



“A targeted military action, even for a few weeks, will not allow us to resolve the nuclear issue in the long term.”

Macron on US-Israeli strikes on Iran

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

SECOND EDITION

THE DAILY

Star

ON FRIDAY

DHAKA FRIDAY APRIL 3, 2026

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXVI No. 74

CHAITRA 20, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

SHAWWAL 14, 1447 HJURI

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Key reform ordinances left to expire

JS special committee places report on 133 ordinances issued by interim govt

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

A special parliamentary committee, reviewing ordinances issued by the interim government, yesterday recommended that 20 of them lapse or expire, including those aimed at ensuring judicial independence, curbing enforced disappearances, and strengthening the anti-corruption and human rights commissions.

In a report placed before parliament by its chief Zainul Abedin, the committee also proposed repealing four of the 20 ordinances.

The 13-member special JS panel, which includes three from the opposition bench, was formed after 133 ordinances passed by the interim government were tabled during the first sitting of the 13th parliament. It was directed to submit its findings by April 2.

According to the constitution, parliament must approve or reject ordinances within 30 days of its first sitting, which took place on March 12. If they are not ratified within this period, the ordinances

AT A GLANCE

- To be passed unchanged: 98
- To be passed with amendments: 15
- To be repealed outright: 4
- May be reintroduced as bills later: 16

automatically lapse.

The committee recommended that 98 ordinances remain unchanged and 15 others be amended.

Opposition members in the special committee issued notes of dissent on the decisions regarding 20 ordinances. The notes concern four proposed to remain in force, two recommended for amendment, 11 set to lapse but to be reintroduced later by ministries, and three slated for repeal.

After the report was placed, and following proposals from the law and home ministers, Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad said the reviewed bills recommended for passage will begin to be placed in the House from Monday (April 6).

TO BE REPEALED

The four ordinances that will be straightaway repealed are the Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat (Interim Special Provisions) Ordinance, 2024; Supreme Court Judges Appointment Ordinance, 2025; Supreme Court Secretariat Ordinance, 2025; and Supreme Court Secretariat (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026.

The three ordinances related to the apex court were introduced to ensure judicial independence, create judicial posts, and support the development of the judiciary, with budgetary authority entrusted to the Supreme Court Secretariat under the chief justice's control. Under the Secretariat's full operation, authority over the transfer, promotion, and discipline of lower court judges would also be vested in the SC.

Although the constitution requires a law for appointing judges, such legislation has not yet been enacted.

In 2025, the interim government issued the Supreme Court Judges Appointment Ordinance, which aimed to establish a process whereby

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Eight-month-old Mizanur Rahman has been undergoing treatment for measles at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in the capital's Mohakhali since Tuesday. Children across the country are getting infected, and the official death toll has already crossed 50. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

AUSTERITY MEASURES

Office hours now 9 to 4, shops to close by 6

- Banks to stay open until 3:00pm
- 30% energy expenditure to be cut for govt offices
- Foreign training for civil servants suspended
- Govt vehicle, vessel purchases paused
- Computer equipment buying suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday announced a series of austerity measures, including curtailing office hours and early closure of shopping malls and shops, as the fallout of the US-Israel war on Iran strains the energy sector.

It also decided to cut expenditure on fuel, power, and gas for government offices by 30 percent and suspend all government-financed foreign training for civil servants until further orders.

Purchase of government vehicles, vessels, and aircraft has also been put on hold.

The decisions were made at a three-hour-long cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at the Cabinet Room of the Jatiya Sangsad

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Bhaban, Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Gani told reporters after the meeting.

He said expenditure on hospitality at meetings and seminars would be reduced by 50 percent. Domestic training programmes would also be cut by 50 percent, he said, adding that non-essential travel expenses would also be cut by 30 percent.

All government and private offices will run from 9:00am to 4:00pm, while banks will conduct transactions from 9:00am to 3:00pm and close fully for the day by 4:00pm.

Shopping malls would have to close by 6:00pm from tomorrow, but outlets for essentials, eateries, and pharmacies would remain open, he said, adding that no decorative lighting would be allowed

Consumers in for worsening LPG woes

12kg cylinder price hiked by 29% to Tk 1,728; importers say the increase is not enough

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SUKANTA HALDER

The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) yesterday raised the price of liquefied petroleum gas cylinders by nearly 29 percent, as a sharp surge in global benchmark prices and import costs for suppliers amid the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran.

According to the new price, a 12kg LPG cylinder, the most widely used size in Bangladesh, will now cost Tk 1,728.

The retail price has increased by Tk 387 per cylinder, marking one of the largest single-month increases since BERC began setting LPG prices in April 2021 as the average benchmark prices of LPG raw materials in the global market rose by nearly 45 percent within a month -- an unusually steep increase in recent history.

In addition, higher freight and shipment-related premiums further raised the cost of imports, contributing to the sharp spike in local retail prices.

Under the revised pricing, the commission has set LPG at Tk 144 per

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People are already paying between Tk 1,900 and Tk 2,100 for a cylinder since late March

'Big step for humanity'

Astronauts begin lunar mission after blast-off

AFP, United States

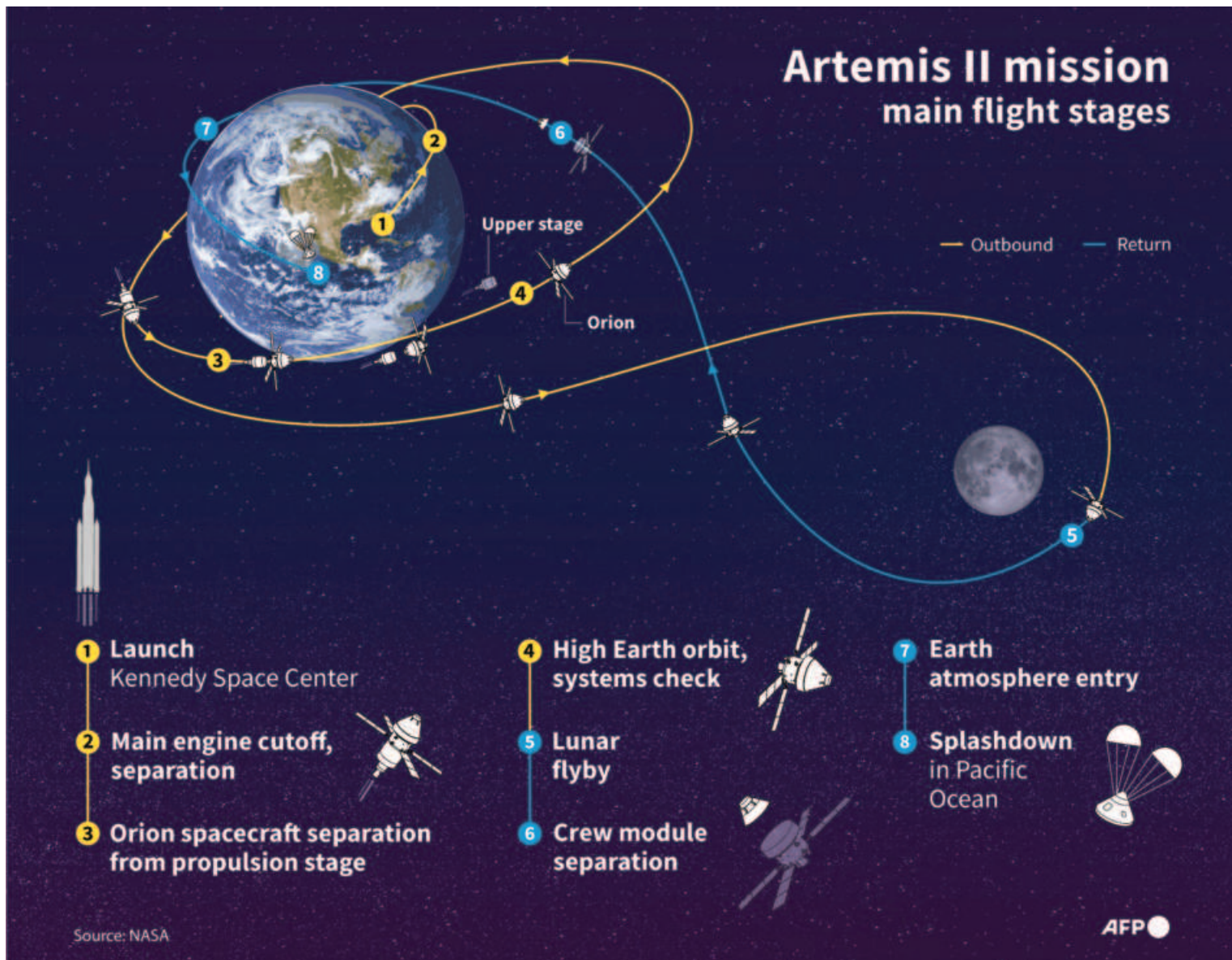
Four astronauts blasted off aboard a massive NASA rocket early yesterday on a long-anticipated journey around the Moon, the first crewed lunar flyby in more than 50 years.

With a thunderous roar that reverberated far beyond the launchpad, the enormous orange-and-white rocket carried three Americans and one Canadian away from Florida's Kennedy Space Center at approximately 6:35pm local time (2235 GMT).

Nasa teams and spectators alike were ecstatic as the spacecraft ascended into a radiant sky atop a cascade of flames. The team, who donned bright orange suits with blue trim as the mission began, includes Americans Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch along with Canadian Jeremy Hansen.

"We have a beautiful moonrise. We're headed

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Oil prices surge as hope fades for swift end to war

Tehran vows 'crushing' attacks after Trump's threat to 'bomb Iran back to the stone age'

AGENCIES

Hopes for a swift end to the Middle East war faded yesterday after US President Donald Trump vowed more aggressive strikes on Iran, sending oil prices sharply up again in a blow to consumers around the world.

Stocks slid and the dollar gained after Trump said military operations would be intensified without offering the timeline that investors had sought for ending hostilities against Iran.

"We're going to hit them extremely hard over the next two to three weeks. We're going to bring them back to the Stone Ages where they belong," Trump said in a Wednesday evening prime-time speech.

Trump said the US would achieve its military objectives soon but suggested the war could escalate if Iranian leaders did not give in to Washington's terms during negotiations, with strikes on Iran's energy and oil infrastructure possible.

He has said he may end the war with a deal and told countries that rely on fuel shipments through the Strait of Hormuz, which has been all but closed by Iranian attacks, to "just grab it".

European and other states have said they will only help secure the strait if there is a ceasefire.

Meanwhile, around 40 countries yesterday called for the immediate reopening of Hormuz.

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Bangladeshi envoy meets Indian army chief

Defence ties discussed ahead of Khalilur's visit

AGENCIES

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India M Riaz Hamidullah yesterday met Indian Chief of Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi in New Delhi to discuss bilateral issues ahead of Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman's visit.

According to a post on X by the Indian Army's Additional Directorate General of Public Information, the two officials held talks at South Block and "deliberated on enhancing bilateral defence cooperation, including joint training initiatives."

They also explored opportunities for deeper collaboration aimed at promoting regional peace and security, it added.

Khalilur is scheduled to visit India on a two-day trip starting April 7. He is expected to hold bilateral talks with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar.

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PHOTO: AFP

First responders search for survivors after an overnight Israeli airstrike on a house in Zibdine, southern Lebanon, yesterday.

Oil prices surge as hope fades

FROM PAGE 1

"Iran is trying to hold the global economy hostage in the Strait of Hormuz. They must not prevail. To that effect, partners today called for the immediate and unconditional reopening of the Strait and respect for the fundamental principles of freedom of navigation and the law of the sea," Britain's Foreign Minister Yvette Cooper said in a statement after talks.

Earlier, French President Emmanuel Macron said that the opening could be "only done in consultation with Iran", adding that a military operation to liberate Hormuz is "unrealistic".

Meanwhile, the secretary general of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) called for the UN Security Council to authorise the use of force to protect the Strait of Hormuz from Iranian attacks.

China said that US and Israeli strikes on Iran were the "root cause" of the blockage. It also called for an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East.

Iran's armed forces responded to Trump with a warning for the United States and Israel of "more crushing, broader and more destructive" attacks in store.

The war will continue until the "permanent regret and surrender" of Iran's enemies, said Ebrahim Zolfaqari, spokesperson for the Iranian military's Khatam al-Anbiya central headquarters, in a statement carried by Iranian media.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi yesterday told Russia's Sputnik state media that Oman was helping to prepare a draft for a peacetime protocol to supervise

maritime traffic through Hormuz. The protocol would apply after the end of the ongoing war, the IRNA news agency said.

Amid the escalation, UN chief Antonio Guterres yesterday warned that the conflict risked spiralling into a wider war, as he called for an immediate halt to US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Iranian attacks on its neighbors.

Thousands of people have been killed across the Middle East since February 28, when the US and Israel began air strikes on Iran. The Iranian Health Ministry yesterday updated the death toll to 2,076, with 26,500 wounded. More than 1,300 have been killed in Lebanon.

At least 28 people have died in Israel, and 13 US troops have been killed in Iranian retaliation.

Iran yesterday said several people were likely injured when a bridge linking Tehran and the western city of Karaj was hit by air strikes. Some of its largest steel producers and Tehran's Pasteur Institute of Iran medical research centre had sustained serious damage in the conflict, it said.

Late yesterday, Trump posted footage on social media of smoke rising from the BI bridge in Karaj, around 20 miles (35 kilometers) southwest of Tehran – and warned that there would be further destruction unless Iran comes to the table to end the five-week war.

"The biggest bridge in Iran comes tumbling down, never to be used again – Much more to follow! IT IS TIME FOR IRAN TO MAKE A DEAL BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE, AND THERE IS NOTHING LEFT OF WHAT STILL COULD BECOME A GREAT COUNTRY!" Trump said.

The country's Revolutionary Guards

said they had targeted US-linked steel and aluminium facilities in Gulf states and would step up such attacks if Iranian industries were hit again.

Israel reported new incoming salvoes yesterday. Several blasts sounded in Jerusalem, AFP journalists said, after the military issued an alert over incoming Iranian missiles.

Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted four drones, and Abu Dhabi said it had intercepted a missile, with minor damage near an economic zone.

The US embassy in Baghdad urged its citizens to leave Iraq, warning of attacks in the capital by Iran-allied militia in the next 24 to 48 hours.

Fuel shortages have already caused economic strains across Asia, and they are expected to bite in Europe soon. Italy's foreign minister said migration flows would increase if the conflict were to drag on.

Benchmark Brent crude prices LCOC jumped by about 8 percent to around \$109 per barrel, and stocks took a hit, with little reassurance from Trump's address about how the strait would reopen.

Experts fear a prolonged conflict may drive crude prices to as high as \$150. Most analysts estimate crude might hit \$130-\$140.

The conflict has also reduced fertiliser shipments through the passage by 92 percent, from over a million tonnes in February to just 82,000 in March.

Trump, in his Wednesday's speech, said talks could be possible with Iran's new leadership, which he described as "less radical and much more reasonable" than their predecessors.

Consumers in for worsening LPG woes

FROM PAGE 1

kg and the cylinder prices across different sizes – from 5.5kg to 45kg, will range between Tk 792 and Tk 6,482.

The auto gas price – LPG used in vehicles – has been set at Tk 79.77 per litre, which was Tk 61.83 per litre last month.

Though the 12kg cylinder's regulated price stood at Tk 1,341 in March, consumers had to pay between Tk 1,600 and Tk 1,800 across the market for much of the month.

Towards late March, the price started rising again, and even before the regulator's latest decision, traders were reportedly selling cylinders at between Tk 1,900 and Tk 2,100 in some cases.

During a stakeholder meeting with the regulator prior to the price announcement, traders submitted a note of dissent, saying the pricing structure was "unrealistic" as they expected more hike in local prices, according to the officials.

Traders argued they had been paying higher freight charges since early March compared to the cost components considered in the April price calculation.

Asked about the issue, BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed said the LPG market experienced supply chain disruptions throughout March, which affected overall market dynamics.

The regulator determines LPG prices based on several key indicators, including the Saudi contract price (CP),

exchange rate movements and other related cost components.

The Saudi CP is a publicly available benchmark that importers can access, meaning companies are generally aware of international price movements beforehand, which is how they increased the prices, he added.

Following the BERC set prices is mandatory, Jalal said, adding that they will request the government to use district administrations to intensify oversight of the LPG supply chain.

Bangladesh's monthly LPG consumption generally ranges between 120,000 and 150,000 tonnes, and the country relies heavily on imports.

Data from the National Board of Revenue shows that private importers have been able to import around 186,000 tonnes of LPG for the April supply.

The current import premium of \$120 determined by BERC does not reflect the actual market situation, said Tanzeem Chowdhury, chief executive officer of Omera Petroleum.

The import premium has surged to between \$300 and \$350 since the Iran war, which most LPG suppliers are now facing.

He also pointed out that the government itself had estimated an import premium of about \$165 when the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation planned to import LPG.

Given this, he questioned the rationale behind the BERC's reference of the \$120 import premium, saying such a price could lead to unsustainable

400,000 people local authorities said had gathered to watch.

