials and employees would be brought under the law over allegations that since the Awami League government came to power, recruitment had been carried out with "incompetent, identified cadres", and that during the 2018 and 2024 elections, some had used board property for election activities.

Replying, the state minister said sports, including cricket, had been "politicised and paralysed" during the previous government, pushing the sector towards destruction.

"Following the prime minister's directive, we are working to free sports from politicisation and partisanship," he added.

Aminul Haque also said he had noticed issues regarding the personal wealth of some BCB officials and employees.

"I will call upon the Anti-Corruption Commission to inform us if there is any investigation underway, so that these matters can be presented before the nation," he said.

'I don't see a crisis anywhere'

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul returned to the country yesterday after spending over a month in Australia, during which a few intriguing developments took place. National Sports Council (NSC) formed an investigation committee to look into the BCB elections, the board responded with a statement, appearing to be in conflict with NSC over the probe and all the while domestic cricket remained static. The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi spoke with Bulbul about the recent issues. Excerpts of the conversation are given below:

The Daily Star (DS): From the board's statement, it seems that the government and the BCB are in confrontation. Does that put you in an uncomfortable position? **Aminul Islam Bulbul (AIB):** Actually, the explanation of the statement was not entirely accurate, I think. There is no confrontation. We are a self-governed institute, we work independently. At that time, it seemed like there could be interference. If you look at that statement closely, you would see that it said it could happen, it didn't say it has happened. Had there been some interference, international news organisations could have picked that up. That's why we gave that statement as a precaution.

DS: Does the government's decision to investigate the polls put your board in an awkward position?

AIB: The board has been up and running for five months. We have been playing series and domestic games. At the end of the day, the government is the custodian of our sports, not just cricket. We respect it.

DS: There was a sentence in the statement related to BCB requesting NSC to "close the matter" which many interpreted as a request to end the investigation. What was it?

AIB: No, that interpretation is wrong. Actually, sometimes meaning gets lost in translation. It was nothing like that. That would be absurd! We run cricket here in affiliation with the ICC and the ACC, but at the end of the day, we work under the Bangladesh government.

DS: Why didn't you handle the matter through talks with relevant people and not a press release?

AIB: The decision had already come [NSC gazette]. It wasn't a clash, we just clarified our position for all of our betterment.

DS: Two board directors have resigned, why?

AIB: It is completely their personal matter.



Having returned from a vacation in Australia, where his family resides, Aminul Islam Bulbul, president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, meets the Tigers' head coach Phil Simmons in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: BCB

But we haven't accepted their resignations yet. We will talk.

DS: Can this board overcome the current crisis?

AIB: I don't see a crisis anywhere. The board is running as it should. Our national team is playing and the women's team are preparing for the Sri Lanka series. This is an elected board running for five-and-a-half-months so we don't expect questions like that.

DS: How has your experience been in the last five-and-a-half-months as an elected president?

AIB: The first four months [becoming a director through NSC quota and being elected as president] and the next five-and-a-half months [elected as director and then as president] have been two different phases and it has been very challenging. We have been able to start cricket activities at the district level. But our main cricket, the lone List-A event, Dhaka Premier League has not happened yet. The Third Division league will start soon and teams from Second Division are playing while the First Division was completed. For the DPL, the board,

umpires, grounds, scorers and players are ready. We are only waiting for the clubs. We feel heartbroken for the players [missing out on DPL income]. But what can we do?

DS: The World Cup issue has created a distance with ICC. How much of it has been resolved?

AIB: We have already recovered from it, Alhamdulillah. Many things have happened in-between which perhaps is not known to the press. I had to accept the decision from the previous government and we will have to abide by the decisions of the current government.

DS: Did you ever feel that you had to stomach that decision due to request?

AIB: No. But I had tried very hard to play. I am a cricketer at the end of the day.

DS: There are talks of the sports ministry opening an investigation on why the team did not compete in the World Cup. What do you know about that? **AIB:** I came to know of it from newspapers. All we have done is listen to the government. We had selected the team, all preparations were done. But we had to abide by the government's directives.

Injuries leave midfield thin ahead of Singapore tie

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head coach Javier Cabrera is dealing with a growing list of concerns ahead of Tuesday's final AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers match against Singapore.

The Spaniard is already without key players, as veteran centre-back Topu Barman and forward Rakib Hossain remain in Dhaka due to suspensions. Midfielder Sohel Rana Jr was also left out due to poor form, leaving the team particularly short in midfield.

