

Nation braces for power cuts in hot summer

War fallout ripples through gas, fuel, LPG imports, fertiliser production

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The country stands on the edge of a difficult summer as global tremors from the war on Iran ripple through its energy lifelines, stoking fears of blackouts as heat waves loom.

Despite official assurances, stress in the energy sector is evident: long petrol queues, gas shortages affecting fertiliser output, and a volatile LPG market, even at record-high prices.

In the power sector, the gas supply crunch and disruptions in production at major coal-fired plants have forced officials to forecast load shedding of around 2,000 megawatts (MW) during peak hours, which could translate into two to three hours of outages nationwide.

In response, the government is weighing a slew of measures to reduce electricity consumption, particularly during evening peak hours.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has called for public cooperation as a series of high-level meetings continues to assess the evolving situation.

Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku yesterday hinted at imminent power cuts during a meeting with leaders of the Bangladesh Shop Owners' Association at

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department has forecast multiple heatwaves in April, with temperatures nearing 40°C, which will likely push electricity demand sharply higher.

the Bidyut Bhaban to discuss a directive to close shops by 6:00pm.

According to sources present, the minister said global energy disruptions have squeezed gas supply, dragging down electricity generation and heightening the risk of load shedding.

"Gas supply has fallen, and as a result electricity generation is also declining, increasing the risk of load shedding," a source quoted him as saying.

Bangladesh's power generation remains heavily reliant on imported gas, coal, and furnace oil, leaving it exposed to global shocks.

Currently, around 920MMcfd (million cubic feet per day) of gas is being supplied to the power sector, producing about 5,200MW of electricity daily.

However, an internal analysis by the Power Development Board (PDB) suggests if supply drops below 800MMcfd, output could fall under 4,500MW.

Even if other fuel supplies remain stable, total electricity generation would reach around 16,200MW — well short of the projected peak demand of 18,500MW during April-May, the PDB analysis showed.

"If there is any disruption in fuel supply, the generation plan could fall short. Coal is largely imported, and a portion of gas is also imported, making supply stability crucial," said Md Zahurul Islam, member (generation) of PDB.

"We may not receive the full 900-950MMcfd of gas that was expected for April-May," he said, adding that the purchase of LNG from the spot market may help recover some of the shortfall if the shipments arrive on schedule.

He also said that electricity demand will depend on weather conditions as well. "If rainfall continues and temperatures remain moderate, the pressure on the power system may stay manageable."

As of yesterday, the country received 14,900MW of electricity against

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PHOTO: STAR

Onlookers gather as thick plumes of black smoke billow from a tin-shed gas lighter manufacturing factory that caught fire at the Kadamtali intersection in Keraniganj yesterday. At least six people were killed and 15 others were injured in the blaze.

Businesses seek reforms, steady energy supply

PM holds maiden meeting with industrialists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Businesses yesterday called for uninterrupted energy supply, easing of regulatory bottlenecks, lower bank interest rates and inauguration of the third terminal at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to improve the investment climate.

The demands came at a meeting with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday at the Prime Minister's Office with a select group of businesspeople.

The group comprised Arif Dowla, managing director of ACI; Syed Nasim Manzur, MD of Apex Footwear; Hafizur Rahman Khan, chairman of Runner Group; Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman and CEO of PRAN-RFL Group; Ziaur Rahman, MD of Bay Footwear; Abdul Mukhtadir, chairman and MD of Incepta Pharmaceuticals; Md Abdul Jabbar, MD of DBL Group; Sohana Rouf Chowdhury, MD of Rangs Group; and Syed Mohammad Tanvir, MD of Pacific Jeans Group.

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Six killed as fire rips thru' Keraniganj factory

Death toll may rise as 15 injured, 2 missing

TOUSIF KARUM and RAKIB MADBER

At least six people died after a fire tore through a gas lighter manufacturing factory at the Kadamtali intersection in Keraniganj yesterday.

Fire Service officials recovered the bodies from the tin-shed structure — five of whom could not yet be identified due to the severity of the burns.

Seven firefighting units rushed to the scene after being informed around 1:11pm, and brought the blaze under control by 2:30pm, said Anwarul Islam, assistant director of Fire Service and

Civil Defence in Dhaka.

The fire was fully extinguished by around 4:45pm.

However, speaking to The Daily Star around 12:30am, he said that rescue operations were still ongoing.

Shamim Hossain, additional magistrate of Dhaka district, said at least 15 people were injured in the incident. One person was reported missing by a family, while this newspaper found that at least two people were being searched for by relatives.

According to locals, around 40

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Open Hormuz in 48 hours or face 'hell'

Trump issues new ultimatum after Iran downs fighter jets

AGENCIES



President Donald Trump yesterday said that Tehran had 48 hours left to cut a deal or face "all Hell", as US and Iranian forces scrambled to find a downed American airman.

Trump's latest threat came after a strike near an Iranian nuclear power plant prompted evacuations, and as Tehran announced fresh attacks in the region, with the Revolutionary Guards saying they hit a commercial ship in Bahrain allegedly linked to Israel.

The war erupted more than a month ago with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, triggering a retaliation that has spread the conflict throughout the Middle East and convulsed the global economy — particularly due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital conduit for oil and gas.

"Remember when I gave Iran ten days to MAKE A DEAL or OPEN UP THE

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Rokia Afzal Rahman
1941-2023

"Three Years Have Passed"

Three years without your laughter,
Three years without your light,
Yet somehow you are closer
In every silent night.

In the courage we now carry,
In the kindness that we show,
In every choice we make with love
Your presence continues to grow.

Three years have passed in silence,
Yet your voice is always near,
A whisper of fearless wisdom
We still hold close and dear.

-Anonymous

Govt starts measles shots drive today

Aims to vaccinate over 13 lakh children

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government today launches an emergency measles-rubella vaccination drive targeting over 13 lakh children, aged six months to under five years, in 30 upazilas of 18 districts, where the infection rate is relatively high.

The health ministry has already completed all necessary preparations, including the supply of vaccines and logistics to the field level, for the campaign amid a recent surge in measles cases and related deaths, officials said.

The move comes as the country recorded four more deaths from suspected measles cases in the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, taking the death toll to 98, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

At a press conference at the Secretariate yesterday, Health Minister Sardar Md Sakawat Husain said the emergency campaign designed following the experts' recommendations aimed at quickly

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SHANTA Life

Eastern Bank PLC.

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পাশে আছে
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শান্তা চাইল্ড এডুকেশন প্ল্যান

বিস্তারিত জানতে কল করুন ১৬২৩০ নম্বরে

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(From left, clockwise) A rescue worker inspects the debris of destroyed buildings at the site of an Israeli strike in the southern Lebanese area of Maarakeh, near the coastal city of Tyre; a building damaged by an Iranian strike is seen in a residential neighbourhood in Israel's Ramat Gan; and Iranian state media released photos on Friday of what it claimed to be the wreckage of a US fighter jet downed by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Photos were taken yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP, COLLECTED

Businesses seek reforms, steady energy supply

FROM PAGE 1
The meeting is Tarique's first with members of the business community since taking office on February 17.
Tarique wanted to hear about business-related challenges in different sectors, said a meeting attendant preferring not to be named.
Bangladesh wants to take the export-GDP ratio to 30 percent in the next few years from the current 10.5 percent, which is much lower than peer countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia.
Upon hearing this target, Tarique sought quick proposals from the businesspeople so that the government can facilitate resolving problems and challenges to expedite export and import processes.
To facilitate higher exports, the businesspeople recommended easier rules for export and import, better facilities at ports and expedited processes.
The PM is hopeful that the third terminal at the HSI may be opened for business within the next one and a half years, said another meeting attendant.
Moreover, the deep seaport may also go into operation within the next six to seven years, he quoted Tarique as saying.
The structure of tariffs and protection should be modernised and rationalised to eliminate anti-export bias.
Advance income tax must be abolished – as it is a tax on revenue not profit – as well as tax deducted at source.
Bangladesh currently spends an estimated 15-20 percent of its GDP on logistics, which is significantly higher than the global average of 8-10 percent.
Improving logistical efficiency is critical for boosting manufacturing competitiveness across sectors.
The businesspeople called for continuing reforms and new investments in Chittagong port, new deep-sea ports, and terminals

MAJOR DEMANDS

Quick removal of regulatory bottlenecks

E-visa system for foreign nationals; increase in on-arrival visa countries

Starting operations at the third terminal at HSI soon

Reduction of corporate tax and bank interest rates

To hit \$70 billion in garment exports over the next three years, greater diversity is needed, such as man-made fabric, workwear and sports apparel.
The businesspeople suggested supporting the next ten export sectors that can each reach \$3 billion in exports annually.
They also sought government support for new sectors similar to what was provided to the garment sector and called for connecting small- and medium-sized enterprises to export firms through VAT and

bond facilities.
The National Export Strategy needs to be designed and implemented.
Pointing out that China is visa-free for 42+ countries, they asked why Bangladesh still requires visas for those coming in from Japan, Korea, the EU, the US and the UK.
The business people also called for supporting new export products – from outdoor equipment to stuffed toys, as well as Bogura's light engineering industry – which meets 80 percent of the country's agricultural machinery needs.
Semiconductors offer an opportunity to develop manufacturing and design capabilities and upskill graduating engineers, they said.
They suggested the government open up the banking sector to allow Bangladeshi companies to borrow offshore more freely based on their balance sheets and rebuild the local bond market to move beyond bank loans.
They called for accelerating the use of renewable energy, especially solar power and incentivising the shift to electric vehicles across commercial, public and private sectors, and suggested reviving commercial commuter rail services, especially in Dhaka and Chattogram.
Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Energy Minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir, State Minister for Energy Anindya Islam Amit, PM's Adviser Mahdi Amin and BIDA Executive Chairman Chowdhury Ashik Mahmud Bin Harun.
After the meeting, Khosru said the PM wanted to know what challenges the businesses were facing.
"Some were addressed and solved immediately – the rest will be resolved later."
The meeting discussed reopening closed factories in both the public and private sectors.
However, he denied that lowering bank interest rates was discussed.

Trump signs executive order aimed at regulating college sports

AFP, Washington
US President Donald Trump on Friday signed an executive order aimed at regulating US collegiate sports in the wake of rule changes that allow student athletes to be compensated financially.
The order, which is the second that Trump has issued on college sports, directs the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) to create rules that allow college athletes to play for "no more than a five-year period."
He also asked that rules be put in place that would allow them to transfer schools just once before they graduate without having to sit out a season.
The changes are scheduled to go into effect on August 1, and institutions who allow athletes who don't meet the criteria risk losing federal funding.
Trump said that the loosening of "consistent rules or limits concerning eligibility, transfers, and pay-for-play schemes has created an out-of-control financial arms race..." that is driving universities into debt.
Friday's order came as the hugely popular NCAA basketball tournament reached its closing stages.
The women's semi-finals took

place on Friday and the men's Final Four semi-finals were scheduled for Saturday.
In addition to demanding eligibility and transfer limits, it calls on governing bodies to ban "improper" financial arrangements and urges Congress to pass legislation to address the issues.
It follows an order issued by Trump in July that sought to block some recruiting payments by third parties to college athletes in big-money sports like football and men's basketball in order to preserve funds available for women's and non-revenue sports.
The president said last month that the rising value of name, image and likeness (NIL) contracts for players in high-visibility sports like football has created a burden for colleges that forces some to abandon other sports.
Some of those sports – such as athletics, swimming and gymnastics – have long been pipelines for US Olympic teams.
The NCAA long prohibited student athletes from accepting any compensation for use of their name, image and likeness, but after a 2021 Supreme Court ruling, the rules were changed so that some collegiate athletes could receive financial compensation.

Turkey says second Turkish-owned ship has crossed Hormuz strait

AFP, Ankara
A second Turkish-flagged ship has crossed the war-torn Strait of Hormuz, Turkey's Transport Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu said yesterday.
Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz, a key global waterway, since the US-Israeli strikes on Iran started on February 28 set off the Middle East conflict and sent global oil and gas prices soaring.
Uraloglu said that on February 28 there were 15 ships belonging to Turkish shipowners waiting to go through the strategic strait.
"Two of these 15 made the crossing," he told the private CNN Turk channel. "This is explained by our initiatives and also by the fact that they were using Iranian ports or carrying goods coming from or bound for Iran."
Uraloglu did not say when the second ship crossed the strait. The first vessel had passed through, with Iranian permission, on March 13.
The two ships are the Rozana and Neraki, according to CNN Turk.
The minister said only nine of the blocked ships had sought permission to pass through the strait and that the transport and foreign ministries was trying to help them.
"Four of them have not requested to leave. Two of them are power-generation vessels and are stationed on site. The other two are waiting for the situation to calm down," he added.

Nation braces for power cuts in hot summer

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a demand for 15,700MW.
Typically, a 1,000MW shortfall results in one to one and a half hours of nationwide load shedding.
However, past patterns, particularly during the 2022 crisis, suggest a stark urban-rural divide, with outages stretching to three to four hours in rural areas while one to two hours in the capital.
Since early March, when the power minister first warned of possible shortages, up to 500MW of load shedding had been introduced. It eased during the extended Eid holidays due to lower demand, but is now rising again.
The situation is further complicated by mounting dues to furnace oil-based power plants, amounting to around Tk 14,000 crore. Operators have warned they may not sustain production unless payments are cleared, raising the risk of further supply cuts.
Adding to the strain, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department has forecast multiple heatwaves in April, with temperatures nearing 40°C, which will likely push electricity demand sharply higher.
BUSINESSES PUSH BACK
At yesterday's meeting, business leaders urged the government to allow shops to remain open until 8:00pm. The minister rejected the proposal, insisting that the cabinet's directive to close by 6:00pm must be followed for now.
"Observe the next three months," he said. "Decisions regarding this directive may be reviewed ahead of Pahela Baishakh and Eid-ul-Azha. But for now, you must comply with the cabinet's decision."
He emphasised that the burden of conservation is being shared. Fuel allocation for official transport has been cut by 70 percent, carpooling is

being encouraged, and office hours have been shortened. A decision on holding half of the classes online every week at educational institutions is expected today.
"If people know shops close at 6:00pm, they will adjust their shopping habits accordingly, just as they do with bank hours," the minister argued, adding that proposals would be discussed with the prime minister.
Essential services such as pharmacies and food outlets may remain open under special consideration.
Business leaders, however, argued that markets are being unfairly targeted.
They claimed electricity consumption in many markets is lower than in residential buildings and other institutions, yet businesses face restrictive measures.
They warned that early closures could leave commercial areas dark, increasing security risks, and called instead for targeted action against high-consumption sectors.
Their proposals include keeping shop hours from 11:00am to 8:00pm, and action against illegal electricity connections, particularly unauthorised charging of battery-powered rickshaws.
They suggested restricting fuel supply to high-capacity private vehicles above 1,800-2,000cc, and introducing an odd-even vehicle system – where vehicles with odd-numbered plates operate on odd-numbered dates, while even-numbered plates operate on even-numbered dates.
They also noted that businesses are still recovering from losses linked to the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war, and may struggle to absorb another shock.

Md Helal Uddin, president of Bangladesh Shop Owners' Association, told The Daily Star that despite their objections, business leaders said they would comply with the 6:00pm closure order while continuing to push for revisions.
According to a source, the minister said, "The government understands the concerns and sentiments of the business community."
"However, the current circumstances have necessitated decisions that apply to everyone."
FERTILISER SQUEEZE
Gas shortages have already forced five of the country's six fertiliser factories to remain shut for the past month, raising concerns ahead of irrigation during the Aus season when early summer rice is sown in March-April and harvested in July-August.
Under current plans, the Shahjalal Fertiliser Company Ltd, operational over the past month with around 40MMcfd gas supply, will be shut, while the Ghorashal-Palas Urea factory is set to resume operations this month, requiring about 72MMcfd.
This shift alone could divert an additional 30MMcfd of gas away from the power sector.
From next month, multinational KAFCO is also expected to resume operations, which would require about 60MMcfd of gas for fertiliser production – further tightening supply for power.
LPG MARKET VOLATILE
The LPG market remains unstable despite repeated price adjustments.
In Dhaka, a 12kg cylinder was selling for no less than Tk 2,000 yesterday, with some retailers charging up to Tk 2,100.
Consumers continue to face difficulties, raising concerns about affordability and supply stability.

Six killed as fire rips thru' Keraniganj factory

FROM PAGE 1
people work at the factory, most of them women and children. The fire, they said, originated around 12:10pm.
Shyamal Chandra Das, a resident living next to the factory, said, "As the fire broke out, we heard several loud noises, and the flames rose very high. Locals immediately evacuated the women and children and removed furniture from nearby houses."
Following the incident, relatives of the workers gathered in front of the factory in search of their loved ones. By around 4:00pm, a crowd had gathered outside, while firefighters continued dousing operations inside the factory.
Around an hour later, Md Sabbir, 25, was seen frantically searching for his mother, Manju Begum, at the factory gate. She had joined work at the factory that very day.
"My sister lives in a house where one of the residents works at the factory. After speaking to them, my mother joined today [yesterday] for her first day on the job. I don't know what happened afterwards. I still haven't found any trace of her."
Another worker, Shahinur Akter, was also missing.
Her brother Sagar Hossain said, "My sister's phone has been off since the incident. We searched everywhere and still could not find her."
'MAIN GATE LOCKED'
Twelve-year-old Ayesha Akter, who had been working at the factory for the past eight months, said, "As soon as the fire started, I ran to get out of the factory. When I reached the gate, I found it closed. After waiting for some time, it was opened from outside, and I managed to get out safely."
Several others also alleged that the factory's main gate had been locked, making it difficult for workers to escape. Many had to look for

alternative escape routes.
Md Mahmud, an employee of an internet service provider shop beside the factory, confirmed the gate was closed at the time of the fire, leaving several people stranded near the exit.
"A girl came running to the gate right after the fire broke out. I asked the guard to open it, but he refused. As a result, they were forced to find other ways to get out."
"The factory authorities cannot evade responsibility for the deaths."
FRANTIC SEARCH FOR AN ONLY CHILD
Delowar Hossain, a security guard by profession, lived with his only daughter Mim, 16, in Keraniganj.

Bokul, along with BNP Executive Committee member Nipun Roy Chowdhury, visited the site around 7:30pm and announced financial assistance of Tk 2 lakh for each of the victim families, while the government would bear the cost of treatment for the injured.
Prime Minister Tarique Rahman expressed grief over the incident and the casualties that followed. His press secretary Saleh Shibly said the PM directed the authorities concerned to investigate the incident and provide necessary assistance to the victims.
He confirmed that Tarique spoke to the health minister and directed him to ensure proper treatment for the

"A girl came running to the gate right after the fire broke out. I asked the guard to open it, but he refused.... The factory authorities cannot evade responsibility for the deaths."
Md Mahmud, employee of ISP shop next to the factory

The girl had been working at the factory for the past five months.
After learning about the fire, Delowar rushed to the factory in search of his daughter. Failing to find her, he went to Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue in the evening, where the bodies of five had been kept.
There, he was able to identify her body and immediately broke down. "My wife died three years ago. I didn't remarry thinking whether it would affect my daughter..."
Morgue sources said Mim died from extreme heat and smoke inhalation.
HEALTH MINISTER'S VISIT
Following the incident, Health Minister Sardar Sakhawat Hossain

injured.
Labour and Employment Minister Ariful Haque Chowdhury also visited the site around 8:00pm and ordered the formation of a separate five-member probe committee, led by a joint secretary, to determine the exact cause of the fire. It was asked to submit its report within five working days.
Meanwhile, the fire service also formed a five-member probe committee, headed by its director of operations and maintenance Lt Col Md Mahmudul Hasan, director of the Operations, which is expected to submit its report within seven working days.

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is our identity
and existence**Says Fakhrul**OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Moulvibazar

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the Liberation War of 1971 is our identity, pride, tradition, and existence as a nation.

"I am very saddened when some politicians try to belittle the Liberation War. To those who want to deny it, I want to make it clear that the Liberation War is our identity, pride, tradition, and existence," he said.

Fakhrul, also BNP secretary general, added that the Liberation War officially started from Teliapara in Madhabpur



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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

A roadside factory worker sprays water along the Postogola-Narayanganj road to reduce dust, constantly stirred up by speeding vehicles. Heavy dust pollution in the area has reduced visibility to near zero, posing serious health risks to pedestrians. The photo was taken yesterday.**Need inclusive reforms to curb unlawful detention****Say speakers at discussion**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said it is possible to eliminate unlawful arrest and detention in the country through inclusive social reforms without considering the government and law enforcement stakeholders as opponents.

They called for effective enforcement of laws, stronger accountability, and compensation for victims to this end.

The discussion titled "Arrest and Detention in Bangladesh: Context and Legal Analysis", was organised by the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka.

Presenting the keynote paper, Prof Muhammad Mahbubur Rahman of Dhaka University's law department said implementation of existing laws remains weak, pointing to concerns over unlawful and informal arrests without warrant, lack of judicial control over detention, poor enforcement of anti-torture protections, abuse of

A single judgement or legal amendment can not solve wider problems in the criminal justice system. In reality, when discretion is curbed in one place, abuse often reappears in another form.**MUHAMMAD MAHBUBUR RAHMAN**
Professor of Law, DU

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He was 'Einstein of structural engineering'**Architects hail FR Khan at bti commemorative event**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Professionals associated with the field of architecture have described internationally acclaimed structural engineer and architect Fazlur Rahman Khan as the "Einstein of Structural Engineering."

