



### US-IRAN DIALOGUE

Negotiations in Islamabad failed to reach a deal as both parties remained firm on their stances.

### IRAN'S POSITION

Blamed US for "unreasonable demands" and insisted on recognition of Iran's rights and interests. Tehran wants control of the Strait of Hormuz, payment of war reparations and a ceasefire across the region, including in Lebanon.

### US POSITION

Iran must commit not to develop nuclear weapons or related tools. Washington presented what it called a "final and best offer." Trump downplayed the need for a deal, saying the US had already "won."

## Trump orders blockade of Hormuz as talks falter

### US vows to intercept ships, destroy mines; Iran threatens to trap enemies in 'deadly vortex'

#### AGENCIES

President Donald Trump said yesterday the US Navy would immediately start blockading the Strait of Hormuz, raising the stakes after marathon talks with Iran mediated by Pakistan failed to reach a deal to end the war, jeopardising a fragile two-week ceasefire.

In response, Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned they have traffic in the strategic waterway under full control and would trap any enemy who tries to challenge it "in a deadly vortex in the Strait if it makes the wrong move".

Each side had earlier blamed the other for the failure of talks to end six weeks of fighting that has killed thousands, roiled the global economy

and sent oil prices soaring. The talks, after a ceasefire earlier in the week, were the first direct US-Iranian meeting in more than a decade and the highest-level discussions since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

In a lengthy declaration on his social media platform, Trump said that his eventual goal was to clear the strait of mines and reopen it to all shipping, but that in the meantime Iran must not be allowed to profit from its control of the waterway.

Iran has itself been restricting traffic through the strait -- a key route for shipments of oil, gas and fertiliser from the Gulf to the world market -- while allowing vessels deemed to be working

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## Armed forces must remain apolitical

### Says Tarique, vows tech-driven overhaul

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday said the armed forces do not belong to any individual, family, or political party, stressing that their duty must be anchored in loyalty to the constitution and the trust of the people.

Addressing armed forces members at a darbar at the Senapangan Auditorium in Dhaka Cantonment,

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## Govt to 'make all ordinances valid'

### Say ministers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday assured that apart from a few exceptions, all activities of the interim government, led by Prof Muhammad Yunus, will be granted validity.

Briefing journalists at the Secretariat, Salahuddin said this validity will be carried out under the Fourth Schedule of the constitution, which deals with transitional and temporary provisions.

"As the Fourth Schedule of the constitution validates all activities of the past interim government, except a few, then it will become legitimate," he said, speaking about parliament's handling of 133 ordinances issued by the interim government.

Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman and Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni also attended the briefing. Both ministers said ordinances not ratified by parliament will be reintroduced later with further review to make them more efficient.

The law minister explained that of the 133 ordinances placed, 97 were ratified into law without changes, 13 were amended

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ASHA BHOSLE (1933-2026)

## Golden voice goes silent

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Asha Bhosle, whose legendary voice flowed through love, longing, rebellion, and joy for nearly eight decades, passed away yesterday. She was 92.

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## JULY UPRISING CASE Ex-Speaker freed on bail



COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury yesterday walked out of jail, five days after she landed there in an attempted murder case linked to the July uprising.

Kawalin Nahar, senior superintendent of Kashimpur Female's Central Jail in Gazipur, told The Daily Star that Shirin Sharmin was released at 6:28pm.

Earlier in the day, Dhaka Additional Chief

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## Rivals stab teen gang leader to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth was killed in broad daylight in a clash between two rival groups over territorial dominance in Dhaka's Mohammadpur area yesterday afternoon, painting a grim picture of the persistent violence linked to juvenile gangs in the locality.

The incident took place around 4:30pm along the embankment road in the Rayerbazar Boddhobhumi area under Mohammadpur Police Station, said Abdullah Al Mamun, assistant commissioner (Mohammadpur Zone).

CCTV footage of the incident shows five to six individuals chasing a group of three, with both sides carrying weapons, in a chaotic scene unfolding in the open.

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MY DHAKA

PHOTOS: STAR

# Shakyamuni's Biju Mela brings the hills to Dhaka

RBR

Biju, Boisu, Sangrai, Bihu, Shangkran, and Bishu are different versions of a festival celebrating the New Year and the arrival of spring in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Each indigenous community has its own name for it in their dialect, and together they are often grouped under the umbrella term Boisabi.

We often say the grass is greener on the other side, but in truth, it is far more lush in our hills. So, in a "if the mountain won't come to..." kind of situation, when you cannot be in the CHT, you must find another way to bring the colours and sounds of the hills to Dhaka.

Last weekend, wandering through an indigenous Biju Mela at the Shakyamuni Buddhist Temple in Mirpur, I was mesmerised by the music, dance, flavours, and vibrant colours of the hills that had found their way to us, Dhakaites.

Stepping into the mela, I did not expect to discover rare edibles like the

humble shimul flower. I had always associated it with cotton pillows and childhood memories, never imagining it could be eaten. At one stall, baskets of dried shimul flowers were neatly packed, waiting to be sold. The vendors explained how they are softened in warm water, stir-fried, or mixed into spicy salads with fermented fish paste. My surprise quickly turned into fascination: something I had thought of only as ornamental was, in fact, a delicacy deeply rooted in indigenous cuisine.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts are full of such wonders. Rare delicacies like Rokto Gota, or Blood Fruit, found in the wild forests, are cherished for their deep-red colour and tangy flavour. I first heard of it from a celebrated Chakma chef and had always wanted to forage for it. Finding it in Dhaka was a treat.

Then there is Rangamati's turmeric, famed for its rich colour and earthy aroma. In Dhaka, people often seek it out at fairs and specialty shops, believing it to be purer and more potent than the turmeric sold in city markets.

Another treasure is the wild, native ginger of the CHT. The hilly climate is ideal for growing it through traditional jhum (slash-and-burn) agriculture in Rangamati, Bandarban, and Khagrachhari. In Dhaka, we mostly find commercial hybrid ginger, bland and watery in taste, whereas the native variety is pungent, sharp, and aromatic — often described as earthy and peppery.

Binni chhal, our sticky rice, and jhum pumpkins, known for their starchy texture and sweet, nutty flavour, are already familiar to Dhaka residents. But the region's unique climate also

makes it a hub for high-value fruits like bananas, pineapples, and papayas, grown with organic fertilizers that enhance their taste.

These foods carry the essence of the hills into our urban kitchens, acting as a bridge between the forest and the capital. They are cuisines are cultural markers tied to festivals, rituals, and the rhythm of seasons.

Walking through the mela, surrounded by traditional dances and songs, I realised that food here is more than sustenance. It is memory, identity, and celebration. Each rare item — whether a dried flower, a crimson fruit, or a golden spice — tells a story of resilience and belonging, connecting the hills to the city through the shared joy of discovery.

Tasting them feels like stepping into a living archive — where every bite carries the wisdom of grandmothers, the resilience of indigenous communities, and the beauty of a land that still holds secrets in its trees and flowers, speaking of a cuisine rooted in the forest and river.



## MEASLES-RUBELLA VACCINE Special drive to inoculate 12 lakh children in 3 cities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special measles-rubella vaccination drive in the four city corporations — Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Mymensingh, and Barishal — began yesterday, amid a surge in measles cases and deaths.

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Hossain inaugurated the campaign at Nagar Bhaban in the capital's Gulistan area around 11:00am. Earlier in the day, MA Muhit, state minister for health, launched it at the Karail slum.

Around 12.20 lakh children aged six months to under five years are expected to be vaccinated under this initiative, according to Shahriar Sajjad, deputy director of the Expanded Programme on Immunization.

In Dhaka, the month-long campaign was launched through separate programmes by Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).

DSCC officials said 540 vaccination centres — 90 permanent and 450 temporary — have been established for the drive. The targeted children will receive the vaccine daily from 9:00am to 4:00pm.

DNCC officials said they have set up 558 permanent and temporary centres, supported by 35 evening centres and eight Friday-only centres.

Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Health Services recorded four more confirmed measles deaths in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the total confirmed measles deaths to 28.

Besides, the directorate recorded six more suspected deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of suspected measles deaths to 151.

## Haiti's historic fort stampede kills 30

AFP, Port-Au-Prince

A stampede at an historical fortress in Haiti has killed at least 30 people, a government minister told AFP yesterday, with the crush reportedly involving several young visitors.

"The Minister of Culture and Communication has confirmed the deaths of 30 people at the Citadelle Henri on Saturday, April 11, 2026," culture minister Emmanuel Menard told AFP in a written message.

"The injured are currently receiving the necessary medical care, and a rescue team is searching for any missing persons," Menard said, without giving an exact figure of those injured.

Citadelle Henri, also known as Citadelle Laferriere, is a 19th-century fortress and popular tourist spot.

## Govt to 'make all ordinances valid'

FROM PAGE 1

before becoming law, and seven were repealed. "The remaining 16 ordinances will undergo further scrutiny and necessary action will be taken later," he said.

Asked about the referendum ordinance and the legality of the referendum held alongside the national election, Salahuddin said, "It is a factum valet, or valid by occurrence. The ordinance was issued, the referendum was held, and it has legitimacy. There is no need for a new law on this, as no further referendum will be held on this matter."

If in the future a referendum is required, it will either be a constitutional referendum under Article 142 or a separate law will have to be enacted. So there is no reason for threats. Its validity already exists. It is not illegal."

On opposition threats of agitation, he said there is no scope for confusion regarding the referendum, as the matter is pending before the court and its decision will be final.

He emphasised that the government is proceeding with transparency on constitutional matters and will

establish the necessary legal framework in due course.

The law minister alleged that certain quarters are spreading confusion by claiming the government has "discarded ordinances."

He argued that transparency and accountability are clearly stated in the preambles of the laws, including repeal bills, which explicitly mention the reasons.

As examples, he cited bills relating to the National Human Rights Commission, the appointment of Supreme Court judges, and the Supreme Court Secretariat, noting that these required further consultation with stakeholders.

On the law concerning enforced disappearances, Asaduzzaman said ambiguities in definitions and trial processes could cause future complications, requiring more detailed examination.

He also said there were gaps in the Human Rights Commission ordinance regarding investigation, fines, and compensation, adding that the government has already initiated discussions with stakeholders, and a

consultation meeting may be held after mid-May.

He compared the current government's approach with the one that came after the 2007-2009 caretaker government and converted only 54 of 122 ordinances into law, while the rest were annulled.

"In contrast, we have converted a larger number of ordinances into law. For those that have not yet become law, we also have a clear plan and genuine intent," he said.

Asked about judicial independence and show-cause notices against lower court judges, the law minister said steps were taken because their names were used by coaching centres, and due to misconduct on social media.

The home minister then added, "We also want the judiciary's independence. But that independence means independence in conducting trials."

Salahuddin, however, questioned whether making the judiciary "super-independent or sovereign" would serve the welfare of the state, stressing the need for harmonious cooperation among all organs of government.

## Trump orders blockade of Hormuz

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for friendly countries, such as China, to pass. There have been unconfirmed reports that Tehran plans to charge tolls.

