

\$234b laundered under AL regime

Tarique says in his first question-answer session in JS



The 11 priority cases of money laundering involve ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her family, former land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, S Alam Group, Beximco Group, Sikder Group, Bashundhara Group, NASSA Group, Orion Group, Nabil Group, HBM Iqbal and his family, and Summit Group.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is giving top priority to recovering assets laundered abroad, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman told parliament yesterday, describing the matter as central to a broader strategy to combat corruption, money laundering and financial crimes.

He said the government's election manifesto underscores the publication of a comprehensive white paper investigating money laundering and corruption during the Awami League regime.

Citing findings of the White Paper Preparation Committee formed by the interim government, the prime minister said, "Between 2009 and 2023, a total of \$234 billion, averaging \$16 billion annually, or

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Govt bank borrowing surges amid war, interim legacy

Annual target nearly exhausted in 9 months

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Government bank borrowing has risen sharply this fiscal year, a trend that began under the interim administration and has continued under the BNP government amid the US-Israel war on Iran, raising fresh concerns about inflation and fiscal pressures.

Between July last year and March 19 this year, the government borrowed Tk 98,526 crore from the banking system, which is 95 percent of the full-year target laid out in the budget for 2025-26 fiscal year, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

A year earlier, net borrowing stood at Tk 27,739 crore.

Of the amount borrowed this fiscal year, Tk 17,386 crore came from the BB, Tk 71,575 crore from banks and Tk 9,564 crore from non-bank sources.

Borrowing directly from the central bank carries significant risks as it has a direct impact on inflation, said M Masrur Reaz, chairman of Policy Exchange Bangladesh.

He urged the government to refrain from central bank borrowing when inflationary pressure is brewing.

Inflation has been hovering around 9 percent for more than three years, hitting a 10-month high of 9.13 percent in February, up from 8.58 percent the previous month, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Officials said borrowing needs have risen due to multiple factors, including election expenditure by the interim government.

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Iran clears 6 tankers heading for Bangladesh

Says it's unhappy with Dhaka's statement on war

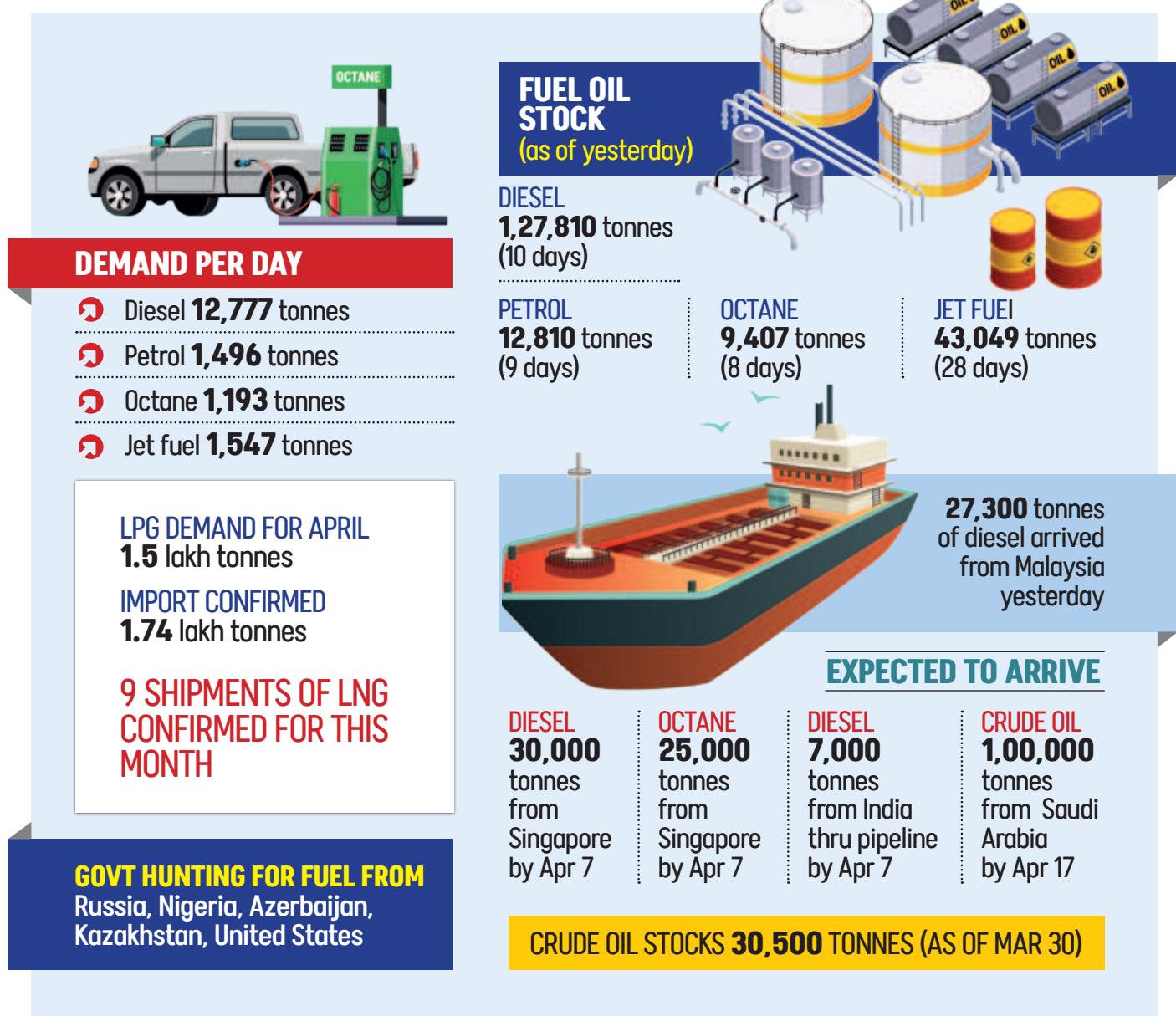
DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Iran has granted the passage of six Bangladesh-bound tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, Iranian Ambassador Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi said yesterday.

"There is no problem for Bangladeshi fuel-carrying ships to use this route. We hope the ships will soon be able to arrive in Bangladesh and help address energy challenges it faces," he told a press conference at the Iranian embassy in Dhaka.

Hundreds of ships got stranded as Iran tightened its grip on the Strait of Hormuz after the US-Israel attacks on Iran on February 28, Bangladesh had requested Iran to allow the six fuel-carrying ships bound for Bangladesh to pass through the strait.

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Emergency measles shot drive from Sunday

3 more deaths take toll to 47 this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will launch an emergency measles vaccination campaign from Sunday in response to a sharp rise in deadly cases across several districts.

It will begin in selected upazilas with high caseloads and eventually cover all children aged six months to 10 years, Health Minister Sardar Md Sakawat Husain said yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference following a meeting at the Secretariat yesterday, he added that leave for all health workers involved has been cancelled.

At least 47 children have died from suspected measles and related complications so far this year, including two in the latest 24-hour count.

The toll could be higher as the government lacks a comprehensive death register.

One of the latest fatalities occurred at the

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Eastern Refinery nears temporary shutdown

Dwindling crude stock the reason; diesel, octane inflows may relieve short-term pressure

MOHAMMAD SUMAN and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh's sole state-owned refinery is operating on critically low crude reserves, raising the prospect of a temporary halt in operations within days, even as shipments await movement through disrupted regional supply lines.

The Eastern Refinery Limited (ERL) held around 30,500 tonnes of usable crude till March 30 -- enough to sustain operations for around six days, according to multiple officials.

Contacted by The Daily Star, a senior ERL official, requesting anonymity, said, "With the current stock, operations can continue until April 6 [with throughput at the installed capacity of 4,500 tonnes per day]. After that, adjustments may be required depending on shipment arrivals."

To stretch reserves, throughput has already been reduced to about 3,700 tonnes per day, down from the installed capacity. Officials have not yet said how long the reserves might last at the reduced throughput.

Throughput refers to the volume of

"The ERL is unable to process anything other than Arabian Light Crude and the Murban, which is mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia and UAE. So, we don't have any alternative crude sources, but we are exploring refined oil alternatives."

- **Monir Hossain Chowdhury**, spokesperson for the Energy Division

crude the refinery processes each day, which can be adjusted to extend available reserves.

While the ERL has operated with relative stability since 1968, undergoing periodic "turnarounds" every three to five years, a shutdown triggered by depleted crude stocks would be highly unusual.

The current strain follows delays in two crude shipments totalling 200,000 tonnes from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, originally scheduled for March.

Bangladesh typically imports two crude cargoes a month. However, since the escalation of the US-Israel war on Iran, three shipments have been delayed.

Officials said one cargo has since been loaded and is now in transit through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's envoy in Bangladesh yesterday indicated that necessary measures would be taken to ensure safe passage of commercial vessels, including those carrying fuel for Bangladesh.

Although shipping through Hormuz remains constrained, limited transit has resumed under controlled conditions.

Even so, the next crude cargo is unlikely to reach the Chattogram port before mid-April, leaving a short gap in the ERL's supply schedule, according to Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) officials.

The ERL processes around 1.5 million tonnes of crude annually -- roughly 125,000 tonnes a month -- producing

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REFORMS COUNCIL Opposition walks out, plans street protests

Shafiqur says people's verdict being ignored

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliance would launch street protests over its demand for convening a Constitution Reform Council, Leader of the Opposition Shafiqur Rahman said yesterday after walking out of parliament.

During a briefing in the evening, following the walkout, he said the protest would be finalised in consultation with other parties in the alliance.

He blamed the move on the failure to secure any resolution on their motion to convene the council.

Around 5:40pm, following the question-answer session in the House, Shafiqur took the floor on a point of order

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US to exit Iran war soon, may return if needed

Says Trump; Tehran denies it asked for ceasefire; global oil supply disruption may double in April

Trump threatens to quit Nato; set to deliver nat'l address

Strikes hit steel complexes in Iran; Kuwait airport, tanker off Qatar coast hit

Israel says it will occupy part of south Lebanon

AGENCIES

The United States would be "out of Iran pretty quickly" but could return for targeted strikes if needed, President Donald Trump said yesterday, as the International Energy Agency warned that global oil supply disruptions could double in April.

The US president also claimed he had rejected a ceasefire proposal from Iran's new leader and vowed to "blast Iran to oblivion" until it agrees to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran denied making any such request, calling the claim "false and baseless".

The conflict, which began when the US and Israel launched airstrikes across Iran that killed supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, showed no signs of abating, with

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People watch smoke rising from an oil warehouse in the Kani Qirzhal area on the outskirts of Erbil, capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, after a suspected drone strike yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Amid the measles outbreak, each of the 15 beds at the isolation ward of Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal is accommodating three infected children. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU KUMAR DAS

Eastern Refinery nears temporary shutdown

FROM PAGE 1
petrol, naphtha, furnace oil, and a portion of diesel.

Most of the country's petrol demand is met from locally produced condensate, processed at a government-owned facility and three private refineries.

These facilities also produce octane by blending naphtha with petrol, meaning around half of the country's octane supply is also locally produced.

However, a halt in the ERL's operations could disrupt naphtha availability, affecting the blending process for petrol and octane.

However, local condensate production remains steady, according to Petrobangla data.

On the other hand, most of the country's diesel demand is met through imports.

Officials said a temporary operational stoppage at the ERL is unlikely to significantly disrupt supply in April, as additional shipments are already in the pipeline.

A diesel shipment worth 27,000 tonnes has arrived Chattogram port from Malaysia yesterday while another 30,000 tonnes is expected by April 7. Two more of similar volume due in mid-April.

To address potential octane pressure, a 25,000-tonne shipment is expected by April 7, followed by another in mid-April.

According to BPC data, these volumes would be sufficient to meet demand for the next two months, reducing the likelihood of any immediate shortage.

Meanwhile, domestic condensate processing is also continuing, providing a partial buffer.

The situation highlights Bangladesh's dependence on the Strait

of Hormuz, a key global oil transit route.

Industry insiders say the ERL is configured to process specific Middle Eastern light crude, limiting flexibility in sourcing alternatives quickly. However, officials stress that the current challenge reflects delays and disruptions rather than a complete supply cutoff.

Pressure on petrol and octane supplies has tightened in recent days, though officials expect some easing.

As of yesterday, BPC data showed octane stocks at 9,407 tonnes and petrol stocks at 12,810 tonnes – enough for about eight to nine days of demand, based on March 2025 averages.

Diesel stocks stood at 127,810 tonnes, providing a buffer of around 10 days. Furnace oil and jet fuel stocks are sufficient for the entire month of April, according to BPC.

Despite stable fuel prices for April, long queues were observed at several filling stations in Dhaka even yesterday.

Motorists reported waiting for hours to refuel, with some returning multiple times. At the Trust Filling Station in Mohakhali, queues stretched onto the street from early morning. At one point, the queue for private cars extended up to the railgate.

Before fuel tankers arrived from depots, many pumps experienced significant congestion.

Officials said the queues reflect distribution tightness and precautionary buying rather than a breakdown in overall supply.

BPC officials maintain that there are no technical barriers to restarting ERL operations once crude arrives.

"We have concern about the issue of shutting down the ERL. But we have alternative measures. We urge people not to panic, as we have already

secured supplies for April," said Monir Hossain Chowdhury, spokesperson for the Energy Division.

Data from Sylhet Gas Fields Limited shows that local production continues to supply around 720 barrels of octane and 3,318 barrels of petrol daily.

While three private refineries are processing this condensate, they lack the high-octane blending components produced by the ERL's catalytic reforming unit.

Without the refinery's higher-grade output in case the Middle East tensions continue, the market may face both volume and quality constraints. Local production provides a buffer, but it lacks the capacity to replace the refinery's 1.5 million tonne annual output.

Industry insiders say the situation underscores the risks of relying on a single, ageing refinery.

In this regard, Monir Hossain Chowdhury said the ERL is unable to process anything other than Arabian Light Crude and the Murban, which is mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia and UAE.

"As a result, we don't have any alternative crude sources, but we are exploring refined oil alternatives."

The long-delayed ERL Unit-2 project has left the country exposed to external shocks, particularly those linked to geopolitical tensions in key supply routes.

Although operations can resume quickly once crude arrives, rising freight costs and insurance premiums amid Middle East tensions are already adding pressure on the national exchequer.

As the timeline for the ERL's potential operational adjustments approaches next week, the situation remains manageable but dependent on the timely arrival of shipments.

Iran clears 6 tankers heading for Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1
"Initially, there were no specific details of the ships. When we informed Bangladesh of this, Dhaka shared the specific information last week. We have sent it to Tehran. Our National Security Council said it will help pass the six ships. We are checking the specification now," said Jahanabadi.

The Iranian envoy said the embassy in Dhaka has sent to Tehran the information and photos of Bangladeshis facing challenges due to the fuel crisis. "Bangladesh is a friendly Muslim country. The people here protested the martyrdom of our supreme leader."

The diplomat, however, said Iran is not happy with Bangladesh's statement after the US-Israel attacks on Iran. "Bangladesh has expressed concerns, but we would have been happier to see Bangladesh condemn the aggression against Iran."

Attacking a sovereign country is

a clear violation of the UN Charter, and the US and Israel have violated it, Jahanabadi added.

He said Iran considered Bangladesh a friend and thus expects a clearer statement, not any confusion.

Asked if Iran would send any formal communication to Dhaka expressing its dissatisfaction, the ambassador said no such letters were sent. However, he would raise the issue if he meets the prime minister.

He also mentioned that countries like Russia and China, despite not being Muslim-majority nations, have voiced condemnation on the issue. "We understand the limitation of Bangladesh whose millions of citizens work in the Gulf countries."

Jahanabadi said Iran has no intention of waging war with Muslim Arab countries and is only attacking US bases in the region. He blamed the Gulf countries for allowing US bases.

He also regretted the deaths of

Bangladeshis in the Gulf amid the war.

The Iranian envoy added that 180 Bangladeshis stranded in Iran have already returned home, while those still remaining there will receive all necessary assistance if they wish to return.

Jahanabadi also commented that US President Donald Trump is now seeking a way out of the war with Iran.

He added that a previous US president did not fall into what he described as the "trap" set by "Zionist Israel", but the current president has.

According to him, the US president is making inconsistent statements about the war, saying one thing in the morning, another at noon, and something different at night.

The diplomat criticised the UN's role, saying that it has failed to ensure the security of sovereign countries. "Thus, we have to defend ourselves."

Emergency measles shot drive from Sunday

FROM PAGE 1
Infectious Diseases Hospital in Mohakhali, raising measles-related deaths at the facility to 26, said superintendent Tanzina Jahan. The hospital was treating 84 suspected patients yesterday, 30 of them admitted in the last daily count.

Another child, seven-month-old Hira Moni from Moheshkhali, died at Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, where 38 others were receiving treatment. Doctors said she was also suffering from pneumonia and oral complications.

Rajshahi Medical College Hospital reported the other latest death, bringing its suspected deaths from measles to four, according to spokesperson Dr Shankar K Biswas.

However, Prothom Alo reported 12 deaths at RMCH until Sunday, though the hospital acknowledged

only one at that time.

EMERGENCY DRIVE

Children normally receive measles vaccines twice – at nine months and 15 months – under the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI).

Special campaigns are usually held every four years, but after the last one in 2020, the planned 2024 drive was cancelled due to the July uprising, the health minister said.

He said routine vaccination was also disrupted at least three times last year due to strikes by health assistants who administer the doses in rural areas. A funding crisis, triggered by suspension of the sector programme by the interim government, further hampered services.

EPI had planned a special campaign in mid-April, but Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, said syringes would

only be available between May and July.

The government has now decided to proceed immediately due to the surge in cases, the minister said.

Unicef has already identified the most affected upazilas, where the campaign will start, he said.

Shahriar Sajjad, director of EPI, said they were finalising the list and it was expected by last night. Replying to a question, he said syringes had been managed "somehow", allowing the drive to go ahead.

Earlier, he told this correspondent that while the central stock of measles vaccine for routine immunisation had run out, supplies remained at field level.

He confirmed receipt of 2 crore doses from Gavi for the emergency campaign.

\$234b laundered during AL regime

FROM PAGE 1
approximately Tk 1.8 lakh crore, had been siphoned off."

Legal action would be taken against those identified as responsible, he said while responding to a question from Cumilla-9 MP Abul Kalam, during his first question-answer session in parliament.

The foreign ministry, he added, is working closely with relevant ministries and agencies to conclude Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties (MLATs) and exchange Mutual Legal Assistance Requests (MLARs) with other countries to repatriate laundered funds.

Nine countries and one territory have initially been identified as destinations for laundered money. They are the US, UK, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Thailand, UAE, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

Among them, Malaysia, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates have agreed to sign agreements while negotiations with the rest are ongoing, the prime minister said.