"Everybody should be excited and be following the next 10 days, because this is a big step for humanity," Proctor said.

Astronauts successfully completed "proximity operations" demonstrations, which tested how their Orion capsule can move relative to another spacecraft and included various maneuvers that mimic what would be needed to dock with a lunar lander.

"Great flying with you, Houston. Nice vehicle," said pilot Glover.

Early on teams identified a number

of kinks to work out, including "a controller issue with the toilet when they spun it up," said Amit Kshatriya, NASA's associate administrator, during a post-launch briefing. "We're just getting started," he added.

Nasa head Jared Isaacman also noted a temporary communication problem with the spacecraft that had since been resolved. The astronauts were "safe, they're secure, and they're in great spirits," he said.

Isaacman also emphasized the historic nature of the launch: "Nasa is back in the business of sending people to the Moon."

Key reform ordinances left to expire

FROM PAGE 1

suitable candidates would be selected and the chief justice would advise the president on appointments.

It stipulated that a "Supreme Judicial Appointment Council", led by the chief justice, would recommend qualified individuals for appointment to the Appellate and High Court divisions of the SC.

Separately, the interim government also issued the Supreme Court Secretariat Ordinance to establish an independent secretariat for overseeing, controlling, and maintaining discipline in the subordinate courts, thereby ensuring judicial independence.

Under this ordinance, the secretariat would handle all administrative and clerical responsibilities related to subordinate courts and administrative

Criminalising enforced disappearances, the ordinance sets the death penalty as the maximum punishment for this crime, according to the law.

Among these, the referendum ordinance was issued with the aim of holding a referendum to implement the July National Charter.

Jamaat issued notes of dissent for both ordinances.

In 2025, the Anti-Corruption Commission (Amendment) Ordinance was issued to expand the ACC's investigative powers; allow direct filing of cases; cover serious financial crimes, including those committed abroad; and increase the number of commission members.

The interim government also issued the Revenue Policy and Revenue

and Tobacco Products Use (Control) (Amendment) Ordinance; Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Ordinance, 2026; Land Use Control and Agricultural Land Protection Ordinance; Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulation (Amendment) Ordinance; Private Educational Institutions Teachers and Employees Retirement Benefits (Amendment) Ordinance; and Private Educational Institutions Teachers and Employees Welfare Trust (Amendment) Ordinance.

Among these, the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance introduced provisions allowing the prohibition of activities by any specified entity, including rallies, meetings, and publications. Following its promulgation, the political activities of the Awami League were banned.

The special committee's report, however, does not specify what further changes will be made.

The interim government also issued the Police Commission Ordinance to establish a commission through a selection committee.

The commission would recommend the appointment of the inspector general of police and address citizens' complaints as well as internal grievances within the police force.

This ordinance too has been recommended for passage in its amended form. However, the opposition Jamaat issued notes of dissent on this as well.

TO BE PASSED UNCHANGED

Ninety-eight ordinances were recommended to be passed unchanged, including several relating to local government institutions with provisions for appointing administrators in special circumstances and in public interest.

Jamaat also expressed its objections in this regard.

Other ordinances include the Grameen Bank (Amendment) Ordinance; International Crimes (Tribunals) (Second Amendment) Ordinance; Delimitation of Constituencies (Amendment) Ordinance; Representation of the People (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; Cyber Security Ordinance; Government Service (Amendment) Ordinance; the ordinance on welfare and rehabilitation of families of July uprising martyrs and fighters; the July Uprising Memorial Museum Ordinance; the July Uprising (Protection and Liability Determination) Ordinance; as well as several other ordinances relating to the renaming of various organisations.

The July Uprising (Protection and Indemnity) Ordinance provides indemnity to July fighters in cases where killings occurred as part of the political resistance against the fascist regime.

Jamaat issued notes of dissent regarding ordinances on the Value Added Tax and Supplementary Duty (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; the Customs (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; the Income Tax (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; the Civil Aviation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026; and the Bangladesh Travel Agency (Registration and Control) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026.

CONCERNS

Political analysts and former parliamentary officials warned that repealing ordinances related to apex court reforms may derail efforts to grant the judiciary administrative and financial autonomy. Without these measures, the executive branch would continue to control judicial appointments, transfers, and promotions – undermining the separation of powers.

They also cautioned that shelving 16 ordinances could stall key reform initiatives introduced by the interim government.

Meanwhile, ongoing political debate over the formation of the Constitutional Reform Council, coupled with opposition dissent on nearly all ordinances set to expire, is likely to deepen political divisions.

As a result, the reform issue could further intensify tensions in the political arena in the days ahead.

ORDINANCES TO BE REPEALED

➤ National Parliament Secretariat (Interim Special Provisions) Ordinance, 2024

➤ Supreme Court Judges Appointment Ordinance, 2025

➤ Supreme Court Secretariat Ordinance, 2025

➤ Supreme Court Secretariat (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026

ORDINANCES NOT TO BE RATIFIED NOW

➤ National Human Rights Commission (Amendment) Ordinance, 2024

➤ Revenue Policy and Revenue Management Ordinance, 2025

➤ Revenue Policy and Revenue Management (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025

➤ National Human Rights Commission Ordinance, 2025 (passed in November)

➤ Referendum Ordinance, 2025

➤ Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Remedies Ordinance, 2025

➤ National Human Rights Commission (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 (passed in December)

➤ Anti-Corruption Commission (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025

➤ Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Remedies (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026

➤ Microfinance Bank Ordinance, 2026

➤ Right to Information (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026

➤ Value Added Tax and Supplementary Duty (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 2025

➤ Customs (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025

➤ Income Tax (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025

➤ Civil Aviation (Amendment) Ordinance, 2026

➤ Bangladesh Travel Agency (Registration and Control) Amendment Ordinance, 2026

tribunals. It would also manage matters such as the posting, promotion, transfer, discipline, and leave of judges engaged in judicial work.

Overall control of the secretariat would rest with the chief justice, while its secretary would serve as the administrative head.

Three Jamaat-e-Islami MPs issued notes of dissent on all three ordinances related to the apex courts.

TO BE EXPIRED

The special committee also recommended that 16 ordinances not be ratified in the current parliamentary session; they may be reintroduced in parliament as bills by the relevant ministries later.

These include amendments to the National Human Rights Commission and Anti-Corruption Commission laws, a proposed referendum law, legislation on preventing and addressing enforced disappearances, and the Right to Information law.

The enforced disappearance prevention and remedies ordinance is aimed at curbing, investigating, and punishing enforced disappearances.

Management Ordinance, restructuring the existing framework by separating revenue policy formulation from revenue collection.

It provides for the establishment of two separate divisions under the finance ministry: the Revenue Policy Division and the Revenue Management Division. The move sparked protests among officials.

The Microfinance Bank Ordinance establishing microfinance banks was also issued under the interim rule.

TO BE PASSED WITH AMENDMENTS

Fifteen ordinances are set to be passed with amendments.

These include Women and Child Repression (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; Public Procurement (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; Bank Resolution Ordinance, 2025; Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; Code of Criminal Procedure (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; National Data Management Ordinance, 2025; Bangladesh Labour (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025; Human Organ Transplantation Ordinance, 2025; Police Commission Ordinance; Smoking

Hindu leaders meet prime minister

Raise issues of rights protection

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the country's Hindu community yesterday paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at his Secretariat office and raised different issues regarding protection of minority rights.

After the meeting, Mahanagar Sarbajanin Puja Committee president Jayanta Kumar Deb told reporters that they informed the PM about incidents of harassment and deprivation faced by members of the community since August 5, 2024, including cases of job losses.

"We also raised issues such as the formation of a Minority Commission, enactment of a Minority Protection Law, establishment of a Hindu Foundation, and matters related to Debottor (Vested) Property Act," he added.

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Wooden structures and a makeshift bamboo shack turn the Shaheed Selim-Delowar Memorial into an eyesore, showing clear neglect and disrespect. The site near Dhaka University's Amar Ekushey Hall is now encroached upon by roadside businesses. HM Ibrahim Selim and Kazi Delwar Hossain were killed when a police truck rammed into a student protest against HM Ershad's autocratic regime in Gulistan in 1984. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DMP continues drive to clear footpaths, roads

Mobile courts remove illegal structures; fines imposed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) continued its drive for a second consecutive day yesterday to reclaim encroached footpaths and roads, expanding operations to several new areas across the capital.

Joint teams of police, particularly from traffic divisions, along with mobile courts, carried out drives in Mirpur, Mohammadpur, Kazipara, Shewrapara, Uttara, Gulshan, Kalshi, Fakirapool, Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Tejgaon and other parts of the city.

During the drive, makeshift shops, roadside stalls and illegal extensions of businesses were removed from footpaths and roads.

In some places, authorities seized goods and dismantled temporary structures, while in others vendors were asked to vacate voluntarily.

A mobile court also conducted a drive at the entrances to the outdoor and emergency units of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, clearing illegal structures from nearby footpaths and roads, witnesses said.

Shop owners present at the time were allowed to take their belongings, while unattended items were confiscated and taken away in law enforcers' pickup vans.

Law enforcers said stricter measures were enforced on the second day, following warnings issued during the first day of the drive.

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PM expresses solidarity with UAE amid ME conflict

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has conveyed Bangladesh's firm solidarity with the UAE government and brotherly people in the context of the ongoing war in the Middle East.

Tarique, in a letter to UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, expressed deep concern over the attacks, the loss of lives, injuries and damage to property there, according to a foreign ministry statement.

The PM's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humayun Kabir handed over the letter to the UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, during a meeting in Abu Dhabi on April 1.

The PM also expressed his appreciation for the UAE's continued support for Bangladeshi expatriates and for the measures taken to ensure their safety and well-being.

He reaffirmed Bangladesh's readiness to provide any necessary support and invited the UAE president to visit Bangladesh.

The UAE foreign minister condoled the deaths of two Bangladeshi expatriates in the attacks and

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BAILEY ROAD FIRE

'Restaurant locked exits to ensure payments'

CID submits charge sheet accusing 22, including owners, managers

TOUSIF KAIUM

Customers were allegedly locked inside a restaurant during the deadly blaze at Green Cozy Cottage on Bailey Road to ensure bill payments, according to findings by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

The investigation also found that stairways and emergency exits were obstructed by gas cylinders and other materials, significantly increasing the death toll.

The fire broke out on the night of February 29, 2024, killing 46 people -- three from burns and 43 from suffocation.

Later, a case was filed with Ramna Police Station, and the CID was tasked with the investigation.

Nearly two years later, the agency submitted a charge sheet to a Dhaka court yesterday, naming 22 individuals as accused.

They include Md Ramjanul Haque Nihad, managing director of Amin Mohammad Foundation, and Sohel Siraj, owner of Kacchi Bhai, along with several other restaurant owners and safety managers.

CID investigation officer Inspector Md Shahjalal Munshi confirmed the submission to The Daily Star.

According to the charge sheet, the main gate of Kacchi Bhai was locked shortly after the fire broke out to prevent customers from leaving without paying their bills.

However, Sohel Siraj denied the

allegation.

"God forbid; we would never stoop so low for our business. This is a completely baseless allegation. I do not know why CID has made such a report. Rather, 44 of our staff members broke the glass and escaped. At the same time, many of them used fire extinguishers to try to put out the fire," he told The Daily Star.



The investigation also found that stairways and emergency exits were obstructed by gas cylinders and other materials, significantly increasing the death toll.

Siraj added that he was arrested by Ramna police after the incident and released eight days later.

The CID found that as the fire spread, people on different floors tried to reach the rooftop but were unable to do so, as the eighth floor and rooftop had been illegally converted into a duplex restaurant.

Many also attempted to escape through the staircase, but it was blocked by gas cylinders and other materials, trapping them inside.

Investigators identified multiple safety violations in the building. Although it was approved for commercial use up to five floors and residential use for three, it had been illegally extended to eight commercial floors.

None of the 10 restaurants in the building had valid documentation, according to the charge sheet. Flammable decorative materials helped the fire spread quickly, and the building lacked an effective ventilation system.

The rooftop, which should have remained open, had been enclosed as a duplex restaurant and was often kept locked, hampering rescue efforts.

CID sources said the fire likely started from an electric kettle at a ground-floor coffee shop named "Cha Chumuk".

On the night of the incident, Kacchi Bhai had high customer traffic due to special leap year offers. Investigators allege that restaurant manager Jain Uddin Jisan ordered the main gate to be locked, contributing to the fatalities.

A CID official said the manager's decision was a key factor in several deaths, leading to his inclusion in the charge sheet.

Rejecting the claim, Siraj said, "It is true that there was an offer that day, but it was only on Foodpanda. There was no dine-in offer. This is also propaganda against us."

Four special assistants to prime minister appointed

STAR REPORT

The government has appointed four special assistants to the prime minister on a contractual basis, according to a notification issued by the Ministry of Public Administration yesterday.

According to the notification, Tanvir Ghani has been appointed special assistant for investment and capital market affairs; Bijon Kanti Sarkar for Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and ethnic minority affairs; Shakirul Islam Khan Shakil for overseas employment in the Asia-Pacific region, and Saiyed Abdullah for youth employment.

Under the Rules of Business, 1996, the prime minister made the appointments, said the notification.

Of the four, Tanvir Ghani and Bijon Kanti Sarkar will hold the rank of state minister. Tanvir is chairman of Osiris Group, an Asian investment firm, while Bijon serves as adviser to the BNP chairman and chairs the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Welfare Front.

Shakil, a former student and teacher of Bangladesh Agricultural University, is currently a faculty member in the Department of Microbiology at Oita University, Japan. Saiyed Abdullah is a former law student at Dhaka University.

'He said he'd return to eat; he never did'

Mother recounts memory of son while testifying against Ziaul at ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A grieving mother told a tribunal yesterday that her teenage son, who had been waiting for lunch, left their Gendaria home in Dhaka in 2011 after receiving a phone call just as she was about to serve the meal, and never returned alive.

She said she waited with his meal until Asr prayers, but her son Sajal, then 17, did not return. She and her elder son later searched for him at hospitals, police stations and other places for over a week.

"The police did not help us in any way," she told the tribunal.

Nine days later, on July 13, 2011, the family learned that two bodies were lying in a hospital in Gazipur. Her elder son Azad went there with a friend and identified Sajal's body.

"The next day, we brought the body and buried him at Jurain graveyard," she said.

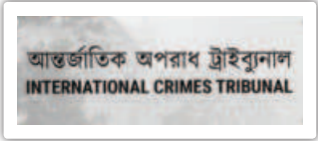
Bhulu Begum, a 52-year-old domestic worker, was testifying before the International Crimes Tribunal-1 as the second prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case against Maj Gen (ret'd) Ziaul Ahsan.

She said her son had been involved in BNP politics and regularly attended rallies and meetings.

"I later came to know that a senior officer of the Rapid Action Battalion [Rab] picked up Sajal and killed him in Gazipur because of his political activities," she said, breaking down in tears.

"I want justice for my son's killing," she said, as Ziaul sat in the dock.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2



Crackdown on fuel hoarding intensifies
44,900 litres seized, 2 fined Tk 30,000 in three districts

STAR REPORT

The government has continued drives against illegal fuel hoarding amid shortages that have disrupted daily life and livelihoods in several districts.

Law enforcers and mobile courts seized more than 44,900 litres of diesel and petrol in separate operations in Patuakhali and Sirajganj yesterday, while fishermen in Kurigram reported acute difficulties in accessing fuel.

In Chattogram,

the port authority, navy and coastguards seized around 37,000 litres of stored diesel from a tanker named OT Korban Ali Sha at Sadarghat yesterday, said Chattogram Port Secretary Syed Rafayet Hamim.

In Patuakhali, police seized 6,200 litres of fuel -- 3,200 litres of diesel and 3,000 litres of petrol -- from a trawler anchored near a ferry ghat on the Andharmanik river in Kalapara upazila around 9:30am. A mobile court later fined the owner of a local filling station Tk 20,000 for supplying the fuel to the trawler.

Kalapara Upazila Executive Magistrate Yasin Sadiq, who led the court, confirmed the development.

In Sirajganj, a mobile court seized around 1,729 litres of diesel and petrol from an unauthorised fuel shop at Sonamukhi Bazar in Kazipur upazila early yesterday.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8



The escalator linked to a footbridge at Banani in Dhaka lies out of service, covered in rust, grease and dirt. Meant to aid the elderly, injured and persons with disabilities, its failure now limits safe road crossing. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

31 state-owned industrial units currently running at loss

Industries minister tells parliament

UNB, Dhaka

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Industries Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir



yesterday told the parliament that a total of 31 state-owned enterprises under the industries ministry are currently operating at loss.

"Five state-owned enterprises of Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation [BSEC], 14 of Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation [BSFIC] and 12 of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation [BCIC] under the industries ministry are operating at loss," he said.

The minister made the disclosure in response to a question from treasury bench lawmaker

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Jamalpur man killed over family feud

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Jamalpur

A man was killed in an alleged attack by his son's in-laws over a family dispute in Jamalpur Sadar upazila on Wednesday night.