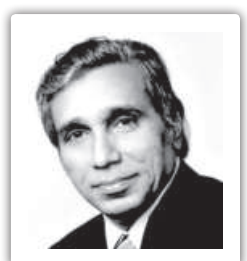
They made the remarks at a commemorative event held yesterday evening at Lakeshore Grand in Gulshan, organised by Building Technology & Ideas Ltd (bti) on the occasion of his 97th birth anniversary.

Reflecting on Khan's legacy, Prof M Shamim Z Bosunia, an academic and structural engineering expert, said, "While Einstein taught us to understand the universe, FR Khan taught us how we can touch the sky."

Renowned architect Rafiq Azam described Khan as "more of a philosopher than an architect-engineer."

He said the new generation remains largely unaware of Khan's significant contributions, attributing this to the state's limited efforts to celebrate national intellectual figures.

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**LABOUR MARKET****Govt looks to Malaysia amid Gulf slowdown****Expatriate welfare minister, PM's adviser to visit Kuala Lumpur as Dhaka explores alternatives****MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN**
and **RASHIDUL HASAN**

The ongoing war involving the US, Israel, and Iran has slowed Bangladesh's labour market in the Middle East, particularly in Saudi Arabia, prompting the government to prioritise reopening Malaysia and explore alternative destinations to sustain overseas employment and remittance flows.

Malaysia, the second-largest destination for Bangladeshi workers after the Middle East, has remained closed to them since June 1, 2024.

Now, with growing uncertainty in Gulf markets, the government is treating reopening the Malaysian labour market as a priority.

As part of the effort, Expatriates' Welfare and

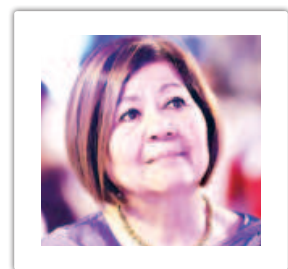
**4,76,672 Bangladeshi workers went to Malaysia in 2022-2024****Remittances from Malaysia saw 57.3% increase from 2021-24****Remittances rose to \$1.89 billion in FY25 (till March)****Malaysia's labour market closed since June 1, 2024****Around 18,000 workers ready in 2024 could not go to Malaysia****Other countries sent 3,00,000+ workers to Malaysia since 2024**

Overseas Employment Minister Ariful Haque Chowdhury and the prime minister's adviser Mahadi Amin are expected to visit Malaysia on April 8 for discussions, according to ministry sources.

Confirming the development, Ariful told The Daily Star, "We have received an invitation from the Malaysian labour ministry. They want to hold discussions with us, and we are preparing to hold discussions at the government level."

"We are hopeful, but the market is sensitive and has had past complications. We aim to guarantee that individuals do not face any form of harassment. This is particularly important at a time when some of our other labour markets have slowed."

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**Rokia Afzal Rahman's third death anniv today**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today marks the third death anniversary of Rokia Afzal Rahman, an eminent entrepreneur, philanthropist, and trailblazer for women's empowerment.

She served as chairperson of Mediaworld Ltd, the owning company of The Daily Star, a post she held for 21 years continuously. She was also a director of Mediastar Limited, the owning company of Prothom Alo.

Rokia Afzal Rahman passed away peacefully in her sleep on the morning of April 5, 2023, at the age of 82, at Mt Elizabeth Novena

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18 killed, 912 injured in political violence last month: HRSS**BNP internal conflicts dominate; rights concerns persist**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 18 people were killed and more than 912 injured in 113 incidents of political violence in March, according to a monthly report by the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS).

Internal conflicts within the BNP accounted for 45 incidents, leaving nine dead and 501 injured. Clashes between the BNP and Jamaat resulted in five deaths and 109 injuries, while confrontations between the BNP and the Awami League led to two deaths and 156 injuries.

The report also documented violence involving the National Citizen Party and other political groups.

The rights body further recorded 28 incidents of post-election violence, resulting in three deaths and 109 injuries. Law enforcement activity remained high, with around 1,500 people arrested during special joint-force drives and more than 28 political cases filed, naming 303 individuals.

The report also raised concerns about freedom of expression and the treatment of vulnerable groups, noting that 59 journalists faced harassment or abuse in March.

It documented abuse of 273 women and girls during the month, including 72 rape victims. Of them, 16 were victims of gang rape, while five --

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Bangla literature evolving amid digital, reading shifts**Say speakers at Star Itihas Adda**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangla literature is undergoing multiple changes amid shifts in reading habits, digital platforms, language, and the wider social context, speakers said yesterday.

They made the remarks at the 16th episode of The Daily Star's Itihas Adda, titled "Kon Dike Bangla Sahitya", held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

Poet and Prothom Alo Executive Editor Sajjad Sharif said the key question is not only where literature is headed, but also what readers expect from it.

"Literature is that place where language speaks," he said, adding that literature cannot be confined to fixed prescriptions, as writers of the same period do not write in the same way.

Referring to the changes brought by satellite television, the internet, social media and mobile phones, he said the broader cultural environment of literature had changed significantly over time.

He also cautioned against judging literature only by popularity or sales, saying important works may initially reach only a small number of readers.

Sajjad also highlighted changes in language, the growing presence of women

writers, and a rise in autobiographical writing in Bangla over the past three decades.

"Over the last 30 years, so many autobiographies have been written in Bangla," he said, adding that many people felt their lives were tied to history.

**Participants at the 16th episode of The Daily Star's Itihas Adda, titled "Kon Dike Bangla Sahitya", held at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.**

PHOTO: STAR

National Book Centre Director Shakhawat Tipu said the future of Bangla literature cannot be separated from the future of the Bangla language. "When we speak of Bangla literature, we are essentially speaking of the Bangla language," he said.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 6

**A city corporation worker sprays larvicide into stagnant roadside water on the Dhaka University campus to eliminate Aedes mosquito larvae ahead of the monsoon. The photo was taken yesterday.**

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Yunus, former advisers must join protests, save reforms**Says Nahid Islam**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and his fellow advisers

must take to the streets to protect the achievements of the previous interim government, said National Citizen Party Convener and Opposition Chief Whip Nahid Islam yesterday.

He made the remarks during a press briefing at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport upon returning after performing Umrah.

The Dhaka-11 lawmaker said those who led the interim government, including Prof Yunus and Asif Nazrul, must take responsibility, as the BNP

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Yunus, former advisers

FROM PAGE 3
government is scrapping key ordinances passed under their administration, including one on the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

"The ordinances they drafted are being scrapped, and they need to speak up. Dr Yunus must open his mouth. They handed over power to the BNP through election engineering and left," Nahid alleged.

"Now these ordinances will be cancelled, reforms won't happen, and they will remain silent and return to their careers. This cannot happen. They will have to face the people's court."

"We gave them power through the blood of the people, but they have disappointed us. However, to retain whatever was achieved during their tenure, they must also take to the streets. I call upon Dr Yunus to join the street protests," he added.

Terming the BNP an "anti-reform party", Nahid said post-August 5 reform politics were expected, but the party sought elections keeping everything

old intact whereas we demanded radical reforms.

Criticising the ruling party, he said the BNP is disregarding everything after securing a two-thirds majority in the elections.

"They have scrapped the public mandate of the referendum. Now we hear they are withholding 10-11 key ordinances, including those on enforced disappearances, the human rights commission and judicial appointments," he said.

"By scrapping these, they want an autocratic system and absolute executive power," Nahid added.

The NCP convener claimed the people did not respond to the BNP's movements over the last 16 years because they never had faith in its leadership.

"We sought a solution in parliament, but failing that, we will take to the streets. We want a constitutional reform council, and the ordinances must be enacted into law," Nahid said, warning the BNP government would struggle to govern during a looming recession without public trust.



Farmers irrigate watermelon fields to maintain soil moisture and ensure proper growth, hoping for continued favourable weather conditions. The photo was taken from Debitala in Batiaghata upazila of Khulna yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

He was Einstein

FROM PAGE 3
"This ceremony has been organised privately. It is a failure of the state that it does not celebrate the country's brilliant minds like FR Khan," he added.

State Minister for Education Bobby Hajjaj also attended the programme and acknowledged the state's lack of initiative in recognising such contributions, noting that more attention is often given to politically prominent figures.

At the event, Khan's nephew, Engr Faizur Rahman Khan –also the managing director of bti – delivered a presentation featuring photographs and personal recollections of the celebrated engineer.

He also announced the introduction of an educational scholarship in the name of FR Khan at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) and in schools.

The programme concluded with a musical performance by Rabindra Sangeet singer Shama Rahman.

FR Khan revolutionised structural engineering by developing innovative systems for tall buildings, now widely known as skyscrapers. Among his most notable works are the John Hancock Center, Willis Tower, the Hajj Terminal, and projects at King Abdulaziz University.

Khan received numerous prestigious accolades, including the Wason Medal and the Middlebrooks and Ernest Howard Awards. He was also honoured with the Independence Award by the government of Bangladesh.

Govt looks to Malaysia amid Gulf slowdown

FROM PAGE 3
Under a memorandum of understanding signed between Bangladesh and Malaysia on December 19, 2021, a total of 476,672 workers were sent to Malaysia through 101 recruiting agencies between 2022 and 2024.

The market was suspended in May 2024 over concerns about high migration costs and worker exploitation by recruitment agencies.

Former BAIRA president Ghulam Mostafa, however, said the conflict among recruitment agencies has become a major barrier to reopening the Malaysian labour market and has badly hurt Bangladesh's labour migration interests.

Ariful said, "We are aware of the longstanding allegations surrounding brokers and the Malaysian

labour market. We are looking into them."

"Since the invitation has come from the Malaysian government, we do not want to miss the opportunity," he added.

Data from the Bangladesh Bank indicate that remittances from Malaysia have risen steadily, from US \$1.02 billion in 2021-22 to US \$1.60 billion in 2023-24. In 2024-25, remittances from Malaysia stood at \$1.89 billion up to March.

Sources said Malaysia still has significant demand for foreign workers, with estimates suggesting room for around 600,000 more workers, which may rise to 1.2 million or more in the next six years.

Since Bangladesh's market closed, countries like Nepal, Indonesia, and Myanmar have sent around 300,000 workers

to Malaysia, while about 18,000 Bangladeshi workers who were ready in 2024 could not go.

Documents show Malaysia is considering reducing its foreign labour quota to 10 percent by the end of 2026 and to 5 percent by 2035 to boost domestic employment. If Bangladesh cannot resume migration now, future opportunities may narrow sharply, sources warned.

Expatriate ministry officials said Malaysia remains one of the few major destinations for a large number of inexperienced and unskilled workers.

Countries such as Japan and South Korea generally require language skills and technical competence, while Singapore's market is relatively small.

Officials say the government is also trying to open or expand labour markets in Thailand, Japan, and Singapore as it seeks alternatives to the conflict-hit Middle East.

Md Abul Hasanath Humayun Kabir, director general of the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, told The Daily Star that opening new labour markets remained a major challenge.

"We are exploring alternatives, as the Middle East war has slowed down the market in Saudi Arabia. We are prioritising Malaysia, since it is the second-largest labour market for Bangladesh. We are hopeful of reopening it," he said.

The Malaysian market has been closed three times in the last 16 years, each time amid allegations of syndicates, corruption, and irregularities in recruitment.

THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

The conflict has disrupted air travel, with 1,145 flights to and from Dhaka and Chattogram cancelled in the past 33 days since February 28.

Due to the disruptions, migrant workers are facing a crisis in rejoining work.

Boshra Islam, general manager (public relations) of the Biman Bangladesh Airlines, said around 1600 Dammam-bound passengers, most of whom are migrant workers, remained stranded in the country as of April 2 due to the flight cancellation of the national flag carrier.

She said the stranded passengers are gradually returning to their destinations by Biman flight. "Except for Doha and Kuwait, all destinations bound for the Middle East have been resumed."

Meanwhile, since the start of the war, six Bangladeshi migrants were killed in the Middle East.

Addressing the media on Friday at the airport, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam said the government was working through diplomatic channels to protect Bangladeshi expatriates in the evolving situation and to extend their visas where necessary.

18 killed, 912 injured

FROM PAGE 3
including three children – were killed after being raped.

The report said 176 children were subjected to abuse in March, including 64 who died and 112 who experienced physical and mental trauma.

It also noted that at least 51 children died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital last month due to treatment-related complications, ICU shortages, and measles symptoms.

The report documented at least 10 attacks on religious minority communities, leaving five people injured. Three temples, one idol, and three houses were vandalised, while one incident of land grabbing targeting minority communities was reported.

According to the report, one person died due to alleged torture during a police operation in March, while at least 12 prisoners died in jails across the country. Among them were two affiliated with the Awami League and its associate bodies, and 10 general inmates.

In addition, at least 13 people were killed and 38 injured in 25 mob attacks across the country.

In a press release issued yesterday, the rights body said these incidents were driven by various allegations, including theft, robbery, mugging, verbal

altercations, dominance disputes, and claims of religious insult.

One notable incident occurred on March 4 in Munshiganj's Lauhajang upazila, where two youths – 32-year-old Sagar and 34-year-old Sanarul – were tied to a tree and beaten to death overnight following accusations of stealing electric wires from a community clinic.

The HRSS report, which compiled data from 16 national newspapers and the organisation's own documentation, highlights a broader trend of instability.

Earlier, the group described the rise in mob violence during the interim government period as "extremely alarming," noting 413 such incidents over 17 months that resulted in at least 259 deaths.

After assuming office, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed has repeatedly addressed the issue. On February 18, he said mob culture would not be tolerated under any circumstances.

During a meeting with the French ambassador on March 29, he said the interim government had struggled to control such violence due to its own weakness, adding that such incidents had largely ceased since the elected government took office, except for isolated cases.



GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
BANGLADESH POLICE
OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE
BARGUNA.

Memo No-BRG/R.T/(4thQ)/25-26/788/ E Date: 02/04/2026.

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender invited in the National system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of goods as follows:

Tender ID No	Packages Name	Online Tender Notice Publication Date and Time	Online Tender Closing Date and Time	Method of Tender
1247256	Procurement of high quality Lentil	05 April 2026 10:00 AM	15 April 2026 17:00 PM	OTM
1247427	Procurement of Vitamin A-Rich Edible oil (Soyabean oil)	05 April 2026 10:00 AM	15 April 2026 17:00 PM	OTM
1248777	Procurement of Wheat crushing	05 April 2026 10:00 AM	15 April 2026 17:00 PM	OTM
1248972	Procurement of Fire wood	05 April 2026 10:00 AM	15 April 2026 17:00 PM	OTM
1248924	Procurement of Polao Rice	05 April 2026 10:00 AM	15 April 2026 17:00 PM	OTM
1249031	Transportation of ration Goods	05 April 2026 10:00 AM	15 April 2026 17:00 PM	OTM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP portal (<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 and 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.Kudrat-E-Khuda,PPM)
BP-7608121583
Superintendent of Police, Barguna
Phone :02478885314, Fax :02478886514

GD-721



বাগদাদ-ঢাকা কার্পেট ফ্যাক্টরী
(বাংলাদেশ পাকিস্তান কর্পোরেশনের একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান)
উত্তর কায়লী, চট্টগ্রাম।

পাত্র চাই

ইল্যাব্দের স্বাম্যদায়ী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে এলোব্রি (অনার্স), এল এলএম ও বাস. এট - ল ডিগ্রি সম্পন্ন করে ইল্যাব্দের প্রতিষ্ঠিত একটি ল' ফার্মে কর্মরত, বয়স ২৪ উত্তমতা ৫'২", গায়ের রং ফর্সা পাঠার জন্য ইল্যাব্দের ব্যবসায়িক/কল্যাণে ইচ্ছুক সজ্জা. মুদ্রাস পত্রিকাতে দেখা যায় প্রয়োজন। কোম্পানী। seik.golam.maksud@gmail.com

presented accurately.

Regarding the July uprising, he said, "The people of Bangladesh do not tolerate injustice. Many movements have taken place, and in 2024, Hasina was forced to leave the country. That is another chapter of our glory. Unfortunately, some politicians spread lies that BNP does not accept the July uprising. Such propaganda cannot be accepted."

Fakhrul also noted reforms initiated by BNP leaders, mentioning that Ziaur Rahman had introduced multi-party democracy from a one-party rule, while Khaleda Zia later introduced the caretaker government system.

"Our leader Tarique Rahman announced a 31-point programme in 2022. We want reforms and will implement them," he added.

The event was chaired by Habiganj District Freedom Fighter Unit Command convener Golam Mostafa Rafiq and moderated by member secretary Humayun Kabir.

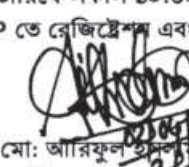
Liberation War Affairs Minister Advocate Ahmed Azam Khan, State Minister Ishraqe Hossain, Parliament Whip Alhaj GK Gaus, MPs Sakhawat Hasan Jibon and Syed Md Faisal, attended among others.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
বাংলাদেশ পরিসংখ্যান ব্যুরো
ফিন্যান্স, এডমিনিস্ট্রেশন এন্ড এমআইএস উইং
পরিসংখ্যান ভবন (৮ম তলা, ব্লক-এ)
ই-২৭/এ, আগারপাঁও, ঢাকা-১২০৭
www.bbs.gov.bd

স্মারক নং- ৫২.০১.০০০০.১১২.০৭.০২৭.২৫.১১১৮ তারিখঃ ১৯ চৈত্র ১৪৩২ বঙ্গাব্দ
০২ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ

“ e -Tender Notice”

বাংলাদেশ পরিসংখ্যান ব্যুরো'র প্রধান কার্যালয়ের আওতাধীন চলতি ২০২৫-২৬ অর্থবছরে বিভিন্ন উইং/শাখায় ব্যবহারের জন্য 'অন্যান্য মনিহারি' সরবরাহের লক্ষ্যে e-GP এর মাধ্যমে ক্রয় সংক্রান্ত কাজ সম্পন্ন করা হবে। e-GP দরপত্রের সূত্র নং: ৫২.০১.০০০০.১১২.০৭.০১৩.২৫.১০৭৫; তারিখ: ০১/০৩/২০২৬ খ্রিঃ। দরপত্র/প্রস্তাব আইডি নং- ১২৫১৪৮৬। উক্ত দরপত্রটি BPPA এর e-GP তে ০৬/০৪/২০২৬ খ্রিঃ তারিখে সকাল ১০:৩০ ঘটিকায় প্রকাশিত হবে। আগ্রহী দরদাতা প্রতিষ্ঠানকে BPPA এর e-GP তে রেজিস্ট্রেশন এবং দরপত্র প্রক্রিয়ায় অংশগ্রহণ করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।


মো: আরিফুল ইসলাম
পরিচালক (ভারপ্রাপ্ত)
ফোনঃ ০২-৫৫০০৭০৬৮
ই-মেইলঃ dir_fa&mis@bbs.gov.bd

GD-724



Higher Education Acceleration & Transformation (HEAT)
Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Extreme Heat in Dhaka City:
A Framework for Resilience to Heat Stress
(SP 13010)

SPM Office, Department of Geography and Environment, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000
Memo No: HEAT/13010/SPMO/60 Date: 04 April 2026

E-Tenders are invited on e-GP the National System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following goods under HEAT Sub-Project (PIN-13010) titled "Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Extreme Heat in Dhaka City: A Framework for Resilience to Heat Stress" for the Department of Geography and Environment, University of Dhaka.

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description	Online Tender Notice Publication Date	Online Tender Closing Date
1251446	DU/PIN13 010/G6	Procurement of Books and Periodicals	07-April-2026	22-April-2026

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. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from the e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Professor Dr. Md. Humayun Kabir)
Sub Project Manager (SPM), SP 13010

GD-718

Youth beaten to death over theft suspicion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A young man died after reportedly being beaten by locals on suspicion of theft in Khulna early yesterday.

The deceased is Didar Sardar, 30, of Kashiani upazila of Gopalganj. He had been living in a rented house in the Arongghata area of Khulna.

Police recovered his body from bushes near a railway line beside Khaja Khal Road under Arongghata Police Station.

Md Shahjahan Ahmed, officer in-charge of Arongghata Police Station, told The Daily Star that locals allegedly beat Didar over accusations of theft.

He was later taken to Khulna Medical College Hospital in an injured condition, where doctors declared him dead, the OC said.



PHOTO: JAHIDUL ISLAM

Rokia Afzal

FROM PAGE 3

Hospital in Singapore. She left behind two daughters, a son, and five grandchildren.

Born in 1941, Rokia started her career at a commercial bank in 1962. Within two years, she became the country's first woman bank manager. From there, she went on to build a distinguished career in business, finance, media, and social development.

She played a pioneering role in promoting women's financial independence. She was the founding president of the Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurs and played a key role in forming Women in Small Enterprises. She also served as chairperson of Midas Financing Limited, which helped small entrepreneurs, especially women, market their products without middlemen.

Her contribution went beyond business. She served as president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, adviser to the 2001 caretaker government, and a board member of several organisations, including Bangladesh Bank. She also chaired the board of directors of the Asian University for Women Support Foundation.

During her long career, she received several honours, including the Leading Women Entrepreneurs of the World award in Monte Carlo, the Businessperson of the Year 2003 award by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, and the Priyadarshani Award in India.

Pollution endangers rivers flowing thru Narsingdi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Unchecked industrial pollution has endangered the rivers flowing through Narsingdi district, while leaving the riverbank communities and ecosystems vulnerable.