"THIS IS WORLD EXTORTION," Trump said. "I have also instructed our Navy to seek and interdict every vessel in International Waters that has paid a toll to Iran. No one who pays an illegal toll will have safe passage on the high seas. We will also begin destroying the mines the Iranians laid in the Straits."

Later, in a Fox News interview, Trump threatened to impose a 50 percent tariff on Chinese imports if Beijing tries to help the Iranian military and added, "I could take out Iran in one day. I could have their entire energy everything, every one of their plants, their electric generating plants, which is a big deal."

Iran's Parliamentary Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, who led his country's delegation along with Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, blamed the US for not winning Tehran's trust despite his team offering "forward-looking initiatives".

"The U.S. has understood Iran's logic

and principles and it's time for them to decide whether they can earn our trust or not," Qalibaf said on X.

Vance said Iran had chosen not to accept American terms, including not to build nuclear weapons.

"I could go into great detail, and talk about much that has been gotten but, there is only one thing that matters — IRAN IS UNWILLING TO GIVE UP ITS NUCLEAR AMBITIONS!" Trump said later.

Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency said "excessive" US demands had hindered reaching a deal. Other Iranian media said there was agreement on a number of issues, but the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's nuclear programme were the main points of difference.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said it was "imperative" to preserve the ceasefire that was agreed last Tuesday as the sides attempt to wind down a war that began on February 28 with air strikes by the US and Israel on Iran.

Israeli security cabinet minister Zeev Elkin told Army Radio that more talks were still an option but added, "The Iranians are playing with fire."

Even as the talks took place, US ally Israel continued bombing Tehran-backed Hezbollah militants in Lebanon, insisting that that conflict was not part of the Iran-US ceasefire. Iran says the fighting in Lebanon must stop.

The Israeli military said it struck Hezbollah rocket launchers overnight into yesterday, and black smoke could be seen rising in the southern suburbs of the Lebanese capital, Beirut, yesterday. In Israeli villages near the border, air raid sirens sounded, warning of incoming rocket fire from Lebanon.

Tehran is demanding control of the Strait of Hormuz, payment of war reparations and a ceasefire across the region, including in Lebanon, according to Iranian state TV and officials, as well as the release of its frozen assets abroad.

Tehran also wants to collect transit fees in the Strait of Hormuz.

Despite the differences in Islamabad, three supertankers fully laden with oil passed through the Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, shipping data showed, in what appeared to be the first vessels to exit the Gulf since the ceasefire deal.

## Armed forces must remain apolitical

FROM PAGE 1

he outlined plans to modernise them into technology-driven, fully integrated, and rapidly responsive forces capable of credible deterrence, while developing the army, navy, and air force into faster, more coordinated units.

He said the government will reshape the forces and defence policy, and formulate a modern national security strategy reflecting Bangladesh's realities, national interests, and future threats, ensuring a Bangladesh-centric, people-centric, and state dignity-oriented security framework. Tarique also assured that past grievances or injustices involving service members will be addressed through due legal and institutional processes, adding that such incidents will not occur in the future.

He said, "We want such an Army that is smart, technology-driven, rapidly responsive and time-befitting, where our fighting arms are modern, well equipped, highly sophisticated, manoeuvre-capable and quickly deployable. At the same time, we aim to make our artillery force more precise, long range and technology-based, and to develop a modern, multi-layered and effective air defence system."

Tarique said the government aims to enhance defence capabilities through drone technology, satellite surveillance, electronic warfare, and strengthened cyber systems to ensure digital security and data integrity, while advancing the Army with modern, smart combat systems.

He said special emphasis is being

placed on naval security, including the Bay of Bengal, maritime routes, marine resources, and the blue economy, adding that protecting coastal areas and maritime communication is a key national priority. He added that the modernisation of the air force will continue to strengthen air surveillance, rapid deployment, airspace security, and technology-based capabilities, including the induction of advanced multi-role combat aircraft and a multi-layered integrated air defence system.

Tarique said a modern joint operations doctrine among the three services, along with an upgraded C4I system — command, control, communication, computer, and intelligence — will ensure rapid decision-making and effective deployment in any crisis. "This will also ensure optimal use of limited resources so that our armed forces can protect national sovereignty, respond to disasters, and uphold Bangladesh's dignity in the international arena."

He said the government plans to build a self-reliant defence capability by developing a domestic defence industry and to strengthen military-to-military partnerships to deepen regional and international cooperation.

He highlighted the difficult realities of the past one and a half decades. Referring to the 2009 BDR mutiny at Palkhona, Tarique said a planned massacre was carried out to weaken the army, adding that during the subsequent one and a half decades under Awami League rule, there were

attempts to undermine and tarnish the image of the armed forces.

He said the role of Bangladesh's armed forces has been globally recognised not merely as a wartime force, but as a protector of independence and sovereignty, and highlighted their contributions to tackling natural disasters and serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions to help war-torn countries achieve stability.

He lauded the military's role in safeguarding the country and its people in 2024, saying their actions gave hope to freedom-loving citizens. "In the unstable period following August 5, 2024, amid visible administrative paralysis, the armed forces played an extraordinary role."

Tarique said the armed forces' support to the interim government in holding the February 12 election in a free, fair, and credible manner reflected their trust in democratic principles and commitment to the people. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to justice, saying any injustice done to members of the armed forces for political or other reasons will be addressed in accordance with due process.

Earlier, upon his arrival at the venue, the prime minister was received by his Defence Adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) AKM Shamsul Islam, Chief of Army Staff General Waker Uz Zaman, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Nazmul Hassan, and Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan, along with the principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division.

## Golden voice goes silent

FROM PAGE 1

Her passing marks the loss of not just a singer, but a presence so indelibly present in the cultural memory of the subcontinent that it feels impossible to separate her voice from the moments it came to define.

Indian media reported that she had been admitted to a hospital in Mumbai, due to extreme exhaustion and a chest infection. Her granddaughter, Zana Bhosle, had earlier said she was undergoing treatment for the condition.

For over seven decades, Asha Bhosle's voice moved effortlessly across genres, languages, and moods. She holds a Guinness record for singing over 12,000 songs in more than 20 Indian and foreign languages; a staggering body of work that places her among the most recorded artistes in history.

From the playful lilt of cabaret numbers to the aching tenderness of ghazals, from folk-inspired melodies to experimental fusions, her catalogue has come to resemble a cultural archive in its scale and depth. Celebrated for timeless hits such as "Piya Tu Ab To Aaja", "Kajra Mohabbat Wala", "Rangeela Re", and "Dil Cheez Kya Hai", she would have turned 93 on September 8 this year. News of her passing has deeply affected generations of listeners who grew up with her music.

Born on September 8, 1933, in Goar, Maharashtra, Asha Bhosle was raised in the culturally rich Mangeshkar household. Her father, Deenanath Mangeshkar, was a respected classical singer and theatre actor, and it was within this environment that her

musical journey began early.

The younger sister of Lata Mangeshkar, Bhosle's rise to prominence was far from inevitable. In an industry that initially typecast her into lighter, more playful numbers, she gradually built a distinct identity, one defined by bold versatility and a constant instinct to evolve.

Asha Bhosle's marriage to composer Rahul Dev Burman gave Indian music one of its most iconic creative duos. Her collaborations with R D Burman marked a defining phase in her career, as the duo reimagined the sound of Hindi cinema by blending Western influences with Indian sensibilities. Songs such as "Dum Maro Dum" and "Chura Liya Hai Tumhe Jo Dil Ko" emerged as defining anthems; bold, sensuous, and strikingly modern for their time.

Yet Bhosle was never confined to a single style. She brought equal mastery to the delicate intricacies of ghazals, most notably in her work with Khayyam for films like Umrao Jaan. Songs such as "Dil Cheez Kya Hai" and "In Aankhon Ki Masti" revealed a different register — restrained, haunting, and steeped in classical depth.

Her repertoire extended further still; from folk-inspired melodies to devotional songs, from pop experiments to international collaborations. She recorded in languages ranging from Hindi and Bengali to English, Russian, and Malay, reflecting a global reach rare for her era.

Recognition followed, though it stood in the shadow of the affection she inspired. Bhosle was the recipient

of multiple Filmfare Awards, including a Lifetime Achievement Award, and won the National Film Award for Best Female Playback Singer on several occasions. She was honoured with the Padma Vibhushan, one of India's highest civilian awards, and received a Grammy Award nomination for her collaborative album Legacy with Ustad Ali Akbar Khan.

Even in her later years, the legendary singer remained artistically restless. She explored new genres, performed globally, and continued to record, refusing to let her voice be reduced to nostalgia.

Her passing marks more than the loss of a singer. It is the silencing of a voice that had become inseparable from the emotional fabric of the subcontinent — a voice that accompanied celebrations, heartbreaks, and everything in between.

Her last rites will be held at 4:00pm today at Shivaji Park in Mumbai. She is survived by her son, Anand Bhosle. As people gather at her residence and later at Shivaji Park to bid farewell, they will not simply mourn a person, but a voice — one that spanned generations and made the intangible deeply human.

In the coming days, tributes will recall her records, her awards, and her milestones. But her true legacy lies elsewhere; in the enduring, almost imperceptible way her songs remain with us. In radios still playing her melodies, in playlists curated across generations, and in memories that surface unbidden at the sound of a familiar note.

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## Deliver best services for Hajj pilgrims: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday directed the authorities concerned to ensure the best possible services for Hajj pilgrims this year.



"The prime minister said those engaged in serving Hajj pilgrims must ensure the highest standard of service this year. He also instructed the authorities concerned to remain vigilant so that pilgrims do not face any hardship," said his Additional Press Secretary Atikur Rahman Rumon.

He said the instruction was given at a meeting of the National Committee on Hajj Management held at the Secretariat chaired by the prime minister.

Rumon said the meeting reviewed the common problems faced by pilgrims and discussed ways to reduce or resolve them.

Rumon said the meeting also discussed improving overall Hajj management, storing pilgrims' information online, evaluating Hajj agencies, identifying agencies facing complaints, and appointing guides (Moallem) from Bangladeshi expatriates living in Saudi Arabia from next year.



Chakma community members float flowers placed on banana leaves on Kaptai Lake in Rangamati in observance of their annual Phool Biju festivities. Hill communities in the region mark the start of the Biju festival, two days before their New Year, by floating flowers on water bodies across the Chittagong Hill Tracts in honour of Goddess Ganga. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

## 'Medieval barbarism'

Rights bodies, parties express outrage over mob killing of Kushtia pir, decry 'culture of impunity'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human rights organisations, cultural bodies, and political parties have strongly condemned the mob killing of a pir (spiritual leader) in Kushtia, demanding an impartial investigation and the immediate arrest of those responsible.

The victim, Abdur Rahman, alias Shamim al Jahangir, was beaten and hacked to death at his darbar (shrine) in Daulatpur upazila on Saturday.

According to the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), tensions had been building over an old social media video containing allegedly derogatory remarks about the Quran, which led a mob to vandalise and torch the premises.