The deceased, Abdul Hakim, 50, was a resident of Jhawla Gopalpur area.

According to police, Hakim's son, Mohammad Shamim Mia, a garment worker, had been living with his wife in Mymensingh.

The couple had long been at odds due to ongoing marital discord.

An arbitration was held between the two sides on Wednesday, but escalated into violence.

Then, Shamim's father-in-law and relatives allegedly assaulted Hakim, leaving him critically injured.

Locals rushed him to Jamalpur General Hospital, where the on-duty physician declared him dead.

Son, wife held 10 months after mother's murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Chattogram

Police on Wednesday arrested a man and his wife nearly 10 months after the throat slit killing of his mother in Banskhali upazila.

The suspects, Md Kashem, 28, and Nargis Akter, 25, were detained in a joint drive by police and Rab-15 in Chakaria, Cox's Bazar.

The victim, Rehana Begum, 62, was killed between the night of June 5 and early June 6 last year.

Police said the couple had been in hiding since then. Investigators linked the murder to a dispute over money sent by Rehana's elder son from abroad, which Kashem allegedly misused. The couple allegedly killed her with a sharp weapon, hid evidence and fled. Rehana was declared dead at hospital.



Farmers collect potatoes from a field after a bountiful harvest this season as they head home to sell their produce in local markets. The photo was taken in Sirajdikhan upazila of Munshiganj recently.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Untimely rains, hill runoff submerge 500 hectares of Boro

JAYDUL ISLAM, Netrakona

Untimely heavy rains and runoff from upstream hills have submerged more than 500 hectares of Boro paddy in Netrakona's haor and low-lying areas, raising fears of significant crop losses.

The waterlogging, triggered by several days of rainfall and inflow from upstream, has affected fields at a critical stage of grain formation, prompting farmers to scramble to save their crops by draining water manually and using irrigation pumps.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Netrokona, around 507 hectares of Boro fields have been submerged, while additional areas have been partially affected. A total of 1,85,448 hectares were brought under Boro cultivation in the district this season, including 41,070 hectares in haor areas.

"If the rain stops now, 50 percent of the submerged crops may be damaged. Continued rainfall could worsen the losses," said Md Amirul Islam, deputy director of the DAE in the district.

In Kalmakanda upazila, about 480 hectares of cropland



have been partially submerged, nearly half of which is fully underwater, said Upazila Agriculture Officer Md Saiful Islam.

He said 240 hectares in Kabir Beel, 160 hectares in Maguria Beel, and 80 hectares in Dulijuri Beel under Rongchhati union have gone underwater due to hill runoff and excessive rainfall.

Farmers alleged that poor drainage has compounded the crisis.

"Sudden rainfall and hill runoff have submerged all our crops. The beel's drainage canal is clogged, so water cannot

recede," said Nurul Islam, a farmer from Jongolbari village, adding that locals are trying to excavate canals with their own funds.

In Khaliajuri upazila, around 15 hectares of land have been submerged, with at least one hectare already destroyed, said Upazila Agriculture Officer Rashedul Hasan, warning that up to 40 percent of the remaining crops could be damaged.

Locals in the area said about 30 hectares in Muldhair Beel have gone underwater, and voluntary efforts are underway to

drain water.

"Excavating just one kilometre of canal could offer a permanent solution," said Joy Sarkar, a college student from the area.

In Barhatta upazila, around 20 hectares of cropland in Rouha Beel have also been submerged, said Upazila Agriculture Officer Sharmin Sultana, adding that farmers are attempting to remove water on their own.

Officials said steps are being taken to address the situation.

"We have informed the district administration and are working with locals to ensure drainage. Canal excavation will be prioritised," said Kalmakanda Upazila Nirbahi Officer S M Mikail Islam.

Deputy Commissioner Khandaker Mushfiqur Rahman said authorities are monitoring the situation and will take necessary measures in coordination with local administration and the agriculture department.

"This is a haor region where low-lying land is naturally prone to waterlogging. Cultivation in lower parts of beels has increased exposure to such risks," he added.

Tea cultivation takes root in Gazipur plains

MONJURUL HAQUE, Gazipur

Breaking away from the long-held notion that tea thrives only in hilly regions, a pioneering initiative in Gazipur's Kapasia upazila is reshaping prospects for cultivation in Bangladesh's plains.

Prof Md Lutfar Rahman, a faculty member at the International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT), has successfully established a tea garden on one hectare of land in Chinaduli village, proving that favourable conditions for tea cultivation extend beyond Sylhet's hills.

Drawing on nearly four decades of experience in the tea industry, Rahman launched the project in 2019 after observing similarities in rainfall and topography between Kapasia and Sylhet. "Although I have not yet analysed the soil composition here in the laboratory, I decided to try it as the topography seemed favourable," he said.

He initially planted 20,000 saplings collected from Srimangal across five plots. Over time, the gardens, now ranging from two to five years old,



have begun yielding results. Production started from the older plantations, with around 100kg of green tea harvested in 2022 and 2023. Output dipped to 60kg in 2024, while 2025 has so far produced 76kg.

Rahman currently produces green tea manually using a Chinese technique learned online. "After picking the leaves, I process them by heating them in very hot water for two minutes," he said, adding that mechanised production and branding are future goals. He expects to reach 150kg of production by 2026.

The initiative has sparked interest among locals and visitors alike, turning the garden into a growing attraction. Many see it as a potential driver of rural employment and economic diversification.

Local resident Monir Hossain said, "Tea cultivation will reduce unemployment in our area. The cost is less than other crops, and the profit is higher." Echoing similar optimism, neighbour Asma Khatun noted, "We can work now. In the future, my children will also be able to work here."

Kapasia Upazila Agriculture Officer Aulia Khatun described the soil as suitable for tea cultivation and said authorities are ready to support aspiring farmers.

With its early success, the Kapasia tea garden is not only challenging traditional boundaries of cultivation but also opening a new frontier for agricultural innovation in Bangladesh's plains.

31 state-owned industrial units

FROM PAGE 3

SM Jahangir Hossain (Dhaka-18) during the question-and-answer session.

Earlier, the parliamentary session resumed at 3:30pm with Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad in the chair.

Muktadir said the government provides subsidies for covering the trade gap -- the difference between production cost and selling price -- on fertilisers such as urea, TSP and DAP produced by factories under BCIC.

However, he said no subsidies are provided to

the loss-making enterprises under BSFIC, though the government offers loans as operating capital support.

Similarly, no subsidies are given to the loss-incurring industries under BSEC, he added.

The government has plans to reduce the losses, the minister added.

He said the government has taken initiatives to modernise sugar mills under BSFIC, increase sugarcane production and sugar recovery rates, rationalise manpower and establish agro-based industries and distillery plants.

He further said a project is underway to convert the production process of Chhatak Cement Company Ltd under BCIC from wet process to dry process.

Besides, initiatives have been taken to restart closed factories and establish energy-efficient, environment-friendly and profitable industries to produce import-substitute products using modern technologies. The minister said efforts are ongoing to modernise BSEC industries and make them environmentally friendly as well as improve their marketing systems.



বাংলাদেশ ডায়ালটিক সমিতি

৫ম তলা, হাসপাতাল ভবন, বারডেম

১২২, কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম এভিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ ডায়ালটিক সমিতির (বাবাস) সম্মানিত আজীবন সদস্য এবং জেলা পর্যায়ের অধিভুক্ত ও উপজেলা পর্যায়ের অধিভুক্ত সমিতিসমূহের মনোনীত প্রতিনিধিদের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, আগামী ০৮ মে ২০২৬ তারিখ শুক্রবার বেলা ৩:০০ টায় এক বিশেষ সাধারণ সভা (Extra-Ordinary General Meeting) ও বেলা ৩:৩০ মিনিটে সমিতির ৬৫তম বার্ষিক সাধারণ সভা (এজিএম) এবং ২০২৩-২০২৬ মেয়াদের বাবাস ন্যাশনাল কাউন্সিলের নির্বাচিত সদস্যদের এক তৃতীয়াংশ শূন্য পদে (আজীবন ও ডেলিগেট ক্যাটাগরি) নির্বাচন বিআইএইচএস জেনারেল হাসপাতাল মিলনায়তন, দারুস সালাম, মিরপুর, ঢাকায় অনুষ্ঠিত হবে।

এ ব্যাপারে সংশ্লিষ্ট কাগজপত্র ০৭ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ তারিখ হতে ১৬ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ তারিখ পর্যন্ত প্রতিদিন (শুক্রবার এবং সরকারি ছুটির দিন বাদে) সকাল ৯টা থেকে বেলা ২টা পর্যন্ত সমিতির কার্যালয় ১২২, কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম এভিনিউ, শাহবাগ, ঢাকায় অবস্থিত বাবাস সচিবালয়ের সচিব শাখা (ফোন: ০১৭১৪-১৩৪০৩৫) কক্ষ নম্বর-৫১৮/১ এবং বারডেম জেনারেল হাসপাতালের ২য় তলা কক্ষ নম্বর-২৩৩ (ফোন: ০১৭১৬-৭২৩৬৮৮) থেকে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে। আগামী ০৬ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ তারিখ ভোটার তালিকাসহ নির্বাচন সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় তথ্য ও কাগজপত্র সমিতির ৫ম তলার নোটিশ বোর্ডে প্রদর্শন করা হবে। মনোনয়ন পত্র জমা দেয়ার শেষ সময় ১৬ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ তারিখ বৃহস্পতিবার বেলা ২.০০ টা পর্যন্ত।

আজীবন সদস্যদের মধ্যে যাদের সদস্যপদ এক বছর পূর্ণ হয়েছে শুধুমাত্র তারা এবং অধিভুক্ত সমিতিসমূহের মনোনীত প্রতিনিধিরাই বাংলাদেশ ডায়ালটিক সমিতির ন্যাশনাল কাউন্সিলের সদস্য নির্বাচনে ভোট দিতে/অংশ নিতে পারবেন। উল্লেখ্য, ভোট প্রদানের জন্য সম্মানিত আজীবন সদস্যবৃন্দকে 'আজীবন সদস্য কার্ড' সঙ্গে আনতে হবে। যারা আজীবন সদস্য কার্ড হারিয়ে ফেলেছেন অথবা ভোটার তালিকায় নাম আছে অথচ সদস্য কার্ড এখনও সংগ্রহ করেননি তাদেরকে আগামী ২৩ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ তারিখের মধ্যে বর্তমান ঠিকানাসহ ২ কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ছবি সমিতির কার্যালয়ে জমা দিয়ে নিজ দায়িত্বে 'আজীবন সদস্য কার্ড' সংগ্রহ করার জন্য অনুরোধ জানানো যাচ্ছে।

(Signature)

মোঃ সাইফ উদ্দিন

মহাসচিব



Janata Bank PLC.

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Invitation for e-Tender

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

SL No.	Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Tender Description	Tender Closing Date & Time
01	1252077	JB/IT-Proc-46/VM Solution/OTM/2026	Procurement of Vulnerability Management (VM) Solution for Janata Bank PLC. following Open Tendering Method.	16.04.2026 at 12.00 PM
02	1250963	JB/IT-Proc-41/Primary Connection/Raj-Rang-Bog/2026	Tender for the Procurement of Primary Network Connectivity under the Rajshahi, Rangpur and Bogura Divisional Zone of Janata Bank PLC.	19.04.2026 at 2:00 PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the national e-GP System portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP portal and e-GP Help Desk (Email: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Sd/-

(Mohammad Shakhawat Hossain)

Deputy General Manager

GD-711

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Project Director

Accelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) Project

Directorate of Technical Education

Plot -F-4/B, Agargaon, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

www.asset-dte.gov.bd

Memo No. 57.03.0000.051.07.984.26-1022

Date: 2 April, 2026

Corrigendum

e-Tender ID No.	Original Last Date of Submission	Revised Last Date of Submission	Original Last Date of Opening	Revised Last Date of Opening
1244324	06/04/2026 15:00 (GMT+ 06:00)	12/04/2026 15:00 (GMT+ 06:00)	06/04/2026 15:00 (GMT+ 06:00)	12/04/2026 15:00 (GMT+ 06:00)

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Signature)

Mir Zahid Hasan

Project Director (Additional Secretary)

ASSET Project

Telephone: 880-02-41024953

E-mail: pd@asset-dte.gov.bd

GD-705

পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি
POWER GRID BANGLADESH PLC
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd
স্মারক নং- ২৭.২১.০০০০.৬৫০.১৬.০০৪.২৬.৩১৯ তারিখঃ ০২/০৪/২০২৬খ্রিঃ

e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

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

ID	Reference	Title of Works
1247114	27.21.0000.625.07.001.26.313; Date: 31.03.2026	Painting work of Boundary Wall at Bhaluka 132/33 kV Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka-North.
1250760	27.21.0000.625.07.001.26.312; Date: 31.03.2026	Marking of Tower's Number, Danger Warning, Circuit Number and Tower Leg Painting of Bhaluka-Mymensingh 132 kV Transmission Line by Bhaluka Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka North, Power Grid.
1251785	27.21.0000.625.07.001.26.315; Date: 01.04.2026	Bracing Work of Nut-bolt of Bhaluka-Mymensingh 132 kV Transmission Line Tower under GMD, Dhaka-North, Power Grid.

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

মোহাম্মদ ওসমান গণি
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, জিএমডি, ঢাকা (উত্তর)

Austria rejects US military overflights

AFP, Vienna

Austria has rejected US requests for military overflights of its territory since the start of the conflict in the Middle East in line with its policy of neutrality, a defence ministry spokesman told AFP yesterday.

“There have indeed been requests and they were refused from the outset,” Colonel Michael Bauer said, adding that every time a similar request “involves a country at war, it is refused”.

Austria has been a neutral country since 1955. It is surrounded to the north, south, and east by Nato members, with neutral Switzerland to the west.

US President Donald Trump has criticised France and Spain, which refused to allow their airspace to be used for the war against Iran.

In mid-March, Switzerland, also invoking its neutrality, said it had refused the use of its airspace.

Russia blocks drone strike on Turkey pipeline

Accuses Ukraine of multiple attacks on the gas line in March

AFP, Moscow

Russian forces repelled a drone attack early yesterday on part of the TurkStream gas pipeline that connects southern Russia and Turkey, the pipeline's operator Gazprom said in a statement.

Several European countries, including Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia, receive gas supplies via the pipeline. Russia has accused Ukraine of attacking it multiple times, most recently in March.



“The Russkaya compressor station, which ensures the reliable export of gas via the TurkStream pipeline, came under attack from three aircraft-type unmanned aerial vehicles,” Gazprom said.

“The attack was repelled and no damage was caused to the Gazprom facility.”

Ukraine made no immediate public comment. The Russkaya compressor station is the starting point of TurkStream.

Ukraine has struck Russian energy infrastructure throughout the nearly four-year war, in a bid to sap Moscow's ability to finance its offensive.



Members of Iraq's Hashed al-Shaabi forces carry the coffins of a commander and comrades killed in a strike in Tal Afar, during a funeral in Baghdad yesterday, amid US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

PHOTO: AFP

Trump's threats a potential war crime

Targeting water plants in Iran

Gulf allies express grave concern

CNN ONLINE

After President Donald Trump floated on Monday the possibility of expanding the Iran war by potentially striking water treatment plants in Iran, some Gulf countries reiterated grave concerns to the Trump administration about any strikes on civilian infrastructure and the risk of an intensifying tit-for-tat escalation, according to four regional sources.

Civilian infrastructure sites like water plants are clearly banned as targets by international law, but throughout the war following US and Israeli strikes, Iran has retaliated against US allies in the Gulf region, many of whom rely heavily on desalination to provide water for citizens due to few fresh water sources.

If Iran responded to a US strike on a water plant by hitting a similar facility in a nearby country, it could trigger devastating consequences.

“It will be a huge catastrophe if they strike, we rely on desalination for almost all drinking water,” said one regional official, explaining that the concerns about pursuing these strikes have been clearly articulated to Trump administration officials in the past and were reiterated after Trump's Truth Social post on Monday.

While several countries have privately reached out to the Trump administration to warn against such attacks, they've so far avoided publicly rebuking the US president.

Targeting critical civilian infrastructure, which includes water plants and potentially power plants that have also been the subject of Trump threats, could be



Iran relies little on desalination, but nearby states including Qatar, Bahrain get over half their drinking water from it.

considered a war crime. The Geneva Conventions and its protocols define objects indispensable to the survival of a civilian population as illegal military targets, and clearly cites “drinking water installations and supplies and irrigation work” as falling into that category.

“Desalination plants are purely civilian infrastructure. There is no legal argument whatsoever for attacking them,” said Kenneth Roth, a former executive director of Human Rights Watch, adding that those advising Trump have “a responsibility not to implement any illegal order.”

Iran gets only a small fraction of its water from desalination plants.

But nearby countries including Qatar and Bahrain produce more than half of their drinking water using the technology, which converts seawater into potable water by removing the salt.

The private chorus of voices encouraging the US to steer clear of committing potential war crimes that could escalate the conflict does not include every player in the region.

