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Respect people's mandate or face movement

Jamaat ameer warns govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Issuing a warning to the government, Jamaat Ameer Shafigur Rahman yesterday said any attempt to "kill" the people's mandate again or curtail their rights would trigger a movement.



"We struggled before and achieved results. That struggle will begin again if needed," the opposition leader told a rally organised by Dhaka district Jamaat in Keraniganj.

He also called for a united effort to build the country amid a volatile global climate. "If the government moves forward with that goodwill, we welcome it."

Referring to the II party programme today "in protest against the disregard of the referendum verdict and the chaos in the fuel market", the Jamaat chief said their programme would be within the bounds of rules.

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PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

A mother comforts her child with measles at Dhaka North City Corporation Hospital in Mohakhali yesterday, as cases surge among children. The facility, once used for Covid-19 and later dengue patients, has now opened a dedicated measles ward.

Food commodity prices soaring

FAO says, cites war pushing up energy, fertiliser costs

AFP, Rome

The war in the Middle East has pushed food commodity prices higher due to higher energy and fertiliser costs, the UN's food agency said yesterday.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said its Food Price Index, which measures the monthly changes in international prices of a basket of food commodities, had increased 2.4 percent in March from February.

It was the second rise in a row, which the agency said was largely due to higher energy prices linked to conflict in the Middle East.

Within the index, the category of vegetable oil saw the sharpest rise, of 5.1 percent over February, as palm oil prices reached their highest point since the middle of 2022, due to effects from spiking crude oil prices, FAO said.

However, a "broadly comfortable" supply of cereal has cushioned the damaged from the conflict, FAO said.

"Price rises since the conflict began have been modest, driven mainly by higher oil prices and cushioned by ample global cereal supplies," said FAO Chief Economist Maximo Torero in a statement.

But he warned that if the conflict goes on beyond 40 days and the high prices on fertiliser continue, "farmers will have to choose: farm the same with fewer inputs, plant less, or switch to less intensive fertilizer crops".

"Those choices will hit future yields and shape our food supply and commodity prices for the rest of this year and all of the next."

Artemis II leaves orbit, sets course for the moon

REUTERS, Orlando

The Orion capsule carrying four astronauts on Nasa's Artemis II mission fired thrusters early yesterday, propelling the crew out of Earth's orbit and onto a path toward the moon, committing them to the farthest distance humans have ever traveled in space.



The successful maneuver put the crew on a path to enter the moon's sphere of gravitational influence by Sunday morning, as they prepare to beat the distance record set by Apollo 13 in 1970.

"We are getting just a beautiful view of the dark side of the Earth lit by the moon right now. Phenomenal," Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen told mission control some 10 minutes after the thruster firing.

Since launching 26 hours earlier from Florida, the astronauts spent their first day in space testing cameras, steering their Orion spacecraft and dealing with small toilet and email issues that were later fixed.

They had been in a highly elliptical Earth orbit swinging them as far as 43,000 miles (64,000 km) away on one end and about 100 miles close on the other, from where the key thruster firing

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Bangladeshi woman killed in Florida

Suspect held

STAR REPORT

A Bangladeshi woman was beaten to death with a hammer at a convenience store in Fort Myers, Florida, on Thursday, triggering a police operation that ended with the suspect's arrest later in the day.

The victim, identified as Yasmin, was a Bangladeshi expatriate living in Fort Myers.

According to local police and emergency service sources, the attack took place around 7:14am (local time). Personnel from the Fort Myers Fire Department and Lee County EMS responded swiftly and rescued Yasmin with severe injuries. She was declared dead later.

Preliminary investigations indicate that a man with a history of mental illness entered the store armed with a hammer and attacked her.

Prior to the assault, he vandalised a vehicle parked outside the premises.

CCTV footage from the scene shows the suspect wearing a yellow graphic T-shirt, black shorts, yellow or orange sneakers and carrying a backpack. He is seen striking the woman's vehicle multiple times with

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EC yet to set women's seats election date

Six weeks left within 90-day deadline; meeting on Monday to decide

AHMED DEEPTO

With around six weeks remaining in the 90-day legal timeframe to hold the election for the women's reserved seats in parliament, the Election Commission has yet to fix a polling schedule.