He also said an inter-agency task force, chaired by the governor of Bangladesh Bank, has been formed, and legal proceedings are underway in 11 prioritised cases identified by the body.

The cases are against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her family, former land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, S Alam Group, Beximco Group, Sikder Group, Bashundhara Group, NASSA Group, Orion Group, Nabil Group, HBM Iqbal and his family, and Summit Group, along with individuals and institutions linked to their interests, Tarique said.

Led by the Anti-Corruption Commission, investigations are being carried out with support from the CID, NBR's Central Intelligence Cell, and the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Department, he said.

Eleven Joint Investigation Teams have been formed, and courts have attached and frozen assets worth Tk 57,168.9 crore within the country as of March 25, 2026, he said.

In total, assets worth Tk 70,446.22 crore at home and abroad have been frozen, he added.

The prime minister said a total of 141 cases have been filed to recover laundered money, with charge sheets

FROM PAGE 1

After the February 12 election, higher fuel import costs linked to the war in the Middle East and the implementation of BNP's election pledges kept the borrowing flow elevated.

Meanwhile, revenue mobilisation has remained weak, compounding fiscal pressures.

Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury described the war as a major problem for Bangladesh.

"Because of the war, we [the government] are having to incur additional expenditure. We are being forced to purchase fuel at higher prices," he told reporters after a meeting on Wednesday.

With the annual borrowing target nearly exhausted in nine months, fiscal pressures are clearly front-loaded, said Ashikur Rahman, principal economist at the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

"More concerning, however, is the

submitted in 15 and verdicts delivered in six.

Responding to a supplementary question from MP Mujibur Rahman, the prime minister said the authorities were preparing a list of individuals involved in money laundering.

"In the past, we have seen various individuals in the government acting on their own wishes and interests, disregarding the country's laws, rules and ethics – detaining people as they pleased, forcing them to write whatever they wanted," he said.

"The current government, however, is respectful of the law. It seeks to act in accordance with the prevailing laws of the country and to ensure justice on a legal basis, so that no person is deprived of rightful justice. For this reason, we will proceed strictly through legal processes," he added.

"The law will advance at its own pace, and punishments will be determined according to the country's existing laws for those who have misappropriated the nation's wealth and laundered people's money," Tarique said.

FAMILY CARD

The prime minister also said that since the family card is issued in the name of the female head of household, "it will elevate their status within the family, and promote the empowerment of women both at home and in society".

He made the comments while responding to a question from MP ABM Mosharraf Hossain, who asked to what extent the government's newly introduced Family Card programme could create opportunities for women's empowerment.

He said that the philosophy of the programme is "not the individual, but the family is the main unit of development."

Currently, assistance is provided to disadvantaged groups through more than 95 social security programmes.

However, despite longstanding support, poverty reduction and improvements in nutrition and health have not reached desired levels, Tarique said.

Launched on March 10, 2026, the Family Card programme aims to cover four crore families nationwide within four years.

Responding to a supplementary question from NCP's Akhter Hossen,

increasing reliance on financing from the central bank. Borrowing from the central bank is inherently risky as it involves the creation of high-powered money."

At a time of persistently high inflation, this form of deficit financing undermines contractionary monetary policy, he said.

"This reflects a deeper structural issue: the central bank is increasingly surrendering to fiscal dominance. As a result, monetary policy risks becoming subordinate to fiscal compulsions, undermining its credibility and effectiveness," Rahman said.

He also said that the government's borrowing pattern this fiscal year reveals a growing inconsistency at the heart of Bangladesh's macroeconomic management.

Reaz pointed out another risk of large government borrowing from the banking system: it can create a crowding-out effect on the private sector, meaning private businesses

Tarique said the exact budget figure is not being disclosed at this stage, but the programme will expand gradually.

He assured parliament that the government is not printing money, so inflation will not occur.

"Rather, the funds provided will remain within the local economy, as farmers and women are unlikely to launder them abroad. This spending will circulate domestically, strengthening the grassroots economy, creating employment, and improving living standards for marginalised groups."

MANIFESTO IMPLEMENTATION

Answering another question from MP Tahsina Rushdir, the prime minister said all ministries and divisions are taking necessary initiatives to formulate action plans for the next 180 days, the next fiscal year, and the next five years to implement the BNP's election pledges.

Significant progress has already been achieved in the implementation of some important activities announced in the election manifesto, he said.

Agricultural loans up to Tk 10,000 in crop, livestock and fisheries sectors have already been waived.

Before Eid-ul-Fitr, allowances for 9,102 beneficiaries, including 3,295 imams, 2,975 muezzins, 2,604 khadems, 114 Hindu temple priests, 83 servicemen, and principals and vice-principals of Buddhist monasteries, were transferred to their bank accounts.

A pilot project to issue 25 lakh e-health cards under a pilot programme in Khulna district is under the approval process.

The 20,000 km canal excavation and re-excavation programme in the next five years began on March 16, 2026. By June, 1,204 km of canals will be excavated or re-excavated.

Afforestation is underway with the aim of planting 25 crore trees and creating green jobs in the next five years.

Plans are also underway to distribute free school uniforms to 200,000 primary students this fiscal year.

To improve technical and language skills, 9,000 teachers of technical institutions will be provided with tablets within 180 days, and 3,832 multimedia classrooms will be set up.

Govt bank borrowing surges amid war, interim legacy

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ranging from about 5.2 to 8.5 percent, driven by trade disruptions and energy market volatility.

Meanwhile, HRW said millions of migrant workers across the GCC countries are facing heightened risks to their safety and livelihoods due to the ongoing regional conflict.

"Millions of migrant workers employed across the Gulf countries are navigating threats to their physical safety and job security amid the conflict," said Michael Page, deputy Middle East and North Africa director at HRW.

As of March 25, conflict-related incidents in GCC countries have killed and injured several migrant workers, according to media and official reports.

Among those killed were a Pakistani driver, a Nepali security guard, and Bangladeshi workers in the UAE and Bahrain.

Quoting family members, the New York-based rights body said Saleh Ahmed, a Bangladeshi driver, was killed in Ajman after debris struck his water tanker. Another Bangladeshi, AM Tarek, died in Bahrain after being hit by shrapnel while leaving work.

HRW said many workers have seen sharp drops in income, especially those in commission-based jobs. Workers in several countries, including the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar, also reported rising food prices. Some said their monthly food costs had doubled.

The rights body urged the Gulf states to take emergency steps to protect migrant workers, including compensating income losses, ensuring payment of living wages, enforcing employment contracts, and improving access to social security benefits.

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PM conveys solidarity, support to Oman

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman recently wrote a letter to Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, conveying Bangladesh's solidarity with the leadership, government, and people of Oman in the context of the current regional situation.

Foreign Affairs Adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Humayun Kabir yesterday called on the Foreign Minister of Oman Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



As part of an eviction drive, Dhaka Metropolitan Police and Dhaka North City Corporation remove makeshift shops from a main road in Banani yesterday. Inset, authorities remove a structure from the capital's Banglamotor area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

EID VACATION

270 road crash victims arrived at NITOR daily

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Around 270 road crash victims visited the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR) daily on average during the Eid vacation, as the number of road crashes increased during the period.

Most of the patients sustained injuries in accidents involving three-wheelers and motorcycles, putting huge pressure on the specialised hospital while operating with limited manpower during the vacation, officials said.

The statistics highlight the growing pressure on medical facilities, particularly specialised ones, in handling patients during such phases.

Although road crashes occur throughout the year, their number sees a sharp rise during the Eid rush, as thousands of people leave Dhaka and other major cities to spend the holidays with family and loved ones, leading to a surge in the number of vehicles on the highways, including unfit and smaller ones, amid lax monitoring.

At least 351 people were killed and 1,046 injured in 346 road accidents across Bangladesh during the Eid rush from March 14-28 this year, said Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity.

"Road crashes are putting a huge burden on medical facilities. The pressure on us reached its peak during the Eid vacation as patients from across the country came here, finding many hospitals closed or offering limited services," said NITOR Director Prof Abul Kenan yesterday.

He said the 100-bed facility received a total of 1,626 road accident patients at their emergency department between March 18 and 23, averaging 271 patients daily.

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DMP moves to reclaim encroached footpaths

Eviction drives launched across key areas in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To make the city's footpaths more pedestrian-friendly, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday launched eviction drives in several areas, including Farmgate, Kakoli, Gulshan, Jatrabari and Indira Road.

Mobile courts cleared sidewalks by removing illegal shops and belongings of traders and shop owners.

During the operation, law enforcers and mobile courts led by Dhaka North City Corporation magistrates removed numerous makeshift shops occupying footpaths. In some cases, goods were confiscated, while in others, vendors were warned and asked to vacate voluntarily.

The drive, which began in the morning yesterday, will continue, a DMP official said.

Speaking after the operation in Farmgate, Executive Magistrate Md Faisal said authorities had considered vendors' livelihoods and mainly tried to persuade them to relocate.

"We have asked them to vacate the footpaths. However, if they

return, strict action will be taken," he said, adding that regular monitoring will be carried out to prevent reoccupation.

Earlier, at a high-level meeting at the Secretariat on March 24 titled "Reducing Traffic Congestion in Dhaka City and Modernizing Traffic Management," Prime

We have considered vendors' livelihoods and mainly tried to persuade them to relocate. We asked them to vacate the footpaths. However, if they return, strict action will be taken. Regular monitoring will be carried out to prevent reoccupation.

MD FAISAL, Executive Magistrate

Minister Tarique Rahman directed authorities to deliver visible improvements within one month.

On March 23, DMP announced a coordinated citywide drive from April 1 and urged traders to remove their belongings in advance. A public notice warned that violators

could face fines, imprisonment, and confiscation of goods.

According to the notice, many businesses – including restaurants, showrooms, workshops, and street vendors – continue to occupy footpaths with grills, ovens, chairs, and makeshift platforms, forcing pedestrians onto roads and worsening traffic congestion.

In Kakoli, mobile courts removed banners, digital signboards, and illegal shop extensions from sidewalks.

According to UNB, the drive was conducted simultaneously from 10:00am in multiple areas, including Moghbazar rail crossing to Banglamotor, Phulbaria Bus Stand-Bakshibazar to Chankharpool, and Nightingale Intersection to Arambagh.

Other areas included Dholaipar to Jatrabari, Faruk Sarani, Indira Road, Green Road, Ananda Cinema Hall, Bashundhara, Karwan Bazar, Kazipara, Shewrapara, Taltala, Bhashantek, Mirpur-14, and from BNS Centre to House Building North Tower and Kakoli outgoing.

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1 bed for 3 children as measles outbreak strains SBMCH

8 die in Barishal division

SUSHANTA GHOSH

Amid a rising measles outbreak in Barishal division, three infected children are sharing a single bed at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH), highlighting a severe shortage of beds and overcrowding.

Hospital authorities said 44 measles patients are currently being treated in just 15 beds.

On one such bed lie twin brothers Rafsan and Hafsan, aged one year and seven months, along with another infected child.

Their mother, Sonia Akter, said she brought them to SBMCH fearing inadequate treatment at the district hospital.

"I am extremely worried. I do not understand how they will receive proper treatment when three infected children are on one bed," she said, adding that she and another guardian are also sharing the same bed. "That makes five people on a single bed."

The situation reflects a wider crisis in the paediatric ward, where isolation arrangements exist but are inadequate due to overcrowding.

During a visit, this correspondent found patients everywhere, with many children lying on the floor amid a shortage of beds. Most were admitted with fever and cold-related complications.

Hospital sources said 491 patients are currently admitted on the second and third floors, including 103

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Third terminal deal on horizon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Negotiations to sign a deal between Bangladesh and Japan over the operation of Dhaka Airport's third terminal entered a decisive phase recently, following Japan's submission of a revised, lower-cost proposal.

Sources at the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) said the second high-level meeting between the two sides, scheduled to be held on April 3 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is likely to determine the deal's fate.

If the meeting delivers a consensus, Bangladesh can finally bring one of its most significant aviation

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2

Master plan key to a planned city: DSCC administrator

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is not possible to build a planned city without a master plan, said Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Administrator Md Abdus Salam yesterday.

The remark came during a views exchange meeting with Urban Development Journalists Forum, Bangladesh (UDJFB), at DSCC Nagar Bhaban.

The meeting was attended by the forum's President Matin Abdullah, Vice President Faisal Khan, General Secretary Hasan Imams and advisers Amitosh Pal and Helemul Alam, along with other members.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

23,865 'politically motivated' cases lifted Says law minister

UNB, Dhaka

Some 23,865 "politically motivated" cases, which were filed to harass people, have so far been withdrawn across the country, said Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman yesterday.

He said this in parliament while replying to a question from ruling party lawmaker MP SM Jahangir Hossain during the day's question answer session in the House.

Asaduzzaman also stated that the process to withdraw the remaining politically motivated cases filed by the fascist Awami League regime is on.

Replying to another question from the lawmaker, Asaduzzaman said that when a person is acquitted by a court and proven innocent, it is his

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

FUEL SHORTAGE

Navigation suspended in several dists

STAR REPORT

Riverine communications in several districts have come to a halt due to a fuel shortage, causing immense public suffering.

Hundreds of boat operators in vast shoal areas under Jamalpur's Dewanganj and Islampur upazilas along the Jamuna River have been hit hard by the ongoing crisis.

At Guthail ghat in Islampur, rows of engine-run boats were seen anchored, while only a few remained operational and were overcrowded.

Robiul Mia, a local boatman, said diesel supply remains insufficient while prices have surged to Tk 155-190 per litre in retail shops, making it nearly impossible to continue operations.

"Earlier, more than a hundred boats used to operate daily. Now, not even around 20 are running," he added.

Alim Mia from Chikajani village in Dewanganj upazila said he had been waiting at the ghat for around two hours but could not find a boat for his commute.

In Rangamati, speedboat operations on Kaptai Lake have remained suspended for the past two days due to the fuel shortage.

Besides, the number of passenger launches in the district has dropped significantly.

According to the Rangamati District Launch

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2



Dhaka University students paint clay bowls for use as decorative items as part of their ongoing preparations for Pahela Baishakh celebrations, including organising cultural programmes. Many are spending long hours creating various artworks. The photo was taken at the Faculty of Fine Arts yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

JULY CHARTER Discussion on adjournment motion Apr 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad yesterday announced that a discussion on the adjournment motion regarding the implementation of the July National Charter will be held on April 5.

This marks the second adjournment motion discussion within the first six days of the current parliament, and according to the Speaker, only the fifth such motion in Bangladesh's 53-year parliamentary history.

The motion was brought forward by ruling party lawmaker Zainul Abedin Farooq, who called for a detailed debate on how the July National Charter should be implemented. The Speaker accepted the motion and scheduled the discussion for two hours on April 5.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

‘We will keep Dhanmondi Lake free from commercialisation’ Says DSCC administrator

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhanmondi Lake will not be allowed to turn into a commercial zone under any circumstances, said Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Administrator Md Abdus Salam yesterday.

Emphasising the need to preserve its natural environment, he said, “Dhanmondi Lake is not a commercial area. There is a severe shortage of breathing spaces in Dhaka city. We want to preserve this lake in its original natural form.”

He made the remarks while speaking to journalists after visiting the lake.

Expressing dissatisfaction over the growing number of restaurants and commercial establishments around the lake, Salam said it now appears that the entire area has been taken over by restaurants, which is unacceptable.

“Our primary goal is to preserve nature here. We will soon restore a beautiful and healthy environment,” he said.



Sandbars have emerged across much of the western bank of the Padma River in the Aibadh area of Rajshahi city, making it appear fragmented into narrow canals. Boat movement has come to a halt, while the Water Development Board has begun work beneath the city protection embankment ahead of the monsoon. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

6 die in road crashes in Cumilla

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed and five were injured in separate road accidents on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Cumilla yesterday.

In Daudkandi, the driver and a passenger of a CNG-run auto-rickshaw were killed, and four other passengers were injured after an unidentified vehicle hit the three-wheeler on the highway in Sarkarpur area around 4:00am, said Md Iqbal Bahar Majumdar, officer-in-charge (OC) of Daudkandi Highway Police Station.

The deceased were identified as auto-rickshaw driver Barek,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

PRAYER TIMING					
APRIL 2					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 4:40	12:45	4:45	6:21	7:45	
JAMAAT 5:15	1:15	5:00	6:24	8:15	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

bKash gives 40,000 books to Bishwo Shahitto Kendro



CITY DESK

bKash has contributed 3,67,520 books to the Bishwo Shahitto Kendro's (BSK) Book Reading Programme over the past 12 years.

As part of its ongoing efforts, more than 40,000 books were presented this year to Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, founder and chief executive of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro, according to a press release.

Maj Gen (ret'd) Sheikh Md Monirul Islam, chief external and corporate affairs officer at bKash, handed over the books at an event at the Kendro's auditorium in Dhaka on Tuesday.

Since 2014, nearly 3,000 educational institutions have received these books, reaching over 3.4 million readers. This year's distribution will cover 330 educational institutions, including 80 new schools participating in the programme.

bKash has remained associated with the reading programme for 13 consecutive years.

Among others present at the event were Executive Director of Bishwo Shahitto Kendro Khandakar Md Asaduzzaman; Joint Director (Programme) Mesbah Uddin Ahmed Sumon; EVP and Head of Regulatory & Corporate Affairs at bKash Humayun Kabir; and Vice President Sayma Ahsan.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Road Transport and Highways Division
Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited
Metrorail Bhaban, Uttara Depot, Sonargaon Janapath
Sector -16, Diabari Uttara, Dhaka-1230
www.dmtcl.gov.bd

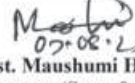
Memo No. 35.05.0000.022.07.004.26-1839 Date: 01.04.2026

e-Tender Notice: OTM

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of Goods as stated as below:

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and No offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP Help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Sl. No.	Package No.	Description of Goods	Tender ID No.	Tender Publishing (Date and time)	Tender Last Selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing (Date & Time)
01	DMTCL/GR-27/2025-26	Supply of Tools and Consumables for Signalling and Telecom Department.	1243670	02-Apr-2026 16:00	22-Apr-2026 16:00	23-Apr-2026 15:00
02	DMTCL/GR-19/2025-26	Supply of MEP Tools for E&M Subsystem Under Electrical Department	1232678	02-Apr-2026 12:00	22-Apr-2026 16:00	23-Apr-2026 15:00


(Mst. Maushumi Habib)
General Manager (Store & Procurement)
(Addl. Charge)
Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited

GD-698

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
BANGLADESH TELEVISION
CHATTOGRAM CENTER
CHATTOGRAM
www.btv.gov.bd

No: 15.54.1543.029.07.002.26.167 Date: 01.04.2026

e-Tender Notice

E-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the following procurement's

SL No.	Package Name	Tender ID/Package No:	Tender Publication Date and Time	Tender/Proposal closing/Opening Date & Time
1.	Procurement of Supply Various furniture, Carpets, Cork Sheets, Workshop equipment, Various types of fabrics, paper, props etc materials used on the set for the construction of TV programme sets.	Tender ID: 1250688 Invitation Reference No: 15.54.1543.029.07.002.25	02 April 2026 10:00 hrs.	16 April 2026 16.00 hrs.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the national e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any scheduled bank branch. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).