Some nations don't have the bandwidth to fight against potential strikes from Iran because they are entirely consumed by defending against the current Iranian attacks, said a senior Gulf diplomat.

In early March, Iran accused the US of attacking a freshwater desalination plant on Qeshm Island, and Iranian officials warned of retaliation.

A US defense official told CNN that it was not a US strike. But the state of the desalination plant and what caused the alleged disruption remains unclear.

Nepal to issue formal apology to Dalits within 15 days

TNN, Kathmandu

Nepal's new govt said it would issue a “formal state apology” to Dalits and other historically excluded communities within 15 days under Prime Minister Balendra Shah's 100-point reform agenda, in what activists described as a historic acknowledgment of generations of caste-based discrimination and denial of opportunity.

The proposed apology is to be accompanied by measures on social justice, inclusive restoration and historical reconciliation.

The agenda said: “We will formally acknowledge the injustice, discrimination and deprivation of opportunities inflicted on Dalits and historically marginalised communities by the state, society and policy structures, and prepare the basis for social justice, inclusive restoration and historical reconciliation.”

It added that a programme would be announced too. The promise has drawn attention in a country where Dalits make up about 13-14 percent of the population but continue to face entrenched exclusion despite constitutional guarantees and laws against caste-based discrimination.

Activists said nearly 42 percent of Dalits lived below the poverty line, literacy remained below the national average, and representation in key institutions stayed disproportionately low.

BORDER CONFLICT

Burden lies with Afghanistan to end hostilities

Pakistan says after initial talks with Kabul

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan said yesterday that the burden of ending its conflict with Afghanistan lay with Kabul, as the two sides held preliminary talks to try to end hostilities.

The neighbours and one-time allies have been locked in an escalating conflict over claims from Islamabad that Kabul is harbouring extremists responsible for cross-border attacks.

Negotiations started in Urumqi, in northwest China, on Wednesday, after Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar travelled to Beijing for talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi.

Pakistan foreign ministry spokesman Tahir Hussain Andrabi told reporters in the capital that the government hoped for a “durable solution”.

“Our participation (in talks) is a reiteration of our core concerns,” he said.

“The burden of real process, however, lies with Afghanistan, which must demonstrate visible and verifiable actions against terrorist groups using (its) soil against Pakistan.”

He described the negotiations as “working level talks” and said they were ongoing. “Our delegation has not returned yet,” he added.

Major quake in Indonesia kills one, sparks panic

AFP, Manado

A major 7.4-magnitude quake struck off the coast of eastern Indonesia yesterday, killing one person, damaging buildings and sending people running into the streets in panic.

The early-morning tremor in the Molucca Sea between the Sulawesi and Maluku island groups triggered waves up to 75 centimetres (2.5 feet) high in places and prompted a tsunami warning that was subsequently lifted.

“I didn't know what to do. I was just trying to save my family,” street food vendor Siti Rohayati, 58, told AFP of the moment the quake hit during the breakfast rush in Manado in North Sulawesi province.

“All that mattered was getting my children away safely. I pushed all three of them and told them: ‘Run!’”

One person was killed when a building collapsed in Manado, and another was injured, search and rescue official George Leo Mercy Randang told AFP.

The victim was “buried under the rubble”, he said, adding that authorities were following up on reports of more people injured.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) said the tremor hit at a shallow depth of 35 kilometres.

The Hawaii-based Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) initially said hazardous tsunami waves were possible within 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) of the epicentre along the coasts of Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia.

Elevated waves were observed in nine locations in North Maluku, North Sulawesi and Gorontalo provinces, with the highest hitting 75 centimetres in North Minahasa, according to Indonesia's BMKG geological agency.

The PTWC lifted its warning just over two hours after the tremor, saying the tsunami threat “has now passed”.

Budi Nurgianto, a 42-year-old resident of Ternate in North Maluku province, said he was inside his house when the tremor struck, sending people outside in terror.

“The quake was felt strongly. I heard it first from the walls of the house that shook,” he said.



BANGLADESH GAS FIELDS COMPANY LIMITED
(A Company of Petrobangla)
Birashar, Brahmanbaria.

"গ্যাসে জাতীয় সম্পদ। এর অপচয় রোধ
করে জাতীয় মর্যাদা পালন করুন।"

Reference no. 28.10.1213.000.806.00.0351(1).26Date: 31-03-2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited in e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Civil Engineering Department, Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Limited, Birashar, Brahmanbaria for the procurement of following works:

SL No	Package No.	Description of works	Tender ID No.	Tender Last Selling /downloading date & Time	Tender Closing date & time	Tender Opening date & time
1	Civil/egp/57/2025-2026	Renovation works of 03 nos, room of Gomoti rest house at Bakhrabad Gas Field under the project titled 3-D seismic survey of Habiganj, Bakhrabad and Meghna field.	1250386 (OTM)	12-04-2026 up to 16.00 Hrs.	13-04-2026 at 14.00 Hrs.	13-04-2026 at 14.00 Hrs.

- This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted;
- The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any members of registered bank's branches up to 16.00 Hrs. on 12-04-2026;
- To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>);
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd);
- The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

28.10.1213.000.876.09.0060.26 (3D-Civil)
(4x4.5")

Engr. Md. Mahbubur Rahman Khan
Dy-General Manager (Civil Engg.)
Phone-02334428141, 02334427428, Extn.-113

GD-703

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Rangamati Road Division, Rangamati
Phone: 02333304971
e-mail: eerangarhd@gmail.com

Memo No. 35.01.8400.466.13.191/6-861Date: 02-04-2026

Tender Notice (OTM)

This is to notify for all concerns that e-Tenders is invited and will publish on 02 April 2026 in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procurement of works for the following Tender. Interested persons/firms can see details by visiting the web site www.eprocure.gov.bd.

SL.	Tender ID	Tender Reference No.	Name of Work	Date & Time
01	1245204	e-GP/PMP Road/RRD-01/2025-2026	Surfacing Work by Carpeting and Seal Coat at Ch. 00+000 (Bangalhala) to Ch. 09+000 (Islampur) km of Bangalhala-Rajasthali-Farua-Bilaichhari-Barkal Road (Z-1814) under Rangamati Road Division during the year 2025-2026.	Last Selling 30.04.2026, 11:00 Closing 30.04.2026, 12:30

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

GD-708

Dhaka’s footpath dilemma

While reclaiming pavements, govt must ensure vendors’ livelihoods are protected

The image is familiar in Dhaka: a footpath meant for pedestrians being occupied by a row of makeshift stalls selling everything from mobile phone accessories to fried snacks. Pedestrians, squeezed onto the road, often compete with a torrent of rickshaws, autorickshaws, and buses. The pavement has thus become a marketplace, and the road essentially a pavement. The Dhaka Metropolitan Police's recent eviction drive, launched across Farmgate, Gulshan, Jatrabari, and more than a dozen other areas, is a welcome attempt to reverse this mess. The government has set a one-month deadline for visible improvement. The political will, for now, appears genuine. The question, however, is whether the authorities can continue to keep pavements clear.

Before assessing the merits of the ongoing crackdown, we must acknowledge that street vending in Dhaka is a vast, functioning, self-organised economy. Informal workers account for 84 percent of total employment in Bangladesh. A significant slice of that informality lives on the footpaths of the capital. On a single busy stretch of Farmgate, hundreds of vendors may turn over transactions worth millions of taka each day by selling goods. The supply chains feeding these stalls run deep. Behind each cart lies a wholesaler, a transporter, a smallholder farmer, or an entire household. It is an intricate web of low-margin commerce that keeps a significant portion of Dhaka fed, clothed, and employed. Street vending serves as a critical buffer for rural migrants unable to find formal employment in Dhaka. The pavement, in this sense, is a lifeline for them.

None of this is an argument against reclaiming footpaths. It is an argument for taking seriously the economic shock that evictions inflict. Many of these traders lack the capital for formal retail space, the connections to secure licences, or the savings to absorb even a week’s disruption. When their stalls are dismantled, they do not disappear. They return because the footpath is often the only viable path they can afford. The city administrator’s promise to “provide alternative spaces” in consultation with law enforcement is promising in principle, but the record of such promises gives little ground for optimism.

Three things are needed if the current drive is to mean something beyond the next news cycle. First, the alternative vendor markets must be in accessible locations and with affordable terms. Second, the monitoring must be institutionalised rather than episodic. The DMP’s commitment to “regular monitoring” will be tested not this week but three months from now, when the political spotlight has moved elsewhere. Third, and most ambitiously, Dhaka’s urban planning apparatus must begin to treat street vending as a feature to be managed rather than a problem to be periodically swept away.

The city must not leave the question of where its poor workers conduct their livelihoods perpetually unresolved. The vendors will be watching. So will the pedestrians. So, indeed, will the many thousands of families whose daily bread depends on whether the city can clear its footpaths without clearing away their livelihoods.

Business as usual no cure for mosquitoes

Authorities must treat the crisis with the seriousness it deserves

In recent years, a routine call at the start of every summer has been to consolidate early actions to contain mosquito spread so that the threat remains manageable later in the year. Yet, almost every year, mosquito-borne diseases have broken out across the country to varying degrees and with differing effects. This year is no exception. The situation, as we have highlighted in a recent editorial, is steadily worsening, and with it, it is becoming clearer that a business-as-usual approach will not work. What we need is a comprehensive plan that takes into account the evolving nature of the threat and mobilises all relevant state agencies to mount a response befitting a national health crisis.

As experts tell us, the nature of the problem itself is changing fast. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and increasing humidity have created near-ideal conditions for mosquito breeding across much of the country. Research indicates that current temperature ranges are highly conducive mosquito proliferation as well as the transmission of the viruses they carry. While such climatic shifts cannot be easily reversed, they make well-thought-out human interventions all the more urgent. And this is where Bangladesh is failing, with persistent shortcomings witnessed in mosquito control programmes, urban planning and governance, and public healthcare.

In particular, the state’s mosquito control programmes remain fragmented at best, and reactive and insufficient at worst. It is common knowledge now that administrative disruptions over the past two years have undermined routine operations, allowing breeding grounds to flourish. Essential tasks such as drain cleaning, waste removal, and the treatment of stagnant water bodies have not been carried out with the regularity or effort required. While the new government has promised proper measures with many relevant institutions seeing change of guards and methods, their impact has been limited.

The consequences of this sustained gap in enforcement have been visible across the country. Dengue, once largely confined to cities and specific time of the year, has become a year-round nationwide concern. Other mosquito-borne diseases—including malaria, chikungunya, and the potential threat of Zika—are also expanding in scope. Rural communities are particularly vulnerable in this reality, as they don’t have the healthcare infrastructure cities do. Meanwhile, the unchecked proliferation of Culex mosquitoes in urban areas also points to persistent failures in sanitation and drainage management. The scale and complexity of the challenge clearly demand a break from the routine response we are still seeing.

We urge the authorities to adopt a coordinated approach to contain the mosquito threat, one that integrates expanded mosquito control operations with effective urban management, waste disposal, and public health preparedness across urban and rural areas. They must treat the problem with the seriousness it deserves.

Renewables are a natural hedge against fossil fuel shocks



Shafiqul Alam is lead energy analyst for Bangladesh at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA).

SHAFIQU ALAM

Like the rest of the world, Bangladesh is currently grappling with the geopolitics-led energy supply disruption, described by the International Energy Agency (IEA) as the biggest ever threat to energy security. Four years ago, the country experienced a comparable crisis stemming from the Russia-Ukraine war. Despite that experience, it finds itself the least prepared to navigate the tumultuous situation we are seeing today.

The abrupt supply disruption, owing to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which carries one-fifth of the global oil annually, and suspension of LNG supply from Qatar following a drone attack, has sent a shockwave through the international fossil fuel market, leading to a massive surge in oil and LNG prices. In Bangladesh, high import prices have already raised the energy sector’s subsidy burden, tempting the government to draw a loan of \$2 billion from international agencies.

As renewables are capable of providing partial insulation from fuel price volatility, it goes without saying that the country should swiftly expand its renewable energy capacity.

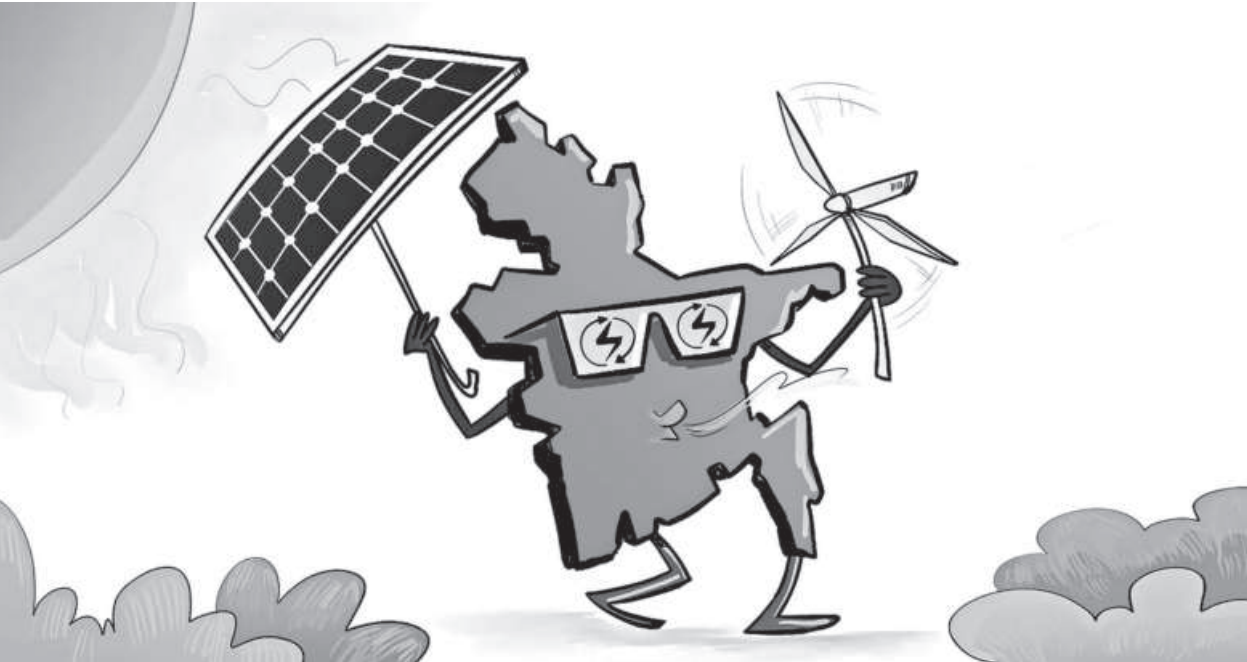
Bangladesh has radically transformed its power sector over the last decade and a half, but without a focus on the urgency of accelerating renewable energy and enhancing energy security. As the country relies more heavily on imported fossil fuels than domestic energy resources, it is now experiencing perpetual vulnerability with a surging fiscal burden.

For instance, the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) reportedly approved eight lakh tonnes of diesel purchase from the spot market at an average cost of Tk 169.75 per litre (\$1.38). Since Bangladesh has kept the diesel price fixed at Tk 100 per litre (\$0.81), the spot purchases will result in a revenue shortfall of Tk 69.75 per litre. The monthly subsidy on account of diesel consumption of approximately 375,000 tonnes will soar to Tk 3,100 crore (approximately \$252 million), excluding import duty and the commissions of BPC and traders.

Likewise, Bangladesh’s spot purchases of LNG cargoes at an average price of about \$21.79 per million British thermal units (MMBtu) in March 2026 requires an average

subsidy of Tk 67.5 per cubic metre (\$0.55), excluding import duty, terminal and regasification fees. Assuming an average monthly LNG consumption of 25 billion cubic feet, the subsidy burden will rise to Tk 4,774 crore (\$390 million).

The \$2 billion loan that Bangladesh has sought will only meet the subsidies for LNG and diesel consumption for just over three months (based on the current prices, three months’ subsidies for diesel and LNG are \$756 million and \$1.17 billion, respectively). The subsidies will also rise in the power sector due to the costly furnace oil and coal.



FILE ILLUSTRATION: REHNUMA PROSHOON

A protracted Middle East crisis will, therefore, significantly strain the country’s energy and power sectors, compelling the government to resort to rationing. This may ultimately lead to an adjustment of tariffs of electricity and different fuels.

However, once implemented, the tariffs of renewable energy projects remain fixed, providing a natural hedge against fossil fuel price volatility in the international market. As a country heavily reliant on imported primary energy, Bangladesh could take this opportunity to swiftly shield itself from the fuel price hikes.

Pakistan offers an example of rapidly scaling up solar energy, thereby insulating itself from fuel price

distributed solar systems across the country. Over the last six to eight months, households and businesses in each village installed rooftop solar capacity of about five to eight kilowatt (kW). Villagers are even taking up rooftop solar projects with battery back-up for mosques. A comparatively high frequency of load-shedding in rural areas is encouraging people to consider rooftop solar systems.