Police rescued the critically injured pir, but doctors at the Daulatpur Upazila Health Complex declared him dead upon arrival.

Terming the killing a serious violation of human rights, the HRSS said such incidents reflect a deep-rooted culture of impunity that threatens communal harmony.

Expressing deep concern, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) pointed to law enforcers' alarming failure to control the

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## Barrister Shafique Ahmed passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Barrister Shafique Ahmed, eminent jurist and former law minister,



passed away yesterday while receiving treatment at Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in Dhaka. He was 91.

He breathed his last at 5:30pm. He left behind two sons, a daughter, and a host of well-wishers to mourn his death.

Barrister Shafique had been suffering from old-age complications. He will be buried at Azimpur Graveyard today, his son Barrister Mahbub Shafique Rajib told The Daily Star.

Shafique Ahmed served as the law, justice and parliamentary affairs minister from January 6, 2009, to November 21, 2013, during the regime of the Sheikh Hasina-led government.

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## RESERVED SEATS IN PARLIAMENT

## Over 1,200 seek ruling party nominations

Hopes run high as aspirants throng BNP central office on final day of sales

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A large crowd gathered at BNP's central office in Nayapaltan yesterday on the final day of selling nomination forms for women in the 13th Jatiya Sangsad.

From early morning, the narrow lanes around the office were packed with aspirants, many accompanied by family members and local leaders. By afternoon, the crowd spilled onto adjoining roads, with slogans being chanted.

Party leaders said that as of 7:00pm yesterday, nearly 1,300 nomination forms had been sold over the three-day period. Sales were scheduled to continue until 10:00pm.

Inside the office premises, long queues formed in front of designated counters, while party activists tried to maintain order. Small groups of aspirants were seen discussing their

prospects, comparing political credentials, and seeking last-minute endorsements from senior leaders.

Party sources said women leaders from the BNP's central executive committee and Mohila Dal, as well as younger leaders with links to former

loyalty, and organisational experience, while others sought backing from senior leaders.

Talking to reporters, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said the party will prioritise candidates based on "qualifications, social



The party will prioritise candidates based on qualifications, social acceptability, education, and contribution to democratic movements, along with those who have faced repression during past political struggles.

RUHUL KABIR RIZVI, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General

Chhatra Dal, are in the race.

Alongside party leaders, aspirants from a wide range of professions, including teachers, lawyers and artists, also bought forms.

Many submitted profiles outlining their activism,

acceptability, education, and contribution to democratic movements", along with those who had faced repression during past political struggles.

According to party sources, aspirants must pay Tk 2,000

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PAHELA BAISHAKH  
DMP rolls out multi-tier security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extensive security measures have been taken across the capital to ensure people from all walks of life can celebrate the Bangla New Year peacefully, said Dhaka Metropolitan Police Acting Commissioner Md Sarwar yesterday.

Speaking at a press briefing at Ramna Park, Sarwar said that although there is no specific intelligence indicating militant threats surrounding the Pahela Baishakh celebrations, law enforcement agencies remain fully prepared to respond to any situation.

"To ensure that people of all religions and communities can celebrate the national festival smoothly, DMP has taken extensive security measures," he told reporters.

The acting commissioner said large crowds are expected at major venues, including Ramna Park, Dhaka University, Bahadur Shah Park, Shakyamuni Buddhist Vihara in Mirpur, Rabindra Sarobar, and Hatirjheel.

To manage the scale of the event, the entire Dhaka Metropolitan area has been divided into nine sectors and 14 sub-sectors. A large number of police personnel -- both in uniform and plainclothes -- will be deployed across the capital.

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FARMERS' CARD  
PM to launch scheme on Pahela Baishakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is set to introduce a "Farmers' Card" scheme nationwide in three phases, bringing all farmers under a unified support system and offering 10 categories of benefits, including subsidised agricultural inputs, irrigation support, and soft farm loans.

The pre-pilot phase will be formally launched on Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla New Year, tomorrow.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is scheduled to inaugurate the programme at Shaheed Maruf Stadium in Tangail.

The announcement was made by Agriculture Minister Mohammad Aminur Rashid at a press conference at the Secretariat yesterday. The prime minister's adviser on finance and planning, Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, also spoke at the briefing.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

## His vision still guides healthcare

## Say speakers on Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury marking his third death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury's lifelong contributions to community-based healthcare, affordable medicine, and people-centered development remain a guiding force for Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK) and beyond, said speakers on Saturday at a commemorative event marking his third death anniversary.



They noted that Zafrullah's vision continues to inspire the struggle for a just, equitable, and accessible healthcare system in Bangladesh, underscoring his role as a pioneer of pro-people medical services.

Marking the third death anniversary of Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus on Saturday recalled him as "a movement in himself".

In a Facebook post, Yunus, also the former chief adviser of the interim government, wrote that Zafrullah's lifelong struggle was for the rights of the poor, especially healthcare for the most vulnerable. He stood firmly beside Grameen Bank's women members, offering active and courageous solidarity. Even in declining health, his commitment to the disenfranchised never wavered.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Chhayanaut authorities officially announce arrangements for the year's traditional musical welcome programme, more popularly known as 'Barshabaran', at Ramna Batamul on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh. The photo was taken at Chhayanaut's cultural centre in the capital's Dhanmondi area yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORHSED

## 'Attempts to silence Bangalees won't succeed'

## Chhayanaut announces Barshabaran programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A message of cultural resilience marked Chhayanaut's announcement of its Pahela Baishakh 1433 celebrations yesterday, as the organisation reaffirmed its commitment to continue its traditional musical welcome, more popularly known as "Barshabaran" at Ramna Batamul.

A hall full of students sat in attentive silence at Chhayanaut's cultural centre in Dhanmondi as the press conference opened with "Sedin Aar Koto Durey", a song by Salil Chowdhury that has long carried the weight of resistance and longing.

"We want to practise culture without obstruction," said Dr Sarwar Ali, president of Chhayanaut, about preparing this year's programme at Ramna Batamul against a backdrop of uncertainty and recent past attacks on cultural institutions.

Referring to recent incidents, including the 2025 attacks on Chhayanaut, Udichi, and other cultural spaces and media houses, he said, "We have faced planned repression since the nation's inception. This is not new to us. No matter what, we will keep singing because we want to sing freely. The state and society must stand aligned."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

## FACEBOOK POST

# Jubo League leader jailed for 2 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Jubo League leader was sentenced to two months' imprisonment yesterday for contempt of court over a Facebook post that the International Crimes Tribunal-1 said contained derogatory remarks about the tribunal and its proceedings.

The three-member tribunal handed down the verdict after MH Patoari Babu, library and publication secretary of Dhaka city Jubo League, appeared before the court with his wife, admitting to posting false and fabricated claims, and sought an unconditional apology, assuring the tribunal he would not repeat such conduct.

The tribunal later recorded his statement and, after hearing both the defence and prosecution, acquitted his wife of the charges.

The court initially considered a one-year sentence, later indicated a three-month term, but ultimately reduced it to two months following requests from both sides for a more lenient, symbolic punishment.

Tribunal Chair Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder said Babu, as a "conscious citizen" and political leader, should have acted responsibly.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5



A potter paints the finishing touches on fruit, bird, and animal-shaped crafts to be sold at traditional Pahela Baishakh fairs across all nine upazilas in Brahmanbaria. The photo was taken at Paulpara in Bholachong village of Nabinagar upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDDOY

## Confce on sustainable development at UIU



CITY DESK

The inaugural ceremony of the 8th UIU-International Conference on Sustainable Development was held on April 11 on the United International University campus in Dhaka.

Neeltje Kielen, delegated representative of Water Affairs, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Bangladesh, was present as the chief guest.

Dr Khairul Islam, regional director at WaterAid, South Asia Region; Shreya Chakraborty, country focal point, International Water Management Institute, Bangladesh; Prof Mashfiqus Salehin, Institute of Water and Flood Management, BUET; Vice Chancellor of UIU Prof Dr Md Abul Kashem Mia; and Prof Dr Hamidul Huq, director of the Institute of Development Studies and Sustainability, UIU, were present at the event, among others.

## Malaysia to reopen job market for Bangladeshis

Says Mahdi Amin

STAR REPORT

Malaysia is set to reopen its labour market for Bangladeshis, with both sides moving to resume recruitment through a more transparent and lower-cost process, Prime Minister's Office spokesperson and Adviser on Overseas Employment Mahdi Amin said yesterday.

Briefing reporters at the Secretariat, Mahdi said he, along with Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Ariful Haque Chowdhury, travelled to Malaysia to discuss how to reopen the labour market as it remained closed for nearly two years.

He said the delegation held talks with Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who listened to Bangladesh's position with sincerity in the presence of representatives from several Malaysian ministries.

Mahdi said Bangladesh sought Malaysia's cooperation in reopening the market, and the Malaysian prime minister directed the relevant authorities to take steps to resume manpower exports as quickly as possible.

The discussions also focused on making the migration process more transparent and reducing costs for workers heading to Malaysia, he said.

Mahdi said Malaysia has a special plan to introduce an artificial intelligence-based platform through which it intends to recruit workers not only from Bangladesh but from countries around the world.

## WAR-HIT COUNTRIES

# Missions working 24/7 to protect Bangladeshis

Says Shama Obaed

STAR REPORT

Bangladeshi missions are working round the clock to ensure the safety of expatriate Bangladeshis in war-affected countries, said State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed yesterday.

She made the remark at a programme titled, "Word Conference Series 2026", organised by the Centre for Non-Resident Bangladeshis at a Dhaka hotel.

At the programme, Information Minister Zahir Uddin Swapan handed over Remittance Awards to 13 banks, one institution, and an individual.

Referring to the ongoing war in the Middle East, Shama said many Bangladeshi workers are employed in Gulf countries, and the missions are "working 24/7" so that expatriate Bangladeshis remain safe and secure.

She also said eight Bangladeshis have so far been killed in the war, and the government is working to bring their bodies back home.

Information Minister Swapan said RMG exports and remittances are

the country's main sources of foreign currency.

State Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Nurul Haque Nur said the government is considering a plan to develop a dedicated area for expat Bangladeshis, possibly in Purbachal, as part of a proposed "expatriate city".

Nur said many returning migrant workers fail to receive government support because they did not complete Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) registration.

He said workers who return within six months or a year can receive rehabilitation support and training if they completed BMET registration.

He also said families of those with BMET cards were eligible for burial support, immediate family expenses and insurance benefits.

Nur expressed concern over irregular migration, saying Bangladeshis are often found among those involved in boat-tragedy incidents in the Mediterranean, which creates embarrassment for the country and affects its image.

## His vision still guides healthcare

FROM PAGE 3

Yunus said Zafrullah would have drawn inspiration from today's youth fighting for a better Bangladesh. "May his life continue to guide us. May he rest in eternal peace."

GK, along with its sister concerns in Savar, solemnly observed the third death anniversary of its founder, Dr Zafrullah with due respect, dignity, and collective remembrance.