Injuries have further compounded the problem. Following the 3-0 defeat to Vietnam, Bangladesh held their second training session in Singapore on Sunday, but defensive midfielder Mohammad Ridoy did not take part, while attacking midfielder Shah Quazem Kirmanee only trained lightly. Forward Arman Faysal Akash also picked up an injury during the session.

Ridoy and Quazem both missed the Vietnam match and are now almost certain to be unavailable against Singapore.

Canada-based midfielder Shamit Shome, who played the full 90 minutes against Vietnam, acknowledged the challenges after training.

"We are obviously missing Ridoy, Quazem, and the ones that didn't come - Rakib and Topu," said Shome. "There may be times when Hamza or I cannot play, so it's about the next man stepping up and contributing."



Despite the setbacks, there are some positives for Bangladesh. Attacking midfielder Sheikh Morsalin has returned to full fitness after playing only 45 minutes against Vietnam.

The team is also drawing encouragement from strong support in Singapore, where a large Bangladeshi expatriate community has attended training sessions.

"Everyone was a bit down after the Vietnam defeat, but we are improving and now fully focused on the Singapore match," Shome added. "The support from the expatriate Bangladeshis here is really motivating us, and we are hoping for a good performance."



Long wait ends as Rakin follows family legacy

ANISUR RAHMAN

The long wait is finally over for Khaled Mahmud Rakin, who has earned his place in the Bangladesh national hockey team, becoming the third member of his family to achieve the feat after his father Abdur Razzak Sona Mia and elder brother Rasel Mahmud Jimmy, one of the country's finest forwards.

A former BKSP player, Rakin had been waiting in the wings for nearly a decade. Despite being called up to preliminary squads on several occasions, he repeatedly fell short of making the final cut. Now, at 28, he has secured a place in the 18-member squad for the Men's Asian Games Qualifiers, scheduled to be held in Thailand from April 2 to 10.

Bangladesh are set to leave for Thailand on March 31 and will compete in Pool B against Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei, and Uzbekistan. Four of the nine participating teams will qualify for September's Asian Games in Japan.

"After hearing the news, the first person I remembered was my father, who dreamed that both his sons would represent the national team together," Rakin told The Daily Star after training at Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium on Sunday.

"I still hope that one day I will get the chance to play alongside Jimmy bhai for the national team. I believe a new committee may recall him, as he is still fit and performing well," he added. The two brothers have previously played together for Mohammedan,

Bangladesh Navy, and in franchise-based domestic competitions.

Rakin admitted that repeated setbacks had taken a toll on him, but encouragement from his elder brother helped him persevere.

"My father would have been happier than me if he were alive. Still, my whole family is proud, and I am delighted. It's an indescribable feeling after waiting for 10 long years," said the right-back.

Alongside Rakin, goalkeeper Ashraful Haque Shad and midfielder Mehrab Hasan Samin have also earned their maiden national call-ups, as the squad blends experience with youth.

Head coach Ashiquzzaman expressed confidence in the team's chances, though he rued the absence of midfielder and penalty-corner specialist Sohanur Rahman Sabuj, who was withdrawn by Bangladesh Air Force following a media report.

"If the players can perform to their potential, we should not face difficulty in qualifying. Our immediate goal is to reach the semifinals, and then fight for the title," said the coach.

Penalty-corner specialist Amirul Islam, who was the top scorer in last year's FIH Men's U-21 World Cup, also echoed the optimism.

"We have a balanced squad with a good mix of senior and junior players, and the fitness level is very good. If we can play to our strengths, we have the ability to become champions," he said.



73 DAYS TO GO



Inside the dome

Hosts USA kicked off their 1994 World Cup campaign on June 18 at the newly built Pontiac Silverdome on the outskirts of Detroit. Playing before a crowd of 73,425 against Switzerland, the match made history as the first-ever World Cup game to be played in an indoor stadium. The venue went on to host four more matches during that tournament.

****Visit The Daily Star website to also read: 'The story behind Gazzaniga's iconic World Cup trophy'**

Sabalenka completes 'SUNSHINE DOUBLE'

Aryna Sabalenka won her second straight Miami Open title on Sunday, beating Coco Gauff 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 to complete a 'Sunshine Double'. World number one Sabalenka became only the fifth woman to win the Indian Wells and Miami titles back-to-back, a feat known as the 'Sunshine Double' given the tournaments' respective locations in California and Florida.