Bangladesh reportedly has 87,230 such villages, which could spearhead a mini solar boom. Apart from households, these villages accommodate schools, colleges, and religious institutions. Solar-powered irrigation could also replace the diesel-run systems. As a rough estimate, an

The country should also motivate people to help spur distributed solar energy projects by offering import duty exemptions on solar accessories and battery storage systems. Thailand, for example, has extended personal and corporate tax exemptions to incentivise investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Bangladesh should urgently draw lessons from its high degree of imported fossil fuel dependence relative to its low share of renewable energy, as this trend is shrinking its fiscal space and making its energy and power sectors unsustainable. It should now swiftly scale up renewable energy that has the potential to free up financial resources.

FROM FUEL QUEUES TO MEASLES CONFUSION

Lessons for our policymakers



Ananta Neelam is senior lecturer at University of Tasmania and a behavioural economist and author on public policy design.

ANANTA NEELIM

Across Bangladesh, people have been queueing for hours to access fuel, often navigating new documentation and rationing requirements. In some cases, individuals are refuelling repeatedly, fearing future shortages. The government is now preparing to roll out a QR code-based digital “fuel pass.” At the same time, enforcement drives are targeting “hoarders” and rationing systems are being tightened. In March alone, authorities reportedly recovered 2.96 lakh litres of hoarded fuel during 3,559 drives and filed 1,244 cases across the country.

While this flurry of government activities is meant to maintain stability with the war in Middle East showing little sign of slowing down, one must acknowledge that the picture that emerges from the persistent queues, administrative bottlenecks and interventions, as well as business and individual uncertainties is one of chaos and suffering. The problem is often being described as one of fuel supply alone. But on the individual level, the issue is also behavioural, driven by expectations, trust, and fear of being left behind.

From a policy perspective, it is

normal for authorities to regulate access, issue directives, and bolster enforcement. But people’s behaviour in practice suggests that many are not responding primarily to what the government says, but acting according to what they believe will happen next: whether prices will rise, whether supply will tighten, and whether others will rush ahead of them. In such an environment, hoarding is not irrational. It is individually rational behaviour in a setting of uncertainty and low trust. If people expect others to stock up, not doing so becomes risky. What emerges then is a coordination problem: actions that make sense for the individual but worsen the situation for everyone. Announcements and enforcement do little to change this dynamic because they do not directly stabilise expectations or rebuild trust.

A similar pattern can be seen regarding the ongoing measles outbreak, though the mechanism is different. This is not a conventional case of vaccine hesitancy driven by refusal. Routine measles immunisation in Bangladesh did not suddenly stop. But disruptions in coverage, combined with contradictory public

statements, have created widespread confusion about what actually happened. A senior minister’s claim that the measles vaccine had not been administered for the last eight years—later contradicted by immunisation data and officials within the Expanded Programme on Immunization—spread quickly and unsettled parents who had already vaccinated their children. In the absence of clear and consistent institutional signals, misinformation filled the gap. Parents began questioning whether previous doses “counted,” whether their children were protected, or whether waiting for clarification was safer than acting. In this context, delay is not avoidance. It is a rational response to conflicting signals.

The issue is not simply about awareness or the lack thereof. It is the fragmentation of belief caused by inconsistent communication and contested explanations. When institutional signals are weak or contradictory, people rely on rumours, social cues, and reigning political narratives.

At first glance, fuel rationing and a measles outbreak may seem unrelated. In one case, people rush to secure fuel. In the other, they hesitate or delay. But the underlying issue is the same. Policy assumes behaviour will follow clear signals: prices, rules, or information. In reality, behaviour follows expectations, trust, and beliefs about what others will do.

Bangladesh has developed relatively strong capacity in designing policies around supply, pricing, and

administration. In fuel markets, attention is focused on imports, reserves, distribution, or stock management. In public health, the emphasis is on access and coverage. But what is often missing in policy circles is a systematic understanding of how people respond. Do citizens trust official signals? Do they expect others to comply? How do they interpret conflicting information? What small frictions delay action? When these questions are overlooked, policies may be well designed on paper but fragile in practice.

There is some irony in calling for an additional layer of policy design while criticising reliance on traditional tools. Yet this shift is already underway elsewhere. Governments in the OECD have established dedicated behavioural insights units to improve policy effectiveness by aligning interventions with how people actually think and behave. Similar approaches are emerging across the Middle East and in other developing countries. These approaches do not replace conventional tools but they make them work better.

Designing better policies in times of crisis is not the challenge, but designing them for real behaviour is. Bangladesh’s policy toolkit has helped address many structural challenges. But the problems we increasingly face are not only structural, but behavioural. Until policy begins to engage seriously with how people think, decide, and act, we will continue trying to solve 21st-century problems with 20th-century tools.

‘Delayed compensation offers little relief to injured road crash victims’

Saidur Rahman, executive director of Road Safety Foundation, speaks with Naznin Tithi of The Daily Star about the barriers faced by road crash victims and their families in receiving compensation, and how the mechanism can be made more effective, among other issues.

As in previous years, this Eid holiday has also seen a large number of people killed and injured in road crashes. Even though people are being killed and injured on the roads every day, we rarely see victims and their families receiving compensation. According to statistics from the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), only 14 percent of those killed have received compensation since the scheme was introduced. For the injured, the rate is even lower—just over two percent. Why so?

The main reason is that the government is not informing people about this issue. Those most affected by road crashes tend to come from disadvantaged, lower-income, or lower-middle-income groups and are often unaware of their rights. Many do not know about the government’s compensation fund, and it is the government’s responsibility to inform them. There has been little to no effective campaigning in the media, social media, or television. As a result, applications remain low. Furthermore, the application process is complex and needs simplification. That said, extending the application deadline to 90 days is a positive step.

The government claims that people are not applying. But the concern is whether the government could meet the demand if applications increased significantly. Around Tk 266 crore has accumulated in the compensation fund over several years, yet given the scale of annual road accidents, an estimated Tk 500-550 crore would be required. This raises the concern that a limited awareness campaign may, in part, be linked to funding constraints.

There are also several procedural barriers.

In many cases, no general diary (GD) or case is filed with the police after a road crash. But applications for compensation are not accepted without the filing of a case. Ideally, a case should be filed immediately after a crash; if not, then within 15 days. However, police often do not cooperate. Moreover, support is often inadequate at district-level BRTA offices, too. Collecting hospital documents is also difficult for ordinary people, leading to frustration and demotivation.

Another major problem is that the fund does not support immediate medical needs. Compensation takes time—applications are followed by a 30-day investigation period. However, the injured require funds for immediate treatment, which the system fails to provide.

How can the compensation process be made more effective?

The government must take responsibility for road crashes, as many so-called “accidents” are actually structural killings. When crashes occur due to faulty roads, defective vehicles, unskilled drivers, and systemic mismanagement, they are no longer mere accidents. The government must ensure compensation for all victims and survivors and improve management to reduce crashes. The current fund, financed by fines and owner contributions among other sources, is insufficient. The government should allocate funds in the national budget. With adequate funding and public awareness, everyone could receive compensation. But currently, the fund is inadequate.

There are also allegations of bribery. How can transparency and accountability be ensured?

This is deeply concerning. To prevent such

irregularities, a well-structured system must be established involving representatives from various segments of society—civil society members, government officials, academics, lawyers, and influential community figures. Oversight should be exercised through such a committee. Smaller committees are more prone to corruption, whereas larger bodies—comprising 15 to 20 members—



Saidur Rahman.

can reduce such risks. However, in practice, these committees are often dominated by government officials, and allegations of corruption within public institutions persist. Accusations against the BRTA are also not unfounded. The institution has failed to ensure accountability, leading to declining public trust.

Community-level committees, with members including safety professionals, law enforcement representatives, and representatives from different social groups,

can raise awareness, encourage people, and help ensure faster and more transparent compensation.

We have not seen effective implementation of the Road Transport Act, 2018 under any government, political or non-political. As a result, road accidents continue to rise. What are the key obstacles to its proper implementation?

Our road transport sector has never had proper governance. Where there is disorder, there is a greater opportunity for corruption and extortion. Some politically affiliated individuals, transport owners, worker leaders, and dishonest officials benefit from maintaining this disorder. The root problem is the lack of political will. Governments often confine themselves to forming committees and issuing recommendations, with little follow-through on implementation.

We need to develop a sustainable transport strategy and implement it in short-, medium-, and long-term phases. Dependence on road transport must be reduced by shifting people towards rail and waterways. Rail is one of the most sustainable modes of mass transport around the world, but it remains underdeveloped here. This imbalance places excessive pressure on roads, contributing to chaos. Institutions such as BRTA and the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) must be made more accountable. Although a road transport law exists, a comprehensive road safety law is still absent. Moreover, there is no dedicated economic code or sufficient budget allocation for road safety. Investment in driver training, public awareness, and a culture of safe road use is also extremely limited. We are spending thousands of crores on building roads, but

allocating almost nothing to ensure they are used safely.

What should the government do to build a disciplined public transport system?

Enforcement of the existing road transport law at the field level is weak. Approximately five lakh unfit or expired vehicles remain in operation on our roads, including around 75,000 buses and trucks. There has been no effective initiative to remove them. Whenever action is proposed, transport owner-worker groups call strikes, and the government backs down, worsening the situation.

The government must strengthen its own public transport capacity. The fleet and service quality of the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) need significant improvement. Buses purchased for public service should not be leased; instead, they should serve passengers directly.

The management and structural frameworks of the BRTA, BRTC, and DTCA must be reformed to ensure institutional transparency and accountability. As these are technical bodies, their top positions should be filled by professionals with relevant expertise rather than members of the administration, so that they can deliver sustainable solutions to existing problems.

Finally, the absence of coordinated, sustainable planning in the transport sector is evident, which must not continue. Rail, road, and waterways should be integrated under a single ministry, which can be called the “Ministry of Transport and Communication.” This would improve coordination in policymaking and implementation, simplify decision-making, and help establish an efficient and disciplined public transport system.

Measles outbreak: Did Bangladesh ignore the warning signs?



Nahid Akhter Jahan is professor at the Institute of Health Economics in the University of Dhaka.

NAHID AKHTER JAHAN

Despite the availability of a safe and cost-effective vaccine, there were an estimated 95,000 measles deaths around the world in 2024, primarily among children under the age of five who were either not vaccinated or under-vaccinated. Measles outbreaks have been on a sharp rise: 59 countries experienced large or disruptive outbreaks in 2024, triple the number of countries affected in 2021. A quarter of these countries had previously eliminated measles. The top 10 countries with measles outbreaks last year were India, Angola, Indonesia, Yemen, Pakistan, Cameroon, Mexico, Sudan, Kazakhstan, and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic.

Per the The World Health Organization’s (WHO) Immunization Agenda 2030 (IA2030) targets, countries must strengthen surveillance, respond more quickly, and reaffirm their political commitment. At least 1.24 crore children in low- and middle-income countries still lack access to basic, routine vaccinations every year. Nearly 50 percent of zero-dose children live in three key geographic contexts: urban areas, remote communities, and in conflict settings.

The ongoing measles outbreak in Bangladesh continues to raise public health

concerns. Many factors contributed to this outbreak, including a shortage of vaccines, inadequate human resources, invalid doses, dropouts, and weak monitoring. The coverage of childhood vaccination dropped in 2023 from 2019. According to the Coverage Evaluation Survey (CES) 2023 (the latest nationally published data on immunisation coverage), valid full vaccination coverage (FVC) by 12 months reduced from 83.9 percent in 2019 to 81.6 percent in 2023. This is well below the country’s vaccination coverage target of over 95 percent.

There is also geographical inequity and dropout rates. According to CES 2023, valid FVC by 12 months was the highest in Barishal division (89 percent), and the lowest in Dhaka division (76.5 percent), while urban area coverage was lower than rural area (79.0 percent and 84.6 percent, respectively). The first dose of the pentavalent vaccine (Penta 1) invalid dose was 3.6 percent, Penta 2 invalid dose was 1.4 percent, Penta 3 invalid dose was 0.7 percent, and M1R1 invalid dose was 9.8 percent in 2023. Therefore, the highest percentage of invalid doses was for M1R1. It was also higher in urban areas (12.9 percent) than in rural areas (8.1 percent).

Migration is one of the major reasons for dropouts from childhood vaccination in slum areas, which is contributing to lower coverage in urban areas. FVC with MR2 was only 76.8 percent in 2023, with 75 percent in urban areas and 79 percent in rural areas. Even globally, the proportion of children receiving a first dose of measles vaccine was 84 percent in 2024, slightly below the 2019 level of 86 percent.



FILE PHOTO: TITU DAS

The ongoing measles outbreak in Bangladesh continues to raise public health concerns.

The existing inequity in the coverage of childhood vaccination in Bangladesh was reiterated in the National Equity Strategy for Expanded Programme of Immunisation 2023. It recommended ensuring adequate and timely supply of vaccines and other logistics,

and establishing an electronic vaccine logistics management information system. Despite the warning signs and recommendations, we faced a shortage of vaccines and syringes, leading to the outbreak. There is also no real-time tracking mechanism in place at the district and upazila levels. As a result, some upazilas may have more vaccines than they need, while others may have very little, and some may have stockouts.

parents or guardians could reduce drop-outs and invalid doses. Exiguous human resources, lack of motivation, and inadequate budget for visiting the outreach centres are causing weak monitoring and supervision, especially in low-performing areas.

Bangladesh has taken steps to procure measles vaccines to cover the children who have not yet received the shots. However, long-term planning is needed to avoid a shortage of all vaccines, not just measles. Reducing the number of zero-dose and under-vaccinated children through collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders is at the core of IA2030. It is essential for a sustainable childhood vaccination programme amid growing urbanisation and population residing in slum areas, and to prevent crises like the present one.

In Bangladesh, the shortage of human resources for EPI should be addressed urgently, and a long-term HR plan must be prepared. Training on the maintenance of cold chain, appropriate vaccination, reducing wastage, and increasing IPC with parents and/or guardians must be provided regularly. Expanding nationwide vaccination campaign, ensuring full coverage, and creating community awareness are crucial. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare should ensure the use of digital tools for real-time disease tracking and target slums, hard-to-reach areas, and Rohingya refugee camps.

Bangladesh could have taken prior measures based on the experiences of measles outbreak in other countries and avoided the current outbreak. It must be the top priority now to reverse the declining trend of childhood vaccination coverage in the country.

CROSSWORD

BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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- 24 Cave raider of story
- 25 Doomed
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- Sonny
- 28 Washed out
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- 31 Dwelling
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- 33 Moved slowly
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YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS



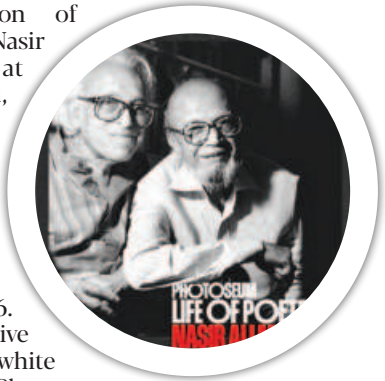
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OPINION PIECES TO
dsopinion@gmail.com.

Nasir Ali Mamun’s 66th solo exhibition opens at AFD

The 66th solo exhibition of renowned photographer Nasir Ali Mamun opens today at Alliance Française de Dhaka, featuring rare portraits and archival materials of two of Bangladesh’s most influential poets.

Titled *Photoseum: Life of Poetree*, the exhibition will be held at La Galerie and continue until April 16. It brings together an extensive collection of black-and-white portraits dedicated to Shamsur Rahman (1929–2006) and Al Mahmud (1936–2019).

Marking the bicentenary of photography, the exhibition presents around 60 photographs alongside previously unpublished video footage. Through minimalist composition and striking use of light and shadow, the works highlight the poets’ inner worlds. Notable guests, including Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of Prothom Alo; Jean-Marc Séré-Charlet; artist Monirul Islam and Kamal Quadir are expected at the opening.



WHAT’S THE HAPS?

‘Raat Bhore Brishti’

Upstage stages *Raat Bhore Brishti*, a taut psychological drama tracing the fragile architecture of marriage. Through Monimala, Anshu, and Joy, the play dissects desire, doubt, and intimacy within middle-class life, confronting inherited moral codes while insisting, quietly but firmly, on the necessity of love, partnership, and survival.

DATE: FRIDAY | APRIL 3, 2026
TIME: 5 PM AND 7:30 PM ONWARDS
VENUE: EXPERIMENTAL THEATRE HALL, NATIONAL THEATRE, BSA



Films should be rooted in original stories: MOSHARRAF KARIM

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Mosharraf Karim, widely admired across Bangladesh and beyond, continues to receive praise for his performance in the Eid release *Bonolota Express*. The film, directed by Tanim Noor, has emerged as one of the most successful releases of the season.

In a conversation with The Daily Star, Mosharraf spoke about his career, the film’s success, and his personal reflections.

Asked about the film’s strong reception, he said, “Bangladeshi audiences want original stories. They consider such stories their own. Through original narratives, people can see reflections of their own culture.” He added that years of working in television have taught him that audiences ultimately connect with stories rooted in their own realities.