The event commenced with the laying of floral tributes at his grave, where members of the Board of Trustees, officials, employees, and well-wishers paid their respects.

A remembrance meeting and doa mahfil was followed by, where long-time colleagues, comrades, and associates shared their memories and reflections on Dr Chowdhury's life.

They said Zafrullah

remained vocal in support of democratic movements and continued his struggle for people's rights.

A documentary screening on the life and work of Dr Chowdhury was held, offering attendees a renewed engagement with his vision, struggles, and lifelong commitment to equitable healthcare.

Among the speakers were Dr Abul Kashem Chowdhury, Dr Sayedur Rahman, Momtaz Begum, and Rijia Akhtar, along with other distinguished colleagues. Former employees of GK were also present, said a press release.

GK founder and valiant freedom fighter Dr Zafrullah died on April 11, 2023, aged 81, at the Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital.

A leading civil society figure, he was a vascular surgeon by background alongside a public health

expert, who earned the reputation of being the architect of the 1982 National Drug Policy to reach expensive medicines at a cheaper price to ordinary people's doorsteps.

He had joined the Liberation War while he was a medical student in the UK and set up 480-bed "Bangladesh Field Hospital", under the wartime in Sector 2, to treat wounded freedom fighters. He founded the GK in Savar in 1972. He was given the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1985 and the Right Livelihood Award in 1992 for his work in the public health sector. He got Swadhinata Padak, country's highest civilian award.

Son of Humayun Morshed Chowdhury, a student of anti-British movement revolutionary Masterda Surya Sen, Zafrullah was born on December 27, 1941, in Raozan, Chattogram.

**NOTICE FOR EXTENSION OF SUBMISSION DEADLINE**  
Ref. Request for Proposal (RFP) Grounds Development Works at National Cricket Ground (NCG), Purbachal, Dhaka

Ref: BCB/Grounds/T&P/Grounds Development Works-NGC/2026/323 Date: 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2026

**EXTENSION OF RFP SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

This is to inform all prospective bidders that the proposal submission deadline for the tender invitation issued by the Bangladesh Cricket Board in national dailies vide **Tender Reference No. BCB/Grounds/T&P/Ground Development Works-NGC/2026/206 dated 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026**, regarding the Grounds Development Works at National Cricket Ground (NCG), Purbachal, Dhaka, has been extended.

Upon due consideration, the board has decided to extend the submission deadline for **02 (two) weeks**, which was primarily scheduled for April 12, 2026. Henceforth, the revised submission deadline for the sealed proposal submission is **April 27, 2026, until 12:00 p.m.**, and the last tender schedule selling date is **April 26, 2026, until 04:00 p.m.**

All other terms and conditions as stipulated in the original RFP shall remain unchanged.

**Chief Executive Officer**  
Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB)  
Management Office: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216  
Tel: +880 2 8031001-4, Fax: 803 1199

## Barrister Shafique

FROM PAGE 3

He served as an adjunct faculty member at the Law Department of Dhaka University from 1969 to 1973. He also served as the principal of City Law College, Dhaka, from 1973 to 2005. Concurrently, he was a member of the Dhaka University Senate. He was enrolled as an advocate at the High Court in 1967 and was elevated to the status of senior advocate in the Appellate Division in 1989.

He was elected president of the Supreme Court

Bar Association on two occasions: 1999-2000 and 2008-2009. Furthermore, he served as the vice president of the Bangladesh Bar Council.

**PRAYER TIMING**  
**APRIL 13**

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-35	12-45	4-45	6-24	7-45
JAMAAT 5-10	1-15	5-00	6-28	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited

Plot No.: 1088, Block No.: I, Road No.: Sabrina Sobhan 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bashundhara, Vatara, Dhaka-1229, Phone: +8809606-555555, Fax: +8809606-555550  
Email: digitech@waltonbd.com, Website www.waltondigitech.com

### Notice on Convening Meeting of Creditors

MEETING OF THE CREDITORS OF WALTON DIGI-TECH INDUSTRIES LIMITED PURSUANT TO DIRECTION OF THE HON'BLE HIGH COURT DIVISION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH.

Notice is hereby given that in accordance with the direction of the Hon'ble High Court issued by Mr. Justice Sikder Mahmud Razi in Company Matter No. 318 of 2026, the Meeting of the Creditors of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (the "Company") will be held on Thursday, 07 May 2026 at 04:00 PM at Plot No: 1088, Block No: I, Road No: Sabrina Sobhan 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bashundhara, Vatara, Dhaka-1229, Dhaka to transact the following business:

#### AGENDA

1. Approval of the Scheme of Merger of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company).

To consider, and if thought fit, to pass the following resolution with or without modification:

"RESOLVED THAT Draft Scheme of Merger (the "Scheme") of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company) be and is hereby approved and subject to sanction of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh in accordance with the provisions of Sections 228 and 229 of the Companies Act, 1994 and approval of the same Scheme by the Creditors of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited, and in the similar manner Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited be merged with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. in terms of the Scheme."

Date: Dhaka, 12 April 2026

By Order of the Board  
Sd/-  
**Asadullah Mahmud, FCS**  
Company Secretary

#### Notes:

- The Draft Scheme of the Merger of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company).
- A creditor who is entitled to attend and vote at the meeting may appoint a proxy to attend and vote on his/her behalf.
- The proxy form must be deposited at the registered office of the Company not less than 72 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.
- Copies of the Scheme of Merger and relevant documents will be available for inspection at the registered office of the Company during business hours.

## Lake-Facing Apartment for Rent in North Gulshan

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## CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Norban Comtex Ltd. 100% Export-Oriented Garments Industry's seeking a visionary and highly ambitious leader to join our Textile Division to fill the following key position:

**Position: Head of Textile (General Manager)**

**Vacancy: 01 (One)**

**Qualifications & Requirements Education:** Masters of Science (MSc) in Textile Chemistry. Educational qualifications may be relaxed for exceptionally experienced candidates.

**Experience:** Minimum 20 years in the textile industry.

**Language Proficiency:** Must be fluent.

**Technical Expertise:** Experience of handling 25-40 tons of fabric per day.

#### Key Responsibilities

Complete control and management of the Textile Division. Directing Fabric Research & Development and overseeing total production planning. Managing fabric finishing parameters during bulk production to ensure optimal efficiency. Guaranteeing that all fabric output strictly adheres to international buyers' requirements and standards.

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Both national and international candidates are encouraged to apply. Please submit your application including:

An updated CV, telephone no and 2 (Two) passport-sized photographs within 15 days to the following address:

Norban Comtex Ltd.

Human Resource Department  
House: 8/B, Road: 1, Gulshan 1, Dhaka-1212  
Email: info@norbangroup.com

## Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC.

Plot No.: 1088, Block No.: I, Road No.: Sabrina Sobhan 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bashundhara, Vatara, Dhaka-1229, Phone: +8809606-555555, Fax: +8809606-555550  
Email: cswhil@waltonplc.com, Website: www.waltonplc.com

### Notice on Convening Meeting of Creditors

MEETING OF THE CREDITORS OF WALTON HI-TECH INDUSTRIES PLC. PURSUANT TO DIRECTION OF THE HON'BLE HIGH COURT DIVISION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH.

Notice is hereby given that in accordance with the direction of the Hon'ble High Court issued by Mr. Justice Sikder Mahmud Razi in Company Matter No. 318 of 2026, the Meeting of the Creditors of Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (the "Company") will be held on Thursday, 07 May 2026 at 03:00 PM at Plot No: 1088, Block No: I, Road No: Sabrina Sobhan 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Bashundhara, Vatara, Dhaka-1229, Dhaka to transact the following business:

#### AGENDA

1. Approval of the Scheme of Merger of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company).

To consider, and if thought fit, to pass the following resolution with or without modification:

"RESOLVED THAT Draft Scheme of Merger (the "Scheme") of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company) be and is hereby approved and subject to sanction of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh in accordance with the provisions of Sections 228 and 229 of the Companies Act, 1994 and approval of the same Scheme by the Creditors of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited, and in the similar manner Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited be merged with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. in terms of the Scheme."

Date: Dhaka, 12 April 2026

By Order of the Board  
Sd/-  
**Md. Rafiqul Islam, FCS**  
Company Secretary

#### Notes:

- The Draft Scheme of the Merger of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC. (Transferee Company).
- A creditor who is entitled to attend and vote at the meeting may appoint a proxy to attend and vote on his/her behalf.
- The proxy form must be deposited at the registered office of the Company not less than 72 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.
- Copies of the Scheme of Merger and relevant documents will be available for inspection at the registered office of the Company during business hours.



## US VP made 'dozen calls' to Trump during talks

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump was not physically in Islamabad for the peace talks with Iran, but he was in constant touch with his team leading the negotiations, hoping to end the Middle East conflict.

The US delegation, led by Vice President (VP) JD Vance, talked to Trump a "dozen times" during multiple rounds of talks with Iran in Pakistan. The talks, however, remained inconclusive, reports NDTV online.

The peace talks mediated by Pakistan lasted 21 hours on Saturday but failed to produce any result, Vance said during a media briefing early yesterday.

When asked how often he communicated with the President throughout those rounds of negotiations, Vance said: "We were talking to the President consistently. I don't know how many times we talked to him, a half dozen times, a dozen times over the past 21 hours."



Relatives mourn four Saeed family members killed in an Israeli strike, at Al Kharab mosque in Tyre, Lebanon, yesterday. Lebanese authorities said Israeli strikes on the country's south on Saturday killed 18 people, bringing the death toll from Israel's operations since the war broke out past 2,000.

PHOTO: REUTERS

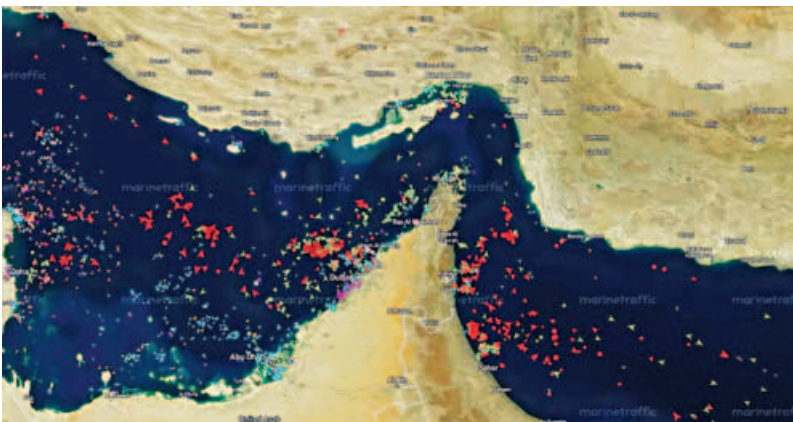
## Why reopening Hormuz won't end shipping woes

AGENCIES

Even if the vital Strait of Hormuz fully reopens and oil along with other essential cargo begins to sail out, it will not be enough to restore normalcy. Reopening the waterway itself is proving difficult.