Narsingdi is crisscrossed by a number of rivers, including the Shitalakkhya, Meghna, Brahmaputra, Arial Kha, Haridhoya, Paharia, Haridhoa and the Old Brahmaputra rivers.

Over the past decades, industrial establishments that have expanded rapidly along the riverbanks continued to discharge untreated toxic wastes directly into the rivers using pipelines, thereby polluting the water and leading to an escalating environmental crisis.

Illegal encroachment on riverbank areas and declining navigability of the rivers further worsened the situation. For much of the year, even small boats find it difficult to ply many stretches of the rivers due to poor navigability.

Despite a government initiative to re-excavate around 232 kilometres of river channels to restore navigability, pollution remains a persistent challenge for its implementation.

Even during monsoon, when water levels typically rise, dissolved oxygen levels

in the rivers still remain critically low, making it impossible for fish and other aquatic species to survive.

According to a study by the River and Delta Research Centre, the 38km Haridhoa river ranks second among the most polluted rivers in the country. The river's dissolved oxygen level stands at just 0.6 mg/L, while alkalinity has reached 4.1, posing serious risks to both biodiversity and human health.



Many residents living along the river have been suffering from skin diseases from exposure to the polluted water. Fish and other aquatic organisms are gradually being wiped out from the river's water.

Meanwhile, the river has also shrunk to a narrow channel due to poor flow and encroachments.

Field observations reveal that a similar situation prevails in the case of most other rivers in Narsingdi.

In recent years, mass fish deaths have been reported during winter along stretches of the Shitalakkhya from Kapasia to Ghorashal.

Proloy Zaman, general secretary of Narsingdi Environment Movement, said that poisonous gases and chemical waste from certain factories are responsible for recurring fish deaths.

"If this continues, the environment will face a serious crisis, fish production will decline, and livelihoods will be endangered," he warned, urging authorities to take immediate action.

Sources said the immediate past interim government had allocated Tk 10 crore through the Department of Environment to address Haridhoa's pollution. The fund was handed over to the Bangladesh Water Development Board for pollution control and improving riverbank accessibility. However, DoE officials claimed that their share of the allocation has yet to be disbursed, even after a year.

Md Badrul Huda, DoE deputy director in Narsingdi, said investigations are underway to determine the exact causes of pollution and fish mortality.

"Necessary actions will be taken against those responsible after discussions at the National River Conservation Commission," he added.

Sack-grown ginger gains ground in chars

S DILIP ROY

Farmers in riverine chars of Kurigram and Lalmonirhat are increasingly cultivating ginger in sacks, using organic inputs, and turning a once-absent crop into a growing source of income in climate-vulnerable areas.

The method has spread across char areas in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat over the past three to four years, with farmers reporting steady profits, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and growers.

About 1,20,000 families live in some 500 chars along 26 rivers, including the Brahmaputra, Teesta, Dharla, Dudhkumar, Jinjiram, and Gangadhar, in the two districts, where agriculture is the main livelihood, according to DAE data.

Originally introduced for vegetables such as cucumbers with support from the DAE and NGOs, sack-based cultivation has expanded to ginger due to its higher returns and adaptability to sandy soil and flooding.



Nawshed Ali, a farmer from Ghughumari Char on the Brahmaputra riverbed in Kurigram, said all 450 families in his char have been cultivating ginger in sacks for the past four years.

"It costs around Tk 25 to 30 per sack, and each produces about one to one-and-a-half kilogrammes of ginger," he said. "With prices between Tk 200 and Tk 300 per kilogram, it brings good returns."

Farmers fill sacks with sandy loam soil mixed with compost before planting ginger in Boishakh (mid-April to mid-May) and harvesting in Falgun and Chaitra (mid-February to mid-April).

"During floods, we can move the sacks to higher ground," said Jobeda Begum of Char Jorgachh in Chilmari upazila, who earned about Tk 5,000 last year from 12 sacks and has increased production this season.

In Lalmonirhat's Teesta char areas, farmers report similar gains.

Agriculture officials say the practice, though not new elsewhere, is gaining traction in char regions due to rising demand for chemical-free produce.

"Consumers prefer it because it is produced using organic fertilisers," said Abdullah Al Mamun, deputy director of the DAE in Kurigram.

Death following C-section sparks vandalism at Dinajpur clinic

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A woman died during a Caesarean section at a private clinic in Dinajpur's Birganj upazila on Friday night, triggering vandalism by her relatives and locals.

The authorities later sealed the clinic, while the health department has formed a three-member probe committee to investigate the incident.

Quoting the victim's family members and locals, Officer-in-Charge of Birganj Police Station Saiful Islam said Sameja Begum, 28, wife of Abdur Razzak of Saronja village under Kaharol upazila, lost consciousness as her condition deteriorated during the C-section while giving birth to a baby girl at Birganj Clinic on Khansama Road.

As Sameja did not regain consciousness, she was referred to Dinajpur Zia Heart Foundation. Family members said she died on the way to Dinajpur due to excessive bleeding.

They further claimed that the clinic authorities referred her to Dinajpur

despite knowing about her death in an attempt to avoid public outrage.

Following the incident, agitated relatives and locals vandalised the clinic around 9:30pm, confined its staff, and staged protests by lighting fires in front of the facility.

Later, police brought the situation under control, said the OC.

That night, Birganj upazila Assistant Commissioner (land) and Executive Magistrate Dipankar Chandra sealed the clinic.

The newborn girl is currently safe.

Birganj upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr Afroza Sultana said it could not be confirmed whether a qualified anaesthetist was present during the operation.

The OC said the clinic's owner and manager likely went into hiding as they could not be reached over the phone till yesterday morning, while the whereabouts of the attending physician also remained unknown. Efforts are underway to contact them, he added.

Need inclusive

FROM PAGE 3

remand, public shaming of suspects, and the absence of compensation for unlawful detention.

He highlighted poor governance as the main problem in Bangladesh's criminal justice system, and warned that disorganised solutions would not work.

When one gap is addressed, another emerges elsewhere, he said, adding that practices once carried out through preventive detention are now often carried out through criminal cases.

He said there is a misconception that a single judgement or legal amendment can solve wider problems in the criminal justice system. In reality, when discretion is curbed in one place, abuse often reappears in another form.

He added that a "bail economy" had developed in the country and called for reforming the entire bail system.

Addressing the event, Prof Md Nazmuzzaman Bhuiyan, dean of the law department at Independent University, Bangladesh, said reforms frequently remain confined to paper as implementation receives far less attention than lawmaking.

He stressed that no law can be effective unless underlying problems are addressed.

He also said neither the judiciary, police, nor the government should be seen as adversaries, adding that a society based on accountability and human rights can only be built through cooperation.

Professor and Advocate Limon Hossain and Imtiaz Hossain Rocky also shared their experiences as victims and claimed

justice.

Victims of warrantless arrest and detention who shared their experiences said ensuring their safety was essential for filing cases in such incidents, adding that court orders must be implemented effectively through clear state action.

Speakers noted that although several important changes had been introduced through recent amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, implementation remained weak and independent judicial assessment was often missing in practice.

They stressed a framework based on justice, accountability, and good governance and the need to learn from legal experiences in other parts of the world, build trust in freedom of expression, and introduce effective screening systems in the arrest process.

Participants proposed greater use of technology in law enforcement, especially body cameras, implementation of the Police Reform Commission's recommendations, preservation of reliable data on victims, and effective enforcement of court orders.

Supreme Court lawyer Dr Kazi Zahed Iqbal moderated the discussion, while BLAST legal department director Md Barkat Ali presented the keynote.

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

Bangla literature evolving

FROM PAGE 3

He also stated that literature does not progress in a linear fashion and no writer starts with a clear understanding of its direction.

He also expressed concern over declining readership, particularly in poetry and fiction, compared with earlier decades.

Fiction writer Shuhan Rizwan spoke about changes in prose and the evolving relationship between writers and readers.

He said Bangla literature saw a major shift with the spread of typing software, blogs, and internet-based writing in the late 2000s, followed by the rise of new media.

He said reading is no longer a solitary activity, as readers now engage with books through online discussions, social media reactions, and writers' public personas.

Books are increasingly being read more collectively across digital platforms, he added.

He also noted the emergence of parallel literary trends through blogs and online platforms. Referring to genre fiction, he said writers of thrillers, horror, and science fiction in Bangladesh are influenced by both local and global trends, though quality remains uneven in many cases.

Rejecting the idea that Bangla literature is declining, he said, "Bangla is the language of 25 crore people. The language carries ways of thinking that cannot be expressed through another language."

Fiction writer Nasima Anis highlighted the challenges faced by women writers in Bangladeshi society.

She said women not only have to fight social constraints but also

struggle constantly to prove their worth, which affects their creative development.

Drawing on her own experience, she said women writers often have to seek permission, directly or indirectly, over what they can write, a burden male writers usually do not face.

She also criticised publishing practices in the country, saying many publishers lack proper editorial boards to assess manuscripts, guide writers, and help books reach the right readers. As a result, both writers and readers suffer.

Other participants spoke about shrinking space for free expression, weakening cultural practices, declining readership, and the growing gap between literary discussion and actual reading.

The session was conducted by The Daily Star journalist Emran Mahfuz.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
PWD Maintenance Division
Chattogram
Phone: 02-334453126

Memo no: 25.36.1500.242.18.002.26/743 Date: 02/04/2026

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following work. Details are given below:

e-GP Tender ID	Last Selling Date and time	Closing Date and time
1253271	05-April-2026 9:30	20-April-2026 10:30

This is an online tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal.

(Moniruzzaman Jitu)
 Executive Engineer
 PWD Maintenance Division
 Chattogram.

GD-719

Higher Education Acceleration & Transformation (HEAT)
Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Extreme Heat in Dhaka City:
A Framework for Resilience to Heat Stress
(SP 13010)
Higher Education
SPM Office, Department of Geography and Environment, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000

Memo No: HEAT/13010/SPMO/59 Date: 04 April 2026

E-Tenders are invited on the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following goods under HEAT Sub-Project (PIN-13010) titled "Mitigation and Adaptation Strategies for Extreme Heat in Dhaka City: A Framework for Resilience to Heat Stress" for the Department of Geography and Environment, University of Dhaka.

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Description	Online Tender Notice Publication Date	Online Tender Closing Date
1245039	DU/PIN1 3010/G4	Procurement of Satellite Images	06-April-2026	19-April-2026

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. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from the e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Professor Dr. Md. Humayun Kabir)
 Sub Project Manager (SPM), SP 13010

GD-717



(From right) Iqbal Ahmed, Shaheen Samad, Mahmudur Rahman Benu, Ikhtear Omar, Sadya Afreen Mallick, Dalia Nausheen, Ruhi Kabir. The photo was captured in 1969. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SADYA AFREEN MALLICK

IN MEMORIES AND MELODIES

Colleagues remember Dalia Nausheen

“At heart, she was an incredibly good human being—gentle, warm, and disarmingly honest,” recalled the ariste, reflecting on her long association with Dalia Nausheen. “She would always speak directly. If something hurt her, she would say it did. If she liked something, she would say that too.”

SHARMIN JOYA & RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

A voice that stood like a warrior against oppression, Nazrul Sangeet exponent Dalia Nausheen was more than a powerful presence at Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra—she was a custodian of Bengali culture, holding firm till her last breath to the belief that Bangladesh would remain liberal and progressive in its ideals, philosophy and ideology.

The Ekushey Padak-winning singer passed away on April 1 after a prolonged battle with cancer and age-related complications, leaving behind loved ones and countless



Shaheen Samad



Khairul Anam Shakil



Sadya Afreen Mallick with Dalia Nausheen

well-wishers. A witness to the Liberation War and a warrior honoured with a guard of honour in death, she will live on through her craft.

Eminent musician Sadya Afreen Mallick, also her first cousin, became nostalgic while recalling their beautiful memories. “We began our musical journey together at Chhayanaaut,” she said, noting their close age difference. They often prepared together and performed as a duo. “People used to call us the ‘Manik Jor’—Sadiya-Dalia was almost always said in one breath.”

Sadya described Dalia’s *gayaki* as extraordinarily beautiful, highlighting her versatility across classical-based songs, kirtans, and rural folk music, even beyond Nazrul Sangeet. She also recalled how music remained central to Dalia’s life, whether in Bangladesh or abroad. “She always wanted to be

known as a Nazrul Sangeet artiste,” she said, despite her wide-ranging repertoire.

One of the most poignant memories for Sadya was Dalia’s final performance at The Daily Star, organised by Gems of Nazrul in October 2025. Despite being unwell, she performed *Bole Rumjhum Jhum Nupur Bole* with remarkable grace. “She sang so beautifully... she loved music more than anything,” Sadya recalled.

Even as her illness progressed, Dalia remained unwavering in her dedication. Though she kept her condition largely private, she continued to travel, record in Kolkata, and perform whenever possible. “Nothing mattered to her more than music,” Sadya emphasised. In her later years, though loneliness quietly surrounded her—with her children abroad and her husband passing away in 2014—music remained her constant.

Another person who shared a deeply personal bond with Dalia was renowned

singer Fatema Tuz Zohra, who is still grappling with the loss. Reflecting on their relationship, she said it was “never just professional—it was deeply personal, almost familial.” Over the years, she grew close not only to Dalia but to her entire family, including her parents, the legendary architect Muzharul Islam and Husne Ara Islam. Her connection with Dalia’s husband, Azad Hafiz, was equally warm, built on years of performing together and mutual respect.

Among her most vivid memories is the devastating flood of 1998. She remembered how she, Dalia, and Shaheen Samad travelled by boat to Amin Bazar to distribute relief. Food packets prepared at Dalia’s home were handed out to those in need. The scenes, she said, were heartbreaking—“people were submerged up to their necks, and many had lost their lives”. Yet, in that moment of crisis, she witnessed Dalia’s compassion and quiet strength.

Speaking of her artistry, she described Dalia as a singer whose voice was

terms with it.”

Shaheen Samad recalled Dalia as one of the most honest people she has encountered in her life. “At heart, she was an incredibly good human being—gentle, warm, and disarmingly honest,” recalled the ariste, reflecting on her long association with Dalia Nausheen. “She would always speak directly. If something hurt her, she would say it did. If she liked something, she would say that too.”

Their bond stretches back decades through music and shared cultural spaces, particularly at Chhayanaaut. “We sang together, learned together, grew up in the same environment,” Shaheen said. “She was like a younger sister to me.”

Even in illness, Dalia’s resilience stood out. Battling multiple health complications for years, she continued to hold on with remarkable strength. “She fought with everything she had,” Shaheen remembered. “But towards the end, she quietly said she wanted rest, and call it a coincidence, the next



Dalia Nausheen

PHOTOS: STAR AND COLLECTED



Fatema Tuz Zohra

day, she left.”

One of Shaheen’s most vivid memories is of Dalia’s final performances. “She could barely walk, yet she slowly made her way to the stage with a stick and sang beautifully. That image will stay with me forever.”

Beyond music, it is her warmth that lingers. “Her home was always full of love—no one ever left without being cared for. These are the memories that remain.”

Khairul Anam Shakil reminisced about the moments with the artiste, “My association with her began through Chhayanaaut,” he recalled. “Though we didn’t know each other closely at first, things changed after the Liberation War.”

In those early years, when Chhayanaaut lacked a permanent space, it was Dalia’s family home opened its doors. “She made it possible for classes to be held there,” he remarked. “That’s when I came to know her more closely. She was still a student then, and I was a few years junior.”

He also remembers seeing her in Kolkata during the war, where she was an artiste of the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. “She was deeply committed to the Liberation War—performing in camps, singing for the cause. She was not just an artiste, but an active participant in the movement.”

In the years that followed, Dalia established herself as a respected Nazrul singer, gaining recognition through Bangladesh Television alongside contemporaries. “She was never just about fame,” Shakil reflects. “She was deeply rooted in Bengali culture and carried the spirit of the Liberation War throughout her life.”

Bell, Heaton to lead ‘Peaky Blinders’ sequel

Jamie Bell and Charlie Heaton are set to headline a sequel series to *Peaky Blinders*, introducing a new generation of the Shelby family.

Created by Steven Knight, the story shifts to 1950s Birmingham. Bell will play Duke Shelby, the son of Tommy Shelby, while Heaton takes a leading role.

The cast also includes Jessica Brown Findlay, Lashana Lynch and Lucy Karczewski. The series is expected to run for two seasons.

The original show, led by Cillian Murphy, ended in 2022. He returned in *Peaky Blinders: The Immortal Man*. The sequel continues a decade later, focusing on Duke Shelby’s rise.



Bangladeshi film ‘Delupi’ heads to Vienna Festival

Bangladeshi film *Delupi* has been selected for the Red Lotus Asian Film Festival Vienna 2026 in Austria.

The festival will take place from April 23 to 26 in Vienna. As part of the programme, *Delupi* will be screened on April 25 at 1:30 pm (local time) at the historic Stadtkino theatre.

Earlier this year, the film was screened at the 55th International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) 2026 in the Netherlands. It received positive responses from both audiences and critics.

The name *Delupi* comes from Deluti Union in Paikgachha, Khulna. The story is inspired by the lives, realities, and relationships of people from that region. The film features local actors, and the shooting was also done in the same region.



WHAT’S THE HAPS?



‘All Quiet on the Western Front’

Tarua presents a theatrical adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque’s classic novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*. It is adapted by Runa Kanchan and directed by Bakar Bakul. The play follows a group of young students who eagerly join war, only to face its brutal reality, questioning nationalism, propaganda, and the cost of lost youth. A powerful, thought-provoking experience that examines humanity amid the horrors of conflict.

DATE: THURSDAY–FRIDAY | APRIL 23–24
TIME: 4:00 PM & 7:00 PM ONWARDS
VENUE: NATIONAL THEATRE HALL, BANGLADESH SHILPAKALA ACADEMY



Next 180 Days Will Be Challenging for the NEWLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT

A roundtable titled “Looking into Bangladesh’s Development: Priorities for the Newly Elected Government in the Short to Medium Term” was held on March 4, 2026, at the BRAC Center, Dhaka. The event was jointly organised by The Daily Star and the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). The discussion convened policymakers, economists, representatives from both public and private economic and financial sectors, and development practitioners to reflect on Bangladesh’s current economic challenges and outline key priorities for the new government. Against a backdrop of high inflation, fiscal constraints, and slowing investment, participants emphasised the urgency of restoring macroeconomic stability, strengthening governance, and accelerating reforms. The roundtable also highlighted the significance of Bangladesh’s upcoming LDC graduation and the need for a strategic, well-coordinated transition to sustain growth and competitiveness.



DR FAHIMDA KHATUN
*Executive Director
Centre for Policy
Dialogue (CPD)*

The current macroeconomic landscape of Bangladesh is navigating a period of multifaceted pressure, characterised by high inflation, a narrowing fiscal space, and a vulnerable banking sector. While real GDP growth showed a downward trend starting in 2022, a slight recovery emerged in early 2026, suggesting a gradual pickup in economic activity. However, headline and food inflation remain significant concerns, as stagnant wage growth continues to erode the public’s purchasing power. The investment climate remains sluggish; private sector credit growth has hit a decade low, while the government’s reliance on banking sector loans has surged to fill fiscal gaps. To restore stability, the focus must shift toward synchronising monetary and fiscal policies while addressing supply-side bottlenecks in the food market. Enhancing fiscal discipline is critical, as the tax-to-GDP ratio remains one of the lowest in the region, and the national debt is rising. In the banking sector, reducing non-performing loans, which spiked due to recent asset quality reviews, and ensuring the independence of the Central Bank are non-negotiable for regaining investor confidence. Furthermore, as the nation approaches LDC graduation, diversifying exports beyond the garment sector and streamlining customs and logistics will be essential to maintaining global competitiveness and protecting foreign exchange reserves.



MAHFUZ ANAM
*Editor and Publisher
The Daily Star*

Effective governance relies less on policy design and more on the efficiency of implementation, which is currently hindered by a bureaucratic system characterised by colonial-era obstructions. Over-regulation often leads to significant project delays, causing costs to escalate far beyond original budgets and placing an unnecessary burden on public funds. To address this, the government must modernise the administrative framework through comprehensive digitalisation. Moving beyond financial systems to include all ministries will enhance efficiency and drastically reduce systemic barriers. Furthermore, establishing independent advisory groups for critical sectors like health and education would allow the government to leverage national expertise. These groups could provide quarterly insights and monitor progress, ensuring intellectual capital informs state functions. Success in this volatile global climate requires moving past bureaucratic inertia toward a collaborative, expert-driven model that views the nation’s economic stability as a collective challenge for both the government and the people.



DR RASHED AL MAHMUD TITUMIR
*Hon’ble Prime
Minister’s Adviser
Ministry of Finance &
Planning*

Addressing the current economic crisis requires a shift from a consumption-led growth model to one driven by sustainable investment, supported by a mandate for comprehensive state reform and the restoration of a fragile economy. Strategic priorities include moving toward “universal social protection” through a digital public infrastructure, specifically a “One Citizen, One Card” system, to eliminate fiscal leakages and ensure aid reaches the truly vulnerable. Immediate fiscal actions have already begun, such as waiving interest for 1.2 million farmers and supporting

the garment sector to ensure stability without industrial unrest. The long-term vision focuses on enhancing domestic capacity and “strategic pragmatism” in revenue management. This involves transitioning from arbitrary tax exemptions to performance-based incentives and aiming to raise the tax-to-GDP ratio to 15 per cent by 2035. To tackle the unsustainable 60,000 crore BDT energy subsidy, the administration is pursuing a three-pronged strategy: renegotiating expensive contracts based on geopolitical and domestic interests, reducing systemic transmission losses, and boosting local production. Furthermore, activating the capital market is essential to move away from a debt-ridden model; currently, low market capitalisation and structural non-performing loans (NPLs) necessitate a deeper bond market and the prevention of insider trading to foster public ownership in the economy. Regarding LDC graduation, the stance is to seek a balanced deferral from the UN, ensuring that the transition only occurs once the country achieves necessary competitive productivity and export diversification.