Speaking about the film’s success, Mosharraf emphasised teamwork. “We truly became a team while working on *Bonolota Express*. Everyone deserves credit—from the director to the writers, actors, and the entire crew,” he said, noting that it was his first collaboration with Tanim Noor.

On the appreciation he has been receiving, the actor said, “I see it positively. I am happy and content. The audience’s love means a lot to any artiste.” He also shared that praise from a senior colleague after watching the film felt as rewarding as receiving an award.

Reflecting on the source material, Mosharraf said he has long been an admirer of Humayun Ahmed’s work. “I entered modern literature through his writings. His prose and dialogue are very powerful, and his short stories are especially dear to me,” he said, adding that *Kichukkhon* carries a layered narrative within a simple journey.

On the trend of Eid-centric releases, he expressed optimism. “Things will improve gradually. We need more cinema halls. There should be mutual respect and understanding within the industry,” he said.

Commenting on the variety

of films released this Eid, he noted that diversity is welcome, but stressed the importance of originality. “Whatever the genre, films should be rooted in original Bangladeshi stories. That is how we will move forward,” he added.

Mosharraf also spoke about his recent visit to his village home in Barishal after many years. “There is no one living there now, but it is filled with memories. I bathed in the river near our house, where I spent my childhood. The feeling of returning cannot be fully described—it brings a sense of peace,” he said.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF HOICHOI



Arifin Shuvoo earns praise from Indian media for ‘Jazz City’

Arifin Shuvoo is gaining international attention following the release of his debut Bollywood series *Jazz City* on March 19. His performance has been widely praised by leading Indian media, with several outlets describing him as a standout lead and one of the series’ strongest elements.

Publications such as The Hollywood Reporter India, The Times of India and Scroll highlighted his portrayal of Jimmy Roy, noting his emotional depth and screen presence. Other platforms, including Moneycontrol and NewsBytes, also credited his performance for keeping the series engaging.

Streaming on SonyLIV, *Jazz City* has topped trending charts since its release. The 10-episode series features Shuvoo performing in four languages—Bangla, Hindi, Urdu and English—marking a notable milestone for Bangla content on the platform.

NEWS

Office hours

FROM PAGE 1
for weddings or celebrations.

Nasimul said, “We are considering how we can deal with the fact that our supply system has become insecure because of the Middle East war, and what measures we can take to handle the resulting price fluctuations.”

The cabinet secretary said some government expenditure would be reduced for the next three months and that no new computer equipment would be purchased.

On educational institutions, he said the education ministry would start issuing separate instructions from Sunday after considering requirements at different levels so that academic activities are not hampered.

On Tuesday, Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon said the government was considering combining online and in-person classes. He also said the authorities were thinking about six-day school weeks.

Nasimul added that the government decided to introduce electric buses as an alternative to the large number of vehicles used by government schools, which will be allowed to import electric buses without duty. Commercial electric buses would only have 20 percent import duty.

The cabinet also approved in principle an amendment to the Public Examinations Offences Act by revising parts of the 1980 law, so that offences committed in public examinations can be tried, he added.

Myanmar House

FROM PAGE 12
Aye, a regional MP from Karen state with the pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), and current Prime Minister Nyo Saw.

Democracy watchdogs have long warned that the new government will be a proxy of the military, which has ruled Myanmar for the vast majority of its post-independence history.

The generals loosened their grip for a decade-long democratic experiment beginning in 2011, allowing Aung San Suu Kyi to ascend as civilian leader and steer a period of reform as the nation opened up.

But after Aung San Suu Kyi trounced the USDP in a landslide in 2020 elections, Min Aung Hlaing snatched back power.

Tk 14,179cr sought for Family Card rollout

FROM PAGE 12
planned to evolve into a universal social identity card by 2030. The government also aims to raise social protection spending to 3 percent of GDP by 2028.

At present, 95 social safety net programmes are operated under 23 ministries, with an allocation of Tk 1.26 lakh crore in the current fiscal year, accounting for 1.87 percent of GDP.

HOUSING SCHEME
In the DO letter, the social welfare minister said the government’s manifesto sets out a comprehensive plan to improve the living conditions of floating and internally displaced communities, including skill training, permanent rehabilitation, and mass housing for urban floating populations.

To this end, Tk 735 crore has been proposed to construct 500 square-foot flats for 5,000 families, particularly those living in Korail and other slums in the capital, according to the letter.

The letter highlighted a manifesto commitment to establish a “Special Children Welfare Fund” for disadvantaged and orphaned children. Under the initiative, the children would receive free education, stipends, and support services.

11-party to stage protest tomorrow

FROM PAGE 12
The opposition’s protests come at a time when the government is already facing multiple issues, including the impact of the Israel-US war on Iran and a measles outbreak.

Talking to reporters, Jamaat leader Azad said the ruling party has taken a position against the referendum, which he described as unfortunate.

He alleged that this amounts to denying the commitments that led to the formation of the interim government and the subsequent election.

“The 15th amendment to the constitution, which scrapped the

Measures will be taken to create job opportunities and cover healthcare expenses for these children, said the DO letter as the ministry sought Tk 100 crore in the next fiscal year to launch the fund.

In addition, the ministry has sought Tk 600 crore to provide monthly allowances to orphans living in private orphanages.

According to the letter, Tk 280 crore was allocated in the 2025-26 fiscal year to provide Tk 2,000 per month to each of 1,16,666 orphans in private orphanages. However, the number of institutions and beneficiaries has since increased.

With a plan to extend the allowances to 2,50,000 orphans, an additional Tk 320 crore will be required, said the letter.

The social welfare minister also proposed an additional Tk 24 crore for the Sarkari Shishu Paribar, state-run children’s homes that provide care, education, training, and rehabilitation for orphaned and fatherless children.

There are 85 such facilities in the country — 43 for boys, 41 for girls, and one for both — in the district towns and some upazilas. The ministry sought Tk 74.16 crore in the next budget to run them, up from Tk 49.99 crore.

caretaker government system, had paved the way for authoritarian rule. During the tenure of Sheikh Hasina, it resulted in constitutional autocracy. The current government is following the same path.”

Azad also spoke about the ongoing fuel crisis, accusing the government of providing misleading information.

He added that despite claims of no shortage, fuel is not available at filling stations.

At the same time, he noted that the government’s proposal to hold online classes three days a week to reduce transport costs contradicts its own assessment of the situation.

Malaysian govt

FROM PAGE 12
Meanwhile, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday Australia will provide up to A\$1 billion (\$693 million) in interest-free loans to critical businesses, including transport operators and fertiliser producers.

The support package comes as the Iran war disrupts global energy supplies, driving up prices and stoking concerns about availability in a country that imports more than 80 percent of its fuel.

The cheap loans will be offered to businesses considered essential to maintaining critical supply chains, helping them to ride out the immediate financial pressure, reports Reuters.

In China, several airlines, including national carrier Air China, said they will raise their fuel surcharges on domestic flights from Sunday as the war in the Middle East drives up oil prices globally, reports AFP.

Air China, China Southern and its subsidiary Xiamen Airlines said in statements that they will increase surcharges on flights of up to 800 kilometres (500 miles) by 60 yuan (\$8.70), and 120 yuan for longer flights. Spring Airlines and Juneyao Airlines also announced fuel surcharge hikes.

International flights will be subject to the system’s calculations, according to statements issued on Wednesday that did not mention the conflict.

The Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan is feeling the impact of the Mideast war, with the government saying “external conditions beyond our control” have forced a hike in fuel prices.

Carbon-negative Bhutan has aggressively promoted hydropower projects, earning substantial revenue by exporting electricity to energy-hungry neighbour India.

But the landlocked nation of about 800,000 people imports its fuel via India, and shortages of fuel have sparked long queues at filling stations in the capital Thimphu, AFP reporters saw yesterday.

Nepal has nearly doubled aviation fuel prices, officials said yesterday, raising fears of a fresh blow to its tourism-dependent economy.

“Aviation fuel prices have increased,” Manoj Kumar Thakur, spokesman for the state-owned Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC), told AFP.

Measles has spread

FROM PAGE 1
of which 743, or around 31 percent, tested positive so far, said Halimur Rashid, director (disease control) of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

However, a DGHS report said a total of 3,709 suspected measles cases were recorded from March 15 until 8:00am yesterday, including 685 reported in the last 24 hours. Of them, 585 cases were confirmed as measles patients.

A total of 27 suspected measles deaths were recorded, including four in the last 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday, and of them, 13 are confirmed measles deaths, the report said.

But this newspaper got reports of 50 deaths in suspected measles cases and related complications until yesterday, including four suspected deaths in the last 24 hours.

Against this backdrop, the government on Wednesday announced plans to launch an emergency vaccination drive in high-burden areas from Sunday.

Officials of the health ministry, the DGHS, Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) and civil surgeons held a series of meetings in the last two days.

As per the initial decision, the emergency drive will be carried out at heavy burden areas for two weeks, said Shahriar Sajjad, deputy director of the EPI.

The tenure can be extended, if necessary, he said, adding that 20 to 21 upazilas with a heavy burden of patients have been identified so far.

However, the target groups for the campaign have not been finalised yet, as differences have emerged between recommendations put forward by the National Immunisation Technical Advisory Group and decisions from the health ministry, sources said.

Measles has spread suddenly and there had been little preparation initially, said Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain yesterday.

“However, within a short time, we are now fully prepared to prevent measles,” he said at the inauguration of the training programme on the use of bubble CPAP in the treatment of respiratory distress due to measles-induced pneumonia at Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute in the capital.

This training is aimed at scaling up the use of bubble CPAP, a low-cost and effective bubble CPAP oxygen delivery system developed by icddr,b, across the country.

Meanwhile, another suspected measles patient has died at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Mohakhali in the last 24 hours, raising measles-related deaths at the facility to 27, said superintendent Tanzina Jahan.

The hospital was treating 81 suspected patients yesterday, she added.

Another suspected measles patient has died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in the past 24 hours, taking the total suspected measles deaths at the facility to five, said the hospital’s spokesperson Shankar K Biswas.

Thesix-month-olddeceased,Abdur Rahman, of Chapainawabganj’s Gomastapur upazila, died around 6:00am yesterday.

Seven-month-old Rahima Akter from Kawdia village in Madaripur Sadar upazila died with symptoms of measles at Faridpur Medical College Hospital, marking the first such death reported in the district, said Faridpur’s Civil Surgeon Mahmudul Hasan.

In Tangail, eight-month-old Saifal of Hatila village in Tangail Sadar upazila died on Thursday while undergoing treatment for measles at the 250-bed Tangail General Hospital, said the hospital’s Deputy Director Khandaker Sadiqur Rahman.

Six suspected measles patients died at Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute, while five died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital. Four victims were from Chapainawabganj and one from Cox’s Bazar, according to previous reports of the newspaper.

[Our correspondents from Rajshahi, Tangail and Faridpur contributed to this report]

Bangladeshi envoy

FROM PAGE 2
This will be the first high-level engagement between Bangladesh and India since the BNP assumed power, following a period of strained ties.

The foreign minister is scheduled to visit Mauritius after the India tour to attend the 9th Indian Ocean Conference.

Elephant pair seen standing by dead calf for three days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A pair of elephants was seen standing beside the body of their dead calf for three consecutive days in Naikhongchhari upazila of Bandarban.

Around noon yesterday, the calf's body was retrieved from Bottola Muslimpara under Sonaichhari union, near the Myanmar border, and a post-mortem was conducted under the Rajarkul Range of Cox's Bazar South Forest Division before burial.

Locals reported that the calf's mother remained in a shallow ditch with the body, while a male elephant stood nearby. While both left to forage at some point, they returned eventually.

Md Tanvir Chowdhury, range officer of Naikhongchhari, said they rushed to the spot after receiving information three days ago. However, they could not immediately recover the body due to the presence of the calf's mother.

The cause of death will be confirmed after the report, he added. Forest officials confirmed the calf was buried after recovery.

Md Mostafizur Rahman, divisional forest officer of Lama, noted that the area lies along an elephant corridor, and it is suspected the calf may have slipped from a hill and fallen into the ditch.



Lakshmi Rani Pal busy making clay toys at Badla village in Barishal ahead of Pahela Baishakh, as demand for such items rises at fairs marking the first day of the Bangla calendar. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Defamation case against Amir Hamza

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pubna

A defamation case was filed in Sirajganj yesterday against MP Mufti Amir Hamza over alleged derogatory remarks about Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku.

The cognisance court of Judge Suman Bhuiyan accepted the complaint and issued a summons against the lawmaker. Advocate Humayun Kabir, general secretary of the district bar, filed the case, marking the second legal action within a week over the same remark.

According to the complaint, Hamza, during a pre-Juma discussion at a mosque in Kushtia Sadar on March 27, allegedly described the minister as an "atheist and anti-Islamic." A video of the remark later went viral.

"The minister strictly adheres to Islamic practices. By calling him an 'atheist' and 'anti-Islamic,' Mufti Amir Hamza has caused significant damage to his reputation," the complainant said.

He said he'd return

FROM PAGE 3

She told the court that on the afternoon of July 4, 2011, Sajal returned home from work and asked for food.

Shortly after, his elder brother Azad also returned, and the two sat watching television. She told them the rice was ready but the curry was not.

"At that moment, Sajal received a phone call. While speaking, he started to leave the house. His brother told him to eat first," she said.

She called out from the window, asking him to finish his meal before leaving.

"He replied, 'I'll just go talk and come back. Get the food ready -- we'll eat together.'"

That was the last time she saw him alive.

According to her testimony, at the time, the family lived in a rented house in Begumganj of Gendaria. Azad worked as a bus helper, while Sajal worked at a sand and brick shop.

Ziaul Ahsan has been charged with three counts of crimes against humanity, filed on January 14, over alleged enforced disappearances and the killings of 104 people between 2010 and 2013.

According to the first charge, acting on Ziaul's plan and with his direct

involvement, Sajal and three unidentified individuals were shot dead along the Bypass Road in Pubail, Gazipur, on July 11, 2011.

The second charge alleges that between 2010 and 2013, at least 50 people, including former BDR member Nazrul Islam Mallik and Alkas Mallik, were shot dead at the confluence of the Baleshwar River in Barguna, and their bodies were dumped into the river on Ziaul's instructions.

The third charge states that during the same period, Ziaul was involved in the killing of another 50 people in Barguna and the Sundarbans in Bagerhat, among other places, under the guise of anti-forest bandit operations.

Ziaul's defence counsel sought his discharge, claiming he was innocent.

After the testimony, his lawyer, Aminul Ghani Titto, cross-examined the witness. The tribunal set April 8 for the next hearing.

PRAYER TIMING		APRIL 3	
Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib Esha
4:40	12:30	4:45	6:21 7:45
5:15	1:15	5:00	6:24 8:15
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION			

PM expresses solidarity

FROM PAGE 3

reiterated his government's commitment to protecting all residents regardless of nationality. He also thanked Bangladesh for its solidarity.

Humayun Kabir commended the restraint demonstrated by the UAE leadership and highlighted the importance of resolving conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to deepen cooperation across sectors of mutual interest.

Humayun Kabir is currently visiting several Gulf countries as the prime minister's special envoy to convey messages and reinforce Bangladesh's engagement in the region. Earlier, he visited Qatar and Oman.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has expressed its stance of non-interference and peaceful diplomatic solution of the conflict in the Middle East.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed conveyed this to Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bangladesh Ali Thunayun Abdulwahab Hamadah during a courtesy call at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

She conveyed

Bangladesh's readiness to extend humanitarian support to Kuwait, as it deems it useful, as the US-Israel war on Iran and the latter's retaliation continue.

She also stressed the exchange of high-level visits and holding regular meetings of existing bilateral platforms to identify opportunities and advance cooperation for mutual benefit.

Shama Obaed thanked the government of Kuwait for ensuring the safety and security of the around 3,00,000 Bangladeshi expatriates in Kuwait.

She emphasised the importance of enhancing trade and investment, especially in energy, infrastructure, ICT and halal food sectors.

She also invited the Kuwaiti investors to explore opportunities in Special Economic Zones and Hi-Tech Parks.

The meeting reaffirmed the longstanding friendship and growing strategic partnership between Bangladesh and Kuwait.

Kuwaiti envoy Ali Thunayun Abdulwahab Hamadah conveyed Kuwait's appreciation for initiating the phone call between the two foreign

ministers of the countries and expressing solidarity with Kuwait at the early stage of the war.

He acknowledged the support of Bangladesh for Kuwait in multilateral fora, including the UN and OIC, while assuring all sorts of cooperation for Bangladesh and its expatriates in Kuwait and foster Bangladesh-Kuwait brotherly relations.

Shama Obaed appreciated Kuwait's support for the Rohingya humanitarian response.

Hindu leaders

FROM PAGE 3

Bangladesh Puja Uddipan Parishad general secretary Santosh Sharma said they also demanded the withdrawal of "false and harassing" cases recently filed against minority community members in connection with different incidents and called for proportional representation of minorities in all spheres of national life.

LGRD Minister and BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and BNP chairman's adviser Bijon Kanti Sarkar were among those present at the meeting.