Experts say shipping lines will not re-enter the Persian Gulf through the strait while the risk remains that the ceasefire is only temporary. That's because empty ships must sail back into the strait to keep goods moving.

Tankers and ship owners — as well as their insurers — won't allow their ships to re-enter the Gulf unless they're sure they won't be caught there for weeks or longer, said Lale Akoner, a global market analyst at



for oil and other goods are likely to continue for months, reports CNN online.

According to Matt Smith of trade analytics firm Kpler, ships trapped in the Gulf must first be allowed to leave before things can get back on track. So far, that hasn't happened.

"(Almost) nobody is confident enough to pass through the strait," he said. The 100-plus oil tankers that typically move through the Strait of Hormuz every day, have been reduced to 10 or fewer, Smith noted.

Even if there is confidence in the ceasefire, the flow of vessels is going to be overwhelmingly outbound ships. Smith said there are about 400 loaded oil tankers in the Gulf waiting to get out, but only about 100 empty tankers eager to get in.

Smith said if the strait were to open today, it would still likely take until July for oil flows to get back to normal. The same is true with container ships that are critical for delivering food and other goods the Gulf states depend upon, as well as exports like fertilizer and industrial resins.

There are about 100 container

ships waiting to exit, but virtually none waiting to enter, said Peter Tirschwell, vice president for maritime and trade at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

That means 30 percent of the world's fertilizer that normally comes out of the region is likely stuck there for months until there are new ships to take them out, he said. As with the oil, sending that cargo out by ship is the only way to move it.

"The capacity does not exist to easily reroute those cargoes," he said. Without new ships coming through the strait and into the Gulf, experts say production of various goods made there — crude oil, gasoline and other refined fuels and fertilizer — will remain on hold.

Production halted during the past six weeks because there was no place to put those goods, said Smith.

The oil producers around the Gulf "are used to just putting (oil) on a tanker and it immediately going out," he said. "They're going to need time to increase production, but also have the tankers in place there to be able to load that crude."

## Masterminds in Kushtia

FROM PAGE 12

set on fire during the attack around 2:30pm.

No case has yet been lodged in connection with the killing, and no one has been detained, although many individuals were clearly visible in videos of the attack.

"A shadow investigation is underway, and we have gathered several pieces of information," Kushtia Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime and Ops) Faisal Mahmud told The Daily Star.

Law enforcement members said a group of 70-80 people were initially involved in the attack, including some elderly individuals, while seven to eight people directly carried out the acts of vandalism. In a second wave, several hundred students from a local madrasa joined.

Followers of Shamim, present during the incident, said that while the attack was carried out on allegations of insulting religion, looting could have been another motive. They claimed valuables were taken and the rest set on fire. The pir's gold crown, flute and anklets are currently missing.

Fazlur Rahman, the victim's elder brother who witnessed the attack, said, "If he had done anything wrong, he could have been tried under the law. But no human being should be killed like this. I want justice."

He later said that immediately after the attack, he rushed to the scene and found his brother lying unconscious near the staircase of the two-storey darbar building. Police were present at the time, and with their assistance, Shamim was initially taken to Mirpur

Health Complex.

Dr Hossain Imam, resident physician at the 250-bed Kushtia General Hospital, said the victim sustained major injuries to the head, neck and back, along with wounds across the body, and died due to excessive bleeding.

Sheikh Joynuddin, additional DIG of Khulna Range, visited the scene around 11:00am yesterday. Speaking to journalists, he said, "Insulting religion is unacceptable under any circumstances. The country's existing laws provide for action against such acts. If law enforcement agencies had been informed, instead of people taking the law into their own hands, legal action could have been taken. At the same time, the attack and the killing were wrong."

Shamim's janaza was held after Asr prayers at the Poshchim-Dokkhin Philipnagar Eidgah ground. He was later buried at a nearby graveyard.

Fazlur Rahman told The Daily Star that the family would decide on filing a case after discussions, adding that no final decision had yet been taken.

Kushtia Superintendent of Police Jasim Uddin said around 7:00pm that family members of the deceased were expected to visit the police station in the evening, after which the process of filing a case would begin.

Asked about the circulation of videos on Facebook that allegedly created the ground for the attack, the SP said it was too early to comment and urged patience, noting that such matters require extensive analysis and verification.

## Ex-Speaker freed

FROM PAGE 1

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Zakir Hossain granted her bail on health grounds after a petition was submitted by the defence, said a sub-inspector working at the court.

During yesterday's hearing, defence lawyer Abul Hasanat Imrul Qausar said, "Not a single word about her [Shirin] appears in the case. Her name is mentioned only once in the FIR. Everyone knows about her qualifications."

"She is suffering from multiple illnesses. She has not been able to receive any treatment since August 5, 2024, as she had been hiding. In 2016, she suffered a heart attack. Every six months, she has to go to Singapore for treatment. But since June 11, 2024, she has not been able to go abroad for treatment. If she is not given treatment, her life will be at risk."

The lawyer said, "There are no allegations of embezzlement, corruption, or abuse of power against her. She is a neutral person. She is a woman and deserves certain privileges. If mercy is not shown on medical grounds, her life will be in danger. An unfortunate incident could happen at any moment."

Opposing the bail petition, Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq Faruqi said, "She is an illegal MP and an illegal Speaker. By supporting Sheikh Hasina, she helped turn her into a fascist. When protesters attacked the parliament building, she was in the underground area of the parliament."

"She is a named accused in the FIR. She was arrested, and the case is currently under investigation. There are accused who are older than her and are also in prison. According to the jail code, they are

being provided medical treatment and are doing well with that treatment."

After hearing the prosecution and the defence, the court granted the ex-Speaker bail on a bond of Tk 50,000.

In the order, the metropolitan magistrate said, "She is a former Speaker. At the time of the incident, she was performing the duties of the Speaker. She is ill. Bail is granted on a bond of Tk 50,000 until the police submit the investigation report."

On April 7, detectives arrested her from her cousin's home in the capital's Dhanmondi.

She was sent to jail the same day, after the court rejected a two-day remand prayer submitted by Detective Branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

On May 25 last year, victim Mohammad Ashraful filed the attempted murder case with a Dhaka court, accusing deposed prime minister Hasina and 129 others.

Following a court directive, the officer-in-charge of Lalbagh Police Station recorded it as a first information report (FIR) on July 17.

According to the case documents, Ashraful was shot in Azimpur on July 18, 2024.

Shirin Sharmin served as Speaker from April 30, 2013, until her resignation on September 2, 2024, according to the parliament website.

According to lawyers and court sources, there are six cases against her linked to the quota reform protests, including four murder cases. Five were filed with police stations under the DMP and one was lodged with Kotwali Police Station under the Rangpur Metropolitan Police.

## Rivals stab teen gang leader

FROM PAGE 1

At one point, Imon, who was the leader of the "Alex Group", a juvenile gang network in the area, fell to the ground. He was carrying a weapon but he dropped it while trying to flee.

The attackers, who were from a rival faction reportedly led by Arman and Shahrukh, then caught up with him and repeatedly struck him with sharp weapons as bystanders remained helpless, said police and as seen in CCTV footage.

Imon, widely known as "Alex Imon", was taken to the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital in critical condition, where doctors later declared him dead, morgue sources said.

Following the incident, members of the Rayerbazar police outpost conducted a drive and arrested three

suspects — Saif, 23, Tuhin, 20, and Rabbi Kazi, 25 — all believed to be members of the Arman group.

Police also recovered three machetes, a cutter, and a steel plate from their possession.

Local sources said tensions had long been simmering between the two groups over control of the area, eventually erupting into Sunday's deadly clash.

Imon had 18 cases filed against him, including for robbery and murder, AC Mamun said, adding that the arrested individuals were also accused in several cases.

Regular drives are ongoing and efforts are being intensified to arrest the suspects, said Ibne Mizan, deputy commissioner of Tejgaon division.

**Jalalabad Gas Transmission & Distribution System Ltd.**  
(A Company of Petrobangla)  
(Gas Bhaban, Mendibag, Sylhet-3100)

গ্যাস ব্যবহারে সশ্রদ্ধী হোন এবং সময়মত গ্যাস বিল পরিশোধ করুন

বিনা কারণে গ্যাসের চুলা জ্বালিয়ে রাখা আর বিপদকে ডাকা একই বিষয়

Reference No.:28.16.9100.034.86.005.26 Dated: 09April, 2026

### e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concern that the following tender have published through National e-GP portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

Sl. No.	Tender ID, Package No. & Date of Publishing	Name of the Work	Tender last Selling and Closing Date & Time
01.	Tender ID : 1252239 Package No: e-GP-EMM-09 Date of Publishing : 09.04.2026	Procurement of Starting/ Starter Motor for 320 kVA Gas Generator Installed at Head Office of JGTDSL.	Last Selling : 22.04.2026, 12:30 Closing date & time : 22.04.2026, 15:00 Opening date & time : 22.04.2026, 15:00

The interested persons/firms may visit the website <https://www.eprocure.gov.bd> to get the details of the tender.

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 (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal/e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

(ENGR. MD. SARWAR JAHAN MAHMUD)  
General Manager (Operation Division)  
Tel: + 8802997700621  
E-mail: gm.op@jalalabadgas.org.bd

GD-809

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
Office of the Jail Super  
Natore District Jail, Natore.

Memo No. 58.04.6900.130.04.013.26-1339/6 Date: 12.04.2026

### e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concern that the following tender is invited in the national e-GP portal:

Sl. No	Tender ID No.	Name of work	Publishing, Closing date & Time
1	1255464	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) of Package-1 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
2	1255465	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) of Package-2 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
3	1255466	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) of Package-3 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
4	1255467	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) of Package-4 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
5	1255468	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of animal protein) of Package-5 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
6	1255469	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of vegetable) of Package-1 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
7	1255470	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of vegetable) of Package-2 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
8	1255471	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of vegetable) of Package-3 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
9	1255472	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of vegetable) of Package-4 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
10	1255473	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Different types of Oil) of Package-1 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
11	1255474	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Spices and other product) of Package-2 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
12	1255475	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Spices and other product) of Package-3 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
13	1255476	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Spices and other product) of Package 4 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
14	1255477	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Fire Wood and Transportation) of Package-5 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00
15	1255511	Procurement of Dietary Articles (Cigarettes, Bidis, and Rice) of Package-6 for the period of July/2026 to December/2026.	12-Apr-2026 09:00:00 22-Apr-2026 13:00:00

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

(Jahanara Begum)  
BJ 01791000493  
Superintendent  
District Jail Natore.

GD-812

## Defaulters must not be rewarded

### Amend Bank Resolution Act to remove clause giving leeway to financial criminals

It is completely unacceptable that the Bank Resolution Act, 2026, based on the ordinance drafted by the interim government to merge five troubled Shariah-based banks, has been passed in parliament enabling the country's most notorious defaulters to regain control of the very banks they caused to fail. Under relatively easy terms, Section 18A of the act allows former directors or owners of the merging banks to reclaim ownership by paying upfront 7.5 percent of the amount injected into these banks by the government or the Bangladesh Bank. They then have two years to pay the remaining amount at a 10 percent simple interest.