(Suchayan Paul)
Designer (Grade-2)
On behalf of General Manager
Bangladesh Television, Chattogram
Phone No: 02333379321 (Office)

GD-696

Bangladesh Power Development Board
Office of the Senior System Analyst
Dhaka Computer Center
Wapda Building(4th fl.), Motijheel, Dhaka.
Phone no. 47113484

Ref No. 27.11.0000.716.77.26.612 Dates: 31/03/2026.

Invitation for e-Tenders

e-Tender are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the Procurement of following work.

Sl. No.	Tender ID & Ref. No.	Name of Works	Tender Publication Date	Tender Closing Date
1.	Tender ID: 1246900 Ref. No: 27.11.0000.716.77.26.611 DL: 31.03.2026	Supply Installation and Commissioning of AVR(Different KVA) and necessary accessories for Dhaka , Chattogram, Comilla Computer Center Data Center of BPDB with 3 years support services .	31.03.2026	16.04.2026 Time: 12:00

Signed
(Mriganka Mohan Paul)
Senior System Analyst
Dhaka Computer Center
BPDB, Dhaka.

বিদ্যুৎ/জন ৯৫৫(২)/০১/০৪/২৬

GD-700

DMP moves to reclaim

FROM PAGE 3

The drive will continue from April 1 to April 5 at different locations and times, said Assistant Police Commissioner Arifa Akhter Preeti of DMP's Media and Public Relations Division.

Before the drive, DMP had asked traders to remove goods from footpaths and roads. During the operation, belongings of those who failed to comply were removed, and fines were imposed in some cases.

Talking to The Daily Star, Dhaka South City Corporation Administrator Abdus Salam said traffic congestion is not only a matter of signal management but also involves clearing encroached footpaths, managing intersections, and improving coordination.

“Traffic is a multi-dimensional issue. These factors are interconnected, and we are addressing them in a coordinated way,” he said.

He stressed the need to regulate street vendors, noting that unplanned

occupation of roads and footpaths contributes significantly to congestion.

Describing the situation as unsustainable, Salam said Dhaka has nearly become paralysed due to congestion.

“This cannot continue. We must restore functionality to the city, and that requires cooperation from all stakeholders,” he said.

He added that locations for proposed vendor markets will be finalised in consultation with law enforcement.

“Vendors cannot occupy major streets where traffic pressure is highest. Instead, we will provide alternative spaces,” he added.

Dhaka North City Corporation Administrator Shahidul Islam Khan said infrastructural and management issues, including illegal structures and poor U-turn systems, are contributing to congestion.

“We have discussed these issues with relevant agencies, and work is underway,” he said.

Master plan key

FROM PAGE 3

Salam said that during the Pakistan era, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar had been designed as a second city under a master plan. Despite some deviations in implementation, the area is still largely a planned city.

There were three playgrounds in Dhupkhola, but former mayor Iqbal constructed markets on the land, leaving only one field, despite a shortage of playgrounds in Dhaka. Now, efforts are underway to make at least one playground for every two wards, he added.

Several initiatives are being implemented to control traffic in the capital under PM Tarique Rahman's direction. Inter-district buses are being

shifted from Sayedabad Bus Terminal to Kanchpur Terminal. Another inter-district bus terminal will be built in Baghoir, Keraniganj. Once completed, inter-district buses will no longer enter the city, which will significantly reduce traffic congestion, he hoped.

Additionally, steps are being taken to identify and resolve footpath encroachment, market encroachment, and unregulated rickshaws, he added.

“The capital faces numerous problems, and coordination is essential to solve them. For this, a city government is needed. Without forming a city government, these problems cannot be resolved,” he said.

1 bed for 3 children

FROM PAGE 3

newborns. The hospital has no ICU, and even in the isolation ward, each bed accommodates three patients.

Prof Dr Bikash Nag, head of paediatrics, said the hospital is facing an acute shortage of beds and space.

“We are trying to arrange isolation, but with such limitations, it is difficult. Still, we are doing our best,” he said.

He added that proper isolation requires ICU support to ensure oxygen supply, which the hospital lacks.

“We are providing oxygen and can deliver up to 50 percent high-flow oxygen, but the number of patients is extremely high. Patients from different upazilas are coming directly, and we cannot turn anyone away,” he said. Acknowledging the

risks, he said measles is highly contagious.

“Keeping three patients on one bed is not isolation,” he added.

According to the divisional health office, eight people have died from measles in the division so far, while 77 new patients were admitted in the 24 hours till 6:00am yesterday.

Although authorities have instructed upazila-level hospitals to treat measles patients, many families are bringing children directly to SBMCH, worsening overcrowding.

Dr Shyamal Kumar Mondal, divisional health director, said district hospitals have been asked to arrange isolation facilities, but many lack resources.

He noted that measles cases typically rise during this period and urged people to remain cautious without panicking.

THE SECURITY PRINTING CORPORATION (BANGLADESH) LTD.
GAZIPUR-1703

LOCAL TENDER NOTICE
Web site: www.spcbl.org.bd

Ref: 28/2025 Dated: 02/04/2026

NAME OF THE WORK: Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of HVAC System for Extended Bank Note Printing Hall at SPCBL, Gazipur

Local tender for the above-mentioned works is hereby invited from eligible contractors having relevant experience in HVAC works with Government, Autonomous Organizations or Banks, as per the schedule mentioned below. Detailed tender documents, terms & conditions, and technical specifications are available on the Corporation's official website www.spcbl.org.bd. For more information, please contact +88-02-223375590.

Tender Information

Item	Details
1. Price of Tender Schedule	BDT 5,000.00 (Five Thousand Taka) [Non-Refundable]
2. Date of Publishing Tender	02/04/2026
3. Pre-Tender Meeting	16/04/2026, 11:00 AM at SPCBL, Gazipur-1703
3. Last Date & Time for Submission	29/04/2026 up to 4:30 PM
4. Date & Time for Opening of Tender	30/04/2026 at 11:15 AM

Submission & Financial Requirements

- Bidders must download the Tender Schedule from the website (website www.spcbl.org.bd) and prepare their offers accordingly.
- Earnest Money equivalent to 2.5% (Two Point Five Percent) of the quoted amount shall be submitted in the form of Bank Guarantee/Pay Order in favor of: “Managing Director, The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd.”
- The Earnest Money must be placed in the Financial offer Envelope of the tender.
- The price of the Tender Schedule (BDT 5,000) must be submitted through Pay-Order/Demand Draft in favor of: “Managing Director, The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd.” along with the tender documents. The price of the Tender Schedule placed in the Technical offer Envelope.
- Tender(s) without the Earnest Money or price of Tender Schedule shall be considered non-responsive and will be rejected outright.

Other Conditions

- The offer(s) will be opened as per the schedule mentioned above in the presence of the tenderer(s), if any.
- The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.
- Any tender submitted after the specified deadline will not be accepted under any circumstances.

(Md. Mustafizur Rahman)
Chief Engineer (Engineering Department)
Phone: +88-02-223375590

GD-689

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, কক্সবাজার
অস্থায়ী কার্যালয়
হাসপাতাল রোড, কক্সবাজার।

বাড়ি ভাড়া গ্রহণের বিজ্ঞপ্তি

জাতীয় রাজস্ব বোর্ডের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন নবস্ট্র কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, কক্সবাজার এর অফিস হিসেবে ব্যবহারের জন্য কক্সবাজার পৌরসভার মধ্যে ২৬.২৯৮.৭৫ বর্গফুট আয়তন বিশিষ্ট বাড়ি/ভবন ভাড়া আবশ্যক। উক্ত বাড়ি/ভবনটিতে নিম্নে বর্ণিত সুবিধাসমূহ থাকা আবশ্যক:

- কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারী এবং সকল সেবা গ্রহীতার জন্য পর্যাপ্ত দিফট এবং সিঁড়ির সু-ব্যবস্থা থাকতে হবে;
- ন্যূনতম ২০ কিউ প্রেশার সড়কের পাশে অবস্থিত হতে হবে;
- বৈদ্যুতিক সাব-স্টেশন ও জেনারেটরের ব্যবস্থা থাকতে হবে যাতে দারুণিক কার্যক্রমে বিঘ্ন না ঘটে;
- বিন্দু, পানি, টেলিফোন ইত্যাদির সুব্যবস্থা থাকতে হবে;
- দিনের বেলায় প্রাকৃতিক আলো ও বাতাসের ব্যবস্থা থাকতে হবে;
- ন্যূনতম ১৫ টি গাড়ি রাখার জন্য গ্যারেজ থাকতে হবে;
- ইন্টারনেট/নেটওয়ার্ক সংযোগের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় অবকাঠামো থাকতে হবে;
- সার্বজনিক নিরাপত্তা গ্রহণীসহ পর্যাপ্ত নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা থাকতে হবে;
- ভবনটি মাঝা-মোকদ্দমা মুক্ত হতে হবে;
- ফায়ার সেকিটি সিস্টেম ও জরুরি বহিঃগমন পথ/সিঁড়ি থাকতে হবে;
- ভবনে পর্যাপ্ত শৌচাগার, বিদ্যুৎ পানির ব্যবস্থা এবং পরিচ্ছন্নতা বজায় রাখার সুবিধা থাকতে হবে;
- প্রতি ফ্লোর ন্যূনতম ৫০০০ বর্গফুট স্পেস থাকতে হবে;
- ভবন মালিকের হলনাগাদ Proof of Submission of Returns (PSR) থাকতে হবে;
- অন্যকর্তা মালিকের সর্বস্বত্বের জন্য পর্যাপ্ত স্থান থাকতে হবে;
- মালিক বা তার অনুমোদিত প্রতিনিধি দারুণিক সময়ে সহজলভ্য থাকতে হবে।

২। উপস্থিতি অফিসের জন্য ভবন/অফিস ভাড়া দিতে অগ্রাধী বাড়ির মালিককে আগামী ১৫/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রি. তারিখ দুপুর ০২ ঘটিকার মধ্যে নিম্নে ঠিকানায় ভবন/অফিসের ক্ষেত্র মাপ, ভবনের মালিকানা সংক্রান্ত কাগজপত্র, একাধিক মালিক থাকলে সকলের লিখিত সম্মতি/অনুমোদন এবং অন্যান্য প্রয়োজনীয় দলিলাদিসহ লিখিতভাবে ভাড়া প্রস্তাব (বিজ্ঞপ্তিত বর্ণনাসহ) প্রেরণ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো। উপস্থো যে, প্রয়োজন অনুযায়ী ও আশোচনা সাক্ষেপে কর্তৃপক্ষ উপস্থিত শর্তাদির পরিবর্তন-পরিবর্তনের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

যোগাযোগের ঠিকানা:
কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, কক্সবাজার
ই-মেইল: cevcxox@gmail.com
অস্থায়ী কার্যালয়
হাসপাতাল রোড, কক্সবাজার।

(মোঃ শাহাদাত হোসেন)
সহকারী কমিশনার
কমিশনারের পক্ষে
কাস্টমস, এক্সাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, কক্সবাজার।

GD-692



“It is absolutely true that France which has not been consulted and is not part of this military offensive launched by the United States and Israel, is not taking part in it.”

French President
Emmanuel Macron



“We receive messages from the American side, some direct and some through our friends. . . There are no grounds for negotiations.”

Iran’s FM
Abbas Araghchi



“The months ahead may not be easy. . . No government can promise to eliminate the pressures that this war is causing.”

Australian PM
Anthony Albanese



“For us, it’s the most significant disruption of supply chains that we have seen since Covid and the beginning of the war in Ukraine.”

WFP’s supply chain chief
Corinne Fleischer on ME war



Smoke rises from Kuwait International Airport after a reported drone strike yesterday. Kuwait’s civil aviation authority said the facility was hit by an Iranian drone attack that caused “a large fire” at a fuel depot. *Inset*, Israeli security forces and first responders work at the scene of a strike in a residential area of Tel Aviv following an Iranian attack.

PHOTO: AFP



US-ISRAELI STRIKES ON IRAN

Trump team’s four goals keep changing

CNN ONLINE

The Trump administration keeps suggesting that the Iran war could wrap up soon. The reason? Because it’s accomplishing its goals. “We are going to achieve our objectives in a matter of weeks, not months,” Secretary of State Marco Rubio told ABC News on Monday. But when it comes to precisely what those goals are, the administration has been remarkably inconsistent. Officials have regularly listed four objectives, but they’ve often changed depending upon the date and who’s providing them. At a briefing, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth described four objectives: destroy Iranian offensive missiles, destroy Iranian missile production, destroy their navy and other security infrastructure and they will never have nuclear weapons. Those four more or less matched the things President Donald Trump mentioned in a video released the morning of the first strikes. But just hours after Hegseth’s comments, Trump debuted an amended list at a Medal of Honor ceremony at the White House. Numbers 3 and 4 were the same, but numbers 1 and 2 were merged into one goal — “destroying Iran’s missile capabilities.” And he added a new fourth goal concerning Iran’s Middle East proxy groups like Hezbollah and the Houthis: “Ensuring that the Iranian regime cannot continue to arm, fund and direct terrorist armies outside of their borders.” Two days later, a similar split was seen. Rubio echoed Hegseth’s list in a social media post. But shortly thereafter,

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt echoed Trump’s amended list. She ran through four goals that again included neutralising the proxy threat, which Rubio hadn’t mentioned.

And the split has largely continued along those lines, with Leavitt including the proxy threat but others like Hegseth and Rubio omitting it. The initial goals suggested success would be achieved only if Iran had no missiles or ability to fire them, and if proxy groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon



and the Houthis in Yemen were cut off. At a briefing on Tuesday morning, Hegseth pitched the war as different from other recent US wars, where he said the mission was ill-defined. But that’s exactly the sense the administration’s public comments about this war have given. It makes it very difficult to measure the success of war effort when administration can’t even give a consistent list of four goals. And the fact that those goals have shifted so much probably won’t calm the fears of Americans who don’t seem to understand what this war is about.

BORDER TENSION

Afghan-Pak hold talks in China

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan and Afghanistan are holding talks in China to end months of conflict, two officials from Islamabad told AFP yesterday. The meeting in the northwestern city of Urumqi comes after Pakistan’s Foreign Minister, Ishaq Dar, travelled to Beijing on Tuesday to meet his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi. The pair discussed Islamabad’s role in trying to get the United States and Iran to the negotiating table, and set out a joint five-point plan for an end to the conflict. Dar was due to return to Islamabad yesterday. China has sought to mediate in the escalating conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan says it is targeting extremists who have carried out cross-border attacks, but authorities in Kabul deny harbouring militants. There was no immediate comment from Pakistan’s foreign ministry and military when contacted by AFP, or from the Afghan government. But a senior Pakistani security official said: “A delegation led by an official from Pakistan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in Urumqi to hold talks with the Afghan Taliban” “The meeting is taking place at the request of our Chinese friends.” A second senior government official also confirmed the talks, adding: “The meeting is to set a base for full-scale dialogue.” The first official said Pakistan’s demands from Afghanistan “remain unchanged”, urging Kabul to “take verifiable action” against extremists and “end any support for the group”.

US to exit Iran war soon, may return if needed

FROM PAGE 1

airstrikes and missiles continuing to hit a wide range of targets across the Middle East. Trump is set to address the nation at 9:00pm Wednesday (0100 GMT Thursday). In an interview with Reuters, Trump said he would consider withdrawing the US from the Nato alliance in his speech. Asked when the United States would consider the war over, Trump said: “I can’t tell you exactly . . . we’re going to be out pretty quickly.” US action had ensured Iran would not have nuclear arms, Trump said: “They won’t have a nuclear weapon because they are incapable of that now, and then I’ll leave, and I’ll take everybody with me. And if we have to, we’ll come back to do spot hits.” He is expected to reiterate a two-to-three-week timetable for ending the war in Iran during the address, a White House official later said. The remarks underscored Washington’s shifting and, at times, contradictory statements about a conflict that has killed thousands, spread across the region, and caused unprecedented energy disruption. They also came at a time when the US is sending more troops to the region, sparking fear of ground operations. The New York Times also reported yesterday that the Pentagon was doubling its fleet of Air Force A-10 attack planes in the Middle East. The Air Force is dispatching 18 A-10s to join roughly one dozen A-10s already in the region, the report said, citing US officials. The slow-moving A-10 “Warthog” could be used to help US ground forces seize territory near Hormuz or Kharg Island, Iran’s main oil hub in the northern Persian Gulf. The planes have been stopping at Royal Air Force Lakenheath, a base in England, en route to the region, according to flight-tracking data and Pentagon officials. Two security sources from Pakistan, which is mediating in the conflict, earlier told Reuters that Islamabad had proposed a temporary ceasefire to both sides but had not heard back from either. Trump had signalled on Tuesday that he could wind down the war in two to three weeks even without a deal, while also scaling up threats to pull the US out of the Nato defence alliance if European states did not help stop Iran from threatening the waterway. Meanwhile, International

Energy Agency head Fatih Birol said the main issue so far from Iran’s effective closure of Hormuz was the shortage of jet fuel and diesel. “We are seeing that in Asia, but soon, I think, in April or May, it would come to Europe,” Birol said in a podcast with Nicolai Tangen, head of Norway’s sovereign wealth fund. The loss of oil in April would be twice that in March, he added. Tehran has insisted there are no ongoing negotiations and that it has not responded to a reported 15-point proposal from Washington to end the war. But Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the Islamic republic had the “necessary will” to end the war, provided its enemies guaranteed it would not flare up again. An Iranian official, Mehdi Tabatabai, said in a post on X that an important letter to the American people from Iran’s president would be released “in a few hours.” With the status of diplomatic efforts uncertain, Iranian state television reported that Tehran was under attack yesterday, with explosions heard in the capital. An AFP journalist said strikes hit an area near the former US embassy — transformed into a museum known as the “Den of Spies” and a symbol of decades-long animosity between Tehran and Washington. Strikes also hit steel complexes in central and southwest Iran, according to Iranian media, causing “significant damage and destruction.” The Israeli military confirmed it had carried out the strikes and said it had also intercepted an Iranian missile attack, which medics said wounded 14 people, including an 11-year-old girl. Israel also said its air defences responded to a missile fired from Yemen — the third attack by Iran-backed Houthi rebels since they entered the war over the weekend. Thousands of people have been killed across the region during the conflict, which has displaced millions more. In Lebanon, seven people were killed in strikes around south Beirut, the health ministry said yesterday, while the Israeli military said it had killed Yousef Hashem, Hezbollah’s top commander for Iraq military affairs. Meanwhile, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the country’s military would occupy a swathe of southern Lebanon even after the current war against Hezbollah ends.

Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Superintendent
250 Bed General Hospital, Kushtia.
kushtia@hospi.dghs.gov.bd

Ref No. G.H/Kushtia/MSR Repair/2025-26/759

Date: 01/04/2026

e-Tender Notice

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 portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details, please contact support desk contact numbers.

e-Tender are invited in e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) by Dr. Abdul Mannan, Superintendent, 250 Bed General Hospital, Kushtia for the procurement of;

Tender Id	Name of Goods	Tender/Proposal Publication Date & Time	Tender/Proposal Last Selling Date & Time	Tender/Proposal Closing Date & Time	Tender/Proposal Opening Date & Time
1198366	Procurement of MSR Equipment Repair for the F.Y. 2025-2026 at Kushtia 250 Bed General Hospital, Kushtia.	02-Apr-2026 12:00	12-Apr-2026 16:00	13-Apr-2026 12:00	13-Apr-2026 12:00

e-Tender details can be downloaded on e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for pursuer.

e-Tender will be accepted only as stated in above list; accepted tenders will be opened online immediate as stated in above list.

(Dr. Abdul Mannan)
Superintendent
250 Bed General Hospital
Kushtia.



Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Director
Central Procurement, Engineering and Store Unit
Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229
www.caab.gov.bd

No: 30.31.0000.184.26.001.23.1162

Dated : 01/04/2026

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No.	Name of Works	Package No.	e-GP Tender ID	Last Selling Date and Time	Closing Date and Time
01	Supply of Spare Parts & other related works for Runway Sweeper at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Dhaka	Gr- 29/ATM/Code-100/2025-2026	1226263	12-Apr-2026 17:00 Hrs	13-Apr-2026 12:00 Hrs
02	Providing & Installation of A/C unit at Osmani International Airport, Cox’s Bazar Airport, Saidpur Airport, Shah Mokhdum Airport, Jashore Airport and Barishal Airport.(Re- Tender)	Gr- 02/CNS/Code-100/2025-2026	1226264	12-Apr-2026 17:00 Hrs	13-Apr-2026 12:00 Hrs
03	Providing, fitting / fixing of Spare Parts & other related repairing works for Chinetty 4 X 4, Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting (ARFF) Vehicle at Barishal Airport, Barishal	Gr- 07/Fire/Code-3258134/2025-2026	1247942	12-Apr-2026 17:00 Hrs	13-Apr-2026 12:00 Hrs
04	Providing, fitting / fixing of Spare Parts & other related works for Titan 4 X 4 ARFF Vehicle at Jashore Airport, Jashore	Gr- 12/Fire/Code-100/2025-2026	1249529	12-Apr-2026 17:00 Hrs	13-Apr-2026 12:00 Hrs
05	Supply of different types of ARFF Vehicle Batteries, Filter, Oils, Lubricant tc.servicing materials for daily time to time use at different ARFF Vehicles in different Airports of CAAB	Gr- 14/Fire/Code-100/2025-2026	1249530	15-Apr-2026 17:00 Hrs	16-Apr-2026 12:00 Hrs

Further information and guidelines is available in the e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk. (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

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তারিখ: ০১/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রি.

(Md. Ahsan Habib)

Executive Director

Central Procurement, Engineering and Store Unit
Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh
Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229
Email: edcemsu@caab.gov.bd

A crisis born of delay and neglect

Govt must bolster vaccination drive to tackle measles outbreak

The ongoing measles outbreak—a disease that Bangladesh once brought under control through the widely lauded Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) launched in the late 1970s—has laid bare the cost of state negligence. The official death toll has already crossed 50 children, and is likely to rise, as hospitals across the country report a steady increase in infections. Disturbingly, most of those infected had not been vaccinated despite reaching or passing the recommended inoculation age of nine months. Even more alarming, babies younger than nine months are now contracting the disease.

How did such a lapse occur? A Prothom Alo report points to delays in vaccine procurement caused by bureaucratic indecision within the health ministry and related departments during the interim government's tenure. As stocks ran out and campaigns were postponed, the number of unvaccinated infants grew, setting the stage for the present outbreak. Given that measles is highly contagious, with one infected person capable of infecting up to 18 others, the spread has been quite rapid. Many children have already been infected, particularly across Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Pabna, Barishal and Mymensingh. The lack of ICU facilities in most hospitals, especially outside Dhaka, has further contributed to the high fatality rate.

Against this backdrop, Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain on Wednesday announced that an emergency measles vaccination campaign will start from April 5. Earlier, although measles-rubella vaccines were stocked, a nationwide campaign remained stalled due to a shortage of syringes. That said, successfully containing this crisis will require firm commitment and persistent action from the government. Experts recommend aiming for 100 percent vaccination coverage for all children between six months and 15 years. Immediate door-to-door campaigns and widespread awareness efforts are essential to inform parents about the urgency of vaccination, the symptoms to watch for, and when to seek medical care. Simultaneously, ICU capacity must be expanded nationwide with dedicated wards for measles and rubella patients, an approach that was successfully implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic. Provisions should also be made for older children and adults who missed being inoculated.

It is unconscionable that infants are dying from a preventable disease due to gaps in routine immunisation. The government must urgently revive and strengthen all EPI programmes, while ensuring that hospitals are equipped with essential life-saving supplies such as oxygen and critical medicines. Encouragingly, as part of the emergency vaccination campaign, the government is said to be prioritising upazilas with a high number of measles cases, eventually covering all children aged between six months and 10 years. But plans alone will not save lives. Vaccination must continue aggressively. Nationwide coverage of other essential vaccines must also be ensured. Every day of delay risks more infections, more preventable deaths, and the loss of hard-won public health gains.

End the silence on marital violence

Rising number of calls to 999 indicates a deepening crisis

We are alarmed by the rising number of calls made to the national emergency helpline 999 in 2025, depicting a deeply troubling picture of violence against women within marriages. Per a recent report by Prothom Alo, an average of 51 calls a day were made by survivors alleging abuse by their husbands—the highest in eight years. This marks a 63 percent increase from 2024, when an average of 31 calls were made per day. In 2023, the number was 27. Per the report, more than half of the complaints related to violence against women were linked to spousal violence. A 2024 national survey on violence against women reveals an even grimmer scenario: three in every four women in the country have faced some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime.

The stories are disturbingly familiar. The nurse in Gopalganj who was beaten, threatened with a knife and locked in a room, and the housewife in Dhaka who was forced out into the night after being assaulted, as narrated in the report, are just two examples among many. While the rising number of calls may partly reflect increased awareness and growing trust in the emergency service, as noted by officials, it would be dangerously misleading to interpret this solely as improved reporting. Rather, it underscores the persistence of abuse within marital relationships, rooted in entrenched patriarchal attitudes and a desire to exert control.

Unfortunately, in many cases, even when complaints are filed following police intervention, little progress is made afterwards, even though legal remedies exist under the existing laws. The Gopalganj survivor, for instance, did not seek protection under any legal framework, and her case saw no further progress. Alongside institutional shortcomings, many women don't want to pursue legal recourse due to fear of family breakdown and social stigma.

Breaking the cycle of marital violence requires better laws and services along with a collective refusal to tolerate abuse in any form. We urge the government to ensure an effective enforcement of the existing laws to address violence against women. Police and local administration must be trained to handle such cases with sensitivity and urgency, ensuring that complaints lead to concrete outcomes. Public awareness campaigns must be intensified so that women are informed of their legal rights and encouraged to seek help. At the same time, deeply ingrained social attitudes that normalise or justify spousal abuse must be challenged through community engagement and education.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY



Jinjira Massacre in 1971

On this day in 1971, Pakistani forces razed villages in Keraniganj, Dhaka to the ground, killing hundreds. This incident is known as the Keraniganj Genocide or Jinjira Massacre.

Budget must stabilise economy amid mounting pressures



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SELIM RAIHAN

The government of Bangladesh, formed less than two months ago, finds itself at a delicate yet consequential moment as it enters the 2026-27 national budget cycle. The economy is not grappling with known cyclical ups and downs, but rather a combination of domestic constraints and external shocks. Growth has significantly slowed down compared to earlier years, inflation remains persistently high, foreign exchange reserves have yet to stabilise fully, there is mounting pressure on the exchange rate, and private investment continues to lag. At the same time, global uncertainties are becoming more pronounced. The ongoing crisis in the Middle East is already taking a toll on our economy through energy markets, remittance flows, and disruptions to trade logistics.

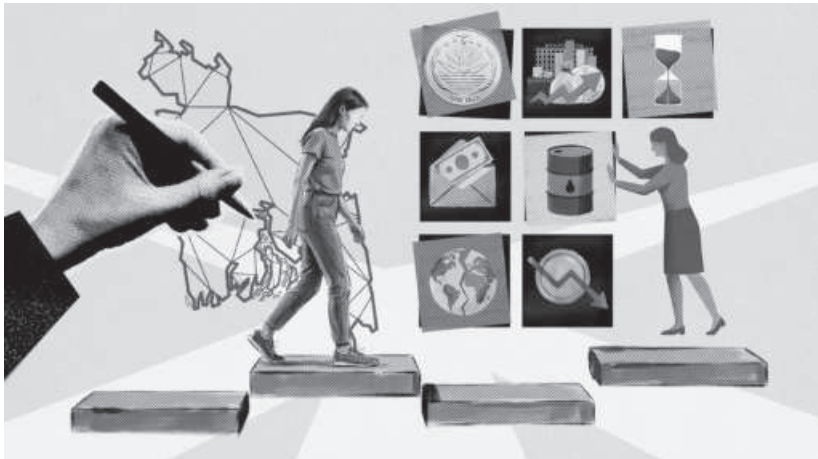
In this context, while the government has several election promises to deliver, it cannot treat the upcoming national budget as a routine fiscal exercise. Rather, it must serve as a strategic instrument to stabilise the economy in the short term, while also preparing for a more demanding transition, particularly in light of the country's forthcoming graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) status.

External shocks and transmission channels

The Middle East crisis adds a new layer of unprecedented complexity to an already constrained macroeconomic environment. Its implications for Bangladesh are complex, and they work through various interconnected channels.

First is energy. Bangladesh's heavy reliance on imported fuel exposes it to global price fluctuations. Persistent rises in oil and gas prices, as well as deep uncertainty about availability in time and sufficient quantity, would increase import and production costs, raise the current account deficit, and increase inflationary pressure. At the same time, continued reliance on fuel subsidies may not be fiscally sustainable. A gradual adjustment strategy, clearly communicated in advance, and complemented by targeted support to the most affected groups, would be more feasible. Meanwhile, the effort to diversify energy supplies and build renewable capacity must speed up.

Second is the remittance channel. A large portion of Bangladesh's labour force works in Gulf countries. Any economic slowdown in those countries, or disruptions to labour markets linked to geopolitical instability, could conspire to reduce inflows of remittances. This would immediately impact household consumption and foreign exchange availability. Another risk is the possibility of return migration from the Middle East. Proactive planning is, therefore, essential. This also involves identifying who may return, what the capacity of the labour market is to absorb them, and how temporary support measures are shaped.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

The third channel is trade and logistics. Disruptions to maritime routes and rising freight costs would hike import costs and erode export competitiveness. Combined, these channels indicate a scenario of higher inflation, tighter external balances, and weaker growth.

If the crisis persists and worsens, these pressures will increase. So the upcoming budget should be prepared with caution, keeping a long-term perspective in mind while also considering potential downside scenarios.

Aligning political commitments with fiscal realities

The government enters this budget cycle with a set of political commitments that are both ambitious and socially significant. The Family

Card programme, support measures for agriculture, and broad reforms in social protection are all aimed at addressing structural inequalities and vulnerabilities.

These commitments are all the more crucial in a time of increasing economic stress. However, their efficacy will derive not only from scale but from design as well. The country's social protection system has long been characterised by fragmentation, duplication, and leakage. Expanding the social protection programmes without fixing the structural problems would risk a rise in fiscal pressure without corresponding advantages. And in the context of high inflation, especially food inflation, protecting vulnerable households is an urgent task.

Hence, the budget should prioritise consolidation and integration. Developing a unified beneficiary registry, strengthening digital delivery mechanisms, and improving targeting criteria are essential steps. The budget must come up with a mechanism to shift focus from only the volume of

changes to trade policy, transportation, and governance systems. The impending LDC graduation also calls for the urgency of such reforms, since Bangladesh will have to compete in a much more demanding global environment with no preferential market access.

Monetary policy and financial sector reform

Monetary policy has already adopted a tightening stance in response to inflationary and external pressures. However, tighter monetary conditions also constrain investment and economic activities. Monetary policy effectiveness is closely tied to the soundness of the banking sector. Structural weaknesses, including high levels of non-performing loans (NPLs) and governance deficiencies, hamper financial intermediation. Therefore, it is vital to address these challenges. The budget needs to support a comprehensive reform agenda for the banking sector. The key will be to strengthen regulatory oversight, improve loan recovery frameworks, and enhance transparency. Without such reforms, the transmission of monetary policy will continue to be limited.

Fiscal policy and revenue mobilisation

Fiscal policy under the 2026-27 budget will have to balance competing demands in a context of a limited resource envelope. However, given limited fiscal space, the need for further support to households and key sectors must be balanced against new expenditures.

Fuel prices pose an especially complicated problem. Fuel taxes and levies are a key source of revenue, but they also have an impact on inflation dynamics. Therefore, fuel taxes and levies must be finely calibrated.

More fundamentally, the tax system needs to be reformed. Bangladesh has a low tax-GDP ratio, limiting its fiscal space. Expanding the tax base, improving compliance, and reducing reliance on distortionary taxes should be prioritised.

The 2026-27 budget comes at a critical moment for the country. This situation demands a budget that is not only prudent but also future-oriented. It needs to stabilise the present and set the stage for future competitiveness. Adapting policy and continued surveillance of changing conditions will be important. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the budget will depend on coherence across fiscal, monetary and structural policies. The challenges are daunting, but the opportunity to guide the economy towards a more resilient and sustainable path is still within reach.

Why rural healthcare is failing persons with disabilities

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MD. AL-MAMUN and MARUFA ALAM

Access to healthcare is a human right and a cornerstone of universal health coverage (UHC). Yet for millions of persons with disabilities around the world, receiving even basic health services remains a difficult and uncertain journey. In Bangladesh, the government has made notable efforts to improve disability rights. The Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013 recognises healthcare access as a fundamental right, while the operation of over 13,000 community clinics is designed to bring essential health services closer to rural populations. Despite these institutional advances, the everyday experiences of persons with disabilities, especially in rural regions, reveal significant gaps between policy commitments and practical realities.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) approximately 2.8 percent of Bangladesh's population lives with some form of disability. However, researchers and disability advocates often argue that the real figure may be higher due to underreporting and social stigma. In rural communities where poverty, limited mobility, and lack of information intersect, persons with disabilities often face compounded challenges in seeking healthcare. One of the most overlooked barriers

is the absence of clear and accessible referral systems within rural healthcare networks.

During recent fieldwork in Jashore, Jhalakathi, Habiganj, Sirajganj, Kurigram, and Mymensingh as part of a study by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) at BRAC University, we encountered a recurring pattern illustrating the challenge. Many persons with disabilities and their caregivers reported that they do not know where to seek treatment or which doctor is capable of addressing their specific health needs.

In principle, Bangladesh's healthcare system follows a structured referral pathway from community clinics to upazila health complexes, district hospitals, and specialised facilities. In practice, however, this pathway is rarely clear to rural patients.

A caregiver in Kurigram described the frustration of navigating this system: "First, we visited a village doctor who advised us to go to the district hospital. When we reached there, another doctor suggested a private clinic in another town. Each visit meant travel costs, consultation fees, and medicines, but we still did not know which doctor could properly treat my son."

Without clear referral guidance, patients are often forced to move from one healthcare provider to another in a process of trial and error. This not only delays treatment but also places a heavy financial burden on already vulnerable households.

According to the World Bank, out-of-pocket payments account for more than 70 percent of total health expenditure in the country. For families caring for persons with disabilities who may require long-term medical attention, rehabilitation services, or

assistive devices, these expenses can quickly become overwhelming. As a result, many families eventually reduce or completely stop seeking medical care. Untreated conditions may worsen over time, leading to additional disabilities, declining health, and increased economic hardship for families.

Another critical challenge is that many persons with disabilities and their caregivers have limited knowledge about available services, rehabilitation options, or specialised treatment facilities. In rural settings where digital access and health literacy remain uneven, this information gap significantly affects healthcare-seeking behaviour. Therefore, improving healthcare access for persons with disabilities is not only about building more hospitals or clinics. Rather, it requires strengthening the connections between existing health services and the communities they are meant to serve.

Rural community clinics could play a transformative role in promoting disability-inclusive healthcare. Community Health Care Providers (CHCPs) are often the most accessible healthcare professionals in rural communities. With proper training and institutional support, they could serve as local health navigators for persons with disabilities. CHCPs could help families identify appropriate healthcare facilities and specialists through structured referral guidance. Maintaining simple referral directories or communication channels with upazila hospitals and district-level specialists would greatly reduce confusion for patients.

Community clinics could also function as local information hubs. Persons with disabilities and their caregivers frequently need guidance

on where to find physiotherapy, rehabilitation services, or assistive devices. Providing reliable information at the community level would help families make informed healthcare decisions. Moreover, home-based outreach services could significantly improve access for individuals with mobility challenges. Regular visits by community health workers would enable persons with disabilities to receive basic services such as health monitoring, medication distribution, or injections without the burden of travelling long distances.

Better coordination between community clinics and specialised disability services is essential. Collaboration with rehabilitation centres, physiotherapists, and disability-focused organisations could ensure that patients receive comprehensive care rather than fragmented treatment. Finally, addressing social attitudes towards disability within healthcare settings remains critical. Training health workers to adopt inclusive practices and respectful communication can help reduce stigma and ensure that persons with disabilities receive dignified care.

Bangladesh has already demonstrated that community-based health interventions can achieve remarkable success. Extending this community-oriented approach to disability-inclusive healthcare could significantly improve access and outcomes for millions of citizens. The challenge now is not merely expanding infrastructure, but ensuring that existing health systems work effectively for everyone. If Bangladesh is truly committed to inclusive development, then ensuring accessible healthcare for persons with disabilities in rural communities must become a national priority.

Time to strategise the long-term cost of energy stability



Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her X handle is @tasneem_tayeb.