DMP continues drive

FROM PAGE 3

Field observations showed that many footpaths remained comparatively clear, as vendors began vacating occupied spaces. However, hawkers demanded compensation and rehabilitation before such drives.

"We are conducting the second day of the drive from Jatrabari to Faruk Sarani, Golapbagh, Kazla, Saidabad and other areas. The drive will continue," said Azad Rahman, deputy commissioner of the Wari Traffic Division, speaking to The Daily Star.

Police also conducted a drive to evict illegal shops and structures on Ring Road in Shyamoli. Similar drives are planned for Tajmahal Road and Salimullah Road in Mohammadpur.

Several private cars and motorcycles parked illegally along roadsides were fined. Some shopkeepers were also fined for placing goods on roads and footpaths.

Many individuals were penalised for obstructing pedestrian movement, while others were warned.

Special Metropolitan Magistrate Md Al Faisal of the DMP led the operation.

He said instructions had been issued to keep footpaths clear, but many failed to comply. "As a result, some were warned while others were fined," he said.

Responding to a question about the return of illegal structures, he said regular monitoring would be arranged in consultation with higher authorities.

Around 50 police personnel, including Assistant Police Commissioner Md Aslam Sagar of the Mohammadpur Traffic Zone, took part in the drive.

Earlier, on March 23, the DMP announced a coordinated citywide drive starting April 1, asking traders to remove their belongings in advance. The public notice warned that violators could face fines, imprisonment and confiscation of goods placed on footpaths and roads.

Meanwhile, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Administrator Md Shafiqul Islam Khan reiterated that footpaths and roads must remain free from encroachment and that no business activities will be allowed there. However, he said alternative arrangements would be made for small and floating traders.

He made the remarks at a meeting with hawkers and small traders at Mukul Fouz Field in Mirpur, held to discuss clearing footpaths from Mirpur-10 to Mirpur-1.

"We will arrange alternative places for your businesses. You must keep in mind that no business will be allowed on footpaths or roads," he said.

He added that those who previously facilitated such businesses would no longer be able to do so. Acknowledging the traders' concerns, he said the city corporation would take a humane approach.

At the meeting, representatives of hawkers demanded designated relocation spaces, sufficient time for relocation, and suitable locations for business.

They said many had been operating for years, and sudden eviction would cause hardship. They called for proper arrangements before relocation.

In response, the administrator said a workable solution would be developed through discussions, and detailed talks would be held with a five-member team.

He also said tokens would be issued by the city corporation to prevent extortion. "Once you receive the token, do not pay anyone asking for money -- inform us, and we will stand by you," he said.

Crackdown

FROM PAGE 3

The shop owner was fined Tk 10,000 for illegal stockpiling, said Kazipur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mostafizur Rahman, who led the drive.

Despite the enforcement drives, fuel scarcity has left livelihoods at risk for many.

In Kurigram, fishing boats were seen sitting idle along the Brahmaputra riverbanks as fishermen struggled to secure diesel.

"It takes six to seven litres of diesel daily to go fishing in the river. Earlier, we could get diesel near the riverbank at a slightly higher price. Now we have to travel 10-12 kilometres to a pump and stand in queue for hours to get only two litres," said Jhontu Chandra Das, a fisherman from Jorgachh Jelepura village in Chilmari upazila.

(Our correspondents from Chattogram, Patuakhali, Jamalpur and Lalmonirhat contributed to this report.)

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Police
Office of the Superintendent of Police, Industrial Police-6 Khulna.
E-mail: spip6@police.gov.bd.

Memo No-416 Date: 02/04/2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of goods follows:

Tender ID No	Package name	Online Tender Notice Publication Date & Time	Online Tender Closing Date & Time	Method of Tender
1251439	Masur Dal(Lentil)	02-April-2026 13:10	16-April-2026 13:00	OTM
1251742	Edible Oil(Soybean Oil)	02-April-2026 12:45	16-April-2026 13:00	OTM
1251743	Polao Rice	02-April-2026 12:35	16-April-2026 13:00	OTM
1251744	Fire Wood	02-April-2026 12:20	16-April-2026 13:00	OTM
1251745	Coolie	02-April-2026 12:10	16-April-2026 13:00	OTM
1251746	Wheat Milling	02-April-2026 11:50	16-April-2026 13:00	OTM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for last downloading e-Tender document from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches up to date & time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Ansar Uddin
BP No: 7608121650
Superintendent of Police
Industrial Police-6 Khulna
Phone-02477702541, Fax-041-762561
E-mail: spip6@police.gov.bd

GD-706

Dhaka North City Corporation

Office of the Executive Engineer
Zone-3 (Mohakhali)
45, Mohakhali, Dhaka.

Memo No: 46.10.0000.091.07.008.2026 Date: 02-04-2026

e-Tender Notice (NCT-OTM)

e-Tender is invited to the National e-GP portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following works

SL No	Tender ID	Name of work	Tender Closing & Opening Date & time
1	1213019	Emergency repair and maintenance works of damaged roads, drains, cross drains, manhole covers, footpaths, medians, grills and other infrastructures under framework contract of the engineering department, Zone-03, DNCC for the fiscal year 2025-2026 (Group-Ka)	15-Apr-2026 15:00
2	1213020	Emergency repair and maintenance works of damaged roads, drains, cross drains, manhole covers, footpaths, medians, grills and other infrastructures under framework contract of the engineering department, Zone-03, DNCC for the fiscal year 2025-2026 (Group-Kha)	15-Apr-2026 15:00
3	1213021	Emergency repair and maintenance work for the Banani Officers' Quarter and related infrastructure under the Engineering Department, Zone 03 according to the framework contract for the fiscal year 2025-2026.	15-Apr-2026 15:00
4	1213339	Supply of materials (bricks, sand, stone, bitumen, firewood, etc.) for emergency repairs of damaged roads under Zone-3 for the fiscal year 2025-26 by departmental labours.	15-Apr-2026 15:00
5	1242608	Construction work of extended office of Nagar Bhaban in the northern area of Nagar Bhaban Level-8 for facilitating the operation of office activities and made easier providing the citizen services of Dhaka North City Corporation.	29-Apr-2026 15:00

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

(Nurul Alam)
Executive Engineer
Zone-3 (Mohakhali)
Dhaka North City Corporation,

GD-710

Words of wisdom for ASPIRING BOXERS

In conversation with National champion and professional boxer Sura Krishna Chakma



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA

For anyone who dreams of representing our country on the international stage, my message is simple: there is no substitute for hard work. Hard work and discipline are the two pillars of boxing. Without them, nothing is possible. Luck doesn't exist in this sport, but if you put in the work, stay dedicated, and train under the right coach, everything else will follow.

ORCHID CHAKMA

Sura Krishna Chakma's journey began in 2006, when a boxing trial at the Rangamati Mari Stadium gave him the opportunity to enrol at the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishtan (BKSP). He then competed for the first time the following year, at the 2007 Intermediate Boxing Championship, where he won a silver medal.

From there, Sura Krishna went on to compete in several tournaments held on national occasions, including Victory Day and Independence Day boxing events, taking home gold medals along the way. A major milestone came in 2013, when he won gold in the senior category at the Bangladesh Games, which earned him a place in the national team that same year. In 2014, he travelled to Glasgow, Scotland, to compete in the Commonwealth Games – his first opportunity to represent Bangladesh on an international stage.

Campus sat down with Sura Krishna to learn a bit more about his journey and what he has to say to aspiring boxers in Bangladesh.

Campus (C): Can you tell us a little about your accomplishments in your boxing career so far?

Sura Krishna (S): On the domestic front, I have been the unbeaten national amateur champion since 2013. Every time I have competed nationally, I have won. On the professional side, my story begins earlier than most people realise. While professional boxing only came to Bangladesh in 2022, I had already turned professional in 2018, competing in India. That makes me the first professional boxer from Bangladesh, according to BoxRec. I have fought ten professional bouts to date, winning eight.

Among those fights, the standout achievement is winning the Asian Boxing Federation (ABF) – the Asian belt – title in 2023. I also earned a bronze medal at the 2019 South Asian Games in Nepal.

C: Why do you think people are drawn to boxing?

S: Boxing isn't for everyone, but many people are naturally inclined toward it, and enjoy watching it even more. You can see this beyond just sports: action films are hugely popular in Bangladesh, and people from all walks of life watch and enjoy them. That same appetite for watching people compete physically is what I think draws people to boxing

and combat sports, in general, even in a country where a strong culture around these sports hasn't fully taken shape yet.

C: You continued boxing alongside your studies. What would your advice be to aspiring boxers who, currently, are students themselves?

S: I studied at BKSP, where boxing and academics went hand in hand from the start. That balance was built into my life early on. For university students hoping to pursue boxing alongside their

capable of going.

C: For an aspiring Bangladeshi boxer, could you walk us through the local boxing scene?

S: The facilities available to aspiring boxers today are significantly better than they used to be. In the past, trained coaches were found almost exclusively at BKSP. But with professional boxing taking root in Bangladesh, qualified trainers are now available outside of BKSP as well.

Many BKSP graduates are even launching their own coaching careers, partly to improve their own

without understanding the science behind it is not just ineffective; it can be actively harmful. Without that foundational knowledge, you risk overtraining your athletes, causing fatigue, and leading to injuries that could seriously set them back.

C: You also run a boxing academy in Rangamati. Could you tell us a bit about that?

S: The academy's journey began after Covid, when I noticed a growing interest in boxing among people in the community. Many see boxing as nothing more than fighting, but I wanted to show those drawn to the sport what it truly involves. So, I simply started training anyone who came to me with a genuine interest, building them up from the ground up.

It started with a small group in Rangamati. Without a gym, we made do with whatever space we could find, like open fields and the Rangamati Mari Stadium, and when I went on my morning runs, I brought them along. Training happened wherever we could make it happen.

But as more people expressed interest, it became clear that outdoor sessions weren't enough. We needed a proper space with real facilities to train seriously. By then, my group had grown to eight to ten people, and I could see the potential – these players could go on to do something great. That belief is what pushed me to establish the gym, which officially opened in early 2025, around March or April.

C: Do you have any words of wisdom for aspiring boxers who are looking to wave the Bangladeshi flag in the international scene?

S: For anyone who dreams of representing our country on the international stage, my message is simple: there is no substitute for hard work. Hard work and discipline are the two pillars of boxing. Without them, nothing is possible. Luck doesn't exist in this sport, but if you put in the work, stay dedicated, and train under the right coach, everything else will follow.

The first step, though, is building the right mindset. You have to dare to dream big, whether that's becoming a world champion or standing on the Olympic podium. If you can't picture yourself reaching those heights, you won't get there. In my view, it all starts from within: build your mindset, build your determination, and success will take care of itself.



Sura Krishna founded a boxing academy to give back, using the sport to teach the youth life skills that go far beyond the ring.

studies, it's likely to be a tougher road, simply because most won't have come into it with prior experience in the sport.

For those who want to start young, two things are essential: determination and a good coach. If your goal is to pursue boxing seriously while keeping up with your education, I strongly recommend beginning under a coach who can guide you through the fundamentals properly. Master the basics first, and from there, you'll gradually begin to understand just how far you're

livelihoods, and this growth has opened up new income streams across the sector.

That said, limitations remain. If we want to compete seriously at the international level, we need to adopt the methods that the rest of the world is using. We have coaches, but they need to become more skilled. Even our amateur coaches, capable as they are, need to keep developing, because great players aren't built on good intentions alone.

Pulling a training routine off the internet

Stepping into the ring: What it takes to get started with amateur boxing

MD. NAYEEM HAIDER

TW: Mentions of self-harm and addiction.

Boxers display unfathomable determination in disciplining their bodies and minds, pushing themselves beyond their limits. They are undoubtedly athletes who deserve greater support and recognition. These individuals typically start their journeys early in life and compete at the amateur level before transitioning to the professional ranks. But where do they find the spark to step into the ring?

For most young people, the fascination with combat sports begins in front of a screen, watching action movies or playing video games. The same was the case for Sameer Imran Chowdhury, a BBA student at North South University who began training to compete at the amateur level in 2023. However, his parents were reluctant to let him participate in combat sports due to his poor fitness as well as the plethora of health conditions he suffered in his childhood.

"It all changed after Covid, when the diseases I had finally went away," says Sameer, describing the beginning of the journey. A journey that, to him, has been miraculous and forged through sheer grit.

He continues, "I began to take fitness very seriously from then, and I joined the gym soon after completing my A levels. But weight lifting gradually started to feel too monotonous for me. I wanted to pursue something that would let me utilise all of my physicality – my strength, endurance, speed, and agility. I asked myself then: now that I can do all the things that I couldn't before, why not try boxing?"

For Adib Alam Aridro, an A level student and boxer affiliated with Xcel Sports Management and Promotions, it was watching boxing matches and then sparring with a boxer that made him fall in love with the sport. He describes his experience, "I used to practise karate, and

the Bangladesh Boxing Federation was not far from that place. This one time, a boxing tournament was going on, and I went to spectate to see what it was all about. I instantly loved it, and I felt that the sport was for me. After that, I started training. When I first sparred, though, I was beaten badly. Being punched was painful, but I put up a fight. I enjoyed the physical exertion, and I felt the sport was for me, that I could become a good fighter."



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

But the journey to becoming a good boxer has always been an arduous one. To prepare for such a strenuous sport and excel at it, aspiring amateur boxers must endure a rigorous training regimen.

Fahim Zaman, who has been a freelance boxing coach for over 15 years, gives his insight: "Once someone makes up their mind to be a boxer, they need to take the training lifestyle seriously. They need to show up every day; they need to perform their exercise routine diligently, which

involves doing bag work, pad sessions, ab workouts, and sparring."

"Bag work" involves trainees training with a punching bag, and "pad sessions" or "pad work" involve them practising specific punches with the coach. Zaman also stresses the importance of diet discipline and puts emphasis on weight training and running to build strength and stamina.

"When they start out, we teach them the six basic boxing punches – the jab, the

lead hook, the rear hook, the lead uppercut, and the rear uppercut," says Muntaha-Ul-Haque Mumit, a professional boxer and kickboxer who works as a boxing coach for Legacy MMA Gym.

He continues, "We also have them work on their footwork. All of these make the foundations of any boxer, and our training programme is designed to strongly instil these basics in them."

Mumit also describes at length what an ordinary training session may look like.

"We first have them start with four rounds of skipping. Then they do some shadow boxing – the first two rounds without weights and the next two involve one-kilogram dumbbells. This is followed by four rounds of bag work and then pad work or partner drills, where they practise their punches with the partners we pair them up with. Once a week, we hold sparring sessions."

"When we notice that a fighter has potential, that they are doing well in sparring sessions, that is when we deem them ready to compete," adds Zaman.

Yet, despite all the training in the world, it is only the fight itself that can truly forge a fighter.

Mahathier Mohammad, an LLB student at London College of Legal Studies (South) and an amateur boxer, shares experiences from his first official fight. "I was very afraid and nervous; for the first few minutes, I was frozen and shaking. I couldn't land my punches properly, but eventually I gained the confidence and started showing what I had learned. I won that fight by a unanimous decision."

But for Mahathier, the story of his first fight and victory will always carry with it the bittersweet tint of him rediscovering himself following his mother's passing. Indeed, for many amateur boxers, the real fight exists outside the ring, and boxing itself is the staunch ally that helps them prevail.

Mahathier tells his story, "I lost interest in everything after my mother died. I quit boxing, disengaged from the other sports I was involved in, and couldn't even bring myself to study properly. I contemplated taking my own life and gravitated towards self-destructive tendencies. One day, my father told me that I had to be strong, that I had to live on for the sake of my mother's dream. He told me to balance boxing and my studies at the same time. So, I returned to boxing and trained harder than ever before. I thought about quitting over and

over again, but I moved forward regardless. Then, of course, came my first victory. It was an emotional, cathartic moment for me."

"Contrary to popular belief, combat sports like boxing do not make people violent. Rather, it provides an outlet for repressed emotions and helps them control that side of themselves," says Mumit.

The others who were spoken to corroborated these views, highlighting how learning boxing and competing at the amateur level have made them calmer and humbler. Aridro discusses how the sport can help in dealing with severe issues such as addiction: "When you love the game, you want to get better at it more than anything else. If you have any addictions, that will certainly cause problems with your training. That in itself will make you want to forego such things."

Yet, when talking about the amateur boxing scene, there appears to be a sense of pessimism in those engaged with the sport. While the professional boxing scene has seen remarkable development in the past few years, amateur boxing has remained stagnant, or perhaps even regressed.

"The target of amateur boxers should be to get into professional boxing. Only then can they do well. But if their end goal is to pursue national titles at the amateur level, I don't think they'll be able to go far," Mumit cautions.

The young people whom I spoke to all wished to have boxing as part of their futures. Mahathier is of the belief that he can build a career in the legal profession and also continue the sport. Aridro wishes to become a promoter of boxing and help the sport grow and thrive. Sameer plans to continue pursuing boxing alongside his job or business. He says, "I know very well that it's going to be hard. If I fail, that's alright. But why not go all out before that?"

Nayeem is a student of law and a contributing writer for The Daily Star.