DR SADIQ AHMED
*Vice Chairman
Policy Research
Institute (PRI) of
Bangladesh*

Bangladesh faces a precarious economic landscape marked by plummeting GDP growth, rising poverty, and high inflation. To reverse this, reforms must prioritise fiscal sustainability, balance of payments (BOP) stability, and restoring the banking sector’s health. Currently, the government is unsustainably borrowing from banks to cover current expenses. Fiscal recovery requires raising the tax-to-GDP ratio from 6.5 per cent to 10 per cent by shifting toward income-based taxes and transforming state-owned enterprises into profit-yielding assets. Furthermore, eliminating non-essential energy and export subsidies could save nearly 2 per cent of GDP, allowing for doubled spending on health, education, and social protection. Finally, with non-performing loans reaching 36 per cent, the banking sector faces a serious risk of instability. To prevent further decline, two urgent steps are needed. Banks that do not meet Basel III standards should be restricted from issuing new loans and operate in a limited capacity. At the same time, all banks must focus on recovering existing loans. Lending should only resume once they meet the required standards through recovery efforts and fresh capital injection.



DR MOHAMMED HELAL UDDIN
*Executive Vice
Chairman
Microcredit
Regulatory Authority*

Current banking data reveals a severe systemic crisis, with 26 banks reporting negative deposit growth and most struggling to maintain liquidity. This internal weakness makes the formal banking sector an ineffective channel for rapid job creation. To generate employment rapidly, the focus must shift to the informal sector and Microfinance Institutions (MFIs). These institutions currently manage significant loan portfolios with high recovery rates and possess the localised capacity to reach “poverty pockets” that traditional banks cannot. Providing aggressive financial support through MFIs for youth and self-employment initiatives is a more viable path to reducing inequality. Furthermore, while inflation remains high, it is increasingly driven by supply-side issues rather than excess demand. So, continuing to suppress demand through high interest rates is likely ineffective and risks deeper economic contraction. The government should transition its focus toward

supply-side interventions to support essential commodities for targeted low-income groups. Stabilising inflation at its current level while shifting the gear toward production and employment is essential to prevent a broader social and economic crisis.



AK AZAD
*Vice President
International
Chambers of
Commerce
Bangladesh (ICC)*

The current economic situation requires a shift in focus from government spending to supporting the private sector and industrial growth. High rates of unpaid bank loans, particularly in state-owned banks, are a major hurdle; while legitimate businesses need support, the government must take a firm stand against those who take money without investing it. To fix the declining growth and revenue, the primary focus must be on energy security. Instead of using natural gas for household stoves or cars, it should be diverted to factories to keep machines running and people employed. Households and vehicles can switch to LPG, allowing the industry to flourish. Additionally, the cost of doing business is too high compared to neighbouring countries that offer better subsidies and cheaper utility rates. The government should trim down bloated bureaucracies and cut unnecessary expenses, such as excessive security details for officials. By reducing wasteful spending and ensuring that gas and electricity reach the manufacturing sector, the country can create more jobs, increase tax revenue, and naturally stabilise the economy.



DOULOT AKTER MALA
*President
Economic Reporters
Forum (ERF)*

Despite changes in government, deep-rooted issues in the financial sector often persist due to a stagnant bureaucratic mindset. Currently, the revenue sector is struggling with a tax collection shortfall of approximately 60 billion BDT, even as targets are being raised. A major concern is the lack of transparency; the government must publicly identify wilful loan defaulters and tax evaders to send a strong message of accountability. Furthermore, the frequent resignation of heads of financial institutions during regime shifts creates instability, suggesting a need to move away from political appointments toward a more professional, stable leadership. To fix the economy, policy-making must involve direct consultation with stakeholders and the media to avoid “surprise” tax hikes that eventually fail. While the previous interim government initiated numerous ordinances and commissions, the priority now is sorting and implementing the most effective ones, such as recovering stolen assets. Internal loopholes and corruption, often protected by vested interests, must be addressed before blaming external global crises to hide our own failures.



SHOWKAT AZIZ RUSSELL
*President
Bangladesh Textile
Mills Association
(BTMA)*

LDC graduation presents a paradox where theoretical benefits like enhanced national branding, better credit ratings, and increased foreign investment are being contradicted by reality, as evidenced by a struggling banking sector and a five-year low in foreign direct investment. While graduation will inevitably terminate access to soft loans and NGO grants, the domestic industrial environment remains stifled by complex land disputes and infrastructure delays. Instead of pursuing overambitious new projects,

the government should prioritise repairing existing assets within the next 180 days. Specifically, hundreds of closed garment and textile factories representing massive investments often collapse due to minor liquidity gaps or banking failures, such as the inability to open back-to-back LCs. Moving beyond superficial debt rescheduling to provide genuine refinancing and timely financing is critical. Revitalising these existing industries is a more viable path toward economic stability than seeking new industrialisation in a time of restricted electricity, gas, and capital.



DR M. MASRUR REAZ
*Chairman
Policy Exchange
Bangladesh*

The new administration has inherited a fragile economy where fiscal discipline has effectively collapsed since 2015-16, characterised by declining revenue, high debt, and low-return spending. A tiny fraction of the population pays taxes, while massive tax exemptions further limit the government’s ability to spend. Borrowing has surged, and the cost of repaying these loans is reaching a critical level where it consumes nearly all available revenue. To regain control, the government must move away from “incremental budgeting”, simply increasing last year’s figures, and adopt “performance-based budgeting” that prioritises human development and energy security over low-impact infrastructure. Strategic renegotiation of existing loans is essential to avoid a repayment crisis. Furthermore, the state should leverage its vast assets to raise equity rather than relying solely on bank loans. Ultimately, fixing internal project management and creating a predictable investment climate are more vital for stability than chasing ambitious growth targets through further debt.



DR M. ASADUZZAMAN
*Former Research
Director
Bangladesh Institute
of Development
Studies (BIDS)*

The current geopolitical instability in the Middle East poses a severe threat to energy security, particularly for a nation heavily reliant on imported primary fuels. Addressing this requires balancing energy supply with demand-side management across households and industries. While high uncertainty and rising costs of LNG threaten food security and nutrition, the long-term solution lies in transitioning to renewables like solar and wind, which are becoming increasingly cost-competitive and scalable. Future investment decisions must be cautious, as poor choices in fossil fuel infrastructure can lead to decades of financial strain through capacity payments and exorbitant foreign supplier contracts. On the demand side, substantial savings can be achieved through behavioural changes, efficient lighting, and circularity in industrial processes, especially in textiles and construction, where recycling remains underdeveloped compared to global standards. Furthermore, popularizing solar pumps and water-saving techniques in agriculture can significantly lower energy consumption during dry periods, ensuring a more resilient and efficient energy future.



MOHAMMED NURUL AMIN
*Former Chairman
Association of
Bankers, Bangladesh
Limited (ABB)*

Restoring banking sector functionality and depositor trust is an urgent priority, particularly for distressed banks facing declining deposits and negative asset growth. Mergers alone will not resolve the crisis if underlying inefficiencies

persist and banks rely on central bank financing to meet costs. Immediate steps are needed to finalise pending financial ordinances and clarify the merger framework to ensure market stability. Private sector credit growth remains weak at 9 per cent, constrained further by government borrowing that crowds out liquidity. Strengthening coordination between fiscal and monetary policies, including better alignment of interest rates, is essential. Developing the capital market, currently only 12 per cent of GDP, is critical for long-term financing. Enhanced risk-based supervision by the central bank and stronger efforts to recover laundered assets must also be prioritised.



DR MOSTAFA ABID KHAN
*Trade specialist and
former Member of
Bangladesh Tariff and
Trade Commission*

Success in a shifting global market requires moving away from the “business as usual” mindset and the cycle of dependency on government or foreign aid. With major competitors like India gaining duty-free access to key markets by 2027, the focus must shift toward radical policy and behavioural changes. A critical priority is reforming the education system to prioritise technical and vocational skills over redundant tertiary degrees, as the current mismatch stifles industrial productivity. To improve efficiency within the next 180 days, the government must fully operationalise the National Single Window (NSW) and adopt a risk-management approach to customs to reduce release times from weeks to hours. Furthermore, implementing the National Tariff Policy is essential to phase out long-term protectionism, forcing industries to become globally competitive. Transitioning the government’s role from “controller” to “facilitator” by simplifying micro-level licensing and activating industrial parks like the CETP and API is vital for sustainable growth.



ASIF IBRAHIM
*Former Director,
BGMEA
Vice-Chairman,
NewAge Group of
Industries*

Rising unemployment and declining female labour force participation call for urgent reforms in investment and labour policies. While foreign direct investment has weakened, local entrepreneurship can drive job creation if bureaucratic barriers are reduced, particularly by streamlining the BIDA Act and eliminating overlapping approvals. Targeted incentives remain necessary to encourage private investment in high-growth sectors such as manufacturing, IT, and renewable energy. The SME Policy 2019 should be updated to simplify licensing and expand access to low-interest credit. The National Skills Development Policy 2011 also requires an industry-led overhaul to better align skills with market demand. Finally, updating environmental and labour regulations is essential to support green investment and increase female workforce participation.



DR MD. MAIN UDDIN
*Professor
Department of
Banking and
Insurance, University
of Dhaka*

The restoration of banking discipline requires immediate accountability for high-profile figures, including lawmakers and regulators, ensuring they settle their personal loan instalments transparently. Addressing non-performing loans (NPLs) through temporary rescheduling or low down payments has failed repeatedly; instead, Bangladesh should adopt stringent measures like China or Malaysia by

publicly blacklisting wilful defaulters and restricting their travel. Furthermore, asset quality reviews (AQR) must be standardised using international firms across all banks to ensure consistency. To activate the capital market, single-borrower exposure should be capped at 10 per cent of a bank's capital, forcing large corporations to seek diverse funding. Ultimately, reducing NPLs from their current crisis levels to international standards depends on unwavering political will to punish defaulters without exception, regardless of their status or influence.



AMRITA ISLAM
*Deputy Managing Director
Picard Bangladesh Ltd*
Addressing the “jobless growth” phenomenon is critical right now for a nation of 178 million, especially as

tertiary unemployment has surged to 13.5 per cent. Export diversification, particularly in the footwear and leather goods sector, offers “low-hanging fruit” to mitigate economic vulnerability, yet progress is stalled by glaring policy discrepancies. Unlike the garment industry, other export sectors lack the authority to issue their own utilisation and export permits, forcing a reliance on bureaucratic hurdles at the NBR. Furthermore, while competitors like Vietnam require only eight licenses to start a factory, Bangladesh remains uncompetitive with twenty-three. To capture the investment shifting away from high-capacity neighbours like Cambodia, the government must prioritise technology transfer and FDI. Transforming the demographic dividend into a genuine asset requires a “jobs-first” approach that moves beyond rhetoric to implement specific logistical and regulatory reforms, ensuring that the cost and speed of doing business no longer hold back industrial expansion.



A K M FAHIM MASHROOR
*Chief Executive Officer
Bdjobs.com Limited*

Migration must be recognised as the nation's largest industry, contributing 15 per cent to the national income and providing double the net foreign reserves of the garment sector. Despite being the economy's lifeline, the banking sector has failed to invest in this industry, even though it offers a high return on investment with a short payback period of eighteen months. Given domestic constraints like energy shortages that hinder large-scale manufacturing job creation, the most viable “low-hanging fruit” for employment is sending 3 to 4 million people abroad within the next three years. This strategy should shift focus from the Middle East to high-demand markets like Japan, China, and Europe. To succeed, banks must provide direct loans to students and workers for language training and education abroad. Sending younger individuals for technical training in these developed markets will ensure a sustainable flow of remittances and long-term economic stability.

MACROECONOMIC & FISCAL POLICY

- Increase the tax-to-GDP ratio to 10 per cent or 15 per cent by shifting toward income-based taxes and establishing district-level collection targets.
- Transition from incremental budgeting to performance-based budgeting that prioritises human development and energy security.
- Eliminate non-essential energy and export subsidies to redirect funds toward health, education, and social protection.
- Renegotiate existing foreign loans and high-cost geopolitical contracts to avoid a repayment crisis and reduce fiscal strain.

BANKING & FINANCIAL SECTOR REFORM

- Ensure the independence of the Central Bank and strengthen its capacity for risk-based auditing to regain investor confidence.
- Reduce non-performing loans (NPLs) by blacklisting wilful defaulters, restricting their travel, and enforcing international asset quality standards.
- Finalise pending financial ordinances and provide clear frameworks for bank mergers to stabilise the distressed banking sector.
- Prioritise the recovery of stolen and laundered assets, specifically targeting large groups that moved funds abroad.

ENERGY SECURITY & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Prioritise the diversion of natural gas to industrial manufacturing while shifting households and vehicles to LPG.
- Shift the energy strategy from volatile imports toward domestic gas exploration and cost-competitive renewables like solar and wind.
- Repair and revitalise existing industrial assets and infrastructure within a 180-day window instead of pursuing overambitious new projects.
- Implement behavioural energy conservation measures and modernise industrial processes to reduce systemic transmission and production losses.

TRADE, INDUSTRY & LDC GRADUATION

- Diversify exports beyond the garment sector by granting all export industries authority over their own permits and raw material imports.
- Negotiate a balanced deferral of LDC graduation and secure bilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) to maintain global competitiveness.
- Streamline the “cost of doing business” by reducing the number of required licenses and operationalising the National Single Window for customs.
- Protect domestic industries by removing logistical bottlenecks, such as customs delays and inefficient regulatory frameworks.

GOVERNANCE & ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM

- Modernise the administrative framework through comprehensive digitalisation across all ministries to reduce bureaucratic inertia and corruption.
- Replace political appointments in financial institutions with stable, professional leadership to ensure institutional continuity.
- Establish independent advisory groups of national experts to monitor progress in critical sectors like health and education.
- Ensure all new policy formulations involve direct, democratic consultation with stakeholders and trade bodies before implementation.

EMPLOYMENT, SKILLS & SOCIAL PROTECTION

- Shift focus toward Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) and SMEs to rapidly generate employment in localized “poverty pockets.”
- Overhaul the national education and skills policy to prioritise technical, vocational, and STEM training over redundant tertiary degrees.
- Recognise migration as a primary industry and provide direct bank loans to workers for language training and placement in high-demand markets.
- Adopt a national strategy for reskilling workers potentially displaced by AI, robotics, and automation.



MIRZA NURUL GHANI SHOYON
*President
National Association of
Small & Cottage Industries
of Bangladesh (NASCIB)*

To drive widespread employment, the government must prioritise industrialisation at the grassroots, district, and village levels. Essential institutions such as the SME Foundation, BSCIC, and the National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) currently lack the necessary strength and require significant reinforcement to be effective. Reintroducing district-specific credit programmes, modelled after successful 1990s initiatives, is vital to provide small entrepreneurs with accessible financing. Furthermore, nearly 3,000 registered Skills Training Providers (STP) centres should be utilised for long-term skills development, while loan interest rates for small businesses must be brought down to single digits. Addressing non-performing loans requires a national or regional verification committee involving diverse stakeholders, rather than just bankers, to distinguish between wilful defaulters and those failing due to systemic issues. Ultimately, creating millions of jobs depends on a unified national political commitment where both the government and

opposition align on a shared economic vision for the country's development.



SYED ALMAS KABIR
*Former President
Bangladesh Association
of Software & Information
Services (BASIS)*

Bangladesh's long-standing economic reliance on cheap labour, particularly in the RMG and freelance sectors, must transition toward a high-skill, value-added model to survive the challenges of LDC graduation and automation. Implementing a national strategy for reskilling workers displaced by AI and robotics is critical, alongside fostering indigenous Intellectual Property (IP) through incentivised R&D and industry-academia collaboration. The IT sector offers an ideal path for diversification due to its low overhead and potential for female empowerment, yet it requires robust soft and hard infrastructure. Effective digitalisation across government agencies, especially the NBR, hinges on structured change management and dedicated budgets for software rather than just hardware. Furthermore, prioritising local value addition in state projects and refining FDI policies to ensure knowledge transfer is essential. Strengthening the startup ecosystem through

improved Venture Capital policies and expanding digital market access for SMEs will further solidify the economic backbone, while exploring innovative green energy like wave power can ensure sustainable growth.



MAHMUD HASAN KHAN (BABU)
*President
Bangladesh Garment
Manufacturers and
Exporters Association
(BGMEA)*

The current government's initial focus on deregulation and accessibility offers a positive trajectory for addressing long-standing systemic hurdles. A primary concern involves the formulation of policies without adequate stakeholder engagement, often exacerbated by a rigid bureaucratic mindset. To foster a sustainable industrial environment, policies must remain consistent, preventing the common issue where sudden regulatory shifts undermine new investments. Enhancing the “ease of doing business” is directly linked to reducing the “cost of doing business,” particularly regarding NBR-related complexities. Furthermore, expanding benefits like Free of Cost (FOC) raw material imports to all export sectors, not just garments, is essential for true export

diversification and foreign reserve growth. To improve the tax-to-GDP ratio, implementing district-level tax collection targets could bring wealthy individuals outside major cities into the tax net, provided local trade bodies are democratically elected to avoid regional oligarchies. Finally, the decision to seek LDC graduation deferment is a strategic necessity, providing a critical window to negotiate essential bilateral agreements to ensure long-term economic resilience.



SHAMS MAHMUD
*Former President, DCCI
Honorary Consul, Federal
Democratic Republic of
Ethiopia*

The immediate priority for the government must be renegotiating GSP terms, as the reduction in export thresholds and the 6 per cent single-country origin cap pose significant threats to the garments sector after LDC graduation. To mitigate these detriments, the focus should shift toward securing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and deeper regional supply chain integration with ASEAN and India. Furthermore, a government-managed long-term fund is necessary to facilitate double-stage transformation, bypassing the collateral bottlenecks of private banking. Structural reforms in energy security, logistics, specifically removing navy-led chemical testing delays, and establishing direct shipping routes are critical for maintaining efficiency. Finally, the investment climate requires a shift from a “poverty-alleviation” mindset to an investment-seeking one, prioritising joint ventures over standalone FDI, reforming the tax incidence on AIT, and stabilising the volatile stock market to build investor confidence.



SHAFIQU ALAM
*Lead Energy Analyst
Institute for Energy
Economics and Financial
Analysis (IEEFA)*

The current energy crisis in Bangladesh is primarily a result of an import-dependent strategy that now sees 62 per cent of primary fuel sourced from volatile global markets. With crude oil and spot LNG prices climbing, the government faces a severe fiscal bottleneck, making supply rationing and load-shedding an inevitable short-term outcome. To navigate this, the immediate priority must be clearing the massive payment backlog to sustain industrial activity while embedding energy conservation into national behaviour to prevent “rebound effects.” While IMF pressure to adjust tariffs persists, further price hikes risk making local industries non-competitive against regional rivals like Vietnam. Instead of just raising prices, the focus should shift to systemic efficiency and reallocating it to the productive sector. Long-term stability requires shifting toward regional hydropower cooperation and setting realistic renewable targets, supported by a significant shift in budgetary allocation toward domestic gas exploration rather than just power generation.

Tougher demos if July charter not implemented Odhikar protests move

FROM PAGE 16
large number of leaders and activists taking part.

Presiding over the event, Jamaat Nayeab-e-Ameer ATM Azharul Islam said the July uprising had given people a “new life”, adding that disrespecting it would mean rejecting that transformation. “It was not about replacing one party with another but about dismantling the old system and establishing a new one where power rests with the people.”

He alleged that by ignoring the votes of 70 percent of referendum participants, the government was trying to concentrate power in the hands of a single individual, in a way reminiscent of the Awami League's rule.

At the rally, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Ameer Mamunul Haque said, “If you fail to stand by the people and the country, if you disregard the public mandate or override it through court decisions, the people of this country will confront you on the streets.”

National Citizen Party Member Secretary Akhter Hossen said that forming a government through

elections is legitimate, but calling reforms endorsed by a popular vote illegitimate reflects “double standards” that the people will not accept.

“Through the referendum, people have expressed their desire to transform the state structure. Now, leveraging a two-thirds majority, they [BNP] are attempting to ignore that mandate. They talk about the constitution -- we agree that a constitution is necessary to run the country. But it cannot be the constitution of 1972, nor that of Sheikh Hasina, nor of the BNP. It must be a constitution of the people.”

Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Hamidur Rahman Azad said constitutional amendment is a routine parliamentary function. He warned that the BNP would face consequences if it pursued amendment without broader reforms.

Jamaat walked out of parliament on Wednesday alleging a lack of “remedy” over a motion related to convening the Constitutional Reform Council.

Under the July National Charter implementation order issued during

the interim government, a referendum held alongside the February 12 parliamentary election endorsed 48 reform proposals. The order stipulates that members of parliament will also serve as members of the reform council, which is to convene within 30 days of the election results.

However, BNP lawmakers did not take oath as members of the council.