The commission has also yet to finalise the party- or alliance-wise list of members, though it said the voter list for the election has been prepared, and work on the party-wise distribution is underway.

According to the constitution, the election for reserved seats for women has to be held within 90 days of a parliamentary election.

The 13th national election, along with the referendum, was held on February 12, with results published the next day.

Fifty parties, including the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and Jatiya Party, contested the polls. Of them, only nine parties won seats. The remaining 41, including the Jatiya Party, failed to secure any.

Contacted by The Daily Star on Wednesday about a tentative timeline for the women's reserved seats election, Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmani Masud said the commission will hold a meeting on April 6 to set the date for the election to the reserved women's seats in the 13th

Jatiya Sangsad. "The schedule and polling date may be announced that day."

Speaking to The Daily Star on February 24, he had said the schedule for the reserved women's seats election would be announced during Ramadan.

He added that of the 50 seats,

According to the Jatiya Sangsad (Reserved Seats for Women) Election Act, 2004, the Election Commission must complete the election within 90 days of publishing the final results in the government gazette. The law also requires the EC to issue a notification setting dates for

Fifty-four years ago, a provision was included in the constitution to reserve seats for women in parliament for greater representation of women in the legislative body. It began with 15 seats in Bangladesh's first parliament in 1972. Since then, the number has increased several times and now stands at 50.

a party must have won at least six parliamentary seats in the general election to qualify for one reserved seat.

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nomination, scrutiny, withdrawal, and voting. In addition, within 30 working days of gazette publication, the commission must prepare separate lists of elected members by party or alliance.

Contacted, EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said, "The voter list is ready and we've asked for the calculations to be completed so the file can be prepared."

On seat distribution, he said the percentages depend on

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Myanmar junta chief elected president

REUTERS

Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing was elected president yesterday after breezing through a parliamentary vote, formalising his grip on political power in the war-torn nation five years after he ousted an elected government in a coup.

His choreographed journey from top general to civilian president follows a lopsided election in December and January that was won in a landslide by an army-backed party and derided by critics and Western governments as a sham to perpetuate military rule behind a veneer of democracy.

The 69-year-old general has had a torrid time

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Trump orders new pharma tariff

Reshapes metal duties

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Thursday ordered new tariffs on certain medicines, alongside an overhaul of metal duties, doubling down on his trade agenda a year after unleashing trade wars on virtually all partners.



The latest pair of orders he signed pile pressure on pharmaceutical companies to manufacture more in the United States, while separately targeting firms that officials accuse of "artificially manipulating" metals prices.

Finished products containing substantial amounts of steel, aluminum and copper will also face a lower 25 percent tariff on their full value instead of being targeted for the amount of metals they contain, a move to simplify an onerous system for firms.

It is not immediately clear how these would affect consumer prices, but a senior US official told reporters they did not expect to see any effect on affordability.

The moves come on the anniversary of what Trump had dubbed "Liberation Day," when he announced varying tariff rates on goods from dozens of economies last year, roiling financial markets and snarling supply chains.

Although the Supreme Court struck down these global tariffs this February, Trump has been working to reinstate duties using different authorities.



The Department of Environment and the local administration shut the brick kilns in Rangamati and fined the owners around a month ago. Nearly 10 of these illegal establishments, a major source of air and soil pollution and built by cutting hills, have resumed operation, burning wood from the forests. This photo was taken in Rajasthali upazila a few days ago.

PHOTO: RIKORS CHAKMA

Pakistan hikes fuel prices sharply

AGENCIES

Pakistan has hiked consumer prices for diesel and petrol sharply, its second increase in less than a month, amid rising global oil prices spurred by the conflict in the Middle East.

The price of diesel would be raised by 54.9 percent to 520.35 rupees (\$1.88) per litre, and petrol by 42.7 percent to 458.40 rupees per litre.

"It was inevitable to raise the prices due to the international market prices going out of control after the US-Iran war," Pakistan's Petroleum Minister, Ali Pervaiz Malik, said in a news conference telecast on state television Thursday evening, along with the country's finance minister.

Last month, the South Asian nation raised consumer prices for diesel and petrol by about 20 percent, citing higher oil

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