ANATOMY OF CABRERA ERA

Long reign, limited return

ANISUR RAHMAN

As the clock ticks down on Javier Cabrera's contract, set to expire on April 30, the Spaniard leaves behind a legacy of historic longevity but conflicting results. Appointed in January 2022, he became Bangladesh's longest-serving foreign coach, yet his tenure remains deeply debated.

In an era when Bangladesh coaches rarely lasted months, Cabrera oversaw 39 international matches across four years. The numbers, however, reflect stagnation: just 10 wins, most against minnows such as Bhutan (3), Cambodia (2), Seychelles (1) and Maldives (3), alongside a rare 1-0 victory over India that ended a 22-year wait.

If results raised concerns, expectations only grew with the influx of high-profile players. Backed by Leicester City midfielder Hamza Choudhury, Canada-based Shamit Shome, Italy-based Fahamedul Islam and USA-based Zayyan Ahmed, Cabrera had one of the strongest pools in recent years. Yet Bangladesh still failed to reach the AFC Asian Cup finals for the first time since 1980, finishing third in a four-team group with five points from six matches.

Despite improved personnel, a clear identity never emerged. Midfield quality through Hamza and Shamit, combined

with the pace of wingers Rakib Hossain, Fahamedul and Faisal Ahmed Fahim, did not translate into a cohesive attacking unit. Cabrera's approach drew regular scrutiny, with delayed and reactive in-game changes raising eyebrows.

Continuity remained elusive. Even after testing more than 30 players following his predecessor Jamie Day's departure in late 2021, Cabrera failed to build a settled side. Experienced names like Topu Barman, Saad Uddin, Bishwanath Ghosh, Sohel Rana, Rahmat Mia, Rakib, Mohammad Ridoy and Mohammad Ibrahim remained central, while a handful of younger players – Sheikh Morsalin, Mehedi Hasan Srabon, Mitul Marma, Shahrear Emon and Shakil Ahad Topu – established themselves alongside overseas-based additions.

Defensive instability was a constant. The 41-year-old struggled to establish a reliable backline, particularly amid injuries, often deploying players out of position. This lack of stability proved costly, with Bangladesh committing late errors and dropping points in tightly contested matches.

Up front, the issues persisted. A rotating cast of strikers – Aminur Rahman Sajib, Sazzad Hossain, Suman Reza, Arman Akash Faisal, Al Amin, Pias Ahmed Nova and Mirajul Islam

– failed to solve the goal drought, with inconsistent selection undermining any cutting edge.

Cabrera's tactical shift further highlighted the uncertainty. From high-intensity pressing in the 2022 Asian Cup Qualifiers, he moved towards build-up play and controlled possession. The approach peaked at the 2023 SAFF Championship in India, where Bangladesh reached the semifinals after 14 years – a rare high in an uneven tenure.

Ultimately, Cabrera's Bangladesh leaned too heavily on individual moments rather than a defined structure. This raised doubts over whether his system suited the squad's physicality and experience. His failure to convert promise into sustained success – particularly qualification for the 2027 Asian Cup, widely seen as attainable – leaves his tenure less fulfilling than desired.

When he took over, Bangladesh were ranked 186. Over time, the ranking dipped to 192 before rising to 180, and currently stands at 181.

What Cabrera did establish was that Bangladesh could compete at the Asian level. What he could not prove, however, was whether they could win when it mattered most.

Italy football chief resigns after World Cup disaster

AFP, Milan

The head of Italy's football federation (FIGC), Gabriele Gravina, resigned on Thursday, falling on his sword after the men's national team failed to qualify for a third consecutive World Cup.

Gravina revealed he would step down following a meeting held at the FIGC's headquarters in Rome.

Italy fell at the playoffs again on Tuesday, this time after a penalty shootout against Bosnia and Herzegovina and will miss this summer's finals in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The shock waves of the latest humiliation for one of the world's most important football nations forced Gravina, 72, to go back on his initial plans to wait until a FIGC board meeting next week to announce a decision on his future.

The FIGC said in a statement a vote for a new president will be held on June 22 with Giovanni Malago, the former long-time head of the Italian Olympic Committee who was president of the Milan-Cortina Winter Olympics organisation committee, among the names in the hat.

Gravina's resignation also means Italy coach Gennaro Gattuso could resign, as it was Gravina who asked the 2006 World Cup winner to stay on beyond the end of his current contract, which expires in the summer.

Can Bangladesh break India final jinx?

Bangladesh will take on India in the final of the 2026 SAFF U-20 Championship at the National Football Stadium in Male today, hoping to secure a maiden win over their neighbours in the final of the tournament at any level. The match will kick off at 9:00 pm.

Like their senior team, Bangladesh's age-level sides have never beaten India in a SAFF Championship final. The national team lost both their finals against India -- in 1999 and 2005 -- while the age-level teams suffered defeats in 2019 (U-18), 2022 (U-20), and 2025 (U-19).

However, Bangladesh held India to a 1-1 draw earlier in the group stage of this edition.

Both teams began their campaigns with wins over Pakistan -- Bangladesh winning 2-0 and India registering a 3-0 victory.

Bangladesh edged past Nepal 1-0 in the semifinal, while India thrashed Bhutan 5-0 to storm into the final.

Defending champions India have won the tournament a record four times.

Bangladesh's only title came in 2024.

We always like to play against India and want to bring the trophy home by beating them. So, that historic moment is upon us, with the final taking place tomorrow [today].

Bangladesh U-20 captain Mithu Chowdhury



PHOTO: SAFF

69 GOALS
DAYS LEFT



THE FASTEST BRACE EVER

In the semifinal of the 2014 edition, Toni Kroos struck twice within just 69 seconds against hosts Brazil – the fastest brace ever scored by a player in World Cup history. On that unforgettable night in Belo Horizonte, Germany delivered a stunning performance, demolishing Brazil 7-1.

**** Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Four stars: Italy's World Cup glory story'.**

JOY IN BANGKOK



Bangladesh players celebrate in jubilant fashion following one of their four successful penalty corners during a thrilling 4-3 victory over Chinese Taipei during their opening Pool B fixture of the Asian Games Qualifiers in Thailand yesterday. After falling behind to an early strike, the men in red and green showcased clinical set-piece execution to turn the game around. A brace from Ashraf Islam, alongside strikes from [R] Amirul Islam -- adjudged player of the match -- and Deen Mohammad Emon, proved enough to withstand a late surge from their opponents and secure a vital three points ahead of their remaining group matches: against Sri Lanka today and Uzbekistan on April 6. The top six teams from this event will qualify for September-October's Asian Games in Japan.

PHOTO: AHF

Another director quits as BCB set for meeting on Saturday

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) is set for a board meeting on Saturday on the backdrop of another director stepping down on Thursday -- the third such resignation in less than six months of the current board.

Yasir Mohammad Foysal Ashiq, who came into the board from the National Sports Council (NSC) quota, tendered his resignation.

"I have resigned due to personal reasons. I have submitted it to the BCB's central office. There was no issue of interference in my decision," Yasir told The Daily Star.

BCB CEO Nizamuddin Chowdhury could not be reached for a comment.

Yasir was one of the two NSC-nominated directors in the current board. Initially, Isfak Hasan had been nominated alongside him but after his links with the deposed Awami League government surfaced -- he had sought nomination from Awami League for the national election in 2024 -- he was replaced by Rubaba Dowla.

Ministry of Youth and Sports secretary Mahbub-ul-Alam told The Daily Star that the NSC has not yet discussed a replacement.

"We are aware of the resignation but it has happened just today [Thursday]. We have a sports council to decide on these issues. The honourable

State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque is the chairman of the council. A decision will be made after discussions with him," he informed.

Before Yasir, director Ishtiaque Sadeque had resigned in January citing personal reasons while last month, Amjad Hossain also stepped down as a director.

However, BCB president Aminul Islam Bulbul had told The Daily Star during a recent interview that their resignations have not been accepted yet.

Ahead of the meeting, there is tangible anxiety in the air in BCB as an independent inquiry committee, formed by the NSC, is currently investigating alleged irregularities in last year's BCB election.

Ahead of the polls on October 6, Bulbul had sent a letter to the Ministry of Youth and Sports on September 18, asking district and divisional sports associations to send councillors' names only from the ad-hoc committees.

This letter remains at the heart of the controversy surrounding that election, which a BCB director highlighted as a "mistake" to The Daily Star.

The inquiry committee began its work on March 24 and is expected to submit its report by the second week of April, which will shed light on the fate of the current board.





DEMAND FOR REFORMS

11-party to stage protest tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-led 11-party alliance yesterday announced a protest programme demanding constitutional reform in line with a referendum verdict.

The programme is scheduled to be held at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at 5:00pm tomorrow.

“Alongside the programme, the opposition would seek to build public opinion through outreach and leaflet distribution to press home the demand,” Hamidur Rahman Azad, Jamaat assistant secretary general, told reporters following a liaison committee meeting of the combine in the capital’s Gulshan area.

He added that seminars and symposiums would also be organised on the implementation of the referendum and the July charter.

“Opposition would be compelled to announce tougher programmes if the government continues to ignore public opinion. The next course of action will be decided at a meeting of the alliance’s top leaders on April 7,” said the Jamaat leader.

However, the government believes the opposition is trying to put pressure on it mainly through street protests, with the demand for implementing the July charter as a part of its strategy, said a top BNP leader requesting not to be named.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2



Once crowded with makeshift hawkers’ stalls, Shaheed Abrar Fahad Avenue -- formerly Bangabandhu Avenue -- in the capital’s Gulistan now appears relatively empty. Law enforcers had warned of an ongoing eviction drive by the DSCC to reclaim encroached footpaths and roads, prompting hawkers to voluntarily close their shops and leave the area. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Myanmar

House to elect new president today

AFP, Naypyidaw

Myanmar lawmakers will elect a new president today, the parliamentary speaker said, with junta leader Min Aung Hlaing one of three candidates for the post.

The former commander in chief has led Myanmar since 2021, when he ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and triggered a civil war.

He was one of three vice presidents elected by lawmakers on Tuesday, receiving 247 of 260 votes in the lower house.

“Among the three vice presidents... (members of parliament) have to vote to select and elect the one vice president they prefer as the President,” parliamentary speaker Aung Lin Dwe said yesterday, adding the vote will be held at 10:00 am (0330 GMT).

The other two vice presidents are Nan Ni Ni

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

31% more March rain costs Tk 83cr in crop losses

2 lakh tonnes of diesel saved

MOSTAFA SHABUI

Bangladesh received 31 percent more rainfall than the seasonal average this March, a development that caused crop damage worth Tk 83.39 crore across 16 northern districts, but also provided water for Boro cultivation, saving approximately 2 lakh tonnes of diesel.

Last month, the country received 62 millimetres (mm) of rainfall, exceeding the average of 47 mm, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

Sylhet recorded the highest volume of rainfall: 240 mm, which is more than double the average.

It was followed by Rangpur (123 mm -- more than four times the seasonal norm for the division), Mymensingh (116 mm -- more than triple the average), Dhaka (68 mm -- 45.9 percent above the average) and Rajshahi (54 mm -- 89.6 percent above average).

In contrast, Chattogram, Khulna and Barishal divisions experienced below-average rainfall -- 44.4, 7.9, and 48.6 percent short respectively.

The average national temperature in March was 0.3°C above normal.

Crops on 2,131 hectares were completely destroyed, with potatoes bearing the heaviest damage on 916 hectares.

The other losses included 229 hectares of banana plantations, 78 hectares of vegetables, 628 hectares of maize, 102 hectares of wheat, 10 hectares of sunflower, 7 hectares of onion seeds and 9 hectares of chilli alongside various seasonal crops.

Despite the damage, the excess rainfall proved a boon for Boro paddy farmers, particularly amid the ongoing global energy crisis.

The rain helped save around 2 lakh tonnes of diesel, said Md. Rowshan Alam, additional director (inputs, field wing) of the Department of Agricultural Extension -- an unlikely boon given the ongoing fuel shortage arising from the US-Israeli war on Iran.

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The social welfare ministry has sought Tk 14,179 crore in the next budget to implement five programmes outlined in the BNP’s electoral manifesto, including an expansion of the Family Card scheme and housing for floating and displaced people living in Dhaka’s slums.

Of the amount, Tk 13,000 crore has been proposed to bring 40 lakh families under the Family Card programme, while Tk 735 crore has been sought to build 500-square-foot flats for around 5,000 marginalised people, particularly residents of Korail and other slums in the capital, ministry officials said.

The ministry also sought Tk 100 crore for a “Special Children Welfare Fund” aimed at ensuring free education for disadvantaged and orphaned children, alongside creating pathways for their employment, another commitment outlined in the electoral manifesto of BNP.

Social Welfare Minister AZM Zahid Hossain placed the proposals in a demi-official (DO) letter to Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury on March 31.

Finance ministry officials said

the budget for the next fiscal year is being tentatively set at around Tk 9 lakh crore. A high-level meeting, to be chaired by the finance minister, will be held soon to finalise the

The Family Card programme was piloted in March of the current fiscal year, covering 37,814 individuals across 15 wards of 13 upazilas. Each beneficiary household is receiving Tk 2,500 per month in cash support.

allocations.

They said the ministry has been holding inter-ministerial consultations since last month, which are likely to conclude this week. Subsidies for fuel, power, and fertiliser are expected to rise amid the ongoing Middle East crisis, they added.

A finance ministry official, requesting anonymity, said priority would be given to implementing the government’s electoral pledges, with possible adjustments to existing social safety net programmes.

“The final decisions, however, will be made after detailed discussions at a cabinet committee meeting on social safety nets, to be chaired by the finance minister,” said the official.

The Family Card programme was piloted in March of the current fiscal year, covering 37,814 individuals across 15 wards of 13 upazilas. Each beneficiary household is receiving Tk 2,500 per month in cash support.

Full-scale implementation of the scheme will begin in the next fiscal year.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman recently told parliament that an additional 30,000 families will be brought under the scheme this year, with a target to cover four crore families gradually nationwide within four years.

If this BNP’s major electoral promise is fully implemented, the programme would require around Tk 5,000 crore per month, or Tk 60,000 crore annually -- equivalent to about 12 percent of the current fiscal year’s revenue target. This could make it the largest social protection expenditure in the country’s history.

According to the ministry’s 2026 guideline, the Family Card

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

Brazil approves law allowing shared pet custody

AFP, Brasilia

No more arguments over who gets the dog: A law passed by the Brazilian Congress will allow separating couples to share custody of their pets.

The measure, approved by lawmakers on Tuesday, is viewed as reflecting the importance Brazilians place on their pets.



The new law stipulates that if a couple separates without reaching an agreement regarding their pet, “a judge will determine the shared custody arrangement and the equitable distribution of the animal’s maintenance expenses between the parties,” according to the text of the law.

To qualify, the animal must have spent the majority of its life with the couple. Shared custody will not be granted in cases of prior criminal records or a history or risk of domestic violence.

Lawmakers pointed to an increase in pet custody disputes in courts, but also said the law responds to “changes that have occurred in Brazilian society in recent decades,” according to a statement accompanying the law.

FACEBOOK POSTS

US man arrested for threat to kill Trump

AFP, New York

An American man has been arrested for allegedly threatening to kill Donald Trump, federal officials said Wednesday, outlining a series of Facebook posts targeting the US president.

Andrew Emerald, 45, is said to have written eight messages on the social media platform last year in which he threatened to injure and kill Trump, who was grazed by a would-be assassin’s bullet in 2024 as he campaigned for the presidency.

“Either Trump is dead and in the ground by 2026 or I am hunting him down and putting him there,” Emerald allegedly wrote in one post in May 2025, according to a Department of Justice press release.

In another expletive-laden post later that month, he apparently threatened to attack Trump’s resort in Florida.



A golden jackal, lean-bodied and alert, moves through the green hush of Chattogram’s Anowara KPZ. Native across parts of South Asia, Southeast Europe, the Middle East and beyond, the golden jackal is the only jackal species found in Bangladesh, where it occurs in forests, grasslands and even along village edges. An opportunistic omnivore, it thrives where food and cover are within easy reach. Golden jackals are known for their synchronised pair bonds and haunting choral howls. Though the species is listed as “Least Concern” by the IUCN, habitat contraction, persecution, poisoning, roadkill incidents and conflict with humans continue to threaten populations in parts of its range.

PHOTO: KAMOL DAS

HIGH ENERGY COST

Malaysian govt employees to work from home

AGENCIES

Malaysian government workers will begin working from home this month as the country seeks to bring down energy costs amid soaring fuel prices due to the conflict in the Middle East, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said.

- Chinese airlines to raise fuel surcharges on domestic flights
- Himalayan kingdom Bhutan hikes fuel prices
- Nepal nearly doubles jet fuel prices

The policy will take effect from April 15 and will affect workers at ministries, government agencies and state-linked companies. “The aim is to reduce fuel consumption and ensure the sustainability of energy supply,” Anwar said in a statement late Wednesday.

Further details on the policy will be announced later, Anwar said, adding that efforts by state oil firm Petronas and others were underway to secure fuel and power supplies.

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