Jamaat Ameer and Opposition Leader Shafiqur Rahman earlier submitted an adjournment motion under Rule 62 of the Rules of Procedure to discuss the issue, but no decision was reached in parliament on the matter.

Alleging that their proposal was sidelined and no remedy was provided, opposition lawmakers staged the walkout. Later, at a press conference, Shafiqur said, “We will return to the people -- the very people who gave this verdict. Together with them, we will decide how to realise the referendum mandate.”

Following his remark, alliance leaders held a meeting in Gulshan on Thursday and announced yesterday's protest programme.

Crime boss Boro Sazzad's deputy held in Chattogram

FROM PAGE 16
according to Rab officials. They said he was the primary enforcer for Sazzad Ali's syndicate and oversaw various criminal activities.

His criminal record, reviewed via the Crime Data Management System (CDMS), reveals at least seven cases, including murder attempts and murder filed against him with Panchlaish, Chawkbazar, Double Mooring, Bayezid Bostami, Akbar Shah, and Sitakunda police stations.

“He was a key associate of Sazzad Ali and effectively ran the syndicate's operations on the ground. His presence had created a state of panic among ordinary citizens in Salimpur,” said ARM Mozaffar Hossain.

Following his arrest and initial interrogation, Saddam was handed over to the Panchlaish Police Station for further legal proceedings, he added.

behaviour and assaults on managers”, prompting complaints against 83 workers. Mustafizur was contacted to collect advance information on worker activities.

Records show he had multiple phone conversations with intelligence officers on April 4, 2012, the day Aminul was abducted and killed.

Evidence indicated that Mustafizur and the unidentified woman lured Aminul from his BCWS office under the pretext of arranging a marriage, abducted him, and disposed of his body in Ghatail, added the charge sheet.

Despite a Tk 100,000 reward announced by the home ministry and several operations, both suspects remain at large.

Kalpona said, “There has been no proper investigation or trial in Aminul murder. Justice has not been delivered.”

Rahiqu echoed that only Mustafizur has been held accountable, while others involved remain untouched.

“My brother worked tirelessly for workers' rights, ensuring unfair dismissals and unpaid wages were addressed, and representing workers' causes in court. Yet, his murder remains unsolved,” he said.

Odhikar protests move

FROM PAGE 16
Rights Commission remained silent. During the interim government period, however, an ordinance was issued to strengthen the commission, it added.

The statement also alleged that the ACC had been used during Hasina's regime to suppress opponents and target individuals and institutions with dissenting views.

Citing remarks by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, Odhikar said \$234 billion had been laundered abroad during Hasina's rule and argued that

these ordinances needed to be turned into law.

It said cancelling these important ordinances would amount to an attempt to take institutions back to the model of subservient bodies that existed under the previous government.

Referring to the recommendation for revoking the ordinance on enforced disappearances, Odhikar said many leaders and activists of the BNP alliance had themselves been victims of disappearance during the Hasina regime.

It noted that three victims who

returned, as well as the wife of a disappeared person, were later elected lawmakers. However, the families of those who never returned continue to live in deep uncertainty.

Odhikar said the recommendation was a grave injustice to victims, their family members, and the people of the country. It urged the prime minister to stop the repeal process and immediately ensure passage of the ordinances in parliament, saying that no country can move forward without human rights and good governance.

BIDA U-turns on pvt sector advisory body

FROM PAGE 16
although it did not specify what form they would take or how they would differ from the council it had earlier announced.

The authority blamed the confusion on “misleading information circulating on social media”, without acknowledging that the source of that information was its own press release, which explicitly announced the council's formation and named its members.

It offered no explanation for why

the earlier claims were made, or what prompted the abrupt reversal within hours.

The backtracking is particularly notable as BIDA Executive Chairman Ashik Chowdhury had described the council in the original statement as “one of the key reforms proposed by BIDA”, suggesting a structured initiative rather than an informal engagement.

The nine business leaders present at Saturday's meeting were initially described as council members personally selected by the prime

minister. They are Arif Dowla, managing director of ACI; Syed Nasim Manzur, managing director of Apex Footwear; Halizur Rahman Khan, chairman of Runner Group; Ahsan Khan Chowdhury, chairman of PRAN-RFL Group; Ziaur Rahman, managing director of Bay Group; Abdul Muktadir, chairman of Incepta Group; Md Abdul Jabbar, managing director of DBL Group; Sohana Rouf Chowdhury, managing director of Rangs Group; and Syed Mohammad Tanvir, managing director of Pacific Jeans Group.

1% of Tk 92,627 crore recovered

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Rupali is owed Tk 8,774 crore by its top 20 defaulters, Janata Tk 58,642 crore, Agrani Tk 13,907 crore, Sonali Tk 6,743 crore, BASIC Tk 2,580 crore and Bangladesh Development Bank Tk 487 crore.

Except for Sonali, the banks' default loan rate is above 35 percent, with Janata coming in at the top with 70 percent. Sonali's default rate is 15 percent, Rupali's 38 percent and Agrani's 35.52 percent.

Despite the dismal overall picture,

the banks' cash recovery against defaulted loans more than doubled to Tk 4,166 crore in 2025 thanks to special loan rescheduling opportunities provided by the BB.

“Such concentration of loans is a matter of concern,” said Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury, former chairman of Sonali Bank.

One of the main reasons for the huge volume of bad loans is the banks' tendency to lend for large projects.

Most of the bank officials lack the capacity to properly evaluate

and oversee such projects, leading to situations where borrowed funds are diverted rather than invested productively, said Chowdhury, also a former finance secretary.

Besides, many large borrowers accumulate substantial liabilities, including interest, over time, eventually exceeding their repayment capacity.

In addition, legal stay orders allow some borrowers to avoid being formally classified as defaulters, said Chowdhury, who was the 12th Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh.

Govt to import another 1 lakh tonnes

FROM PAGE 16
LNG shipments from Aramco Trading Singapore.

The energy ministry informed the committee that the BPC's regular suppliers are struggling to deliver fuel within the stipulated timeframe, disrupting the country's import schedule.

The situation surrounding fuel procurement has become increasingly challenging.

In this context, the ministry emphasised the need to diversify import sources to ensure energy security and maintain a stable fuel supply.

Several fuel-exporting countries have also curtailed supplies, further

tightening the global market and complicating Bangladesh's import efforts.

Meanwhile, disruptions in LNG exports from Qatar and Oman have pushed up gas prices in Europe, increasing demand for alternative liquid fuels and adding further pressure on global oil prices.

Trump weighs broader cabinet shake-up amid war

REUTERS, Washington

US President Donald Trump is considering a broader cabinet shake-up in the wake of Attorney General Pam Bondi's removal this week, as he grows increasingly frustrated with the political fallout from the war with Iran, five people familiar with internal White House discussions said.

Any potential reshuffling could serve as a reset for the White House as it confronts a politically challenging stretch: The five-week-old war has driven up gas prices, dragged down Trump's approval ratings and intensified anxiety about the consequences for Republicans heading into November's midterm elections.

Some allies said his televised speech to the nation on Wednesday - which one senior White House official described as an attempt to project a sense of control and confidence about the direction of the war - fell flat, adding to the sense that changes in messaging or personnel were needed.

"A shake-up to show action is not a bad thing, is it?" another White House official said.

Three White House officials and two other sources with knowledge of administration dynamics spoke to Reuters on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive personnel matters.

The sources did not consistently describe any single cabinet member as certain to lose their job in the near term. But multiple officials are in some degree of danger, they said.

Several of the sources said Tulsi Gabbard, Trump's director of national intelligence, and Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick are among those potentially on the chopping block, after Trump ousted Bondi and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem in recent weeks.

Trump has in recent months expressed displeasure with Gabbard, said one senior White House official. Another source with direct knowledge of the matter said Trump had asked allies about their thoughts on potential replacements for his

intelligence chief.

Some high-profile Trump allies, meanwhile, are privately pushing for the removal of Lutnick, a close personal friend of the president who has faced renewed scrutiny in recent months for his relationship with late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

New files released earlier in the year revealed that Lutnick had lunch with Epstein on his private island in the Caribbean in 2012. Lutnick has said he "barely had anything to do with" Epstein and that the lunch took place only because he was on a boat near the island.

White House spokesman Davis Ingle said Trump maintained "total confidence" in Gabbard and Lutnick.

"The President has assembled the most talented and impactful Cabinet ever, and they have collectively delivered historic victories on behalf of the American people, from Director Gabbard's role in ending the Maduro narcoterror regime to Secretary Lutnick's role securing major trade and investment deals," Ingle wrote in an email when asked for comment.

A spokesperson for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence pointed Reuters to a Thursday post by the White House on X in which White House communications director Steve Cheung is quoted as saying Trump has "total confidence" in Gabbard.

The Commerce Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Trump could ultimately decide, however, not to make any changes to his administration's senior ranks. Several others close to Trump have said the president is reluctant to overhaul his cabinet too frequently, after recurrent staffing changes during his first term dominated headlines and created the impression of chaos at the White House.

One of the White House officials said to expect a "targeted churn," rather than a "big, dramatic reset."

Still, after his disappointing speech on Wednesday, doing nothing could be just as politically dangerous as making a significant change that, for

better or for worse, would dominate news headlines, one White House official said.

Trump worked with his speechwriting team and top advisers on this week's prime-time address, one official said, after aides had urged him for weeks to speak directly to the nation about the U.S. role in Iran.

During the speech, the president declined to lay out an off-ramp for the war, which began on February 28, leaving the impression that the conflict was open-ended. And instead of offering solutions to voters' economic anxieties, he said the pain would be short-lived and that Tehran would be able to survive.

"The speech did not accomplish what it was supposed to," the official said, adding that while Trump's core supporters still backed him on the war, they are broadly under economic strain.

"Voters tolerate ideological messaging, but they feel fuel prices immediately," the official said.

Just 36% of Americans approve of Trump's overall job performance, according to the latest Reuters/Ipsos survey, the lowest figure of his current term. The war with Iran is particularly unpopular, with 60% of respondents disapproving of the U.S. Israeli decision to start the conflict.

Two of the White House officials said Trump is extremely frustrated with what he perceives to be unfair media coverage of the war in Iran, and he has made clear to his team he wants more positive news accounts. He has not indicated, however, that he is interested in adjusting his own messaging strategy.

Such pressures notwithstanding, multiple cabinet members have shown remarkable staying power despite drawing negative headlines or consternation from the White House over their actions.

Some outside allies, for instance, have pushed for Lutnick's ouster since April of last year, when he rolled out a set of global tariffs that puzzled allies and experts during "Liberation Day."

Govt starts measles shots drive today

FROM PAGE 1

controlling the spread of infection of the disease and ensuring protection for children at risk.

He added that the campaign will begin in 30 high-risk hotspot areas from 9:00am today and will gradually be expanded nationwide, aiming to be completed by 21 May, ahead of Eid-ul-Azha.

The 30 upazilas are: Barguna Sadar upazila and municipality; Ishwardi, Atgharia, Bera, and Sardar upazila and municipality of Pabna; Mehendiganj and Bakerganj upazilas of Barishal; Haimchar, Sadar upazilas, and municipality of Chandpur; Maheshkhali and Ramu upazilas of Cox's Bazar; Nawabganj upazila of Dhaka; Gazipur Sadar upazilas, Jashore Sadar upazila; Nalchity upazila of Jhalakathi; Madaripur Sadar upazila; Louhajang, Sreenagar, and Sadar upazilas of Munshiganj; Trishal, Phulpur, and Sadar upazilas of Mymensingh; Natore Sadar

upazila; Atpara upazila of Netrakona; Porsha upazila of Naogaon; Shibganj, Bholahat, and Sadar upazilas of Chapainawabganj; Godagari upazila of Rajshahi; and Zajira upazila of Shariatpur.

The minister said 82 percent of measles patients are between six months and under five years (up to 59 months and 29 days), and therefore, the decision has been made to vaccinate children in this age group.

All children of this group will be included in the programme, regardless of whether they have been vaccinated before, he said, adding that a Vitamin A capsule will be provided only to children affected by measles.

However, children suffering from fever or other illnesses should not be administered shots now; they will be vaccinated later.

The health minister will inaugurate the campaign in Nawabganj, Dhaka, while Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed will open the programme in

Cox's Bazar, and State Minister for Health MA Muhit will do so in Pabna.

Talking to this correspondent, Shahriar Sajjad, deputy director of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI), said 13.23 lakh children of 30 upazilas have been selected for the emergency vaccination.

Responding to a question, he said they have already supplied vaccines and other logistics to the upazilas.

Meanwhile, of the four deaths in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, three were reported from the Dhaka division, and one from Chattogram.

DGHS also reported 787 new suspected cases during the period, raising the total number to 6,476.

Sixteen deaths have so far been confirmed as caused by measles, including two in the last 24 hours, said the health directorate.

It reported nine confirmed measles deaths on Friday, but updated data raised the number to 16.

Open Hormuz in 48 hours or face ‘hell’

FROM PAGE 1

HORMUZ STRAIT," Trump wrote on Truth Social, referring to an ultimatum issued on March 26.

"Time is running out -- 48 hours before all Hell will reign (sic) down on them."

Tehran said on Friday it had shot down an F-15 warplane, and US media reported United States special forces had rescued one of its two crew members, with the other still missing.

Iran's military also said it downed a US A-10 ground attack aircraft in the Gulf, with US media saying the pilot of that plane was rescued.

The local Mehr news agency yesterday quoted the deputy governor of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, Fattah Mohammadi, as saying the search for the missing pilot involved "presence of popular forces and tribesmen alongside military forces and is still ongoing".

He added that "last night, people fired at enemy helicopters with rifles and did not allow them to land".

Images posted on social media and verified by AFP TV showed Iranian police firing at a US helicopter in southwestern Iran as US forces searched for the airman.

Iran's military said a "new advanced" air defence system was used to bring down the fighter jet.

Iranians celebrated the downing of the planes. Parliament Speaker Mohammad Ghalibaf said on X that the war had been "downgraded from regime change" to a hunt for pilots.

The incidents highlight the risks still facing US and Israeli aircraft over Iran, despite assertions by Trump and Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth that US forces had full control of the skies.

Meanwhile, US Israeli strikes hit an area near Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant yesterday, prompting its foreign minister to warn that any radioactive fallout would be felt most acutely by Gulf neighbours.

The strike near the Bushehr plant killed a guard and led Russia, which partly constructed and helps operate the facility, to evacuate 198 workers.

"Remember the Western outrage about hostilities near Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine? Israel-US have bombed our Bushehr plant four times now. Radioactive fallout will end life in GCC capitals, not Tehran," Araghchi said on X, referring to Gulf Arab states.

Bushehr is considerably closer to Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar than to the Iranian capital.

Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said on X that no increase in radiation levels had been reported, but expressed "deep concern", noting it was the fourth such incident in recent weeks.

With Iran's leadership remaining defiant, its foreign minister said in principle that peace talks with the US could take place via mediation from Pakistan, but gave no indication of willingness to accept Trump's demands.

"We are deeply grateful to Pakistan for its efforts and have never refused to go to Islamabad. What we care about are the terms of a conclusive and lasting END to the illegal war imposed on us," Araghchi said on X.

As hostilities continued yesterday, Iranian state media reported air strikes in a petrochemical zone in southwestern Iran, injuring at least

five people.

Iranian media also reported strikes on warehouses storing bottled water in western Iran.

The Israeli military said it carried out "a wave of strikes" on Tehran, targeting air defence sites, ballistic missile silos and research centres.

Iran also fired several rounds of missiles toward Israel, injuring several people in Tel Aviv and surrounding areas. Since midnight, seven waves of Iranian missiles have been launched towards Israel, according to the Israeli military.

Iran has virtually shut the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas. However, the Tasnim news agency reported that Iran had authorised the passage of vessels carrying essential goods to its ports.

Meanwhile, India's Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said domestic refiners continued to secure stable crude oil supplies from the Middle East.

In a statement on X, the ministry said, "Indian refiners have secured their crude oil requirements, including from Iran."

The statement came as another Indian-flagged tanker carrying LPG safely passed through the Strait of Hormuz. Public broadcaster All India Radio said it was the "seventh India-bound LPG tanker" to cross the strait since the war began.

Authorities in Dubai said no injuries were reported after debris from aerial interceptions struck the facades of two buildings, including that of US tech company Oracle in Dubai Internet City.

গনপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

নির্বাহী পরিচালকের কার্যালয়

শিশু-মাতৃ স্বাস্থ্য ইনস্টিটিউট

মাতুয়াইল, ঢাকা-১৩৬২

Ref No.ICMH/Admin/2025-26/1918

Date : 04/04/26

e-Tender Notice

This is an online tender, where only e-tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/ hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details, please contact support desk contact numbers.

e-Tender are invited in e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) by Dr. Mohammad Ahsanul Haque, Joint Director, Institute of Child & Mother Health, Matuail, Dhaka-1362 for the Procurement of:

Tender Id	PACKAGE NO.PACKAGE DESCRIPTION	Tender/Proposal Publication Date & Time	Tender/Proposal Last Selling Date & Time	Tender/Proposal Closing/Opening Date & Time
1252015	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-01 Procurement of ICU Ventilator Neonate	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252016	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-02 Procurement of Over Head Rediant	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252017	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-03 Procurement of New Born Baby Warmer	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252018	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-04 Procurement of Double Surface Phototherapy Machine	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252019	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-05 Procurement of LED Phototherapy Machine	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252020	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-06 Procurement of Bubble C-PAP Machine	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252021	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-07 Procurement of Baby Incubator	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252022	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-08 Procurement of A. Patient Monitor Neonatal B. Patient Monitor Paediatric C. Patient Monitor Adult	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252023	ICMH-2025-26/stationary-09 Procurement of Delivery Table	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252024	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-10 Procurement of A. 4D USG Machine with Convex Linear and TVS Prove. B.4D USG Machine with Linear and TVS Prove	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252025	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-11 Procurement of Operation Theater Table.	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252026	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-12 Procurement of OT LED Light Ceiling Mounted Double Dome	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252027	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-13 Procurement of Anesthesia Machine With Ventilator and standard accessories	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252028	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-14 Procurement of Diathermy Machine	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252029	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-15 Procurement of Video Laryngoscope with all Accessories..	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252030	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-16 Procurement of Blood gas Analyzer	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252031	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-17 Procurement of Electrosurgical Unit (Diathermy Machine)	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252032	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-18 Procurement of ECG Machine 3 Channel	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252033	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-19 Procurement of A. Dual Channel Syringe Pump B. Infusion Pump. C. Pulse Oximeter Paediatric. D. Suction Machine	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252034	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-20 Procurement of Automated Cell Separator Machine	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252035	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-21 Procurement of Microscope Binocular Electric Complete.	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252036	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-22 Procurement of A. Centrifuge Electric 16 Holes. B. Lab Rotary Machine C. Digital Heated water Bath	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252037	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-23 Procurement of Auto Clave	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252038	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-24 Procurement of Incubator 150 Litter	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252039	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-25 Procurement of Manual Rotary Microtome.	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252040	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-26 Procurement of Blood Bank Refrigerator 638 Liters (390 bag capacity)	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252041	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-27 Procurement of ICU Bed Three Function.	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252042	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-28 Procurement of USB PC based Spirometer Machine.	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252043	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-29 Procurement of Irrigation & Suction Pump for Hysteroscopy (Touch Screen).	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252044	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-30 Procurement of A. Procurement of Androstation (Laminar air flow) B. Androblock (Heating Block) C. Wonder Sperm (Serum counting Chamber)	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252045	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-31 Procurement of A. Digital Blood Pressure Machine. B. Spot light. C. Boiling Sterilizer 20 liter temp-120°C or more (ss material) D. Automatic Portable Autoclave Machine 20 ltr. E. Medicine Freeze (BIG). F. Optical Loupe	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00
1252046	ICMH-2025-26 Equipment-32 Procurement of A. Hospital Bed With Mattress B. Bed Side Table. C. Overhead Trolley.	05-April-2026 12:00	15-April-2026 16:00	16-April-2026 12:00

e-Tender details can be downloaded on e-GP system portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for pursuer. e-Tender will be accepted only as stated in above list, accepted tenders will be opened online immediate as stated in above list.

(Brig. Gen. Md. Emdadul Haque)
Executive Director
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Amid an uncertain Middle East, Bangladesh must rethink its migration strategy

Bangladesh needs to strengthen migration diplomacy. It must go beyond traditional agreements and include crisis-time protection measures such as evacuation support, compensation, legal safeguards, and waivers of costs like iqama renewal fees during emergencies. Bangladesh should also develop an early warning system to monitor geopolitical risks and adjust migration policies in advance.

MOHAMMAD JALAL UDDIN SIKDER

International labour migration is a key pillar of Bangladesh's economy, with most workers going to the Gulf region. In 2025, out of 1,116,399 migrants, about 82.4% (919,981) went to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (BMET, 2026). Remittances are equally important: Bangladesh received \$32.8 billion in 2025, of which around \$15.07 billion—about 46%—came from GCC countries (Bangladesh Bank, 2026). This shows the country's heavy dependence on the Gulf for both employment and income.

However, migration is not only economic; it is also shaped by politics and international relations. Rising tensions in the Middle East, especially the US–Israel–Iran conflict, are creating new uncertainties for Bangladeshi workers in terms of jobs, mobility, and safety. Therefore, migration should not be seen simply as a matter of labour demand and supply. It needs to be understood within a broader geopolitical context, where global power relations shape both opportunities and risks.