PHOTO: AFP



CWAB voices frustration over Dhaka leagues' stalemate

SPORTS REPORTER

The Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) has expressed frustration over the ongoing stagnation of Dhaka leagues in a letter addressed to Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Aminul Islam Bulbul, according to a CWAB media release on Sunday.

The letter was also sent to Adnan Rahman Dipon, chairman of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan (CCDM), who was out of the country.

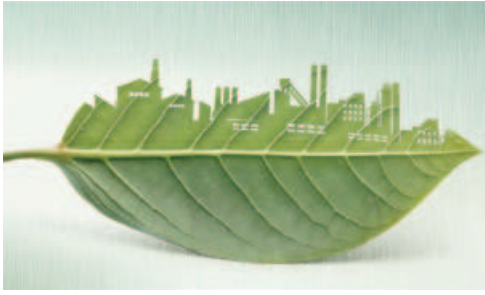
CWAB said both letters had been received by the board.

In the letter, CWAB highlighted that while the domestic cricket season is approaching its final stages, the stalemate between clubs and the BCB continues. It noted the lack of preparation for the Third Division League and the absence of any initiative for players unable to participate in the Second Division League.

"There are no visible discussions or plans to start the Dhaka Premier League. Overall, the current state of domestic cricket is extremely disappointing for the players," the letter read.

The association also raised concerns over the impact on players, many of whom depend on these leagues for their livelihood.

The letter concluded by expressing hope that, as the "guardian of Bangladesh cricket", Bulbul would take the necessary steps to resume the leagues.



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Govt, opposition clash over some ordinances

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday said it submitted notes of dissent on around 15 key issues during a meeting of the special parliamentary committee reviewing 133 ordinances issued by the interim government.

The notes pertain to the ordinances on the referendum, the Human Rights Commission, and the separation of the judiciary, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General and committee member Rafiqul Islam Khan told the media after the meeting.

Around 22 issues were discussed at the meeting, and Jamaat disagreed on 14 to 15 of them, he said.

Rafiqul alleged that the proposed changes would place several important institutions back under political influence, but the ruling BNP members were trying to pass them in parliament using their majority.

“Especially, they [the BNP] want to take institutions like the Human Rights Commission, Police Commission, and the commission to prevent enforced disappearances and killings back under political control, like before,” he said.

He added that the ruling party members were attempting to scrap some reform measures and return to the previous system.

These reforms include establishing an independent secretariat for the Supreme Court and forming a selection committee for appointing judges.

“We also strongly opposed any move to curtail the independence of the Anti-Corruption Commission,” Rafiqul said.

Speaking to reporters, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said the special committee had discussed each of the 133 ordinances and would place its report in parliament on April 2.

He said some ordinances would be approved without

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Passengers risk life and limb as they cling to the locomotive and ride on the roof of a train crossing Malibagh yesterday afternoon. A fruit vendor sitting on the level crossing scrambles away at the last moment, leaving inches for the train to pass. Meanwhile, a man darts across the tracks, ignoring the gateman's signal. On the adjacent lines, a group of men lounge idly, unlikely to hear another approaching train over the roar of the one already passing. Despite the fatal consequences of train-related accidents, recklessness remains rampant all over the country. Just Friday night, five people were killed after being run over by a train in Tangail's Kalihati upazila.

RAMPANT RECKLESSNESS

Dreams of Europe end in saltwater

18 Bangladeshis killed in the Mediterranean

DWOHA CHOWDHURY and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

For months, Sajidur Rahman's family hoped the 28-year-old would reach Europe and change their fortunes.

Instead, they are now mourning his death -- from hunger, on a boat adrift in the Mediterranean.

The second of three brothers from a farming family in Tarapasha village of Sunamganj's Dirai upazila, Sajidur had taught at a madrasa before deciding to try his luck in Europe, like many young men in his area.

Several Bangladeshis attempting the perilous crossing from Libya to Europe were rescued and taken to hospitals or detention centres in Greece. Sajidur was not among them.

He was one of at least 18 Bangladeshis who died in the tragedy, confirmed Md Nurul Haque Nur, state minister for expatriates' welfare and overseas employment.

Sajidur left home on January 14 after his family struck a Tk 12 lakh deal with local broker Mujibur Rahman, his father Abdul Gani said.

“For two months and eight days, they kept giving excuses. Then they said he had been sent on the crossing. The next day, they said he had already reached Greece. Later, we came to know my brother had died on the boat.”