In addition, they will have to make several pledges in their ownership reclamation application, including paying all pre-merger liabilities to depositors, foreign and domestic creditors, and third-party claims, as well as clearing all taxes and other financial liabilities to the government. Given that the infamous S Alam Group is among the former directors/owners of the five ailing Shariah-based banks, insertion of this clause appears to be a gross error of judgement. Not long ago, the finance minister identified this group as the country's top loan defaulter. It has defaulted on crores of taka in loans with nearly a dozen banks and has been implicated in serious financial crimes. According to the former central bank governor, the group's founder and chairman, Mohammed Saiful Alam, and his associates "syphoned off" more than Tk 1 lakh crore (~\$10 billion) after taking control of several banks with the help of an intelligence agency during Sheikh Hasina's regime.

Now imagine that the S Alam Group applies to reclaim ownership or directorship of one of the ailing banks under Section 18A of the act, making the required pledges and paying 7.5 percent of the Tk 35,000 crore bailout fund. For a group that has syphoned off vast sums, paying Tk 2,625 crore upfront would be easy. But how can they be trusted to fulfil the pledges or pay the remainder of the money when 11 of its subsidiaries alone have at least Tk 22,881 crore in defaulted loans—about 65 percent of the total owed by the top 20 defaulters?

If such a situation arises, what will happen to the cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission, now awaiting international arbitration, as the S Alam Group has reportedly approached the World Bank's International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes? With ownership restored, would they not influence the investigation? How would this affect efforts to repatriate laundered money? Most importantly, what message does this send to wilful defaulters and financial criminals?

In a country where bad loans reached Tk 5.45 lakh crore in 2025, allowing such entities to own banks sets a dangerous precedent. Many of them are largely responsible for the illicit financial outflows totalling \$68 billion between 2013 and 2022. Thus, this provision may end up rewarding those who caused such great losses in the first place. It is indeed concerning that the government passed this law despite opposition objections. Parliamentary majority should not be abused to pass contentious legislations. The government should promptly amend the act to remove this provision.

## Children's hospitals must not lie idle

### Make the six unused hospital buildings functional urgently

While many hospitals are struggling to cope with a growing number of child patients amid the measles outbreak, it is deeply frustrating that six specialised children's hospital buildings across the country remain unused years after their completion. Built at a cost of Tk 320 crore and equipped with a total of 1,050 beds, including NICU facilities, these hospitals in Rangpur, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barishal, Sylhet and Cumilla reveal a failing system that does not serve our children when they need care the most.

According to a report by Prothom Alo, no institutions have taken over the hospitals in Khulna, Rajshahi, Barishal, Sylhet and Cumilla due to a shortage of manpower, furniture, medical equipment, budget allocation, and other logistical support. These unused structures are now falling into disrepair, and incidents of theft have also been reported in several buildings. We must ask: why were these facilities built without a proper operational plan in the first place? If they cannot be used when they are needed the most, what purpose would they serve?

Meanwhile, in Rajshahi, the 200-bed children's hospital—completed years ago—has remained unused, when a shortage of ICU facilities has created severe pressure on healthcare services in the region, leading to many child deaths. Similarly, the 100-bed children's hospital in Rangpur remained unutilised for six years after completion and inauguration. This reflects a systemic failure in planning, coordination and accountability.

Earlier this year, this daily reported that 80 government health facilities across 18 districts, including four children's hospitals, have remained non-operational for years, further exposing deep weaknesses in our healthcare governance. Moreover, even the operational facilities are burdened by shortages of doctors, nurses and essential staff, leaving them unable to provide adequate services.

We urge the health authorities to urgently resolve the administrative and bureaucratic bottlenecks and ensure adequate staffing and budget allocation so that these hospitals can become fully operational. The government must also formulate a policy ensuring that no healthcare infrastructure project proceeds without a fully approved operational plan, including staffing, budgeting and management frameworks. Greater coordination between the health ministry, Directorate General of Health Services and other relevant agencies is essential to prevent such waste of public funds in the future. The present government must take lessons from the measles outbreak this year and prioritise strengthening child healthcare services across the country.

# Who should pay for Islamic banks' bad investments?



Mezbah Uddin Ahmed is a research fellow at the International Shariah Research Academy (ISRA) Institute of INCEIF University in Malaysia. He can be reached at mezbah.uddin.ahmed@gmail.com. Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

MEZBAH UDDIN AHMED

While Islamic banking's significant market share and systemic importance within the banking system are often highlighted as notable achievements, a troubling reality undermines this success: a substantial portion of investments in several Islamic banks are non-performing. To contain systemic risks and avoid destabilising the banking system, the central bank has merged five of the 10 full-fledged Islamic banks into the state-backed Sammilito Islami Bank. With a large volume of non-performing investments (NPIs), the Islamic banking sector's urgent priorities include asset recovery, liquidity management, and restoring confidence.

The high level of NPIs in Islamic banking is troubling, given the strict Shariah compliance requirements. They are meant to demonstrate stronger governance and more disciplined practices than conventional banks. Yet, governance frameworks and Shariah requirements have often been treated as mere formalities rather than being meaningfully integrated. This has undermined the inherent strengths of Islamic banking principles in practice. The distress, therefore, lies not in the concept of Islamic banking itself but in its flawed implementation, which has become entrenched over time.

Accountability for high NPIs seems elusive, with responsibility diffused among different parties. Some attribute the crisis to networks involving powerful actors, actors with political interests, oligarchs, regulators, and insiders. Boards blame management, while management points to boards, state actors, and regulatory compromise. While such claims may provide context, they do not establish legal, fiduciary, or Shariah accountability, nor do they identify who made decisions, approved transactions, ignored warnings, or facilitated bad investments.

Broad attribution of responsibility risks obscuring real actors and the underlying problems. It fails to recognise deep-rooted governance weaknesses and deliberate misconduct. It also obscures the reality that various actors were complicit.

Without deliberate and transparent efforts to trace responsibility, accountability risks remaining rhetorical rather than real. Equally

concerning is the implicit immunity enjoyed by those holding decision-making authority. Investment decisions were not anonymous. They were made, approved, executed, verified, reported, and audited by identifiable individuals. The absence of visible action to identify those responsible weakens confidence in the process.

At the same time, the role of the central bank, particularly in its capacity as a regulator and supervisor, warrants scrutiny regarding the



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

timing, conditions, and effectiveness of its interventions. Moreover, statutory audit, internal audit, and Shariah audit do not appear to have operated as effective checks, raising concerns about the robustness of the control environment.

There is also a deeper ethical dimension concerning obedience to wrongful instructions. Acting under such instructions does not absolve responsibility. Islamic teachings do not permit obedience in wrongdoing. By failing to identify the real culprits, the burden ultimately shifts to depositors and the public. This diffusion of accountability is not only unjust; it undermines the moral and legal foundations of Islamic banking. From a Shariah perspective, such a shift is difficult to justify, as justice requires identifying those who have failed in their fiduciary duties.

This issue is particularly critical in the context of mudarabah deposits and bonds. Mudarabah is a trust-based arrangement in which Islamic banks

serve as the mudarib (investment manager). Returns are shared between the bank and fund providers according to a pre-agreed ratio, while fund providers bear losses unless they arise from the mudarib's failure in fiduciary duties.

This underscores the need to carefully distinguish between genuine business risk and losses arising from breaches of fiduciary duty. From a Shariah perspective, this distinction is essential. Where losses result from failure in fiduciary duties, the mudarib must bear them. This principle is grounded in the concepts of trust and accountability that underpin Islamic banking and are well-established in classical jurisprudence and contemporary Shariah standards.

However, while mudarabah historically involved individuals in institutional contexts such as Islamic banking, identifying the mudarib remains a subject of discussion. If the

principles of accountability and broaden the scope of recovery to meet depositor claims. It would also reduce the burden on the state and strengthen accountability within the financial system. In this regard, it is pertinent to note that the Islamic Financial Services Act 2013 of Malaysia treats failure to comply with Shariah requirements as a serious offence, with significant penalties for those involved, which may include directors, officers, and Shariah committee members, of up to eight years' imprisonment and a fine of 25 million ringgit (approximately Tk 76 crore), or both.

However, this also highlights the limitations of Bangladesh's existing legal and regulatory framework. Without clear mechanisms to attribute personal responsibility beyond the institutional level, enforcement may not be possible. Meaningful reform is therefore required to allow individual responsibilities to be traced and enforced. In this context, the inclusion of personal liability provisions (Section 53-58) in the newly enacted Bank Resolution Act, 2026, for the fraudulent use of a bank's assets or funds represents a step in the right direction. This, however, should apply to all fraudulent cases, not just to banks under resolution.

For Islamic banking to retain credibility, responsibility must be traced to where decisions were actually made. Key decision-makers cannot remain shielded behind the corporate veil. Accountability must be both institutional and personal. Similarly, Shariah supervisory committees, auditors, and rating agencies must be held accountable for any negligence and ensure that, going forward, their work becomes substantive rather than merely procedural.

At the same time, fairness requires recognising that not all actors bear equal responsibility. Some individuals engage in wilful misconduct for personal gain, such as additional benefits, promotions, or desired transfers, while others follow instructions from higher authorities, possibly due to fear of job loss or implicit or explicit threats. Generalised blame is therefore not appropriate for assigning responsibility.

Establishing accountability is essential to restoring discipline in a system built on trust. Without it, Islamic banking risks drifting towards a model in which profits are privatised while losses are socialised, similar to conventional banking, which is neither just nor Islamic. Unless the industry clearly identifies the mudarib, traces responsibility, rejects unjustified immunity, and embeds accountability in both law and practice, the proper establishment of Shariah principles will remain incomplete.

# Fix the financing gap for women entrepreneurs



Tafhimur Rahman is doctoral student at The University of Alabama, U.S.

TAFHIMUR RAHMAN

Imagine a woman in Dhaka who has spent three years building a small textile business. She has loyal customers, a product that keeps people coming back, and a clear vision for growth. All she needs is a loan to expand. But when she walks into a bank, the conversation turns to collateral, and she has none to offer. And just like that, her application goes nowhere. She is one of the 28 lakh women-led SME owners in Bangladesh, who contribute to the economy, but rarely receives the investment needed to survive. Bangladesh has been producing the right language around women's entrepreneurship for years, but what seems not to keep pace is action. Women-led enterprises represent the majority of the country's \$2.8 billion financing gap in the micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) sector, according to an estimate by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in 2023. The primary obstacle is collateral: women in Bangladesh disproportionately lack assets registered in their own names, which are the standard requirement

for formal lending.

That structural barrier has a predictable consequence: less than six percent of Bangladeshi women entrepreneurs are able to obtain bank loans. Men, by contrast, receive roughly 93 percent of startup loans from banks. Those are not figures from a country that has decided to overlook women founders but from a country that keeps describing the problem without redesigning the system that produces it.