TASNEEM TAYEB

Amid the ongoing Middle East crisis, Bangladesh has so far largely avoided an energy shock. Supply has been maintained through imports and stock management, enforcement against hoarding has been visible, and prices have remained stable. This is not incidental but the reflection of a deliberate effort by the government to contain immediate pressure and keep conditions manageable, and for now, it is working. But stability under these conditions comes with trade-offs, for it is not being secured; rather, it is being financed, deferred, and redistributed across the system.

The current approach reflects a calculated choice. Supply and price stability is being prioritised. The last major price adjustment in 2022 moved quickly through transport, production and household budgets. Inflation followed and lingered. That experience has left a lasting imprint on the economy, its rippling effects still visible in prices and household budgets. There is limited space for another abrupt correction.

The country's energy system depends, in part, on imported liquefied natural gas (LNG). When global prices rise, the cost of securing supply rises with them. Maintaining continuity under those conditions requires additional intervention, and that carries a cost of its own. It is absorbed within the system, including through external financing.

Bangladesh is under a programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) amounting to roughly \$5.5 billion, disbursed in phases, aimed at supporting external balances, fiscal stability, and policy reform. In addition, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other partners have also extended support, including policy-based loans. While

these are not designed to finance energy imports directly, they create fiscal constraint at a time when energy-related costs are rising. More recently, the government has sought over \$2 billion in additional financing linked to fuel and LNG purchase.

Bangladesh continues to rely on the spot LNG market to meet part of its demand. Spot purchases are volatile: prices move quickly during supply disruptions and cargoes secured at higher rates add to the cost. External financing can only absorb that pressure for a certain period. It lingers in the shadows of crisis management, gathering weight over time until it emerges unannounced in forms the system is not designed to absorb.

Foreign exchange reserves, the gross amount standing at around \$30.35 billion as of February 24, 2026, provide some room. But that room provides buffer space only while inflows, particularly from exports and remittances, keep pace with external payments. Energy imports are among the first to draw on it. Part of that cost is absorbed within fiscal space, sometimes through subsidies, sometimes through state-linked entities carrying losses. These don't always appear immediately in headline figures, but they build gradually. What is changing is how that pressure accumulates and is distributed through the system.

Per a recent report by this daily, fuel prices have been kept unchanged for several consecutive months even as import costs have risen sharply. In March alone, the government covered over Tk 5,000 crore in subsidies, with diesel import cost rising to Tk 198 per litre, nearly double the retail price of Tk 100. That gap will not disappear, but will eventually move into public finances, and

from there into the taxation system.

One may recall that exports have softened in recent months, with Bangladesh recording a 1.9 percent year-on-year decline in export earnings during the July-January period of the current fiscal year, alongside weaker RMG shipments to key EU markets—around four percent—during the same period.

At the same time, logistics disruptions linked to the Middle East crisis have affected

extended delivery timelines. For a system built on cost discipline and reliability, that matters.

Part of the pressure is already embedded within the system. Payments for installed power capacity that is not always utilised continue to add to the overall burden. Recent estimates suggest that, taken together, these overlapping pressures—from energy imports to structural costs within the power sector—are adding hundreds of millions of dollars

Meeting them has proven difficult to sustain, particularly where the adjustment moves through households and the formal economy.

Revenue has historically been harder to manage than it appears to be. Bangladesh's tax-GDP ratio remains among the lowest in comparable economies, hovering around seven to eight percent in recent years. Efforts to expand it continue to face structural constraints, including a narrow base and heavy reliance on indirect taxes. When pressure builds, the response tends to follow the easier path. Rather than widening the base, the system leans more on those already within it—through tighter enforcement and greater reliance on indirect taxation, including VAT and supplementary duties.

The burden does not spread evenly. It falls more heavily on individual taxpayers, compliant businesses, and consumers already within the system, while large segments remain outside effective coverage. Indirect taxes, by design, apply uniformly across transactions. In practice, that uniformity does not translate into socioeconomic equity. That raises costs within the formal economy without necessarily improving the overall resilience. Over time, this approach tightens the system, rather than strengthening it. The pressure shifts again—into margins, into pricing, and into parts of the economy where it is less visible but still felt.

What this points to is not a policy gap but a structural one. Stability cannot be managed reactively. It depends on knowing where the cost sits and how it is carried over time. Without that strategy, stability risks becoming a way of holding pressure in place rather than resolving how it is managed sustainably.

The current approach has kept conditions stable for now, at least on the surface. But it also risks something closer to Friedrich Nietzsche's idea of recurrence, where what is unresolved does not disappear; it returns, again and again, in the same form. The current trade-off cannot hold indefinitely. It is high time to strategise how the cost is absorbed and where, accepting that the economy will be pressured, while keeping the impact as contained as possible.



Vehicles wait in long queues to purchase fuel at a refilling station in Kalshi Road, Mirpur, Dhaka on March 29, 2026.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

cargo movement through key routes. More than half of the country's air cargo is routed through Gulf hubs, leaving it exposed to interruption involving major regional carriers. As capacity has tightened, freight costs have risen sharply. Air freight rates from South Asia to Europe have increased by up to 70 percent, reaching around \$4.37 per kg, with some exporters reporting even higher costs as shipments are rerouted or shifted from sea to air. Shipping lines have also introduced fuel surcharges and war-risk premiums, while longer diversions have

in monthly obligations. The same set of pressures is now working through both sides of the external account. Higher import costs increase demand for foreign currency. Softer exports and rising logistics costs weaken inflows. Remittance flows from the Middle East carry their own uncertainty.

Bangladesh has seen similar phases before. External financing has provided breathing space during periods of stress, often tied to expectations around revenue mobilisation, pricing discipline, and stronger financial governance. Those expectations are not new.

Bangladesh's inverted pesticide tariffs need to be fixed



Md. Arifujjaman is deputy solicitor (additional district judge) at the Solicitor Wing of the Law and Justice Division under the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. He can be reached at arifujjaman.md@gmail.com

MD. ARIFUJJAMAN

Bangladesh has long promoted domestic manufacturing as the cornerstone of its development strategy. Yet in the agrochemical sector—essential to feeding the country's population of nearly 18 crore—policy appears to be pulling in the opposite direction, as tariff structures, regulatory rules, and administrative delays continue to favour imported pesticides over local production.

Manufacturers say the country's tariff structure now makes it significantly cheaper to import finished pesticides than to produce them locally. According to industry calculations, raw materials used in domestic pesticide formulation—including emulsifiers, solvents, stabilisers, and other formulation agents—fall under different chemical tariff headings where customs duties can reach 25 percent. When value added tax and additional charges are added, the total tax on these inputs can reach about 58 percent. Meanwhile, finished pesticide—including insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides—enter the country with customs duties of about five percent and limited additional taxes. In effect, the tax system penalises domestic value addition while rewarding imports. Trade economists have a term for this phenomenon: an inverted

tariff structure.

Government officials often note that technical-grade active ingredients (TGAIs) are imported duty-free. In practice, however, this exemption has limited impact. In most pesticide formulations, active ingredients account for a very small proportion of the composition, while the auxiliary chemicals that stabilise, dilute, and deliver the product constitute the bulk of the formulation and bear the highest duties. A further distortion arises because finished pesticides are exempt from VAT, whereas many excipients and auxiliary inputs used by domestic manufacturers remain subject to VAT despite already incurring import duties. The result is a misleading perception that pesticides face minimal taxation. In reality, industry estimates suggest that local manufacturers bear an effective duty burden exceeding 40 percent, creating a cost structure that discourages domestic production and favours the finished goods imports.

What makes the issue unusual is that the distortion has already been recognised within the government. In the FY2025-26 national budget speech, then Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed announced that duties on

pesticide raw materials would be reduced to support domestic manufacturers, however, months later, the tariff schedule has not changed and no public explanation has been issued for the delay.

Tariffs are only part of the policy framework shaping the industry. Manufacturers also point to a regulatory requirement informally known as “single country, single source.” Applied through the Pesticide Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC) under the agriculture ministry, the rule restricts manufacturers to importing specific raw materials from a single approved supplier in a single approved country. Changing suppliers can require fresh regulatory approval, including laboratory testing and field trials. Industry executives say the policy prevents companies from sourcing lower-cost chemicals from alternative international suppliers. Trade specialists note that Bangladesh's pesticide regulatory framework, derived largely from the Pesticide Ordinance of 1971, does not explicitly mandate single-source procurement restrictions. Government regulators defend the rule as a safeguard designed to ensure product safety and prevent substandard inputs entering the market.

The sourcing restriction raises potential issues under global trade rules. Bangladesh is a member of the World Trade Organization and therefore subject to the national treatment principle under Article III of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). That provision requires imported goods to be treated no less favourably than domestic goods once they enter the market. Trade lawyers say a regulatory requirement that restricts manufacturers' access to

imported inputs could potentially raise questions if it disproportionately affects domestic production. A second relevant provision is Article XI of the GATT, which prohibits quantitative restrictions on imports unless justified under specific exceptions. If the “single source” rule functions in practice as a limitation on import channels, it could be scrutinised under those provisions. No WTO dispute has been filed on the issue. But similar sourcing restrictions in other sectors have been challenged internationally.

Even when raw materials are approved, manufacturers say they face delays in clearing them through customs. Each shipment requires a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from agricultural authorities before customs release. Industry participants say obtaining these certificates can take 15 to 20 days, during which containers remain at port and incur demurrage charges. Finished pesticide imports face fewer procedural steps. For chemical manufacturers operating on tight supply chains, such delays can disrupt production schedules and increase costs.

Bangladesh's status as a Least Developed Country (LDC)—scheduled for graduation in November 2026—provides a policy opportunity. Under the WTO agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), LDC members are not required to enforce pharmaceutical product patents until 2033. Bangladesh's pharmaceutical sector used that flexibility to build a thriving generic drug industry that now supplies almost the entire domestic market and exports to more than 150 countries. The agrochemical industry has not followed the same trajectory. Manufacturers

argue that regulatory decisions have sometimes restricted local production of pesticide formulations despite the broader TRIPS exemption. Government officials say regulatory approvals are based on safety considerations rather than patent protection.

The stakes extend beyond industrial policy. Bangladesh's pesticide market is estimated at roughly Tk 7,500 crore, with a significant portion supplied through imports. Industry leaders say eliminating excessive duties on raw materials could reduce pesticide prices by around 30 percent, lowering costs for farmers. Approximately 16 million farmers depend on crop protection chemicals to safeguard harvests. Lower input prices could directly affect agricultural productivity and rural incomes. The timing is also significant as when Bangladesh graduates from its LDC status, several policy flexibilities and trade preferences will gradually disappear. Developing domestic manufacturing capacity before that transition could strengthen economic resilience.

Bangladesh has demonstrated before that coherent policy can transform an industry. The pharmaceutical sector stands as one of the most prominent examples in the developing world. The agrochemical sector appears to possess similar ingredients: investment, technical capability, and domestic demand. What it lacks is policy alignment. For now, the reforms exist in meeting minutes and official letters. On the factory floor, the machines often remain quiet. In Dhaka's ministries, the decision to support domestic pesticide manufacturing has already been made—at least on paper. The question is whether it will move beyond the paperwork any time soon.

CROSSWORD

BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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1 Partners
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34 Like cliffs
39 —canto
41 Building wing



MONDAY'S ANSWERS



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

All credit goes to Tanim Noor:

MAMO ON ‘BONOLOTA EXPRESS’ SUCCESS



SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Zakia Bari Mamo returns this Eid with *Bonolota Express*, stepping back into cinemas with a performance that is drawing a distinctly emotional response from audiences.

The National Film Award-winning actor, who first broke through with *Daruchini Dwip*, says the reception to her latest film has been immediate and deeply felt—something she has not witnessed in years.

“There has been so much excitement, so much joy, so much emotion around *Bonolota Express*—it’s beyond words,” she said. “Audiences are watching the film with deep interest. They are embracing it with immense love and praising the entire film. I’m truly grateful to them.”

In the film, Mamo plays Afia—a character she says has resonated on a personal level with viewers. The reactions, she notes, have gone beyond routine appreciation.

“I’ve seen audience members come up to me and break down in tears,” she said. “They’ve shared how much the character moved them. Some are crying, some are smiling. I haven’t witnessed such reactions in a long time. This kind of love is unforgettable. Ultimately, the audience is the soul of cinema.”

She credits much of that impact to the strength of the ensemble cast and the collaborative process behind the film.

“My co-artists are all major stars—exceptionally talented performers,” she said. “It was a wonderful experience working with them. I’ve worked with most of them before, except Sariful Razz.

Every single person gave their hundred per cent, with sincerity and dedication.”

Mamo is unequivocal when it comes to the film’s director, placing the weight of its success firmly on his shoulders.

“Tanim Noor is an incredibly talented director,” she said. “He has made this film based on Humayun Ahmed’s novel *Kichukkhon*. It’s a very well-crafted film. The writers who worked on the script have also shown great skill. Honestly, all the credit for *Bonolota Express* goes to Tanim Noor.”

For Mamo, the response also reflects a broader shift in audience expectations.

“Viewers want strong stories—and *Bonolota Express* has that,” she said.

She also points to her academic grounding in theatre as formative.

“I studied at Jahangirnagar University, where Selim Al Deen sir was my teacher,” she said. “I had the chance to learn so much from him as well.”

Looking beyond Eid, Mamo questions the industry’s reliance on festive release windows.

“Why should films only be released during Eid?” she said. “They should be released throughout the year. We have other festivals—Pahela Baishakh, among many others. If films are released around those occasions, it would be very positive. The key is to have releases year-round.”

Her next project, *Master*, is already building momentum ahead of its local release.

“*Master* is a powerful story,” she said. “It recently won an award in the Netherlands and received strong appreciation. I hope it will be released very soon.”



CÉLINE DION

announces comeback with Paris shows

Céline Dion has announced her return to the stage, four years after being diagnosed with Stiff Person Syndrome that affected her voice and mobility.

The singer will perform a 10-night residency at the Paris La Défense Arena in September and October, marking her first live shows since 2020. The announcement coincided with her 58th birthday.

“I’m so ready to do this,” she told fans. “I’m feeling good, I’m strong, I’m feeling excited, and of course, a little nervous.”

Dion, known for hits such as *My Heart Will Go On* and *Because You Loved Me*. Tickets for the shows will go on sale from April 7, with high demand expected. Registration has been started on her official website since March 31.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

‘Café de Volte’

In Kalikotha, civility fractures as a gifted chef orchestrates a quiet reckoning. *Café de Volte*, a Hunt Inc production directed by Diana Merline, unfolds as a dark, psychological fable—where morality blurs, power shifts, and a single evening spirals into a haunting meditation on guilt, conscience, and the cost of truth.

Date: Friday | April 3, 2026

Time: 5:30 pm and 7:30 pm onwards

Venue: Studio Theatre Hall, BSA

NEWS

Italy miss out on WC again

FROM PAGE 12

Elsewhere, Turkey qualified as Kerem Akturkoglu’s 53rd-minute goal secured a 1-0 win in Kosovo, shattering their hosts’ dream of appearing at the tournament for the first time. It will be Turkey’s first appearance at a World Cup since reaching the semi-finals in 2002.

Meanwhile, Sweden recovered from a desperate performance in the group stage of qualifying to secure

their place at the finals in dramatic fashion.

Having beaten Ukraine 3-1 in last week’s semifinal, they edged Poland 3-2 in Stockholm, with Arsenal’s Viktor Gyokeres scoring an 88th-minute winner.

The Czech Republic matched Bosnia’s achievement by qualifying thanks to back-to-back shoot-out victories, as they followed their success against Ireland last week by

defeating Denmark 3-1 on penalties in Prague.

Meanwhile, The Democratic Republic of Congo defeated Jamaica 1-0 after extra time in an intercontinental playoff on Tuesday to seal their first World Cup appearance in 52 years while Iraq grabbed the last available place by beating Bolivia 2-1 in their inter-confederation playoff, sealing their return to the finals after a 40-year absence.

2 arrested over rape of schoolgirl

FROM PAGE 12

According to the case statement, around 8:00pm of March 26, the 15-year-old victim went to meet her friend Raju near her house. At that time, Ali and Shaon beat the victim’s friend and took her to a nearby field where Nayan and Amin were waiting. There, Ali, Shaon and Nayan raped her while Amin recorded the video on his phone.

They threatened to publish the video online and kill her if she told anyone about the incident and left her there, according to the case statement.

When the victim returned home

the next day, she informed her paternal aunt about the matter. When the aunt confronted the accused, they threatened her too with murder, added the case details.

After consulting with family and locals, the aunt filed a case with Maheshpur Police Station on Tuesday night.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the victim said she was scared after the incident and did not want anyone to find out. Although she revealed the matter to her aunt, she forbade her from telling anyone else. Later, the matter came to light after the suspects showed the video to several people

and then they decided to go for legal action.

Maheshpur Police Station OC Mehedi Hasan told The Daily Star, “The victim has been sent to a local hospital for medical check-up. One accused in the case, along with another suspect in the investigation, have been arrested. The operation to arrest the other accused is underway.”

He said Hazrat Ali, who was arrested early yesterday, was sent to jail after he was produced before a court. Meanwhile, Raju, arrested in the afternoon, will be produced before a magistrate tomorrow.

Opposition walks out, plans street protests

FROM PAGE 1

and declared the walkout. Opposition lawmakers then left the chamber.

The opposition alleged that no decision was reached on their adjournment motion and accused the government of suppressing their proposal by bringing another notice on the same issue.

“We are deeply surprised, hurt, and aggrieved. There have been three referendums in Bangladesh before, and none ended like this. In all three cases, the people’s verdict was honoured. This is the first time when all of us -- government and opposition -- were united and sought votes in favour of it, yet it has been ignored, defied, and brought to an end,” Shafiqur said during the briefing.

He added, “We sincerely wanted a resolution within the House. Had it been resolved inside the House, the people would have been pleased. Since the people’s will was not duly respected and accepted within the House, we now have only one path -- to return to the people. We will go back to those who gave us this mandate.”

Calling the situation painful and unfortunate, he said the 11-party alliance would meet soon to decide their next course of action.

WALK OUT

Lawmakers from Jamaat, the National Citizen Party, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, and Khelafat Majlish left the House around 5:45pm and did not return. The debate on Shafiqur’s adjournment motion, calling for the Constitution Reform Council in line with the July charter, had ended the previous day without resolution.

Yesterday, Shafiqur again raised the issue, refuting remarks by Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman. “Perhaps

he did not pay close attention to my statement. I do not believe he said it intentionally, but he went beyond the subject and made some personal remarks about me. Our notice was mainly about the referendum and the convening of the council that was supposed to be formed on the basis of that referendum,” he said.

Responding to a proposal from the home minister, Shafiqur said, “Since the discussion was centred on the convening of the Constitution Reform Council, if a special committee were to be formed around it, we would consider it positively. That is why we called upon you to make a decision. But I could not understand whether any decision was made. I would like to hear a clear explanation from you.”

Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad explained that the proposal was an adjournment motion adopted in his absence. He noted that in Bangladesh’s 53-year parliamentary history, only three adjournment motions had been passed. “You know very well that an adjournment motion cannot be brought on an issue that can only be resolved through legislation. Even so, it was accepted generously to give the opposition a chance to speak,” he said.

He added that another adjournment motion would be considered, giving the opposition further opportunity to raise points.

Shafiqur responded, “The issue we had all agreed on before the election -- both the ruling party and the opposition -- as one we supported and campaigned for. Yet, we did not receive the remedy we expected. This is not just about us; it reflects that the verdict of the people was neither honoured nor valued. As the opposition, we cannot accept this disregard. Therefore, in protest, we

are staging a walkout.”

The Speaker urged him to stay and listen, but Shafiqur said: “That notice has already come to our attention, and we believe it has been brought forward to overshadow the main notice. For this reason, we are walking out of the parliament in protest.”

As the opposition left, the Speaker remarked, “You can walk out as tradition of the House.”

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed later said: “The Leader of the Opposition chose to walk out, and under parliamentary practice that is their right.” He noted that Shafiqur had already objected to the adjournment motion adopted earlier. “Issues which can only be resolved through legislation cannot be discussed under an adjournment motion. Out of generosity, the Speaker allowed it to be raised as a matter of national importance, and two hours were allocated for discussion. But once debate has taken place, parliamentary practice is that ‘It’s talked out.’ There is no provision for a vote on the resolution itself,” Salahuddin said.

Drone debris kills

FROM PAGE 12

strike in Saudi Arabia’s Al Kharj area. Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun was critically injured in the attack and later died in Riyadh on March 18 while undergoing treatment.

The conflict has also heavily disrupted air travel to and from Bangladesh.

At least 18 flights were cancelled yesterday, according to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh. A total of 894 flights to and from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport have been cancelled since the beginning of the war.

India hikes jet fuel

FROM PAGE 12

The price rose to 7,500 riel (\$1.88) per litre as of midnight yesterday, up from 7,200 the previous day and 3,750 in late February, the commerce ministry said in a statement. A litre of regular gasoline in Cambodia now costs 5,450 riel, up from around 3,750 in late February, the commerce ministry said.

As conflict in the Middle East disrupts trade, India will allow factories in export-focused zones to sell goods domestically at lower import duties, according to a government order.

The measure was announced in the February budget to shield exporters from higher US tariffs, but analysts say it has gained urgency as the war threatens energy supplies and pushes up freight and oil costs, reports Reuters.

The relief applies to factories in Special Economic Zones (SEZs),

which are primarily set up for exports and allow companies to import raw materials duty free.

Under the order, SEZ businesses can sell a capped share of products including chemicals, engineering goods, heavy machinery, textiles, footwear, pharmaceuticals, electronics and consumer items in the domestic market while paying reduced customs duties, instead of the full import tax applied to foreign goods.

The reduced duties vary by product, with customs rates of about 5 percent to 12.5 percent, rather than the higher levies applied to comparable imports, the order showed.

The relief will apply from April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027 and will be available to businesses that began production on or before March 31, 2025.

Initial probe finds

FROM PAGE 12

already been reported to the tribunal’s fact-finding committee formed to investigate a series of allegations involving members of the prosecutors.

Questions over the tribunal’s CCTV system first surfaced after ICT Prosecutor Sultan alleged in a Facebook post on February 23 that Abzalul’s wife entered the chamber of a powerful prosecutor carrying a heavy bag.

In the post, he also claimed that Abzalul was later made a prosecution witness in exchange for money and was eventually acquitted.

Following the allegation and other claims of unethical conduct within the prosecution team, ICT Chief Prosecutor Aminul Islam formed a fact-finding committee on March 10 to probe the matter.

US open to Dhaka’s waiver request

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladesh had earlier sent a letter making a similar request to the US.

Khalilur made the request in view of the upcoming planting season in Bangladesh so that farmers are not adversely affected and harvests and food security are not hampered, the statement said.

He explained that Bangladesh could not take advantage of the earlier limited worldwide waiver by the US on Russian oil shipments at sea, as none of the tankers was bound for Bangladesh at that time.

The two sides also discussed

options for purchasing more refined oil produced from Russian crude in third countries to meet immediate needs.

Secretary Wright acknowledged the energy challenges Bangladesh is facing and expressed his country’s commitment to support Bangladesh during these difficult times to help ensure its energy security, the statement added.

He assured that he and his team would work closely with the relevant departments of the US government to this end.

The two sides also discussed longer-term cooperation on

sustainable energy solutions for Bangladesh and the prospects of increasing procurement of US energy products.

Wright also congratulated Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on his election victory and said he looked forward to strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries in the coming days.

Tareq Md Ariful Islam, Bangladesh ambassador to the US; DM Salahuddin Mahmud, deputy chief of mission; and Fazle Rabbi, economic minister at the Bangladesh embassy in the US, were also present at the meeting.

270 road

FROM PAGE 3

Of these, 387 patients were injured in accidents involving three-wheelers, while 178 were linked to motorcycle accidents, and the rest of the patients were injured in bus or other crashes, he also said.

Of the patients, 419 were admitted, and the hospital performed 413 major and minor surgeries during the period, the NITOR director added.

The number is much higher than the annual average daily patient influx in the hospital's emergency department.

A total of 85,558 patients visited NITOR's emergency department in 2024, meaning an average of 234 patients per day.

Earlier, visiting NITOR on the Eid day, this correspondent found the emergency department busier than usual with patients coming from different districts.

One of them, Jubayer, 18, a HSC student, was brought to the hospital from Narayanganj Sadar by ambulance.

"I had an accident while riding my elder brother's motorbike. My right leg is broken," he said.

Prof Kenan said reckless driving, joy rides on motorcycles, and movement of slow vehicles on highways alongside high-speed ones are among the key causes of road accidents.

He also said if the trauma centres along the highways were functional, there would have been less pressure on NITOR, adding that there should be at least one trauma centre in every division so that road crash victims can be rushed there immediately.

Besides, many local hospitals lack the necessary manpower and equipment to perform the surgeries required promptly after accidents. As such, delays in reaching Dhaka from remote areas often worsen patients' conditions, and in many cases, limbs have to be amputated, he added.

Third terminal deal on horizon

FROM PAGE 3

infrastructure projects into operation, marking the end of years of delay and the beginning of a new phase in the country's aviation expansion, according to CAAB officials.

A high official of CAAB told The Daily Star that the Japanese consortium has addressed Dhaka's concerns by recalibrating its financial offer, particularly on service charges, operational control and revenue-sharing issues that had stalled earlier discussions.

Previously, on March 13, Japan and Bangladesh resumed the stalled talks.

The latest progress follows a series of segment-wise technical meetings, where both sides reviewed pricing and operational components in detail.

With revised pricing now on the table and high-level political engagement intensifying, officials say the process has entered its final stretch.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Mostafa

Mahmood Siddiq yesterday briefed the outcomes of the technical meetings to Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Afroza Khanom Rita and State Minister M Rashiduzzaman Millat at the secretariat. "A final agreement is expected to be reached next week following the April 3 meeting," a high official of CAAB said.

The third terminal has remained non-operational for years due to unresolved management and operational arrangements.

Industry insiders have widely criticised the delay, attributing it to policy indecision and rigid positions under the previous interim administration, which left a major national asset idle.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, after assuming office, directed authorities to resume negotiations with Japan immediately.

That directive led to the March 13 breakthrough meeting chaired by the foreign minister with attendance of civil aviation

and tourism minister and state minister, where Bangladesh formally requested a revised proposal from the Japanese side.

The Japanese consortium — comprising Japan Airport Terminal Company, Sumitomo Corporation, Sojitz Corporation and Narita International Airport Corporation — has since submitted a revised offer with reduced pricing, significantly narrowing differences.

Officials said the new proposal created a pathway towards a "win-win" agreement.

Aviation experts say operationalising the facility is crucial for easing congestion at Dhaka airport and advancing Bangladesh's ambition to emerge as a regional aviation hub in South and Southeast Asia.

Discussion on

FROM PAGE 3

Announcing the acceptance, the Speaker said, "This marks a rare precedent in Bangladesh's parliamentary history. In 53 years, this is the first time an adjournment motion brought by a member from the treasury bench has been accepted for discussion."

On March 29, Opposition Leader Shafiqur Rahman submitted an adjournment motion regarding the convening of the Constitutional Reform Council. That motion was debated in parliament on Tuesday, but no resolution was reached. In protest at not receiving redress and alleging that another adjournment motion was introduced to overshadow theirs, the opposition staged a walkout yesterday.

Later, Zainul Abedin Farooq formally introduced his new adjournment motion in the House.

He said, "After 17 years of sacrifice and struggle, under the leadership of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the July-August revolution produced the 'July National Charter.' This is our roadmap for the future."

6 die in road

FROM PAGE 4

42, and Mostafa, 40 — both residents of Sarkarpur village in the upazila. The injured were taken to various hospitals, said the OC.

In Chandina, a ninth grader named Ibne Taim sustained critical injuries when a Chattogram-bound lorry ran him over while he was crossing the road on his way home after coaching class around 9:30am.

He was taken to Eastern Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, said OC Md Abdul Momin of Mainamati Highway Police Station.

Taim was the son of Babul Mia from the Radirchar area of Chandina municipality and a student of Bara Gobindapur Ali Mia Bhuiyan High School, he added.

In Burichang upazila, a truck rammed into a covered van from behind at Nimsar Bazar on the highway around 3:45am, leaving drivers from both vehicles dead on the spot and injuring another.

OC Md Abdul Momin of Mainamati Highway Police Station confirmed the deaths.

The deceased were identified as Mohammad Zahirul Islam Moin from Begumganj upazila of Noakhali and Md Sohul Rana, 35, from Keshabpur village in Meherpur district.

In Chaudhagram upazila, an elderly woman was killed after being hit by an unidentified vehicle while crossing the highway in the Chaudhagram Bazar area around 12:15pm, said Md Shahabuddin, in-charge of Miyabazar Highway Police Outpost.

The deceased was identified as Hazera Begum, 70, wife of Moider Ali from Ramchandrapur in Chaudhagram.

23,865

FROM PAGE 3

fundamental right to be treated with dignity and in accordance with the law.

Responding to another query from Md Kamrul Hasan (Mymensingh-6), he said many teachers have been victims of cases in the past. Even those who died 20 years ago were also victimised through cases.

"We have even seen cases filed against persons with disabilities and political leaders," he said.

"We are continuing the process of withdrawing cases wherever possible. I would request the concerned individuals to submit applications to the respective ministries or departments," he added.

The relevant departments will verify the cases that have been withdrawn and take necessary steps accordingly, the minister noted.

However, this matter does not directly fall under the law ministry, he added.

PM conveys solidarity, support

FROM PAGE 3

Albusaidi and handed over a personal letter from the PM, addressed to the Sultan of Oman.

The PM also conveyed Bangladesh's readiness to extend any necessary support, should it be considered useful by the Omani government.

The foreign affairs adviser is currently undertaking a visit to several Gulf countries as the special envoy of the prime minister to convey his messages to the leadership

and further reinforce Bangladesh's engagement with the region.

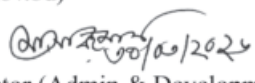
The prime minister expressed his deep concerns regarding the attacks on Oman and loss of lives and property, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He expressed deep appreciation for the continued support extended by the Omani government in hosting a large number of Bangladeshi expatriates and for the measures taken to ensure their safety and

well-being.

During the meeting, Kabir appreciated the constructive role played by Oman to negotiate the dispute between Iran and the US while promoting peace, dialogue and diplomacy in the region.

The discussion also covered the excellent state of bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Oman, with a shared commitment to further strengthening cooperation across sectors of mutual interest.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Wage Earners' Welfare Board Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare & Overseas Employment Prabashi Kallayan Bhaban Eskaton Garden, Ramna, Dhaka-1000 www.web.gov.bd			
No-49.04.0000.004.07.091.18.149		Date: 30.03.2026	
e-Tender Notice (OTM)			
e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of goods as mentioned in the following table:			
Tender ID No.	Name of Scheme	Last Selling date & time	Tender Closing date & time
1243350	Supply of Computer, Printer, Scanner & Photocopier	22-04-2026 9.00 AM	22-04-2026 12.30 PM
This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the national e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the national e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)  Director (Admin & Development) Deputy Secretary e-mail: d.ad@web.gov.bd			
GD-699			

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Roads & Highways Department Office of the Executive Engineer Road Division, Manikganj. www.rhd.gov.bd		
Memo No. 35.01.5600.444.07.010.26-845		Dated: 01/04/2026
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e-Tender are invited in the National e-GP Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of works as stated below:		
Tender Notice & ID	Name of work	Last selling, closing date & time
05/e-GP/PMP/EE/Mkg. Rd/2025-26 ID: 1248425	Construction of 12.75 m (1x12.00 m) Long RCC Slab Bridge (Pukhuria Bridge) at 62nd Km (Ch. 61+267m) on Rd/2025-2026 Dhaka (Mirpur) - Uthuli - Paturia National Highway Road (N-5) under Manikganj Road Division during the year 2025-2026.	28-Apr-2026 17:00 & 29-Apr-2026 12:15
06/e-GP/PMP/EE/Mkg.Rd/2025-26 ID: 1248427	Construction of 12.75 m (1x12.00m) Long RCC Slab Bridge (Joka Bridge -1) at 61st Km (Ch. 60+123m) of Dhaka (Mirpur) - Uthuli - Paturia National Highway Road (N-5) under Manikganj Road Division during the year 2025-2026.	28-Apr-2026 17:00 & 29-Apr-2026 12:15
44/e-GP/EE/Mkg.Rd/2025-2026 ID: 1248426	Providing different type of Labour for Emergency Repairing of potholes, Large holes, damaged Pavement, due to heavy traffic,rain and other road Maintenance works by laying Asphalt materials at Different Road under Manikganj Road Sub-division under Manikganj Road division during the year of 2025-2026.	15-Apr-2026 17:00 & 16-Apr-2026 12:15
45/e-GP/EE/Mkg.Rd/2025-2026 ID: 1251171	Replacement of Bearing Plate and other ancillary works of Kaia Bridge at 30th Km (p) of Dhaka (Mirpur)-Uthuli-Paturia- (N-5) Road under Road Division Manikganj during the year 2025-2026	15-Apr-2026 17:00 & 16-Apr-2026 12:15
1. This is an online tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. 2. To submit e-tender, registration in the national e-GP portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. 3. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).  (Md. Shahriar Alam) Executive Engineer RHD Phone: 02-996610377 eamanikganj@gmail.com		
GD-702		