Political nature of migrant workers

To understand this situation, we need to look at how countries behave in international politics. Political scientists Hans Morgenthau (Politics Among Nations, 1948) and Kenneth Waltz (Theory of International Politics, 1979) explain that during crises, states focus mainly on their own interests and security. As a result, migrant workers become less important. They are needed in stable times, but are easily pushed aside when risks increase.

Because of this, migration governance becomes weak. Agreements such as MoUs often fail during crises, as countries take decisions independently. As Stephen Castles, Hein de Haas, and Mark J. Miller show in The Age of Migration (2014), host countries can change rules suddenly, while countries like Bangladesh have little influence to protect their workers.

Migrant workers also remain in a vulnerable position. They have little bargaining power, and in many Middle Eastern countries, the kafala system ties their legal status to employers. Human Rights Watch (EU: Human Rights Should Be Priority at GCC Summit, 2024) highlights that this increases the risk of exploitation. During crises, support systems such as evacuation and legal assistance remain limited.

As a result, crises quickly turn into real risks. Workers lose jobs first, are

forced to return without compensation, and face movement restrictions. We saw the same during the COVID-19 crisis and the Libya conflict (since 2011). At the same time, xenophobia increases. For example, UN human rights experts (OHCHR, May 21, 2020) reported that migrants in Malaysia were blamed for spreading the virus and were detained or deported.

A similar pattern is now visible in the Iran war, where some migrant workers are being detained or deported for sharing war-related content on social media. Overall, migrant workers are not just labour—they are a geopolitically vulnerable population, often the first smart cities like “The Line”, advanced technology zones, and tourism hubs. Alongside NEOM, projects such as the Red Sea tourism project, Qiddiya entertainment city, and the FIFA World Cup 2034 are expected to create millions of jobs. However, if instability continues in the region, these projects may face delays, rising costs, or downsizing.

This impact will also affect the United Arab Emirates—especially Dubai and Abu Dhabi—as well as Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain. Major real estate and infrastructure projects may slow down, investor confidence may decline, property sales may fall, and

employment. Many migrants may be forced to return without savings, increasing pressure on the domestic economy. Families dependent on migration income will face growing hardship.

From risk to opportunity: A geopolitical strategy

At the same time, these risks also create opportunities for Bangladesh to rethink its migration strategy. When risks spread, new opportunities also emerge. This makes it important to explore labour markets beyond the Gulf region.

A good example is China's Belt and

crisis-time protection measures such as evacuation support, compensation, legal safeguards, and waivers of costs like iqama renewal fees during emergencies. Bangladesh should also develop an early warning system to monitor geopolitical risks and adjust migration policies in advance.

To achieve this, Bangladesh needs new training systems. Through bilateral cooperation, foreign trainers can be brought in, and the skilled Bangladeshi diaspora can be engaged online. By digitalising training centres, students can learn directly from them. Partnerships with foreign governments or companies can help develop workers based on labour market needs and allow direct recruitment. This will improve skills, reduce dependence on brokers, and make migration safer and more transparent.

In addition, a new strategic direction could be virtual migration, which is clearly different from traditional outsourcing. While outsourcing usually depends on intermediaries, virtual migration allows Bangladeshi workers to stay in the country and directly provide services to foreign employers through digital platforms. This includes IT services, freelancing, and various forms of remote professional work. Since this process does not depend on visas, borders, or physical relocation, it is comparatively less affected by geopolitical instability. As global demand for digital services continues to grow, this type of virtual migration can create relatively stable income opportunities and help reduce both the risks and costs associated with overseas employment.

Finally, geopolitics should be seen not as a crisis, but as an opportunity to explore new labour markets and build a safe and sustainable migration system for Bangladesh.



FILE VISUAL: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

to be excluded and the least protected during crises.

Future migration trends & structural risks

The ongoing tensions surrounding Iran will not be limited to politics; they will also affect the global labour market in the future. The war has already damaged key infrastructure such as the oil and gas sectors, which are the backbone of Gulf economies. As a result, government revenues will decline, major investments will be delayed, and economic uncertainty will increase across the region.

In Saudi Arabia, this impact will be most visible in its Vision 2030 projects. One of the largest projects is NEOM—a futuristic city worth around \$500 billion—which includes plans for

jobs in construction and services may decrease. At the same time, prolonged conflict may damage the region's reputation for stability, leading to further declines in investment and business.

At the same time, structural changes will continue. Gulf countries will invest more in automation and digital technologies, reducing the demand for low-skilled labour. Governments will also strengthen nationalisation policies to prioritise local citizens. As a result, demand for low-skilled migrant workers will gradually decline.

For Bangladesh, the consequences will be serious. Job opportunities in the Gulf will become more uncertain, recruitment will slow down, and visa restrictions will increase. Remittance inflows may decline due to unstable

Road Initiative (BRI). Through this initiative, large infrastructure projects are being developed across Asia, Africa, and Europe. Many countries face labour shortages due to small populations or low birth rates. As noted in the World Bank's Belt and Road Economics report (2019), these investments are expanding rapidly and creating new labour demand. Similar opportunities are also emerging in Russia, Central Asia, and parts of Africa, where investments in gas, oil, and energy sectors are increasing labour demand. If Bangladesh can develop a skilled workforce, it can take advantage of these opportunities.

To capture these opportunities, Bangladesh needs to strengthen migration diplomacy. It must go beyond traditional agreements and include

FROM NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY TO MODERNISATION Mapping Bangladesh's defence future

AYESHA BINTE TOWHID

The political transition in Bangladesh has ushered in a new era of hope, presenting a unique opportunity to rethink and reformulate several aspects of statecraft. As the defence forces embody the strength of a nation, there is much anticipation regarding the plans for this sector. The political parties have also resonated with this sentiment in their election manifestos, as they laid out their visions for enhancing defence capabilities under the overarching philosophies “Bangladesh Before All” and “An Uncompromising Bangladesh”. As the new political government settles in, it is imperative to look at the key pledges and share some insights regarding the expectations surrounding them.

At the strategic level, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) shared its plan for formulating a National Security Strategy (NSS). Both BNP and the National Citizen Party (NCP) called for establishing a National Security Council (NSC). There have been calls for an NSC and an NSS for several years, and finally they might be in sight. The NSS is a crucial document, as it gives direction regarding the state's plan to apply all elements of national power to attain its political objectives, both during war and in peacetime. It indicates the state's approach to ensuring and upholding security, prosperity, and global standing. While it is common for major powers to publish their NSS at regular intervals, there has not been any such publicly available document for Bangladesh. Therefore, there is a great deal of eagerness to see what an NSS might look like for a country such as Bangladesh.

While formulating the NSS, it is very important to look into all elements of power used in contemporary times and assess what we have at our disposal. Self identification of our current position is essential, as it would provide clarity regarding what combination of power we want to exercise and what kind of influence we want to project. Do we want to see ourselves as a small South Asian state, or do we want to establish ourselves

as an emerging middle power with greater stakes and responsibilities? These are some of the key issues that need to be addressed. It is expected that policymakers would take geopolitical realities into consideration and adopt an approach that helps to secure our strategic objectives.

In line with the NSS, political parties have called for formulating a defence policy and defence doctrine. The Defence Policy 2018 was based on the core aspects of the 1974 Defence Policy. Reviewing it is a need of the time. It is expected that the government would include all relevant stakeholders, including think tanks, in the policy formulation process. Consulting diverse views would make the policy more participatory and effective.

One of the core principles of our defence policy is credible deterrence, and the periodic enhancement of defence capabilities is a fundamental requirement for ensuring it. BNP, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, and NCP have pledged to strengthen defence capability by modernising the Armed Forces. In its election manifesto, BNP expressed its vision for a four-dimensional armed force; Jamaat shared broad views on updating the 2030 modernisation goal into a forward-looking Vision 2040; and NCP shared specific visions for the weapon systems it seeks to acquire. Although there are some differences in approach, the intention to invest in defence capabilities is well reflected in all three manifestos.

However, in this sector, there is an inherent struggle to match aspirations for technologically advanced armaments with economic realities. Here, it is important to note that the maximum portion of the defence budget is required to cover operating costs, and only a very small percentage can be dedicated to new procurements. It is paramount for policymakers to take this into consideration and plan ways to increase allocation for modernisation purposes. At the same time, it is essential to look for cost-effective technologies. Recent inter-state conflicts have demonstrated how low-cost defence technologies can deliver kinetic

effects in asymmetric warfare. Operational-level ingenuity has been instrumental in this process. These events have provided critical insights for small military organisations around the world. It is expected that policymakers would take these into consideration in the policy formulation process.

It is also pivotal to consider the geopolitical setting of the policy. The defence policy should be aligned with the evolving strategic landscape of both the immediate and extended region. Bangladesh's geography has always influenced its strategic thinking. While the priority on land is imminent, the strategic competition centring the Indo-Pacific region has made the operational environment in the maritime vicinity very uncertain, requiring our defence forces to stay prepared for potential contingencies. It is expected that the defence policy would adequately emphasise the requirements for securing national interests in the Bay of Bengal and in the wider Indian Ocean region.

As geopolitical competition intensifies and a transactional approach in international relations becomes the new norm, it is wise to prepare for any restrictive

measures imposed by major powers. Such preparation includes the diversification of defence articles acquisition and the strengthening of indigenous production capability where possible. In the manifestos, both BNP and Jamaat shared their interest in promoting military research and developing the domestic defence industry. While some aspects of the manifestos are rhetorical, the underlying objective of expanding and strengthening indigenous capabilities is evident. A long-term vision is vital in materialising this pledge. This needs to start by developing subject matter experts to operate at different levels of this industry. Joint production is a major avenue for developing the indigenous industry. It

synergy is integral for this purpose.

Besides strengthening and expanding the regular forces, it is also essential to plan and prepare for situations that may demand the integration of the general population in national defence. The concept of People's War has been a key feature of Bangladesh's strategic culture, as witnessed in the Liberation War. It is also reflected in the existing Defence Policy. The political parties have shared similar ideas in their election manifestos. BNP called for formulating the defence policy in light of Ziaur Rahman's 'People's Warfare Doctrine'. Jamaat proposed a 6–12 month voluntary military training programme for men and women aged 18–22 years. NCP called for building a combat-ready reserve force by training 30 thousand youths in arms and military tactics every year. Although the approaches differ, the underlying objective appears similar. Short-term military training or national service can be instrumental in unconventional warfare. Several countries have either voluntary or mandatory national service requirements. Bangladesh can consider this as well. However, Bangladesh already has a large pool of paramilitary and auxiliary forces. If the government wants to proceed with the idea, there has to be a convincing narrative to justify, promote, and popularise this initiative through a consultative process.

Through the defence policy visions in the election manifestos, one can gain some working knowledge regarding the priorities and preferences of the political parties for strengthening our defence capabilities. Transforming these visions into policy would be a critical step. Election pledges have been made in the past too, but this time the people's mandate is strong, and so are their expectations from these policies. It is now time for the ruling party to deliver and for the opposition to follow up.

Ayesha Bint

Ayesha Bint

Business as usual for BNP?

Ordinances promoting good governance cannot be abandoned

We are disappointed by the parliamentary special committee's decision against ratifying 20 ordinances passed during the interim government's tenure, many of them central to the reform proposals of the July National Charter. The issues these ordinances were meant to tackle include judicial independence, prevention of enforced disappearance, and strengthening of crucial institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Human Rights Commission. The charter reforms were extensively discussed by the National Consensus Commission with all parties, including BNP. So, what does the allowing of these 20 ordinances to expire or lapse say about the ruling party's commitment to the aspirations of the 2024 uprising as expressed through the signing of the July charter?

Three of the ordinances, considered landmark decisions, related to ensuring separation of the judiciary from the executive. They included a legal framework for appointing judges to the apex courts, creating a secretariat for the Supreme Court, and granting the judiciary administrative and financial autonomy. This was to ensure that appointments of judges and all things related to the courts would not be influenced by the executive. Dropping these ordinances risks reverting to the age-old practice of Supreme Court appointments being influenced by the ruling party's preference. Meanwhile, failure to ratify the ordinance that aimed to criminalise enforced disappearance (with the highest punishment) is disturbing. Why would the BNP have any reservations against making disappearances, which their own members had been victims of, punishable?

In the same vein, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Ordinance, 2025 would have strengthened the commission with a mandate to conduct its own investigations, including inspecting the facilities of various security agencies. What technicalities prevented the special committee from ratifying this ordinance? The unbridled corruption of Sheikh Hasina's regime was one of the major catalysts of the July uprising. Which is why the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 was welcomed by the people as it would further strengthen the commission, allow it to directly file cases, and investigate financial crimes abroad. That the committee would decide to ignore this crucial ordinance gives rise to questions.

According to parliamentary rules, the 16 ordinances that have been dropped can be reintroduced in parliament after scrutiny and revision. But this has to happen within 30 days from the first sitting of the parliament, which would make April 10 the deadline. After this date, the ordinances will expire. Will the level of scrutiny required be completed within less than a week?

It is now difficult not to be skeptical of the ruling party (which holds a two-thirds majority in parliament) and its commitment to bringing about major reform in governance. Strengthening democratic institutions and making them independent of political influence were major aspirations of the July uprising and its actors. But the dropping of ordinances that, if ratified into laws, could have realised these very aspirations takes us back to the politicisation of key institutions, which we saw during the time of the fallen Awami League regime. We sincerely hope that our misgivings will be dispelled and these key ordinances that reflect people's aspirations of true democracy will be revived and ratified into laws after quick review by parliament.

Vaccination drive mustn't falter

Those responsible for the measles outbreak must be held accountable

Between March 15 and April 3, the government reported 94 suspected measles deaths among 5,792 suspected cases across the country. Most of those dead are children. To put this into perspective, the total number of measles cases last year was reported to be 125. While the highest number of suspected cases have been reported in Dhaka, the figures are considerable in other divisions as well. What's exasperating is that this outbreak is largely due to entirely avoidable reasons, and especially the previous interim government's attempt to reform a system that was not broken in the first place.

Through continuous and planned efforts over the last few decades under the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), measles had practically become a disease of the past in Bangladesh. While there were reportedly discussions in 2017 of shifting the costs of the vaccination programmes away from Gavi, the global vaccine alliance, and Unicef, and to the country's budget, this gained no momentum. The last special vaccination campaign (meant to cover those missed during the EPI's regular campaigns) was held in 2020, with the 2024 one being disrupted by the political changeover. Meanwhile, routine vaccinations were disrupted at least three times last year due to strikes by health sector assistants in rural areas. And to put the nail in the coffin of Bangladesh's measles prevention, the interim government scrapped the proposed fifth Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP) in March 2025 and decided to procure only half the vaccines via the longtime arrangement with Unicef, and the other half via tender. This decision, and the consequent, characteristic bureaucratic indecision, is now manifested in the current deadly outbreak.

It is, of course, reassuring that the current government is taking prompt action: an emergency measles vaccination campaign will begin today across 30 high burden upazilas in 18 districts. Reportedly, Gavi has provided two crore doses of the measles vaccine, while central stocks were exhausted. We urge that this vaccination campaign be conducted with care and efficiency at all levels and that the government do its utmost to reach as many unvaccinated babies and children as possible. Simultaneously, efforts must be made to inform families of young children of symptoms and prevention techniques. Most crucially, ICU capacity and accessibility must be bolstered across the country, especially in rural areas. Also, those responsible for this outbreak should be held accountable accordingly. Each of the confirmed measles deaths so far was preventable. What we desperately need now is a return to a time when measles could not turn fatal for any child.

Times are changing, so too must the way the state communicates



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S.M. REZWAN-UL-ALAM

Communication is now one of the most decisive forces governing the state in Bangladesh. Policymaking, administrative control, and conventional political management remain as necessary as ever, but they are no longer enough on their own. Today, a rumour can spread faster than an official instruction. A Facebook post can trigger market anxiety before any formal announcement appears. State silence is often read not as deliberation, but as weakness, secrecy, or incompetence. In this reality, communication is not an accessory to governance. It is part of governance itself, and increasingly a condition for public order, trust, and national stability.

Government communication has traditionally been treated as a defensive form of public relations, something activated only after criticism grows or a crisis erupts. That approach is now costly. By the time the government begins speaking, speculation has already spread, public opinion has hardened, and trust has started to erode. This is why Bangladesh urgently needs to rebuild the state's communication architecture through an integrated and professional system built on three connected pillars: strategic communication, risk communication, and crisis communication.

Strategic communication explains the long-term direction of the state and the logic behind major choices. Risk communication prepares the public in advance for possible disruptions or painful adjustments. Crisis communication delivers fast, clear, and credible guidance when danger is already unfolding. These three are linked, but each has a separate purpose. Without all three working together, it becomes difficult to govern sensitive sectors such as energy, migration, and macroeconomic management.

The current situation in the energy sector makes this especially clear. For instance, fuel pricing in Bangladesh impacts transport costs, industrial production, household survival, market prices, as well as political sentiment. Yet, price adjustments have often appeared sudden, unprepared, and imposed from above. Sometimes, secrecy has been used as if it could calm the situation. In reality, secrecy often creates fear, encourages hoarding and market manipulation, and gives people the impression that the government is not managing the problem but rather reacting under pressure.

Economic decisions quickly become political decisions when people do not understand why they are being made.

The deeper problem is not simply the price increase itself. It is the absence of credible explanations before the decision arrives. If market-adjusted pricing is going to shape Bangladesh's energy future, the public must be prepared well in advance. People need context, not slogans. If explained consistently and factually,

can accelerate the crisis. In such cases, real-time information becomes more powerful than generic assurances. If people know how much fuel is available, where supplies are stored, and how distribution is moving, panic can be eased. Opacity deepens uncertainty. Transparency reduces it.

The migration and remittance sector presents another major test. In a world marked by regional conflicts, labour market uncertainty, and rumours flow rapidly, migrant communication must be redesigned around trust, preparedness, and visible protection. If expatriate workers are truly national assets, then the state must communicate with them not only in the language of administration but also in the language of responsibility. Migrants should know that the government has contingency plans, diplomatic channels, emergency support systems,

the government says one thing to international lenders and another to the domestic public, credibility quickly weakens. If policy messages are late, vague, or contradictory, traders turn defensive, speculators grow active, and ordinary people become anxious.

What is needed is a disciplined culture of economic communication. The Ministry of Finance and Bangladesh Bank should publicise timely briefings and communicate quality public data, and forward guidance regularly, predictably, and clearly to stabilise expectations even when the news is difficult. Honesty is essential. It is better to acknowledge reserve pressure early than to let outside actors reveal the damage later. Trust is not lost only because the news is bad. It is often lost because people feel the truth was hidden. Similarly, when it comes to rumours in the banking sector, silence



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

even difficult decisions can become more understandable and acceptable.

This is where risk communication matters. The relevant ministries should not wait until a price revision is announced, but should instead provide regular, forecast-based explanations in simple language. If Brent crude rises, citizens should not learn about its implications only from foreign media or partisan political commentary. They should hear it directly from their own government, through clear language, visuals, and public briefings. The message should not be framed as mere suffering. It should explain how the state is trying to protect supply, reduce long-term vulnerability, and manage risks before they become shocks. Effective communication does not exist to make people feel good. It exists to help them understand reality.

Transparency becomes even more important when a crisis actually unfolds. In energy management, fear of shortage can itself intensify the scarcity. If the public suspects that fuel is running out, panic behaviour

and safety mechanisms ready before a crisis begins. Confidence cannot be improvised after a conflict erupts.

In migration crises, the information vacuum is especially dangerous because it is quickly filled by brokers, rumour mongers, and opportunists. That is why communication here must be direct, digital, and continuous. Dedicated 24-hour response platforms, location-based SMS alerts, verified safe zone updates, and simple guidance for emergency assistance would do more than share information. They would make the state visibly present in migrants' lives. That visibility matters, as it can reduce fear, prevent deception, and lower the chances of irregular migration, which affects not only families but also the wider economy.

Macroeconomic stability also depends heavily on communication. Economic language is often technical, but its social and political effects are immediate. Markets do not run only on numbers. They run on expectations, trust, and perceived credibility. If

is rarely neutral. It is often interpreted as confirmation. In such situations, visible leadership, credible data, and plain explanation must move together. That is why strategic, risk, and crisis communication must be treated as one governing framework.

Bangladesh must move from reactive messaging. It needs inter-ministerial coordination that can detect panic, rumours, and confusion early. It needs a culture of timely disclosure, honest interpretation, and empathetic language, especially where policy decisions affect kitchens, savings, migration routes, and everyday survival. In an age of unstable information flows, the public sphere never remains empty for long. If the state leaves it vacant, rumours, fear, and propaganda will take over. And once they do, governing becomes increasingly difficult. Bangladesh's future stability will depend not only on what the state does, but also on how honestly, prudently, and responsibly it speaks to its people.

The missing link in our renewable energy transition lies in quality assurance



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MD RAZIB

Geopolitical crises have repeatedly exposed Bangladesh's excessive dependence on imported fossil fuels, driving up energy prices and depleting foreign exchange reserves. The ongoing war in the Middle East has once again highlighted this structural vulnerability. To mitigate such external shocks, Bangladesh must urgently expand its domestic renewable energy capacity. But to what extent does the government demonstrate genuine commitment to a renewable energy transition? And if such intent exists, are current policies and strategies being implemented effectively? The answer, unfortunately, appears to be no. While financing constraints, investment gaps, and taxation remain the primary barriers to renewable energy expansion in Bangladesh, another critical issue has received far less attention: barriers related to imported renewable energy components.