Bangladesh Bank's 2025 startup financing policy was an important step to bridge this gap. It allowed banks to move beyond traditional lending and make equity investments in startups. Interest rates have been capped at four percent, loan limits raised to Tk 8 crore, and the minimum age for founders lowered to 21. Most importantly, it introduced a mandate that at least 10 percent of startup financing should be allocated to women entrepreneurs. This directive matters but 10 percent is a floor, not an aspiration.

A 2026 study examined female-owned SMEs in Bangladesh and found

that gender-based discrimination, entrenched by both local tradition and colonial-era frameworks, restricts women's mobility and their participation in professional networks. This is particularly difficult to accept when we take into consideration that women-led startups globally outperform male-led counterparts by over 60 percent. Yet in 2024, all-female founding teams captured just only around two percent of global venture capital. The underinvestment is not explained by performance. It is explained by proximity: who investors know, who gets introduced into their networks, and whose story matches the picture investors have already formed of what a successful founder looks like. Bangladesh has a version of this problem that goes beyond investor bias. The network that matters for early-stage funding here is small, largely male, and inaccessible to founders who did not come up through the right institutions. Women founders describe doing everything right and still finding that the room where decisions get made is one they were never invited into.

**What can we change?**

The remedies are not a mystery. They have been identified across enough contexts, in enough research, and by enough women founders themselves, that continuing to present this as an unsolved problem is itself a kind of evasion. Collateral reform is the most urgent fix. A financing system that

requires land title or property as the basis for lending will keep excluding women founders regardless of what targets are announced. Revenue-based lending and peer group models have worked in comparable markets. They require banks to change their internal processes, not just their public commitments. Mentorship is the second gap. The Harvard Business Review has identified poor matching and a lack of ongoing honest dialogue as one of the core reasons why mentoring programmes fail. For women founders in Bangladesh, that failure is made worse by a shortage of female mentors who successfully raised capital in this market.

Network access is the third. Research revealed structured introductions to capital have 3.7 times more impact than general networking events. Bangladesh has competitions and accelerators. What it lacks is the pipeline that moves women founders from those programmes into rooms where capital decisions are made. And then there is the question of who makes the decisions. A financing ecosystem with very few women in senior roles at venture capital firms, banks, and accelerators will keep replicating the same blind spots, regardless of the targets written into policy.

Bangladesh is not short of women who want to build something. It is short of systems that take them seriously. The ambition is already there; what women need is access to capital and mentorship.

# Why a benevolent dictatorship will not succeed in Bangladesh



Mir Aftabuddin Ahmed is a public policy columnist. He can be reached at mir.ahmed@mail.ncjill.ca. Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

The fact that former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's backers, before her eventual ouster in August 2024, would position her as the only person capable of serving as an effective head of government carried with it an implied argument: that the Awami League supremo should be permitted to govern sans a sound electoral mandate because she was perceived to be uniquely possessing the competencies, strength, and brand recognition deemed indispensable to the republic.

Two arguments tended to be invoked, albeit tacitly. First, economic development was assumed to require the unspoken postponement, dilution, or subordination of democratic competition. Second, political stability was portrayed as a precondition for securing that development. Authoritarian practices were, thus, treated as a necessary evil in the name of preserving stability. These arguments served to justify both the institutionalisation and social normalisation of authoritarianism. Unfortunately, that impulse has not yet disappeared.

The tendency to argue that Bangladesh needs an authoritarian leader—provided that leader is benevolent—remains a middle ground to which many retreat, especially when they believe voters lack sufficient literacy to make informed choices and when they identify additional limitations in Westminster-style liberal democracy: a multi-party parliamentary order in which one side may hold ideological leanings that the other regards as intolerable, but which nevertheless remains a system in which competing visions of society can coexist through norms of mutual restraint.

The possibility that an Islamist government could eventually come to power in Bangladesh, not necessarily by brute force but by leveraging the democratic system to first win office and then use that mandate to refashion the government into a form of theocratic state apparatus, may cause some concerns among secularists and liberals. Urban elites and progressives, in particular, may therefore be tempted to conclude that the ruling party should be allowed to govern for as long as necessary to keep theocrats out of power, even if that means treating the ballot box in local and national elections—and, more broadly, the mechanisms that enable representative government to function—as secondary. That



VISUAL: SALMAN SAKIB SHAHRYAR

line of thinking would place the country on a slippery slope.

A benevolent dictatorship is a system in which one ruler retains all political and policymaking power, but is portrayed as using that power in pursuit of the common good rather than for personal gains. Embedded in that definition is the assumption that such a ruler would act as a strongman while still keeping the country's overarching needs and interests in view.

Allegedly, some BNP activists have already begun indulging in the kind of rhetoric that once helped place Hasina above the democratic system, suggesting that Tarique Rahman should govern for life or remain in office for three or four terms. This kind of talk should be shut down now, especially by a prime minister who, to his credit, has so far largely avoided presenting himself in those terms. But Bangladesh is all too familiar with this pattern of sycophancy. Similar chatter began in the early years of Hasina's post-2009 rule, and the country should not go down that road again.

For a benevolent dictatorship to work, two prerequisites would have to be met. First, the ruler would have to be exceptionally selfless

and able to withstand the corrupting effects of power. Second, they have to use coercion cautiously, only after careful judgement, and only when force is truly justified. No society can safely assume that either condition will hold.

There are four reasons why a benevolent dictatorship would not work in Bangladesh.

First, the country's political history is rooted in a long record of resistance to all forms of authoritarianism. During the partition of the

right-wing, or centrist in character, would move it in precisely the opposite direction from the one envisioned at its founding.

Second, Bangladeshi culture does not readily lend itself to one-party rule. It is an intensely opinionated society, and those opinions must be allowed to be voiced without fear of persecution under an authoritarian regime. From dinner-table conversations to streetside exchanges, people hold strong and

culture is not suited to a Chinese-style authoritarian system or to other communist or military dictatorships of the late 20th century.

Third, there is little evidence that benevolent dictatorship is a model that can be replicated. Singapore under Lee Kuan Yew is often invoked, but it is a city-state of roughly 60 lakh people, whereas Bangladesh is about 30 times more populous. Bangladesh, a post-colonial society that has repeatedly had to shed blood to rekindle the flames of democracy, exists on an entirely different demographic and political scale, making any like-for-like comparison untenable. That something may have appeared to work politically in Singapore does not mean it could work in Bangladesh.

The very few cases cited as successful examples of benevolent dictatorships are outliers; they do not amount to a persuasive body of evidence on which a country can build its future.

Which brings us to the fourth reason: Bangladesh has spent much of its history placing excessive faith in individual leaders and, in turn, has failed to allow public institutions to develop and mature in ways that would enable them to outlast any one head of government. Consider the leaders of post-independence Bangladesh. Each came from varying ideological traditions and contexts. But politics has repeatedly been bookended by figures around whom entire systems are made to revolve. The state has a long track record of bending around the individual rather than requiring the individual to work within a well-oiled system.

Nation-building should not take place on the assumption that one leader will remain virtuous. Bangladesh today cannot afford to bank on one leader to solve all of its problems through force of personality, discipline, and work ethic alone. The country needs a capable team around the leader, an opposition able to function as a government in waiting, and a civil service that works in a non-partisan manner.

The period from 1991 to 2006, for all its flaws, at least preserved a competitive parliamentary landscape with two major parties and other smaller but electorally significant parties. That period does point in the direction the country needs to move as a basic first step. The most transformational political contribution the prime minister can now make is to ensure that his administration upholds the basics of good governance and parliamentarism so that, when the time comes for him to step aside, the system does not collapse with his departure.

This would require ensuring that, much like his mother, Khaleda Zia, the prime minister presents himself not as indispensable to the republic but as a statesman who governs through consensus-building, subject-matter expertise, negotiation, and good faith. That, in itself, would stand as a consequential achievement following the 2024 mass uprising.

often divergent views on political issues. One reason why so many Bangladeshis have taken to the streets at various times since independence—including during the 1990 and 2024 mass uprisings—once the status quo became unmistakably authoritarian is the country's outspoken and dissenting civic culture. That kind of society cannot be constrained by a benevolent dictatorship. The more one tries to control Bangladeshis, the angrier and more unpredictable the nation is likely to become.

Bangladesh is also not politically homogeneous. It contains left-wing and progressive currents, ultra-right streams, and a substantial centrist constituency. A country of nearly 18 crore people is far too large and too diverse to be reduced to a single political label. The question, then, is how those tendencies are meant to coexist within a single state. Representative democracy is the optimal means of managing that coexistence. A dictatorship, even a benevolent one, would require a unitary governing philosophy or political ideology. Bangladeshis cannot be expected to follow any one creed blindly.

The bottom line is, Bangladesh's political

# From censorship to chaos, we must steer clear of the extremes of social media



Md Yeasinur Rahman is undergraduate teaching assistant and research assistant at the Department of Law in North South University.

MD YEASINUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh's online space today reflects a shift that was perhaps inevitable, but also difficult to manage. It is not simply a story of increasing freedom. It is a reaction shaped by years of suppression, followed by a hard reset without a corresponding structure to guide the future.

Bangladesh today is dealing with the legacy of overbroad regulation and the rise of unregulated online hostility. Addressing only one will not restore balance. The space in between, where disagreement can exist without fear from either the state or the crowd, is currently unprotected. And this is where policy must shift.

For much of the past decade, laws like the Digital Security Act, 2018, were repeatedly misused. There were numerous instances where social media posts led to arrests, prolonged detention, or criminal proceedings,

including against journalists, students and the general public. Even when the law was reworked into the Cyber Security Act, 2023, the stated objective was to reduce misuse by softening penalties and altering certain provisions. Yet concerns persisted that the core structure remained largely unchanged, continuing in widespread suppression of dissent.

However, that phase did not end without consequences. When control over expression is prolonged and then suddenly shattered, people do not simply return to neutral behaviour. They push outwards. Comparative studies on societies emerging from overly restrictive environments show that expression often becomes more forceful and less restrained, as individuals assert what was denied previously. Bangladesh is now experiencing a version of that shift. Online disagreement increasingly

turns into coordinated backlash. Often, individuals who take moderate positions or who do not align clearly with dominant narratives are subjected to collective targeting or pile-ons that discourage participation. It is a pattern of behaviour that makes civil dialogue difficult.

The national conversation, however, remains incomplete. It continues to focus on censorship versus freedom, as if one must be reduced for the other to survive, which oversimplifies the problem. The Cyber Security Ordinance, 2025, later ratified as Cyber Security Act, 2026, recognises internet access as a civic right, which indeed is a commendable addition. However, we are still far from home. Vaguely termed provisions and a limited mandate for threat intelligence sharing are still present, leaving space for broad interpretations and little to no space for incorporating platform obligations through public-private collaboration. To overcome these hurdles, we must not aim for control in a broad sense, but for structured protection of the space for participation itself. This requires a more deliberate set of measures.