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার													
জনপ্রশাসন মন্ত্রণালয়													
সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানা													
১৬, আব্দুল গানি রোড, ঢাকা।													
উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি													
দরপত্র নং-০১/২০২৫-২০২৬													
সরকারি যানবাহন অধিদপ্তর/সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানায় কার্যকর কার্ণার ও ১৭-২০ রোড কর্মচারীদের সাজ-পোশাক সরবরাহের নিমিত্ত প্রকৃত বাসকারী/স্বত্বাধিকারী/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিমিত্ত থেকে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। দরপত্রের প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্যাদি ও শর্তাবলী নিম্নলিখিত:													
ক্রমিক	দরপত্রের বর্ণনাবলী	দরপত্রের বিজ্ঞপ্তির বিবরণ											
১.	মহাপাশ	জনপ্রশাসন মন্ত্রণালয়											
২.	সহকারী	সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানা, সরকারি যানবাহন অধিদপ্তর											
৩.	দরপত্র আহ্বায়ক	ব্যবস্থাপক, সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানা, ঢাকা।											
৪.	দরপত্র আহ্বায়কের কোড	১০৭৫০৮০১৪২৫											
৫.	দরপত্র আহ্বায়কের জেলা	ঢাকা, বাংলাদেশ।											
৬.	দরপত্রের বিধিবিধি	সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানার কর্মকর্তা কার্ণার ও ১৭ থেকে ২০ রোড কর্মচারীদের সাজ-পোশাক ক্রয়/সরবরাহ।											
৭.	দরপত্র আহ্বানের সূত্র	০৫.০৫.০০০০.০০৬.০৭.০০৫.২৫-২৫৬-২৪১											
৮.	তারিখ	০১/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রি.											
৯.	ক্রয়ের পদ্ধতি	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র (Open Tender Method)											
১০.	বাজেট এবং অর্থবর্ষের উৎস	রাজস্ব বাজেট, ২০২৫-২০২৬ অর্থ বর্ষ											
১১.	দরপত্রের প্যাকেজ নং	দরপত্রের প্যাকেজ নাম											
	প্যাকেজ নং-১, লট নং-১, ২	সাজ-পোশাক ক্রয়।											
১২.	দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ	০২/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রি.											
১৩.	দরপত্র সিডিউল বিস্তারিত শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১৫/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রি., বিকাল ৫:০০ টা											
১৪.	দরপত্র সিডিউল জমা দেয়ার তারিখ ও সময়	১৬/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রি. কার্ণার দুপুর ১:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত (০২/০৪/২০২৬ হতে ১৫/০৪/২০২৬ তারিখের যে কোন কর্মদিবসে বিকাল ৫:০০ টা পর্যন্ত)											
১৫.	দরপত্র বাস্তব দেয়ার তারিখ ও সময়	১৬/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রি. কার্ণার দুপুর ২:০০ টা											
১৬.	অধিকারের নাম ও ঠিকানা	ব্যবস্থাপকের কার্যালয়, সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানা, ১৬, আব্দুল গানি রোড, ঢাকা। ফোন: ০২-৪১০৫৩৫৯৭, e-mail: poripool@gmail.com											
	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের ঠিকানা	(ক) ব্যবস্থাপকের কার্যালয়, সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানা, ১৬, আব্দুল গানি রোড, ঢাকা। (খ) হিসাবরক্ষণ কর্মকর্তা, সরকারি যানবাহন অধিদপ্তর, সচিবালয় লিকে রোড, ঢাকা।											
	দরপত্র জমা দেয়ার ঠিকানা	(ক) ব্যবস্থাপকের কার্যালয়, সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানা, ১৬, আব্দুল গানি রোড, ঢাকা। (খ) পরিচালক (সড়ক) এর কার্যালয়, সরকারি যানবাহন অধিদপ্তর, সচিবালয় লিকে রোড, ঢাকা।											
	দরপত্র খোলার ঠিকানা	পরিচালক (সড়ক) এর অফিস কক্ষ, সরকারি যানবাহন অধিদপ্তর, সচিবালয় লিকে রোড, ঢাকা।											
১৭.	প্রি-টেণ্ডার মিটিং	প্রয়োজ্য নহে।											
১৮.	দরপত্রে অন্তর্ভুক্ত হওয়ার শর্তাবলী	(১) সরকারি/আধা সরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানে সাজ-পোশাক সরবরাহকারী হিসেবে অভিজ্ঞতার সনদ/কার্যসম্পন্ন (২) হালনাগাদ সার্ভিসিট কার্ডের ট্রেড লাইসেন্স (৩) হালনাগাদ আর্থিক ব্যালেন্স স্টেটমেন্ট (৪) হালনাগাদ স্টাট সনদপত্র (৫) টি আই এন ও সর্বশেষ বছরের আয়কর রিটার্ন প্রত্যয়ন/সনদপত্র (৬) স্বত্বাধিকারীরা জাতীয় পরিচালকের ফটোকপি (৭) ট্রেড লাইসেন্সের ধরণ সার্ভিসিট কার্ডের/সরবরাহকারী/ট্রেডিং হতে হবে (৮) প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিজস্ব শেখান ব্যালেন্স হতে হবে (৯) কর্মচারীদের পোশাকের ক্ষেত্রে মাপ নিয়ে নিম্ন প্রতিষ্ঠান থেকে ঠিকার করে সরবরাহ করতে হবে। (১০) সেকেন্ড হ্যান্ডের ক্ষেত্রে সেকেন্ড হ্যান্ডের চুক্তিপত্রের ফটোকপি দাখিল করতে হবে এবং নিজস্ব হলে বিদ্যুৎ বিদ্যুত ও পৌরসভার পরিশোধের হিসেব ফটোকপি সহ দরপত্রে বর্ণিত সকল ডকুমেন্টের সত্যায়িত কপি দরপত্রের সঙ্গে দাখিল করতে হবে। অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী দরপত্র সিডিউলে বিজ্ঞপ্তির বর্ণনা করা হয়েছে।											
১৯.	দরপত্র সিডিউল এর মূল্য (প্রতি প্যাকেজ) এবং যে কোড নম্বর ট্রেজারী চালান জমা করতে হবে উত্তর নম্বর	১০০০/- টাকার (অক্ষরলেখযোগ্য), বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক অথবা সোনালী ব্যাংকের যে কোন শাখায় নিম্নে বর্ণিত কোড নম্বরে ট্রেজারী চালান জমা দিতে হবে। <table border="1"> <tr> <td>১</td> <td>০</td> <td>৭</td> <td>৬</td> <td>১</td> <td>০</td> <td>০</td> <td>০</td> <td>০</td> <td>০</td> <td>৬</td> </tr> </table>	১	০	৭	৬	১	০	০	০	০	০	৬
১	০	৭	৬	১	০	০	০	০	০	৬			
২০.	প্যাকেজ নম্বর	লট নম্বর	মাল্যমাদের সর্বশেষ বিবরণ	ছান	টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি	কার্য সম্পাদনের সময়							
	প্যাকেজ নং-১	লট-১	কার্ণার ও ১৭-২০ রোড কর্মচারীদের পোশাক (জো-কাপাল), জামা, ফুল প্যান্ট(কাপো),ফুল শার্ট(কাপো), মোজা (কাপো), ছাটা (কাপো), নাম ফলক, বি.গদা গোয়েস্তা, ফুল সার্ভ (সাদা)।	সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানা	২৬,৩০০/-	চুক্তি সম্পাদনের কার্ণার হতে ৩০ দিন।							
		লট-২	কার্ণার ও ১৭-২০ রোড কর্মচারীদের চামড়ার জুতা (কাপো অক্সফোর্ড সু)।	সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানা	৯,০০০/-								
২১.	দরপত্র আহ্বায়কের নাম		মো: মিজানুর রহমান										
২২.	দরপত্র আহ্বায়কের পদবী		ব্যবস্থাপক										
২৩.	দরপত্র আহ্বায়কের ঠিকানা		ব্যবস্থাপকের কার্যালয়, সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানা										
২৪.	দরপত্র আহ্বায়কের দুলাদানী		ফোন: ০২-৪১০৫৩৫৯৭, e-mail: poripool@gmail.com										
২৫.	কার্যক্রম/মাল্যমাদের বিবরণ		সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানার কার্ণার ও ১৭ থেকে ২০ রোড কর্মচারীদের সাজ-পোশাক ক্রয়/সরবরাহ।										
২৬.	টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি মার অনুসারে জমা দিতে হবে		টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি ব্যবস্থাপক, সরকারি যানবাহন মেরামত কারখানা, ঢাকা এর ব্যালেন্স যে কোন সিডিউল কার্ডের পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট দরপত্রের সঙ্গে জমা দিতে হবে।										
২৭.	নমুনা দাখিল		দরপত্রে বর্ণিত মাল্যমাদের নমুনা দরপত্রের সহিত দাখিল করতে হবে। নমুনা বাজীর কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।										
২৮.	বিশেষ নির্দেশাবলী		অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী দরপত্র সিডিউলে বিজ্ঞপ্তির বর্ণনা করা হয়েছে। কার্ণার যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল অথবা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।										

১৫.০১/০১/২৫

মো: মিজানুর রহমান
ব্যবস্থাপক (উপসচিব)
ফোন: ০২-৪১০৫৩৫৯৭

GD-690

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

Stories from under the waves

Review of ‘Twist’ (Random House, 2025) by Colum McCann

ATIYA RUMNI MAHMOOD

Finding an independent bookstore in a new city is one of my most cherished travel experiences. Travelling to a new city and not visiting a local independent bookstore is something that has hardly ever occurred to me. These stores are like small windows to me—providing a glimpse of the local culture and history, and the literary pulse of the city.

The last time we were in Dallas, Texas attending a wedding, I carved out a slice of my busy time to go on my pilgrimage to a locally owned, independent bookstore: Interabang Books. After browsing their collection of books, I struck up a conversation with the friendly bookseller, and he recommended me *Twist*.

Twist’s snappy title, the palette of the dark greenish blue jacket of the book, and the author’s name caught my eye. I have a soft spot for Irish literature, and remember reading *Angela’s Ashes* (Scribner, 1996) by Frank McCourt. In his memoir, McCourt, with his “literary Irishness”, crafted the dark humor and hardship of growing up in Ireland. It deeply moved me.



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

I had no idea before I started reading *Twist* that so much of our lives bounce around under the sea. Although the book does not mention the Bay of Bengal, I could see a connection with current concerns—as it is there that the shipping routes of Southeast Asia intersect, where energy routes and data cables intersect, where the geopolitical ambitions of major powers intersect.

So I bought *Twist*.

Twist is a story within a story that explores themes of isolation in the digital age and human connection and disconnection. “We are all shards in the smash-up. Our lives, even the

unruptured ones, bounce around on the sea floor. For a while we might brush tenderly against one another, but eventually, and inevitably, we collide and splinter,” Fennell contemplates. This sombre soliloquy reflects his eagerness to repair his own shards caused by his heavy drinking. Part thriller, part fact, part self-reflection, in essence it is a novel about a writer, about broken cables, the sabotage and repair of underwater cables, and a man named John Conway.

Anthony Fennell, a heartbroken Irish journalist, is on an assignment from an online journal to write about the lives of a cable repair vessel. The first commercial cable was laid at the bottom of the English Channel in the 1850s. Since then, a vast network of cables has become an important part of

the global economy. Fennell goes off to Cape Town to join the cable repair boat, “Georges Lecoq”. The boat departs into the ocean to begin the long journey from South Africa to Ghana, and the task is to fix an undersea cable that has been broken since a storm hit Congo, disrupting internet access for many in Africa. He meets the crew and the mysterious, charismatic mission chief of the vessel, John Conway.

Conway is an experienced diver and extremely knowledgeable about the ocean’s endless depth. He repairs cables that carry all the world’s information. He is also in a difficult relationship with Zanele, a South African actor. While Conway is sailing in the deep sea, Zanele is busy with her performance of Beckett’s “Waiting for Godot” in the UK. There, she is attacked with acid during a

performance.

Fennell’s original goal was to document the repair mission, but Conway’s erratic behavior intrigues him. Gradually he becomes obsessed with unearthing the real Conway, and just when they are about to finish their job, Conway disappears, leaving everyone on the boat in awe. The story line shifts as the title of the book hints.

It is fascinating to read Fennell’s story about contradictions in the real world, his gripping description of human beings struggling to survive in the deep sea. He talks about love, hate, peaceful conflicts, wars, the sabotage of those cables, the scale of beauty of the natural world and anger at humanity’s capacity to destroy it. “All the myopia. All the greed. A new cable would make billions of dollars for its owners... The

old colonialism was dressed up in a tube. It snaked the floors of our unsilent seas,” he says.

As a reader I am intrigued by the narratives of the novel that reflect the broad themes of globalism, human suffering, and the gap between instant global connectivity (enabled by the cables) and the real-world crises: “The news of the bombing—and that is what most of the world heard—had shot through the media within a couple of days. It hit all the major websites, amid the stories of the pandemic and the hurricanes and the evacuations and the drowning of refugees and the other sundry horrors that the world delivered.” I recall reading the remark by a British admiral in the book, “the next war will not begin in the air like they did in the past century but there is a high probability it will begin underwater”.

Twist is a remarkable and highly informative novel. In today’s world, we are divided, and we are lost and lonely. Although the heart of this story revolves around Fennell’s struggle with issues of breakage and repair of human nature, it has a deeper narrative of mystery, idealism, and our digital vulnerability. It is part fictional and part meditative, with a multilayered structure. I had no idea before I started reading *Twist* that so much of our lives bounce around under the sea. Although the book does not mention the Bay of Bengal, I could see a connection with current concerns—as it is there that the shipping routes of Southeast Asia intersect, where energy routes and data cables intersect, where the geopolitical ambitions of major powers intersect.

Atiya Rumni Mahmood is a long-term resident of Maryland, who studied at the University of Dhaka and the University of Maryland at College Park, and worked in the greater Washington DC metro area in corporate finance and accounting. She enjoys cooking, gardening, reading, and travelling.

The lives of the two couples, with their inner conflicts, converge although their issues do not intersect. I expected the conflicts—internal and external—to lead to a major explosion of sorts but Miller prevents anything like that from happening. What transpires, however, is something much closer to life: frictions result in reactions—some of them intense, but kept realistic through Miller’s measured prose. When something happens—a character finding out something, for example—it is not loudly announced. Instead, the prose gently leads us to the event.

dramatically—each piece of the puzzle fit into another, the complexities of my human experience paving the way for more of life. Sometimes it was only in retrospect that I realised how anticlimacticly I dealt with events that were often quite serious. While I do not mean to suggest that *The Land in Winter* is anticlimactic by any means, I argue it reflects the fact that no matter how complex life is, it is often not proportionally dramatic. It is this fact of life that Miller portrays in the novel, and his four characters are microcosmic representations of the complicated, often ugly, seldom simple human experience.

Shounak Reza is a PhD student in English at the University of Virginia.

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

A wintry account of the human experience

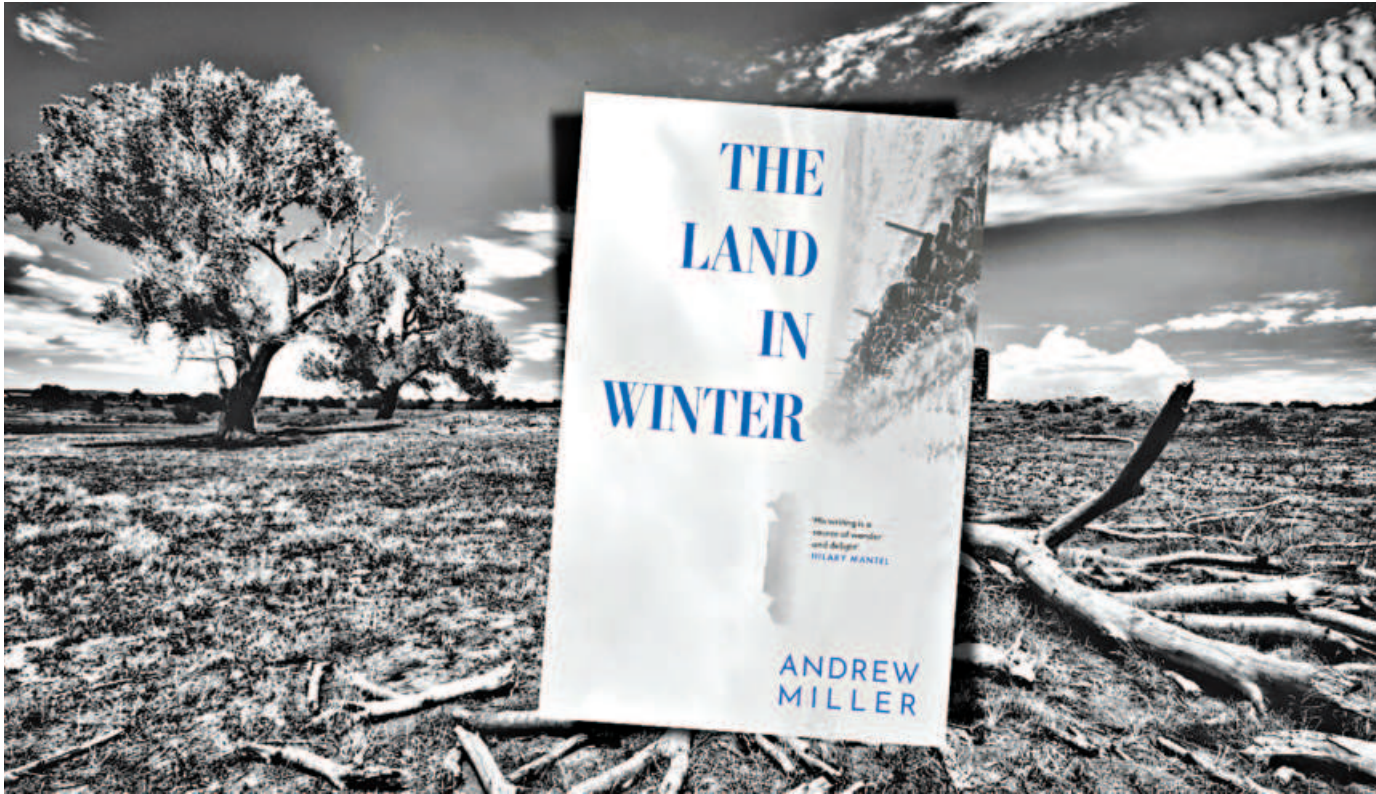
Review of Andrew Miller’s ‘The Land in Winter’ (Sceptre, 2024)

SHOUNAK REZA

In my early 20s, I moved to New York and started going to a commuter college. I lived far from campus, so in order to get to school, I had to take a bus and then the subway, adding up to an hour of commute each way. My classmates all commuted from various parts of the city; some of them ran to work right after classes. Having been surrounded by friends all my life and not yet knowing how to enjoy my own company, I felt extremely lonely. One winter evening, on my way back home, I was informed that my train would not be stopping at a particular station, so I would have to brave my way through the winds of Manhattan to take another train, two blocks from where I was. Another person was in the same position and we started walking to the other station. We made small talk, only to realise we were both into writing. We exchanged numbers, and soon became rather unlikely friends—I was an English major; he had just graduated with a degree in Computer Science and was now working for a bank. What brought us together was our loneliness in the maze of a city that lures you in and makes you suffer until you finally fall in love with the sight and sound and smell of it. Our loneliness was informed by the fact that we felt like two nameless individuals in an ever-busy city.

In Andrew Miller’s *The Land in Winter*, we encounter loneliness, except, as opposed to New York, it is set in a small village where nothing much happens. It is this isolation that brings neighbours Irene and Rita together. The two women could not be more different from each other: Irene, married to a doctor, is from an upper-middle class family in London, whereas Rita worked as a dancer before marrying Bill, who has just moved to the village to become a farmer. The two women form a friendship, something that would perhaps be impossible in a big city where class, background, and social circles inform friendships. In a village that seems stuck in wintry nothingness, all those factors become unimportant.

The village, of course, is not stuck in



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

nothingness, wintry or not. I grew up reading Agatha Christie, and I remember how Miss Marple used to observe the complexities of human nature reflected in the lives of the residents of her village. Unlike Christie’s characters, Miller’s characters are not conspiring and plotting against one another (this is not a mystery novel). However, scratch the surface and you will find the potential for disasters. Eric, Irene’s husband, is having an affair with Allison, who happens to be rich and, to make matters more inconvenient, also married—happily so, on the surface. When he visits her, he has to make calculations: he is, after all, a doctor in a small village. What will happen if the villagers get to know about the affair?

As Eric struggles to keep his affair a secret, his neighbour Rita has to take care to silence the voices in her head. Her husband, Bill, navigates issues of his own as he tries to succeed at being a farmer after having received an elite education. His father is an immigrant who changed his last name in order to sound British. He grew wealthy and provided Bill with the best education in the country, and Bill has gone on to become a farmer.

The lives of the two couples, with their inner conflicts, converge although their issues do not intersect. I expected the conflicts—internal and external—to lead to a major explosion of sorts but Miller prevents anything like that from happening. What transpires, however, is something much

closer to life: frictions result in reactions—some of them intense, but kept realistic through Miller’s measured prose. When something happens—a character finding out something, for example—it is not loudly announced. Instead, the prose gently leads us to the event. As a result, while people’s feelings and inner landscape are carefully observed and even delved into, it never becomes dramatic. It is this, in my opinion, that makes the novel work so well. The four central characters are realistic—even when I did not approve of their actions, I never thought they were hyperbolic.

Looking back, the way I eventually fell in love with New York and all the meaningful friendships I formed and the people I would go on to fall out with did not happen



The roadmap for the 2026 FIFA World Cup -- the biggest yet, with 48 nations -- took shape yesterday against a backdrop of tears, joy, and historic feats. [Anti-clockwise] For Italy, it was shock and disbelief as Gennaro Gattuso's men suffered an agonising 4-1 penalty shootout defeat to Bosnia and Herzegovina in their playoff final, following a 1-1 draw in Zenica. The result means Italy -- reduced to 10 men after defender Alessandro Bastoni was sent off late in the first half -- will miss a third straight World Cup while Bosnia return to the event for the first time since 2014. Meanwhile, the Democratic Republic of Congo defeated Jamaica 1-0 at home with an extra-time winner from former England Under-21 international Axel Tuanzebe in their inter-confederation playoff final, securing their first World Cup appearance in 52 years, when the country was known as Zaire. In Mexico's Monterrey, Iraq players celebrated their return to the quadrennial event after a 40-year absence by claiming the final spot with a 2-1 win over Bolivia. Turkiye also returned after a 22-year gap, while Sweden (first time since 2018) and Czechia (first time since 2006) also booked their places in the tournament.