HELAL SARDAR, brother of deceased Nuruzzaman Sardar Moyna

Promised passage on a large steel boat, Sajidur was instead confined for 17 days without food in a so-called “game ghar”, a deceptive term used by trafficking syndicates for detention centres where migrants are held, tortured and extorted.

Later he was forced onto a plastic boat to cross the sea.

“His last call came before boarding on March 21. They gave him no food there [in the detention centre], and even after

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

2 Bangladeshis tortured to death in Libya

Their families in Madaripur say

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

Two Bangladeshi migrants from Madaripur have died in Libya after being tortured by human traffickers while attempting to reach Italy, their families have said, citing brokers.

The victims were identified as Ilias Hawlader, 25, son of Kalam Hawlader from South Janardandi in Kalkini upazila, and Faruk Hawlader, 35, son of Seken Hawlader from Binitiluk in Dasar upazila.

Family members said Ilias had been living in Qatar, while Faruk was employed in Saudi Arabia. Both men supported their households with remittances. Ilias provided for his wife Bithi, their two-year-old son, and his parents; Faruk sustained his wife Laboni, their son and daughter, and his mother.

Relatives alleged that traffickers lured the two men with promises of a better life in Europe. After arriving in Libya, they were detained in a so-called “game house” -- a traffickers' holding facility -- where they were subjected to brutal torture.

According to the families, Faruk died

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Labour migration hits a wall with several key markets shut

Experts warn against overreliance on Saudi Arabia, call for recruitment reforms, diversification of destinations

MD ABBAS

Labour migration from Bangladesh to several major overseas destinations, including Malaysia and the UAE, has remained stalled for years, leaving tens of thousands of aspiring migrant workers in uncertainty.

Apart from Malaysia and the UAE, Oman and Bahrain either shut or restricted Bangladeshi workers' entry to their labour markets, with no clear timeline for reopening. This has left Bangladesh heavily reliant on a single destination -- Saudi Arabia -- which, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), has absorbed around 30 lakh Bangladeshi workers into its labour market over the last five years.

Experts warn that the situation could worsen, as rising geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, particularly the US-Israel war on Iran, threaten regional stability and economic activity. Any escalation could disrupt labour demand in Gulf countries, further shrinking employment opportunities for Bangladeshi migrants.

- Malaysia, the UAE, several other destinations remain largely closed
- 18,000 workers stranded after missing Malaysia's visa deadline
- Fraud, 'visa trade', syndicates weakening migration system
- US-Israel war on Iran may dampen labour demand
- Oman, the Maldives halted recruitment over visa irregularities

BMET data shows that 11.31 lakh Bangladeshis went abroad for work last year. Of them, 754,671 or 66.72 percent went to

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

PROTEST CRACKDOWN Nepal court extends ex-PM Oli's detention

AFP, Kathmandu

A Nepal court yesterday extended by five days the detention of former prime minister KP Sharma Oli and his home minister after their arrest over alleged involvement in a deadly crackdown on the 2025 protests that ousted him.

Oli, 74, and ex-home minister Ramesh Lekhak were arrested in pre-dawn raids on Saturday, a day after Prime Minister Balendra Shah was sworn in following the first elections since the September uprising.

They were arrested over their alleged involvement in the protest crackdown that killed at least 76

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Illegal structures built haphazardly on Satarkul canal have narrowed the once wide waterbody, linked to the Balu river, in the city's Badda. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

‘We, the people, will rule’

Thousands of rallies oppose authoritarianism in Trump's US

REUTERS

Demonstrators decrying US President Donald Trump's aggressive deportation efforts, war in Iran and other policies took to the city streets on Saturday across the country in the third round of the “No Kings” rallies.

More than 3,200 events had been planned in all 50 states, after the two previous nationwide events attracted millions of participants.

Large rallies took place in New York, Dallas, Philadelphia and Washington, but two-thirds of No Kings events took place outside major cities, a nearly 40 percent jump for smaller communities from the movement's first mobilisation last June, organisers said.

The first No Kings event, on Trump's birthday, June 14, last year, drew an estimated 4 million to 6 million people across roughly 2,100 sites nationwide. The second mobilisation in October involved an estimated 7 million participants in more than 2,700 cities, according to sources.

The events come amid what organisers said was a call to action against the bombardment of Iran by the US and Israel.

Morgan Taylor, 45, attending the Washington protest with her 12-year-old son, said she was enraged by Trump's military action in Iran, which she called a “stupid war.”

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