Renewable energy systems typically rely on high-quality components that can deliver efficient, stable, and durable performance under challenging environmental conditions. A robust solar components testing facility is, thereby, essential to ensuring that these

products meet international safety and performance standards. Proper testing ensures optimal energy conversion and storage, and safe operation in challenging environmental conditions. It improves system efficiency, reduces failure risks, and ensures maximum return on investment for end users.

Bangladesh needs its own dedicated renewable energy components testing institute for a successful renewable energy transition. Countries currently leading in renewable energy transition—such as Germany, Italy, the US, China, and India—all have their own specialised testing institutes for renewable energy components. Even Pakistan, which has recently achieved a 46 percent share of renewable energy in its electricity generation mix as of September 2025, established a state-of-the-art solar panel testing facility in collaboration with South Korea in December 2025.

However, there is no single dedicated renewable energy components testing institute in Bangladesh. Neither does the country have its own comprehensive solar components testing facility, although approximately 78 percent of the total renewable energy capacity

comes from solar power in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) has performed a limited role in this area, but its capacity remains significantly constrained. For instance, its capabilities for testing solar inverters are negligible, and it does not offer testing services for other solar components.

Normally, solar panels are certified based on internationally recognised standards, which are enforced by national testing authorities. Unfortunately, Bangladesh has not developed its own certification framework for solar panels. Instead, it adapts different international standards such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), etc. Moreover, BSTI's testing system is mainly documentation-based. It is not based on direct physical testing. Usually, a company imports solar components and submits the certificates to BSTI, and then BSTI reviews them to determine compliance with the required standards. If approved, the product is listed in BSTI's database. Once a specific model is listed, subsequent imports of the same model do not require further testing. However, bureaucratic delays often complicate the process. Sometimes, even with BSTI certifications, the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA) conducts unnecessary and lengthy documentation checks that may take three to four months. As a result, importing companies cannot install

solar panels for the customers on time, escalating project costs and diminishing efficiency.

Another major concern is that BSTI lacks adequate modern and advanced testing equipment for testing solar panels and solar inverters. Without proper testing infrastructures, imported solar panels and inverters often fail to meet their claimed quality and performance standards: for example, a solar panel advertised as having a capacity of 500 watts delivers only 300 watts. Therefore, the current government should urgently establish a separate testing institute for renewable energy components, if the funds for such a project are available. If not, the existing capacities of BSTI should be strengthened, modernised, and upgraded. Also, BSTI must introduce direct physical testing-based methods for all renewable energy components, rather than a purely documentation-based system. Another solution could be to establish port-based testing facilities that could significantly decrease delays by enabling rapid testing of imported products upon arrival. Otherwise, several months are wasted in bringing these components to Dhaka and distributing them among the city's few testing labs.

As technology is changing rapidly around the world, BSTI's testing equipment needs to be updated and modernised accordingly. In addition, the government should encourage the establishment of testing laboratories in the private sector to enhance capacity and encourage competition.

‘Zone-based school timings could ease morning traffic nightmare’

Md Hadiuzzaman, a professor at the department of civil engineering of BUET, talks to Khairul Hassan Jahin of The Daily Star about alternative ways to ease traffic congestion during school hours and reduce fuel consumption amid the rollout of austerity measures in response to the energy crisis.

The prime minister recently directed the education ministry to adopt alternative measures to reduce traffic congestion during school hours. In your opinion, what would be the most effective alternatives? One of the main reasons for traffic congestion during school hours is that guardians in private cars drop off and pick up students directly in front of school gates. Since our road capacity is limited, the pressure spills onto the main roads. Therefore, as a first step, such cars should be prevented from reaching school gates directly. The footpaths around schools should be made hawker-free so that students can get off a little further away and walk safely to school.

Secondly, all morning-shift schools start at the same time, creating immense simultaneous pressure on the roads. To reduce this, a zone-based staggered schedule can be introduced. For example, schools in Mohammadpur could start at one time and those in Motijheel at another. If this is staggered by 30 minutes to one hour, the pressure will no longer hit the main roads all at once. At the same time, office schedules also need adjustment. Many guardians drop their children at school, return home, and then go to office, which creates extra trips. If school and office timings are coordinated, guardians can drop their children and go straight to work, reducing one trip on the road.

The third and most important issue, which is not being discussed enough, is coaching centres. Our education system is now heavily coaching dependent. Students often rush to coaching immediately after school, adding more trips and vehicles on the roads. If coaching centres are temporarily closed during the ongoing fuel crisis, traffic will fall and fuel will be saved. To make the prime minister's initiative effective, this issue must be considered alongside school timing.

In recent years, the intensity of heatwaves during summer has become a major cause of suffering for students. If the

current season is considered in the context of changing school schedules, how logical would this change be?

There are a large number of schools in Dhaka city, and among them, most haven't been built in a planned manner. To meet capacity shortages, many run morning and day shifts. A zone-based staggered schedule will certainly reduce road pressure, but heat must factor into such decisions now. When temperatures rise, electricity consumption in schools increases significantly. If the energy crisis is not managed strategically, load-shedding may become inevitable, and conducting classes in classrooms will be very difficult.

I know the education ministry is considering an alternate-day method in light of the energy crisis—one day online, one day offline. But in my opinion, this would be managerially difficult for both students and guardians. Instead, if the crisis becomes severe, educational activities could be moved fully online while examinations remain offline. However, if the government wants to keep schools partially open, then the alternate-day system should be coordinated with office schedules. On days when school is online, offices should also operate online. That would allow guardians to manage both their children and their own work.

Since Covid, educational institutions have been among the first to close during any movement or unrest. As a result, students' learning and socialisation needs have both been affected. So, is changing the schedule the only solution? For example, can changes in school transport systems, through mandatory school buses or carpooling, be effective in offsetting such disruptions or closures?

This is essentially a problem of flawed planning. In Dhaka, most schools were not established in a planned way; they have neither their own buses nor parking facilities, yet approvals were given without proper analysis. At the same time, we have still not created school zones. In developed cities, the concept



Md Hadiuzzaman

of a school catchment area is common—only those living within about one and a half to two kilometres of a school usually attend that school. But in Dhaka, guardians often send children from Motijheel to Uttara in pursuit of reputed schools. That is where the main problem lies.

This also makes the idea of school buses less effective. Because the distances are so long, routes become lengthy. The student living furthest away must board the bus two to three hours before school and returns home last. But if a catchment area is determined, the situation changes. Students remain within a limited zone, it becomes possible to run circular transport services effectively, and many can also walk if footpaths are connected and hawker-free. Then repeated guardian drop-offs and pick-ups would decline, and so would extra trips on the road.

Another benefit is educational quality. If students mainly attend nearby schools, there will be pressure on schools in general to improve their standards. This is a major opportunity for our overall education system.

How exactly would a catchment area policy work? Should we opt for area-based priority over admission tests in schools, and what broader impact would

that have on students and the city?

I have not seen any precedent in developed countries for admission tests at the school level. The main principle there is simple: if someone lives within the catchment area and wants to admit their child to that school, the school gives them priority. Education is a fundamental right, so there should be no discrimination based on financial ability. If only affluent children study in good schools while low-income children are pushed into weaker institutions, deep inequality is created.

If the zone or catchment area plan is implemented, many problems will be solved at once. If the school is within two kilometres, students can walk and vehicle dependence will fall. School-based traffic congestion will decrease, fuel will be saved, and each school will have to focus more on improving quality in light of the evolving social needs. But I do not agree with admission tests. Merit is not properly verified in this way; there is already a system of national examinations for that purpose.

Since we are talking about managing school hours and traffic, let's focus on the metro rail, particularly the concern that it has failed to sufficiently attract private car owners. Why is that?

This is an important issue. Our research shows that the main purpose of building the metro was to shift private car users off the roads. Private cars occupy about 60 percent of road space, but carry only six percent of passengers. The original idea was that if a section of private car passengers moved to the metro, the roads below would become less congested, making way for a more disciplined public transport system. But in reality, the opposite has happened: about 60 percent of daily metro passengers have been found to have travelled by bus previously, while only around five percent came from private cars.

The reason is a fundamental flaw in planning. The metro has been seen only as a fast transport mode, whereas in developed

countries it is used as an urban planning tool. They improve roads below, build proper footpaths, and develop buses as feeder services before or alongside metro systems. The metro acts as a backbone. But we did not think sufficiently about the connection system to stations. Private car users enjoy door-to-door service, and to be attracted to the metro, they need an easy and comfortable path to the station. If there were effective footpath networks within 500 metres to one kilometre of metro stations, many more people would walk.

That planning failure is costing us. Before building more metro lines, investment should be made in public transport and footpath management on the roads below. Compared to metro projects, this requires far less investment, but the impact can be much greater.

Coming back to the energy crisis, what else do you think the government should do going forward?

The government is repeatedly saying there is no fuel shortage—that oil exists in depots, distribution systems, filling stations. But it must clearly explain where the crisis actually lies, because people are standing in long queues, not getting oil, and many stations are closed. In this situation, some are even storing thousands of litres.

To prevent confusion and hoarding, the government must send a strict message and strengthen monitoring. If the fuel card system is properly implemented, it will be possible to reduce excess purchases and black marketing. Those whose livelihoods depend on fuel, especially ride-sharing drivers, are suffering the most.

At the same time, alongside changing schooling schedules and methods, it is necessary to introduce online-offline systems in offices to reduce trips on the road. In the long term, the plans we already have for public transport development must be implemented seriously so that small fuel-dependent vehicles can gradually be removed from the roads.

EU’s changing apparel market and Bangladesh’s export challenges



RMG NOTES

Mostafiz Uddin is managing director of Denim Expert Limited. He is also the founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE).

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

Bangladesh's garment industry has faced some serious challenges of late. In the first eight months of FY2025-26, the country's ready-made garment exports fell 3.73 percent year on year to \$25.79 billion, against \$26.79 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year. In the EU—Bangladesh's biggest apparel market—garment exports slipped 1.03 percent to \$7.83 billion in the July-November period, down from \$7.92 billion in the same period of FY25, with the bloc accounting for over 48 percent of total RMG shipments in that period.

There are several obvious explanations for the slowdown. These include weak consumer demand in Europe, higher living costs, a cautious buying environment and, of course, geopolitical disruptions. Bangladesh's own exporters and trade bodies have been making these points for months. But I believe there is another possibility worth examining—especially for suppliers serving mainstream fashion retail—and it is that part of the market has been shifting away from traditional wholesale import channels and towards direct-to-consumer cross-border e-commerce flows led by companies such as Shein and Temu. In

other words, the global apparel trade may be increasingly influenced by a growing “parcel economy.” EU policymakers themselves now describe the surge in low-value e-commerce consignments as large enough to distort competition. The European Parliament said 5.8 billion low-value items valued under 150 euro entered the EU in 2025. It said that growth is linked to the rise of Chinese online retailers such as Shein and Temu, as 91 percent of those shipments came from China in 2024.

For Bangladesh, the EU is not just another market, it is the main market. The European Commission says total EU-Bangladesh goods trade reached 22.2 billion euro in 2024 and that almost 94 percent of EU imports from Bangladesh were textiles. It also notes that Bangladesh remains the largest beneficiary of the bloc's Everything but Arms arrangement—providing duty-free, quota-free access to the EU single market for all products except arms and ammunition from Least Developed Countries (LDCs). So, any structural change in the way Europeans buy low-cost clothing matters directly for Bangladesh's export machine.

The problem for traditional trade analysis is that the direct-to-consumer parcel boom does not show up neatly alongside the conventional bulk import model on which many sourcing economies depend. Even where goods are recorded for customs and VAT, the flow is highly fragmented, often entering as millions of small consignments rather than containerised wholesale orders to established retailers. Eurostat's own quality reporting says that extra-EU trade statistics can exclude transactions below national statistical thresholds, which can be as high as 1,000 euro or 1,000kg in some member states. That does not mean all low-value e-commerce trade disappears from the data. But it does mean analysts should be cautious about assuming that traditional apparel import datasets capture the full competitive pressure now coming from the parcel economy in a comparable way.

For Bangladesh's garment sector, the commercial effect could be significant even if the statistical picture is far from perfect. If EU consumers are spending more for ultra-fast, cross-border direct shipments, then traditional retailers may order less from their established sourcing bases or buy later and in smaller quantities. That would show up as pressure on Bangladesh's export receipts without necessarily appearing in import datasets most commonly used by industry observers. It would also help explain why suppliers can feel the market weakening even when some official trade readings appear mixed or lagged. This is especially relevant in value fashion—where speed, price, and variety influence consumer decisions.

The good news for our exporters and European customers is that Brussels has now moved decisively to curb at least part of that distortion. In February 2026, the Council of the European Union gave final approval to new customs duty rules for small parcels entering the EU. The measure abolishes the threshold-based customs duty relief for consignments valued under 150 euro. Until the wider EU customs data hub is operational in 2028, member states will apply an interim flat-rate customs duty of three euro on each item category in a small parcel sent directly to consumers, from 1 July 2026 to 1 July 2028. Once the new system is fully in place, normal customs tariffs will apply instead. Under the new proposal, online platforms are also set to become responsible for customs duties, product compliance, and paperwork on goods sold into the EU. Distance sellers and platforms shipping directly to EU consumers will be treated as the Importer of Record (IOR)—responsible for ensuring imported goods comply with all local laws, customs regulations, and documentation requirements in the destination country—shifting legal responsibility away from consumers and onto the seller or platform. They will be required to ensure that duties are paid and that goods comply with EU regulations. Operators that repeatedly fail to comply could face fines of one to six percent of the value of goods imported into the EU over the previous 12 months. The EU will also create a new EU Customs Authority in French city Lille and a central data hub, though the deal still needs final formal approval. While this will not end the small-parcel model

and nor is it aimed specifically at fashion, EU institutions are being unusually explicit about the rationale. The council said the current duty-free treatment of such parcels leads to unfair competition for EU sellers. The European Commission has made the same point, saying the removal of the threshold is intended to level the playing field between direct imports of individual parcels and traditional retail imports of goods in bulk. For Bangladesh, that should be read as a positive.

Bangladesh's garment industry has built its position around scale, compliance, established buyer relationships, and the ability to supply large programmes into mainstream retail. If Europe becomes less permissive towards lightly taxed or duty-sheltered parcel flows, some competitive pressure should shift back towards more conventional sourcing and import models. That would not solve our other challenges, from productivity and lead times to margin pressure and post-LDC trade planning. But it could remove part of the policy asymmetry that has favoured direct cross-border sellers. There is also a wider point for brands and retailers buying from Bangladesh. A more level customs framework in Europe is not just about protecting EU sellers. It is also about restoring fairer competition across supply chains. Suppliers investing in compliance, traceability, worker protections, and long-term manufacturing capacity have struggled to compete with business models built around millions of low-value parcels moving through a lighter-touch border regime. Brussels now appears to accept that this imbalance has gone too far.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

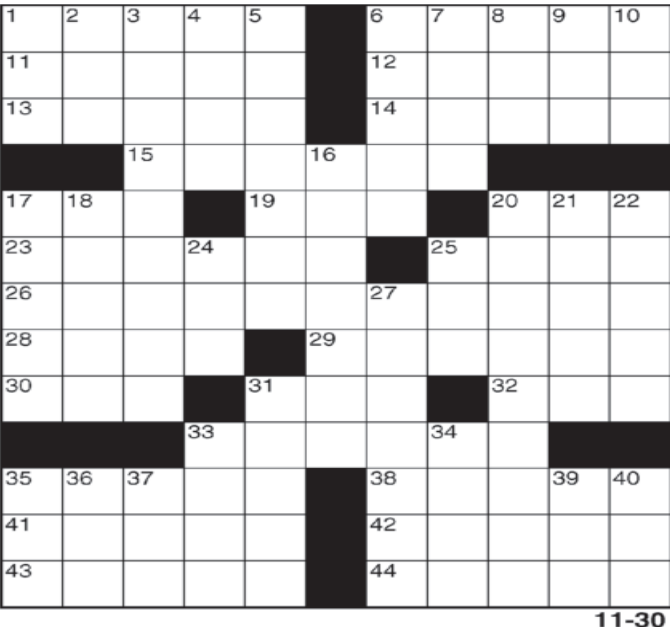
- 1 Hay sites
- 6 Stylist's spot
- 11 “Cats” poet
- 12 Banish
- 13 Film category
- 14 African grassland
- 15 Tooth layer
- 17 Gadot of “Wonder Woman”
- 19 Impair
- 20 Diet no-no
- 23 Out of bed
- 25 Trig function
- 26 They say they're free, in life
- 28 Yard units
- 29 Flip
- 30 Snaky shape
- 31 Cove

- 32 Stew sphere
- 33 Bill collector, of a sort
- 35 November birthstone
- 38 Heep of fiction
- 41 Not dozing
- 42 Simpleton
- 43 Floppy cap
- 44 Door sign

DOWN

- 1 Relay section
- 2 Corrida cry
- 3 Small distinctions
- 4 Tattered
- 5 Clambake clam
- 6 Cut off
- 7 Skating jump
- 8 Rap's ___ Nas X
- 9 Outdated

- 10 Pay stub line
- 16 Snare
- 17 Social blunder
- 18 Spring sign
- 20 Contract details
- 21 Trig topic
- 22 Physicist Nikola
- 24 Ready to go
- 25 Pop's daughter
- 27 Hit song of 1968
- 31 “Carmen” composer
- 33 Confiscate
- 34 Give ___ for one's money
- 35 Bar bill
- 36 Need to pay
- 37 Golf goal
- 39 Hole in one
- 40 That woman



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY 2026

Bridging the gap in Autism care

RABEYA FERDOUS

Observed globally on 2 April, World Autism Awareness Day highlights the urgent need to improve the lives of people living with autism. First declared by the United Nations in 2008, this year's theme, "Autism and Humanity – Every Life Has Value," calls for dignity, inclusion and equal opportunity across societies.

In Bangladesh, the day is marked by rallies, seminars and media campaigns, yet awareness alone is not enough. Experts stress the importance of multidisciplinary care, where occupational therapists play a pivotal role. They help children develop essential skills, including sensory regulation, fine and gross motor coordination, and the ability to perform daily activities such as eating, dressing and grooming independently.

Therapists also nurture social interaction, play and communication skills, while addressing behavioural challenges through structured interventions. Guidance for parents and adjustments to home environments further support children's development and reduce anxiety.

However, access to such services remains limited and largely Dhaka-centric. Expanding occupational therapy nationwide is crucial to ensure individuals with autism gain the skills needed for independence and meaningful inclusion in society.



WORLD HEALTH DAY 2026

Together for health. Stand with science.



STAR HEALTH DESK

On World Health Day 2026, the World Health Organisation is calling for a renewed global commitment to science under the theme "Together for health. Stand with science." The campaign highlights how scientific collaboration remains central to safeguarding not only human health, but also the wellbeing of animals, plants and the planet.

At a time marked by misinformation, climate threats and evolving health challenges, the message is clear: evidence must lead the way. WHO emphasises that scientific knowledge, when combined with strong partnerships and political will, can transform health outcomes and build resilient systems. The year-long initiative celebrates breakthroughs in science while urging governments and institutions to translate research into action.

Central to this vision is the "One Health" approach, recognising

that human health is deeply interconnected with environmental and animal health. From emerging diseases to food security and climate change, science offers the tools to understand risks and develop effective solutions. However, experts warn that without sustained investment and trust in science, these solutions may fall short.

The campaign calls on governments to prioritise science-based policies, strengthen support for research and reinforce WHO's role in guiding global health decisions. Embedding evidence into health, environmental and food systems is seen as essential for long-term sustainability.

Health professionals and scientists are also urged to step forward as trusted voices. By explaining complex evidence in accessible ways, they can help bridge the gap between science and the public, fostering trust and encouraging informed decision-

making. Communication, WHO notes, is as crucial as discovery itself.

Communities, too, play a vital role. The campaign encourages individuals to ask questions, seek reliable information and actively engage in conversations about health. Through social media movements such as #StandWithScience, people are invited to share how science impacts their lives and contributes to healthier communities.

Ultimately, World Health Day 2026 is more than a symbolic observance; it is a call to action. It reminds the world that trust in science is not just an academic concern but a public necessity. By choosing evidence over misinformation and collaboration over division, societies can better prepare for future health challenges.

As global health threats continue to evolve, standing with science may be the most powerful step towards a safer, healthier and more sustainable future for all.

Beyond the classroom door
Ensuring inclusion for Autistic students

TANIA ZARIN KHUSBU

Inclusive education for children with autism in Bangladesh requires more than enrolment in mainstream schools. Experts stress that meaningful inclusion depends on awareness, trained teachers, appropriate resources and a broader cultural shift towards acceptance.

Misconceptions about autism remain widespread, often leading to stigma and exclusion. Schools can play a critical role by promoting awareness and fostering understanding among teachers, students and communities. When neurodiversity is understood, classrooms become safer and more welcoming spaces.

Adapting teaching methods is equally important. Structured routines, clear instructions and visual supports help autistic students navigate daily activities with confidence. Integrating their interests into lessons can enhance engagement and emotional development.

However, teacher training remains limited, with little practical exposure to inclusive education. Continuous professional development, along with access to assistive technologies and individualised education plans, is essential for effective learning.

Improved infrastructure, collaboration with families and community awareness are also vital. Building inclusive classrooms is not a one-time effort but a sustained commitment to ensuring every child can learn, participate and thrive.