PHOTO: AFP/FIGO

‘UNACCEPTABLE DISGRACE’

Italy miss third straight World Cup

STAR SPORTS DESK

Italy's World Cup nightmare deepened on Tuesday as the four-time champions crashed out in the playoffs once again, falling 4-1 on penalties to Bosnia and Herzegovina after a 1-1 draw -- a result that has sparked nationwide outrage and renewed calls for sweeping reform.

The Azzurri looked on course early when Moise Kean fired them ahead in the 15th minute, but the match turned just before halftime when Alessandro Bastoni was sent off for a last-man tackle. Reduced to 10 men, Italy struggled to maintain control, and Haris Tabakovic struck an equaliser 11 minutes from time to force penalties.

Misses from Pio Esposito and Bryan Cristante proved costly as Bosnia converted all their spot-kicks, with 18-year-old Kerim Alajbegovic once again showing composure under pressure.

The defeat means Italy will miss a third consecutive World Cup, extending an astonishing decline for a nation that last lifted the trophy in 2006 and has not played a knockout match at the tournament since.

Head coach Gennaro Gattuso cut an emotional figure after the match. "Today the boys didn't deserve a beating like this," he told RAI. "We were left with 10 players, we had three decent chances and

Group A
Mexico
South Korea
South Africa
Czechia

Group D
USA
Australia
Paraguay
Turkey

Group G
Belgium
Iran
Egypt
New Zealand

Group J
Argentina
Austria
Algeria
Jordan

Group B
Canada
Switzerland
Qatar
Bosnia and Herzegovina

Group E
Germany
Ecuador
Ivory Coast
Curacao

Group H
Spain
Uruguay
Saudi Arabia
Cape Verde

Group K
Portugal
Colombia
Uzbekistan
DR Congo

Group C
Brazil
Morocco
Scotland
Haiti

Group F
Netherlands
Japan
Tunisia
Sweden

Group I
France
Senegal
Norway
Iraq

Group L
England
Croatia
Panama
Ghana

EUROPEAN PLAYOFFS
Bosnia and Herzegovina 1-1 Italy (Bosnia win 4-1 on penalties)
Sweden 3-2 Poland
Kosovo 0-1 Turkey

Czechia 2-2 Denmark (Czechia win 3-1 on penalties)

INTERCONTINENTAL PLAYOFFS
DR Congo 1-0 Jamaica
Iraq 2-1 Bolivia



they barely troubled us. I'm sorry... I'm proud of my boys."

But pride offered little consolation back home.

Italy woke up to fury and disbelief, with Corriere della Sera branding it "the World Cup curse," while La Gazzetta dello Sport and Corriere dello Sport, the country's two main sports newspapers declared: "We're all staying at home." Fans echoed that frustration.

"Everything went badly from the start," said Rome supporter Davide Caldareta. "The team wasn't good... honestly, I'm shocked."

The backlash quickly turned political. Italy's Sports Minister Andrea Abodi called for change at the top, saying, "Italian football needs to be rebuilt from the ground up," while members of the ruling coalition demanded the resignation of federation president Gabriele Gravina, whose future will be discussed at a board meeting next week.

"It is an unacceptable disgrace," the League Party, a member of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's coalition, wrote on Instagram.

Even legends weighed in. "Today's results are the consequence of our attitude from 20 years ago," said Gianluigi Buffon, pointing to a failure to evolve beyond past greats.

SAFF U-20 C'SHIP

Manik header seals final berth

SPORTS REPORTER

A first-half header from Mohammad Manik sent Bangladesh into the SAFF U-20 Championship final with a 1-0 win over Nepal in the first semifinal at the National Stadium in Male yesterday.

The victory secured Bangladesh's sixth final appearance, barring the 2023 edition. The men in red and green dominated early, then withstood sustained second-half pressure from former champions Nepal.

With head coach Mark Cox suspended, assistant coach Atiqur Rahman Meshu led the side from the touchline. Bangladesh began brightly, creating early chances but scored a solitary goal.



Manik scored in the 11th minute, heading home from a precise lob by Murshed Ali. US-based forward Ronan Sullivan thought he had doubled the lead shortly after, but it was ruled out for offside.

Nepal pressed for an equaliser in the second half, but Bangladesh's defence held firm. Yousuf Ali blocked a powerful strike from substitute Anubhab Puri in the 90th minute.

Bangladesh had late chances to seal the game, with Sumon Soren's flick from a Declan Sullivan cross drifting wide, and Ronan's close-range effort from another Declan pass saved by Bhote.

Bangladesh held on to book a place in the final on April 3 against either India or Bhutan.



The day Brazil owned the cup

At the 1970 edition, Brazil won the World Cup for a third time to claim the Jules Rimet Trophy permanently. In the final at the Azteca Stadium in Mexico, they thrashed Italy 4-1. Pele, Gerson, Jairzinho, and Carlos Alberto scored for the Selecao, while Roberto Boninsegna netted the Azzurri's lone goal.

** Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Seaman and the 42-yard illusion'.

Hamza hails progress after ‘hard lesson’

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's talisman Hamza Choudhury struck a tone of cautious optimism after Tuesday's 1-0 defeat to Singapore, framing the end of their AFC Asian Cup qualifying campaign as a necessary "hard lesson" for a side he believes have progressed by "leaps and bounds" over the past year.

"It's a big step forward," Hamza told reporters at Changi Airport. "To come to Singapore, who have already qualified, and play the kind of football we did is something we should be proud of. It puts us in good stead



for the next campaign."

He acknowledged the immediate sting felt within the squad and by head coach Javier Cabrera, but insisted that a closer look at the performances would reflect a team beginning to establish themselves on the continental stage.

"Of course, we wanted to qualify, but with these hard lessons everyone becomes stronger. There's disappointment, but when we look back at the games, we'll see how much better we've become as a team."

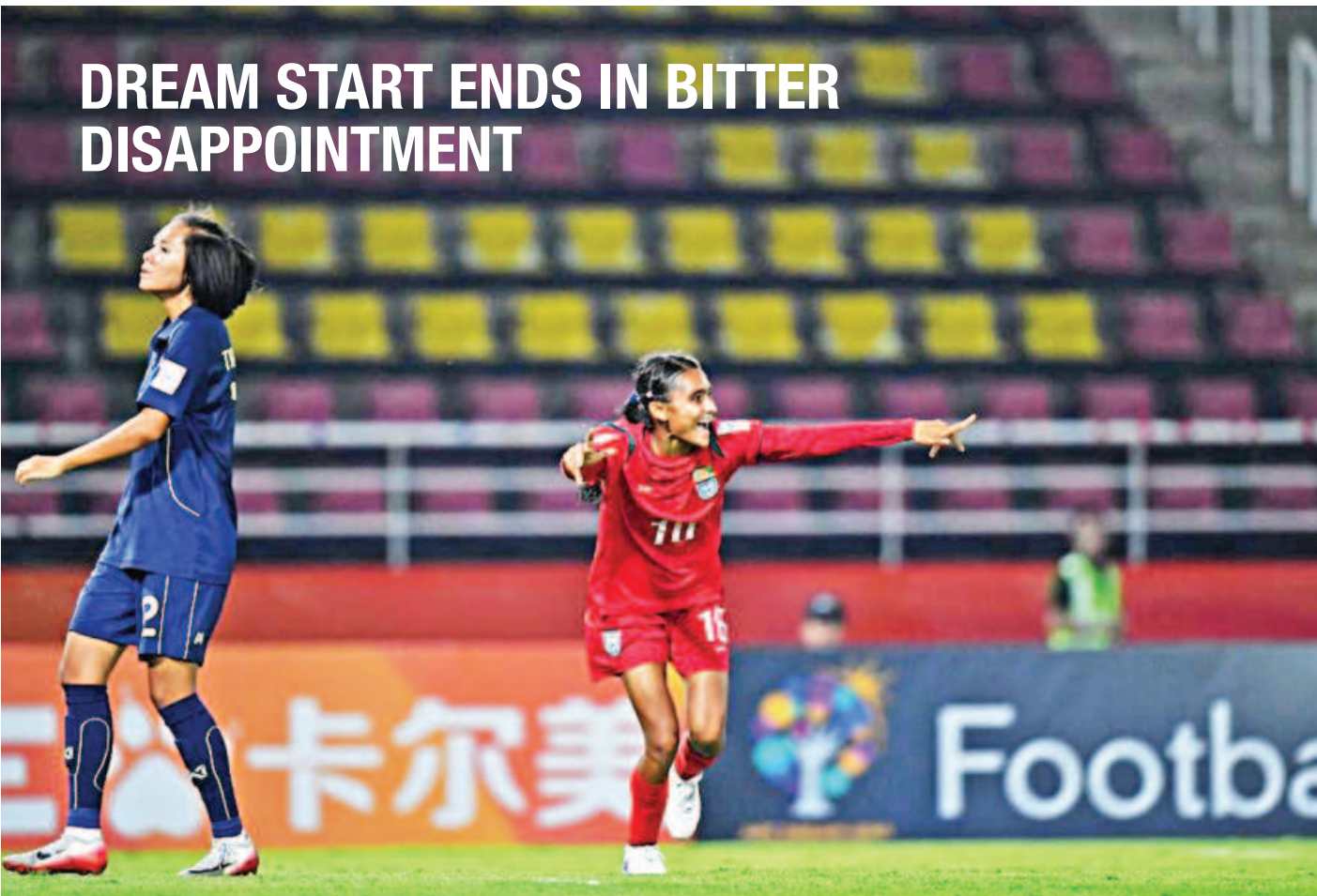
Reflecting on his first year in international football, the 28-year-old described his experience with Bangladesh as deeply fulfilling. "It's amazing -- honestly, the best thing I've done," he said.

The Leicester City midfielder also reserved special praise for Bangladesh's travelling support, who turned out in significant numbers at the National Stadium in Kallang and, at times, drowned out the home crowd.

"I think they're the best fans in the world. For them to travel and spend their hard-earned money to support us like that -- even when we haven't qualified -- is second to none. We're so grateful."

Looking ahead, Hamza pointed to a run of summer friendlies before the next competitive window in September, with expectations within the camp now shifting.

"We expect to win now. Within the country and within ourselves, we've put that expectation on us after some of our displays."



Goal-machine Mosammat Sagorika handed Bangladesh a dream start to their maiden AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup campaign against Thailand in Bangkok yesterday, striking in the 36th and 54th minutes. However, two rash challenges by Bangladesh defenders inside the box in the 68th and 74th minutes led to penalties, allowing the hosts to seize control. Riding that momentum, Thailand netted a decisive third goal in the 78th minute, leaving Bangladesh's historic debut to end in bitter disappointment.

PHOTO: AFC



Drone debris kills another Bangladeshi in the UAE

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Falling shrapnel from an intercepted drone in the UAE's Fujairah killed a Bangladeshi national yesterday, pushing the death toll of Bangladeshis in the US-Israel war on Iran to six.

"Shrapnel falling from the interception of a drone ... resulted in the killing of a person of Bangladeshi nationality," the UAE's official WAM news agency said in a post on X.

The identity of the deceased could not be ascertained till filing of this report last night.

The first victim of the war was Ahmed Ali, also known as Saleh Ahmed, who died in the UAE on February 28 when US-Israeli strikes on Iran began. SM Tareq, a 48-year-old migrant worker, died in Bahrain on March 2 after debris from an intercepted drone fell on an industrial area.

On March 8, Bacchu Miah of Kishoreganj and Mosharraf Hossain of Tangail were killed in a missile

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3



DANCIN' IN THE RAIN ... Young people enjoying a sudden downpour at Dhaka University's TSC last night. The rain, coming after a few days of scorching heat, provided a fleeting moment of relief and release.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

RUSSIAN FUEL US open to Dhaka's waiver request



DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US will positively consider Bangladesh's request for a special waiver to buy refined diesel and other petroleum products from Russian sources, according to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office.

According to the statement, Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman met US Energy Secretary Chris Wright at the Department of Energy in Washington, DC, on Tuesday and explained the energy-related challenges Bangladesh is facing due to supply chain disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz amid the US-Israel war on Iran.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

First crewed lunar mission in 50 years launches today

REUTERS, Cape Canaveral

Nasa is set to launch four astronauts as soon as 4:24am today on a 10-day flight around the moon, marking the most ambitious US space mission in decades and a major step toward returning humans to the lunar surface before China's first crewed landing.

Nasa mission managers on Monday polled "go" to launch the Artemis II mission's towering, 322-ft (98-m) Space Launch System (SLS) rocket topped with the astronauts' Orion crew capsule as early as 6:24 pm EDT yesterday.



It will launch from Nasa's Kennedy Space Center in Florida just one pad away from where the last moon-bound astronauts of the US Apollo program lifted off more than half a century ago.

The Artemis II crew includes Nasa astronauts Christina Koch, Victor Glover and Reid Wiseman and Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen, who landed in Florida from Houston on Friday.

They had been in a two-week quarantine leading up to liftoff and spent time with their families over the weekend at the Kennedy Space Center's beach house, a spot where astronauts rest before blasting off into space.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

BRIBERY CLAIM AT ICT Initial probe finds CCTV hard drive swap: prosecutor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Crimes Tribunal Prosecutor Tanvir Hassan Zoha yesterday said preliminary findings suggest hard drives meant to remain inside the tribunal's CCTV system had been replaced.

"From our initial findings, we have learned that the hard drives were replaced. Completely new drives were installed there. This is now under investigation," Zoha said while speaking to reporters at the ICT premises.

The issue surfaced during an attempt to verify an allegation that a family member of an accused, who later became a state witness in the Ashulia body-burning case, had entered the room of ICT Prosecutor Gazi MH Tamim carrying a bag of money.

ICT Prosecutor BM Sultan Mahmud earlier alleged that a member of the family of former police sub-inspector Sheikh Abzalul Haque, an accused in the case, entered Tamim's room with a bag containing money.

"In the preliminary stage, we have seen indications in the CCTV footage and the registrar records that some of the hard drives were replaced with others, both old and new," Zoha said.

He added that the matter has

AGENCIES

India's oil ministry said yesterday that domestic jet fuel prices would rise as the Middle East war pushed up energy costs, but that it had cushioned airlines from an expected 100 percent jump.

Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) makes up a substantial chunk of airlines' expenses, and sustained increases could translate into higher airfares. State-run refiner Indian Oil Corporation said that ATF prices rose by 8.5 percent in the capital Delhi, with similar rises in other major cities.

"Due to the closure of Strait of Hormuz, and extraordinary situation in global energy markets, price of ATF for domestic markets was expected to increase by more than 100 percent on April 1," the Ministry of Petroleum said in a statement.

In Nepal, the state-run Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) has increased aviation fuel prices by up to 117.4 percent for international flights, effective after midnight on Tuesday.

The NOC said increases of 84.7 percent, 116.2 percent and 117.4 percent for international flights from Kathmandu, Pokhara and Bhairahawa, respectively, were needed to make payments to Indian Oil Corporation on time and avoid further supply disruptions.

Prices for domestic flights have been

increased by 97.6 percent, NOC said.

Nepal increased petrol and diesel prices by 9.55 percent and 7.0 percent, respectively, and started rationing cooking gas earlier this month, reports AFP.

In Cambodia, diesel price yesterday



reached double its level at the start of the war after the latest government increase, official figures showed.

Millions of Cambodian farmers are facing hardship as rising fuel and fertiliser costs are fuelling their production costs since the conflict began.

"When the price of fuel is rising, the prices of inputs, fertiliser, (and) services including transportation also rises, and smallholders are not profitable," Cambodian Farmer Federation Association of Agricultural Producers Chief Executive Sok Sotha told Bernama.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Italy miss out on WC again Congo, Iraq end long wait

AFP, Paris

Italy failed to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup as a play-off defeat on penalties to Bosnia and Herzegovina on Tuesday meant the Azzurri will not go to this year's tournament in North America, while Turkey, the Czech Republic and Sweden all secured their places at the finals.

Italy have won the World Cup four times, but they failed to qualify for the 2018 and 2022 tournaments and will once again have to watch from afar as the field is expanded to 48 teams in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Bosnia won 4-1 in the shoot-out in Zenica after their play-off final finished 1-1 at the end of extra time, with Sandro Tonali the only Italy player to score from the spot as Francesco Pio Esposito blazed their first penalty over and Bryan Cristante smashed his kick against the crossbar.

Moise Kean had given Gennaro Gattuso's Italy the lead on 15 minutes, but they were reduced to 10 men when Alessandro Bastoni was shown a straight red card late in the first half.

Bosnia equalised on 79 minutes through Haris Tabakovic, and with no further goals in extra time the tie was decided on penalties.



SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

29 dead as Russian military plane crashes

REUTERS

A Russian An-26 military transport plane crashed into a cliff in Crimea, killing 29 people on board, due to a possible technical malfunction, Russia's defence ministry said early yesterday, according to news agencies.

TASS news agency, quoting the ministry, said communication with the aircraft was lost at about 6:00 pm local time (1500 GMT) on Tuesday on a planned flight over Crimea. The peninsula, covered in sweeping mountains leading down to the coast of the Black Sea, was annexed by Russia from Ukraine in 2014.

"The defence ministry reported that a search team found the site of the catastrophe," TASS reported. "According to a report from the site, six crew members and 23 passengers on board were killed."

The ministry report did not say how many people were on board, but it made no mention of any survivors on the An-26, a light tactical military transport that has for decades been a mainstay that can carry cargo and up to 40 passengers over short and medium distances.

"There was no impact on the aircraft," TASS quoted the ministry as saying, implying that objects like missiles, drones and birds were not involved.

"The preliminary cause of the crash is a technical malfunction. A commission from the military is working at the site," it said.

Russia's defence ministry did not respond immediately to a request for comment outside normal business hours.



Workers unloading watermelons from a cargo vessel at the Sadarghat Launch Terminal in Dhaka yesterday. As the harvesting season peaks, massive shipments of the juicy fruit are arriving in the capital from the southern districts. Wholesalers are selling 100 watermelons for between Tk 10,000 and Tk 15,000, depending on their size.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

2 arrested over rape of schoolgirl

A CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

Police yesterday arrested two people in a case filed over the abduction and rape of a class 10 student in Jhenaidah's Maheshpur and recording a video of the act on March 26.

The arrestees are Md Hazrat Ali, 22, of Bagdiar Aair village in Maheshpur upazila, and Aser Ali alias Raju, 18, of Samanta Charatla Para of the upazila, said Maheshpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Mehedi Hasan.

The victim's aunt filed a case on Monday night with the police station accusing four people of rape and recording the video. Besides Hazrat Ali, the other accused are Md Shaon, 20, Nayan, 23, and Amin, 21-- from Bagdiar Aair village.

Police said they are conducting drives to arrest the other accused.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4