The writer is a special educator and meditation therapist. E-mail: taniazarinkhusbu@gmail.com



Power without conscience

In observance of the International Day of Conscience on April 5

DR RUBAIUL MURSHED

A beginning for our time: On a small planet suspended in a vast, silent universe, a rare light flickers—the light of human consciousness. As reflected in a conversation in Davos, this consciousness may be rare, placing on humanity a profound responsibility to preserve it. Yet a deeper question emerges: what is the value of preserving consciousness if conscience itself begins to fade?

The forgotten compass: Conscience is humanity's inner compass; the force that distinguishes right from wrong and guides action. Today, however, we face a troubling paradox. While human capability has expanded beyond imagination, the moral restraint that gives it meaning is weakening.

A warning from the present: Missiles now cross skies faster than diplomacy can respond. Conflicts, technological risks, and global interdependence mean that decisions made in one region affect millions elsewhere. Beneath these developments lies a quieter danger: the erosion of moral restraint.

Today, power is abundant.

But conscience is increasingly scarce.

Lessons history still whispers: Leaders such as Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, and Nelson Mandela showed that lasting leadership is grounded not in force, but in moral clarity.

Yet today, polarisation, speed, and short-term thinking challenge this principle.

New century, deeper risks: Cyber threats, artificial intelligence, and global interdependence amplify both opportunity and risk.

Technology extends human capability, but cannot replace conscience.

Why conscience must lead: Conscience is not abstract; it is practical. It encourages restraint, strengthens trust, and enables cooperation.

We must invest in:

- Ethical education
- Accountability
- Leadership grounded in responsibility

A message to the young: To the youth: your generation will shape the future.

In a world of noise and speed, conscience must not be outsourced. It must be cultivated within.

In a noisy world, your conscience is your quiet power.

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FLOW FEST REDEFINES

WORKPLACE connection beyond the office bridging wellbeing

SAZED IQBAL

In today's fast-paced corporate world, a quieter crisis is unfolding behind glass offices and crowded meeting rooms, workplace loneliness. It is not the absence of people, but the absence of meaningful connection. Professionals often know colleagues by their roles, routines and responses, yet remain strangers to their inner lives. This silent disconnect is increasingly recognised as a barrier to wellbeing and productivity.

Research from Gallup's State of the Global Workplace report highlights the impact. Employees who have a close friend at work are significantly more engaged, productive and likely to remain in their



roles. The difference between superficial interaction and genuine connection is not subtle, it is transformative.

Yet modern workplaces often mistake activity for connection. Team lunches and structured events rarely create the depth required for trust to grow. Real connection develops in unstructured moments, in shared experiences, open conversations and the simple act of being seen beyond a job title.

This is where retreats are gaining attention. By taking employees out of familiar environments and away from daily pressures, they create space for authentic interaction. In natural settings, individuals begin to shed professional barriers, allowing more honest and human connections to emerge.

Initiatives such as "Flow Fest" are tapping into this need. Their retreats in Bangladesh are designed to bring teams together through shared activities, mindful rest and collective experiences. Over several days, participants move, eat and unwind together, often rediscovering both personal balance and team cohesion.

Experts suggest that such investments are not merely about employee satisfaction but long-term organisational strength. Teams built on trust communicate more effectively, adapt better under pressure and demonstrate stronger retention. In this sense, connection is not a soft benefit, but a strategic asset.

As workplaces continue to evolve, addressing loneliness may become as important as improving performance metrics. Creating environments where people feel understood, not just employed, could be the key to healthier organisations and more sustainable success.

The writer works at Flow Fest. E-mail: iqbalsazed@gmail.com

Why doctors no longer want their children to follow them

PROF DR SYED MD AKRAM HUSSAIN

A growing number of doctors are discouraging their children from entering the medical profession, raising concerns about the future of healthcare in South Asia. A recent survey in India found that 91 percent of physicians would not want their children to pursue medicine, a trend experts warn may also be emerging in Bangladesh.

At the core of this shift lies an overstretched healthcare system. In public hospitals, doctors routinely face overwhelming patient loads with limited resources and support. The result is not just long working hours but chronic exhaustion, leading to burnout, reduced motivation and compromised quality of care. The pressure begins early in medical training and persists throughout a doctor's career.

Equally concerning is the growing threat to workplace safety. Reports of verbal abuse, intimidation and even physical assault have become increasingly common. Such conditions foster fear and defensive medical practices, where decisions may be influenced by legal concerns rather than clinical judgement.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed a silent mental health crisis among healthcare workers. High



levels of anxiety, depression and burnout remain largely unaddressed, with limited institutional support available.

At the same time, trust between doctors and patients is eroding. The rise of misinformation and social media scrutiny has intensified pressure on physicians, often without adequate backing from institutions.

Experts emphasise that these challenges are systemic rather than individual. Addressing them will require comprehensive reforms,

including improved workplace safety, fair legal frameworks, reduced workloads and better mental health support.

As Bangladesh considers health sector reforms, the warning signs are clear. Without urgent action, the profession risks losing future talent, threatening the stability of the healthcare system for years to come.

The writer is a Health Policy Analyst and the Chairman of Department of Clinical Oncology at Bangladesh Medical University. E-mail: syedmdakram@gmail.com



HEROES' HOMECOMING

The Bangladesh U-20 squad was accorded a hero's welcome yesterday upon their return from the Maldives, a day after reclaiming the SAFF U-20 Championship title with a victory over India in Male. The winners were received at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka by State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque before heading to a formal reception at the Hatirjheel Amphitheatre via an open-top bus parade through the capital.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



U-20 women go down to China

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh suffered their second successive defeat in the AFC U-20 Women's Asian Cup as favourites China handed the girls in red and green a 2-0 loss in their Group A clash at Nonthaburi Stadium in Bangkok yesterday.

Bangladesh now must beat Vietnam on April 7 to keep their hopes of reaching the knockout stage alive.

After a goalless first half, Yu Xingyue and Wang Aifang struck after the break to seal China's second straight win, following their convincing victory over Vietnam.

Still reeling from a narrow loss to Thailand, Bangladesh made one change to the starting lineup, with coach Peter Butler bringing in Puja Das for Sopna Rani. However, the side failed to find rhythm against one of Asia's strongest teams.

China dominated from the outset, applying constant pressure on the Bangladesh defence, where goalkeeper Mile Akter put in a resilient performance.

China broke the deadlock two minutes into the second half when Zeng Yujia advanced down the right and squared for Yu Xingyue, who finished from close range. Struggling to cope, Bangladesh conceded again in the 82nd minute as Aifang converted a free-kick.

Ronan the answer to senior team's striker void?

ANISUR RAHMAN

SAFF U-20 champions Bangladesh returned home yesterday amid a festive mood, with a trophy parade from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to the Hatirjheel Amphitheatre on an open-top bus -- a grand reception reminiscent of those previously hosted by the Bangladesh Football Federation for the history-making women's national and futsal teams.

While securing a second regional youth title is a significant milestone, the campaign's true revelation was Ronan Sullivan. The US-born forward, hailing from the Philadelphia Union Academy, enjoyed a dream debut in the red and green that exceeded all expectations.

The 18-year-old striker consistently impressed throughout the tournament. From his clinical brace against Pakistan to his vital assist for the winner against Nepal, Ronan proved his worth. However, it was his audacious Panenka in the high-pressure final shootout -- taking the fifth and decisive penalty -- that provided the ultimate evidence of the big-game temperament and technical confidence required for international football.

With the Bangladesh senior national team currently starved of genuine goal-scorers, former national player-turned-coach Shafiqul Islam Manik believes Ronan's promotion to the senior squad should be considered sooner rather than later.

"Ronan deserves a call-up in the trial camp of the national football team if we want to fill up the long lacking of the genuine striker in the senior team," Manik told The Daily Star yesterday.

"He has performed really well in the number nine position of the Bangladesh U-20 side, having good movements in the attacking third, along with good shooting and free-kick ability," added the

because the 17-year-old footballer also plays in the national team at the world level. I think he has the possibility to click for the national side, though the level of the U-20 and national team is not similar," said Manik, adding that Ronan should follow a similar developmental path to the one laid out for Zayyan.

Just two months prior to this tournament, it was not even certain that



experienced AFC A-licence coach.

"As there is no opportunity to see him in the Bangladesh Football League, Ronan can be tested by giving him a chance in the national team's training camp and FIFA international friendly matches."

Drawing a parallel with US based Zayyan Ahmed, Manik noted that while Zayyan initially struggled in trials, he proved his quality with the U-23 side before earning a senior call-up.

"We should make room for Ronan

Ronan would represent Bangladesh. Ronan, for his part, has already set his sights higher. "Senior team, that's the goal," he said after the final.

Manik also urged the football authorities to actively create space for overseas-based forwards. He noted that homegrown attackers currently face an uphill battle to secure starting spots in the domestic league due to the heavy influx of foreign signings in the Bangladesh Premier League.

BCB extends Miraz, Litton tenures

SPORTS REPORTER

The fourth board of directors meeting of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was held yesterday in Mirpur. Extension of the captaincy tenures of its existing leadership groups in ODIs and T20Is, and the appointment of former cricketer Mohammad Rafique as a specialised BCB coach were the biggest outcomes from the meeting. Notably, BCB director Faiazur Rahman also resigned from his position after the meeting, becoming the fourth director of the current board to do so.

The outcomes of the meeting are as follows:

- ODI captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz's tenure, which was set to expire in June, has been extended till the 2027 ICC World Cup.
- T20I captain Litton Das, whose tenure ended in March, will continue as skipper till the 2028 ICC T20 World Cup.
- The tenures of ODI and T20I vice-captains -- Najmul Hossain Shanto and Saif Hassan -- have also been similarly extended.
- Former Bangladesh cricketer Mohammad Rafique has been appointed as a specialised spin bowling coach for one year.
- A pension scheme for players and officials set to be launched by the BCB. A primary committee set to begin work on the initiative.
- An inter-university cricket tournament will be launched
- The board to restart BCB Award Night to recognise players and journalists.

67 GOALS
DAYS LEFT



Masters of longevity

The combined number of World Cup matches played by the top three South American players stands at 67. Lionel Messi leads the tally with 26 matches, followed by Diego Maradona with 21, while Cafu and Javier Mascherano (20 each) jointly hold third place. Meanwhile, Europe's top three players in this regard are Lothar Matthaus (25 matches), Miroslav Klose (24), and Paolo Maldini (23), with a combined total of 72 matches.

**** Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Battle for the golden trophy: All you need to know'.**

BFF's fixation on Cabrera

ANISUR RAHMAN

The National Teams Committee (NTC) of the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday initiated the search for a new head coach following a meeting, as Spanish coach Javier Cabrera's contract is set to expire on April 30.

There, however, remains a catch -- Cabrera himself will also be allowed to appear for an interview. The Spaniard has delivered underwhelming results, with 10 wins, 10 draws, and 19 losses in a tenure of over four years since his appointment in January 2022. Yet, the BFF has not opted to completely part ways with him before beginning the search for a successor.

Such a move can be interpreted in two ways: either the BFF is not confident of attracting someone better than the current coach, or it is unwilling to go through the process of starting anew.

"We are neither thinking of his exclusion, nor thinking of his inclusion," said NTC member and BFF media committee chairman Amirul Islam Babu when asked about keeping Cabrera in contention.

"He [Cabrera] still has about a month remaining in his contract. So, we are searching for someone better than him. If we find someone better than him, then we will think along those lines," he added.

Babu's remarks appear to indicate the governing body's continued inclination towards

the Spanish tactician, who, despite coming under scrutiny after completing his initial 11-month contract, received three extensions along with significant salary increases under both former and current BFF presidents, Kazi Salahuddin and Tabith Awal.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a former BFF executive member who was also part of the previous National Teams Management Committee, said: "The then national teams committee also rejected the appointment of Cabrera in 2022 before he got the job with the blessing of the previous BFF president Kazi Salahuddin."

While most members of the current NTC remain reluctant to reappoint Cabrera, there have also been murmurs about how discussions unfold whenever the topic of replacing him arises -- with those advocating change being asked to find a better alternative themselves.

As it stands, in its apparent fixation on Cabrera, the BFF has overlooked established channels typically followed in hiring a new coach, such as issuing open advertisements, liaising with international coaching agents, or assigning the technical department to conduct the search.

Hence, it would not be a surprise to see Cabrera -- already the longest-serving coach in Bangladesh football history -- extend his tenure, even though the BFF insists it will handle his case in a new manner if he appears for the interview.



HAALAND HATTRICK PROPELS CITY TO FA CUP SEMIS

Erling Haaland hit a hattrick as Manchester City thrashed Liverpool 4-0 on Saturday to reach the FA Cup semifinals and increase the pressure on Reds boss Arne Slot. Haaland netted twice late in the first half of the quarter-final at the Etihad Stadium and completed his treble after the interval following an Antoine Semenyo strike.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Tougher demos if July charter not implemented

11-party rally warns govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Jamaat-led 11-party alliance yesterday demanded the full implementation of the July charter in line with the referendum verdict and warned that they would launch strong street protests if the referendum mandate is ignored.

They said the July uprising did not take place to carry out "routine tasks" like constitutional amendments but to bring about structural reforms. Ignoring the people's verdict in favour of reforms would amount to reinstating a "fascist system", they alleged.

The warning came from a rally held at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the capital, organised to protest what the alliance described as the government's stance against the referendum verdict and to demand its immediate implementation. A procession followed the rally, with a

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



The 11-party alliance led by the Jamaat-e-Islami holds a rally and protest march at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in Dhaka yesterday, demanding the implementation of the referendum verdict.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

DIESEL FROM KAZAKHSTAN

Govt to import another 1 lakh tonnes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is set to import another 1,00,000 tonnes of diesel from Kazakhstan on an emergency basis as it hunts high and low for fuel amid the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran.

The diesel will be bought at \$75.06 per barrel from Kazakh Gas Processing Plant through direct procurement, as per the decision of the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase chaired by Finance and Planning Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday.

"The deal is considered cost-effective given the current energy supply situation," the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) informed the meeting.

The BPC and Kazakh Gas Processing Plant completed their negotiations on April 2. The shipment would be loaded from Batumi, Georgia for delivery to Chittagong Port.

This comes after the government last week approved the import of another 1 lakh tonnes of diesel from ExxonMobil Kazakhstan through direct procurement.

The move to import diesel from Kazakhstan comes after contracted suppliers Unipac Singapore and Petco Trading Labuan Company invoked force majeure on their April delivery.

The committee also approved the procurement of two

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Odhikar protests move to repeal key ordinances

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights body Odhikar yesterday strongly protested moves to repeal several key ordinances issued by the interim government and urged the government to immediately pass them in parliament instead.

In a statement, the organisation said a parliamentary special committee recommended revoking four ordinances.

These are the Supreme Court Judges Appointment Ordinance 2025, the Supreme Court Secretariat Ordinance 2025, the Supreme Court Secretariat (Amendment) Ordinance 2026, and the National Parliament Secretariat (Interim Special Provisions) Ordinance.

The committee also suggested not placing 16 important ordinances as bills at this stage, Odhikar said.

These include the July National Charter Implementation Order 2025, the ordinance expanding the powers of the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Prevention of Enforced Disappearance Ordinance, and the National Human Rights Commission Ordinance.

If they are not placed as bills, the ordinances will be treated as repealed and lose effect after April 10, according to the statement.

Odhikar said 68 percent of people voted "yes" in the referendum. It also alleged that the special committee recommended the repeal, ignoring notes of dissents from opposition lawmakers.

It said that during Sheikh Hasina's long rule, state institutions were deliberately turned into subservient partisan bodies, resulting in judicial harassment, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, mass arrests, torture, and other forms of repression against opposition leaders and activists, dissenters, and citizens.

The rights body added that although BNP and Jamaat leaders and activists, as well as dissenters, faced widespread repression during that period, the then National Human

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BIDA U-turns on pvt sector advisory body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a sudden reversal, the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) has withdrawn its claim that the government had established a formal Private Sector Advisory Council.

The clarification came just hours after BIDA issued a statement naming nine prominent business leaders as inaugural members of the body. The Daily Star had published a report on its business page, based on that initial press release issued yesterday evening.

In a revised message posted on its Facebook page, BIDA said the meeting with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman was merely convened to gather observations and recommendations from selected entrepreneurs and identify priorities for private sector-led growth.

"It was not a formal advisory council of the government or the honourable prime minister," BIDA said, adding that the council had no organisational or legal basis.

BIDA also said "similar engagements" would continue in the future,

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TOP 20 LOAN DEFAULTERS

1% of Tk 92,627 crore recovered from six state banks

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The top 20 loan defaulters account for 63 percent of the defaulted loans in six state-owned banks, prompting the government to order specific roadmaps for recovery.

At the end of last year, the top 20 defaulters owed Tk 92,627 crore, according to the minutes of a finance ministry review meeting held last month.

The state banks could recover only Tk 562 crore from the defaulters. Rupali recovered Tk 361 crore, followed by Janata (Tk 56 crore), Agrani (Tk 31 crore), Sonali (Tk 9 crore), Bangladesh Development Bank (Tk 7 crore) and BASIC (Tk 5 crore).

Nazma Mobarek, secretary of the Financial Institutions Division, who chaired the review meeting, termed the recovery situation "highly disappointing". The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

She directed the banks' chief executives to formulate a realistic recovery action plan.

A steel company cleared Tk 242 crore to exit Rupali Bank, or else the bank's recovery figure would have been much less, said one of its top officials on the condition of

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anonymity to speak candidly on the issue.

The majority of the defaulted loans are from the Awami League times and most of the defaulters have fled the country with the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina-led government.

The state banks could recover only Tk 562 crore from the defaulters. Rupali recovered Tk 361 crore, followed by Janata (Tk 56 crore), Agrani (Tk 31 crore), Sonali (Tk 9 crore), Bangladesh Development Bank (Tk 7 crore) and BASIC (Tk 5 crore).

"How can we recover such sums from them when they are not in the country?"

And those who are still in the country made down payments to avail themselves of the central bank's special loan rescheduling facility, he said.

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AMINUL MURDER

14 years on, family waits for justice

Demands probe to identify masterminds behind the labour leader's killing

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Fourteen years after the brutal killing of Aminul Islam, a labour leader from Ashulia, his family continues its quest for justice, calling for a full and impartial probe to bring all those responsible to book.

Aminul, 40, was abducted on the evening of April 4, 2012, by self-proclaimed labour leader Mustafizur Rahman and an unidentified burqa-clad woman.

His body was found the next morning by the roadside in Ghatail, Tangail, bearing signs of torture. The autopsy confirmed it was a murder, sparking outrage both at home and abroad.

Aminul's elder brother Rafiqul Islam filed a murder case with Ghatail Police Station. The investigation passed through four officers before Fajlul Kabir, assistant superintendent of police at the Criminal Investigation Department, submitted a charge sheet in 2013, naming only Mustafizur.

Mustafizur reportedly worked as a source for intelligence agencies. In 2018, a Tangail court sentenced him to death, but he had already gone into hiding.

The family and activists of the Bangladesh Centre for Workers Solidarity (BCWS), where Aminul was an organiser, rejected the verdict.

They said the judgment failed to clarify Mustafizur's role, identify accomplices, or address alleged involvement of intelligence officials.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Aminul's brother

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Artemis astronauts more than halfway to the Moon: Nasa

AFP, Houston

The Artemis 2 astronauts have passed the halfway point between Earth and the Moon yesterday as they sped toward a planned lunar flyby, with Nasa releasing initial images of Earth taken from inside the Orion spacecraft.

Astronaut Christina Koch said the crew had a collective "expression of joy" upon being told of the milestone, which was hit around two days, five hours and 24 minutes after the spacecraft blasted off from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

Nasa's online dashboard showed early Saturday that the Orion spacecraft carrying the astronauts was more than 229,000 kilometres (142,000 miles) from Earth.

The space agency earlier released images from Orion that included a full portrait of Earth, featuring its deep blue oceans and billowing clouds.

The astronauts are due to loop around the Moon early next week – a feat not accomplished in more than 50 years.

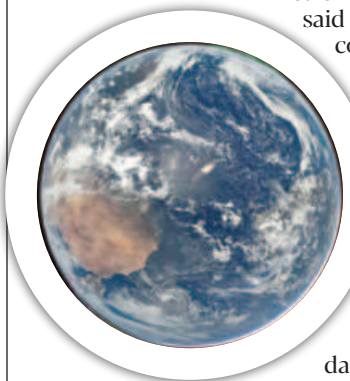


PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

A mother comforts her baby, suffering from measles, as it sleeps with an oxygen mask on at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Mohakhali yesterday. Patients are being accommodated on balconies or floors as the facility is overcrowded amid a measles outbreak.

Crime boss Boro Sazzad's deputy held in Chattogram

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday arrested Saddam Hossain, alias "Galakata Bacha", the second-in-command of notorious criminal Sazzad Ali, alias Boro Sazzad.

Saddam, 37, of the Muktiyoddha Colony in Arefin Nagar under Bayezid Bostami area in Chattogram, was apprehended in the South Salimpur area of Sitakunda upazila early yesterday.

ARM Mozaffar Hossain, assistant director (media) of Rab-7, confirmed that the raid took place around 2:45am following a tip-off regarding Saddam's whereabouts.

Saddam has long been a figure of fear in Chattogram, particularly in the Jungle Salimpur and surrounding areas,

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