First, legal provisions must be narrow and conduct-based. Direct threats, incitement to violence, and sustained targeted harassment should be clearly defined and actionable. This allows the law to address real harm

without opening the door to interpretation that can be used against dissent. Second, and equally important, the law must recognise coordinated harassment as a distinct harm. Current frameworks tend to focus on individual posts, but much of the pressure online comes from collective targeting. Addition of an intelligence-sharing protocol can open the door to a workable system allowing patterns of behaviour, repeated targeting by multiple accounts, organised pile-ons to be identified and addressed through platform obligations and legal recognition.

Third, protections for users must be built in. The Cyber Security Act has very lenient provisions regarding the time allowed for finishing investigation and lacks a fast-track complaint mechanism for victims of coordinated abuse, which requires platforms to respond within defined timeframes and ensure transparency in how complaints are handled. Without this, victims will continue to withdraw from participation. Fourth, safeguards against misuse must be structural, not optional. Independent oversight, judicial authorisation for serious action, and public reporting on enforcement are essential. These are not additions; they are what make regulation credible in a post-abusive environment.

Finally, there must be an explicit recognition

that protecting civil discourse is a policy goal. This means acknowledging that online space is not only about individual rights, but about maintaining conditions where disagreement can occur without intimidation. Without that, freedom of expression exists formally, but not meaningfully.

Global approaches offer direction here. Countries are increasingly holding platforms accountable for systemic risks, including organised harassment, rather than treating online harms as isolated incidents. Under the EU's Digital Services Act, major tech companies must proactively identify and reduce online harms or face massive penalties totalling 6% of their worldwide earnings. In the UK, the Online Safety Act 2023 imposes a duty of care on platforms to protect users from abuse and harassment, with statutory enforcement powers. Additionally, Australia's Online Safety Act 2021 empowers the eSafety Commissioner to ensure platforms address cyber-bullying and other online abuse, introducing mandatory compliance measures.

The relevance is not in copying these models directly, but in recognising the shift towards addressing behaviour at scale. Bangladesh's challenge is to adapt that understanding to its own context. The next phase of policy must actively protect our digital space, especially for those who are neither loud nor aligned.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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1 Final  
5 Snowy bird  
10 Pinnacle  
11 Vineyard harvest  
13 Subsequently  
14 Alludes to  
15 Brewski  
17 Lyricist Gershwin  
18 Skilled showoff  
19 Illuminated  
20 Massive  
21 Finished  
22 Confectioner's harvest  
25 Hair over the forehead  
26 Poet Khayyam  
27 Cellist's need  
28 Work wk. start  
29 US/USSR tension  
33 Ran into  
34 Emergency phone  
35 Tolerates  
37 Notion  
38 Most rational  
39 Bookish sort

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3 Do refinery work  
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7 Squealer  
8 Letter after delta  
9 Ripping  
12 Declares  
16 Toledo setting  
21 Wasting time  
22 List separators  
23 One-celled creatures  
24 Saloon of the Southwest  
25 Shackle part  
27 Increases  
29 Heart's place  
30 More broad  
31 "... the end of -"  
32 Prepared  
36 Singer Shannon

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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## 'UNMATCHED' Eminent Bangladeshi artistes reminisce Asha Bhosle



Fahmida Nabi

ZAHID AKBAR & SHAH ALAM  
SHAZU

Asha Bhosle (1933-2026) was a legend not only in the context of South Asia, but the entire musical world feels her absence. Her departure brought about a platitude of sorrow in Bangladesh as well. Some of the most renowned musicians in the country made their reactions known in their personal tributes.

**The world has lost a rare jewel: Runa Laila**

In an emotional tribute on Facebook, Runa Laila recalled her deep bond with the iconic singer, describing her loss in words that echoed the grief of millions. She said, "I am completely devastated. The world has lost a rare jewel, irreplaceable and unsurpassable. I learnt so much from her. As a child, I would listen to Asha *didi's* songs and try to copy the superlative and finely-honed intricacies in her unmatched voice.

Whilst judging the reality show *Sur Kshetra*, we became very close. We laughed and joked and gossiped so much that after a few episodes the producer placed us far apart so that we couldn't communicate easily. But Asha *didi* insisted that I be seated in the chair next to her and of course you simply cannot say 'no' to her.

She would cook Biryani and Prawns for me and bring them to the shoot for me. We became good friends and loved and respected each other. I always insisted that she call me by my name instead of Runa *ji* and *Aap*. But she told me that she respects a human being and as a 'great' artiste therefore, she continued calling me that.

*Didi* I will miss our long



Sabina Yasmin

conversations on the phone, endless gossip and hearing your voice again saying *Runa ji Aap kaisi hain* (Runa *ji*, how are you)? May you rest in eternal peace."

**A voice like hers was rare: Sabina Yasmin**

The legendary Sabina Yasmin shared her heartfelt memories of the legend. "I truly have no words to describe Asha *ji's* music. I have only ever listened to her in awe, and I will continue to do so all my life.

Reminiscing about her meeting with the singer, she shared, "I first met her during the recording of the film *Onnyay Obichar*, when I travelled to Mumbai. It was at R D Burman's studio. She was incredibly warm and humble—there was no trace of ego despite her stature. Perhaps that is what defines truly great artistes."

Sabina also added that Asha had praised the songs of *Onnyay Obichar*, and later, when she visited Bangladesh and stayed at the InterContinental, she listened to several of her songs. That remains a cherished moment in her life.

"A signature voice like hers is rare. I feel deeply saddened by her passing. I do not even dare to comment on her music."

**The word 'heartbroken' feels insufficient: Kanak Chapa**  
Renowned singer Kanak Chapa expressed her grief. "The word



Kanak Chapa

'heartbroken' feels insufficient—I am just shocked. We know that all humans must one day pass away, yet the music of such an artiste never dies."

She also stated that in the next hundred years, the world may never hear another voice like hers—or like Lata Mangeshkar.

"It is hard to even imagine. While she was alive, I felt a strange comfort knowing that somewhere on this same earth, Asha Bhosle existed. It felt as though her breath, her music, somehow reached me. Her voice was utterly unique—like honey that cannot be separated once poured, like a pearl that shines with its own brilliance."

Adding that there's no comparison for her, Kanak Chapa said, "I will listen to her songs as long as I live. News like this is difficult to accept—I am deeply shaken."

**She will remain an idol for generations to come: Rafiqul Alam**

"There is no need to say anew how gifted an artiste Asha Bhosle was," said eminent singer Rafiqul Alam. "I consider it an act of audacity to speak about her. Even so, let me say a few words. I had the fortune of meeting such a celebrated artiste twice—once in Dhaka, and once in Kolkata."

Rafiqul Alam said, "In Dhaka, I had the opportunity to speak with her closely. I asked her directly,



Rafiqul Alam

PHOTOS: STAR

'Asha *ji, Jibono*, the song you have sung, is an extraordinarily beautiful song in the Bengali language. Is it possible to render such a song by bringing every skill to bear? No one but you could sing this song.' She was pleased to hear it. She smiled. Then she asked, 'Is it popular here too?' I told her it was a favourite and a song beloved by everyone."

Rafiqul Alam said, "Whenever one speaks of any discipline, one needs a point of reference. In the very first such reference, the name of Asha Bhosle will inevitably arise. If we speak of live music, her name comes up effortlessly. Through her music, she elevated herself to an unparalleled height. She will remain an example for all time."

He continued, "Personally, I feel that to reach the level of an artiste like her, I would have to be born twice. As a female artiste in live music and classical music, Asha Bhosle stands at a very great height. Today she has departed. We must remember her. The songs she sang will keep her alive forever."

**I followed her style closely: Fahmida Nabi**

Paying a heartfelt tribute, Fahmida Nabi expressed her emotions. "I am deeply saddened to hear that Asha Bhosle is no more. I do not know what words could suffice. Another Asha Bhosle will never be born, that much I know. From a young age, her musical finesse, beauty, knowledge, and magical voice shaped my dreams. I followed her style closely, her expression, clarity, romance, everything." An artiste like her never truly dies. She will live on forever in the hearts of listeners through her songs. What she has left behind is timeless and inexhaustible.

## NEWS

### Opposition's arena is streets

FROM PAGE 12

Claiming there were efforts to render parliament ineffective, he urged July fighters to prepare for another mass movement.

"Without a mass movement, the government will not implement reforms. This time, we must take to the streets in a planned way. We do not want to fail or achieve only partial success again," he said.

At least 10 family members of July martyrs and injured activists, along with other speakers, said the key aspirations of the July uprising remain largely unfulfilled, including ending discrimination and reforming the state.

They alleged that by not placing major interim government ordinances before parliament, the BNP has gone against the spirit of the uprising. These ordinances included those on the referendum, police commission, enforced disappearance,

and Anti-Corruption Commission.

Shafiqur said most BNP lawmakers had themselves faced repression. "This [current parliament] is a gathering of the oppressed, who should understand each other's suffering. But power seems so ruthless that it makes people forget their past. Then they see nothing but the lure of power."

Referring to the BNP's 31-point reform pledge, he said, "The very first point was constitutional reform. Now they [BNP] have taken a position against it."

He further alleged a "spree of takeovers" across institutions, from Bangladesh Bank and Bangladesh Cricket Board to district councils and universities, accusing the BNP of attempting to reimpose "one-party rule in a BAKSAL-style manner."

Nahid also said the July martyrs and injured should not be used for

political purposes. "The government is at times invoking the July movement and 1971 to legitimise its actions. Yet it embodies neither 2024 nor 1971," he said.

Among others, Sanzida Khan, mother of July martyr Shahariar Khan Anas, said she did not expect the BNP, once an oppressed party, to "forget the martyrs and stand against the people's verdict" after coming to power.

"We believe Hasnat, Nahid and others represent the July martyrs and injured in parliament. We hope the government will honour the people's mandate and realise the martyrs' aspirations, without political duplicity," she added.

Injured July activist Kamrul Ahsan urged the government to implement the July charter in line with the referendum verdict, warning of a broader movement if it fails to do so.

### War threatens remittance lifeline

FROM PAGE 12

authorities have restricted such gatherings," he said. "There are thousands of daily wage workers like us who are suffering."

Bangladeshi businesses in the Gulf are also struggling. "Be it clothing shops or construction work, every business is affected. There are almost no tourists in the thriving tourism industry of Bahrain," said Shafi Sarwar, a Bangladeshi businessman in Manama.

The Middle East hosts some 70 lakh Bangladeshi migrants, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET).

But overseas employment has dropped sharply in recent months. BMET data shows emigration clearance fell from 95,095 in January to 65,634 in February, and further to 44,661 in March.

In 2025, more than 80 percent of over one million Bangladeshi migrants went to the Middle East, which accounted for around 60 percent of the country's \$32 billion remittance.

Sharmin Akhter, 26, of Satkhira secured work visas for Jordan on February 27 and was supposed to fly in the first week of March.

"I am unable to fly and join work because my agency could not buy an air ticket," she told this newspaper yesterday. "Now I'm worried over the uncertainty created by the war."

Ali Haider Chowdhury, former secretary general of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, said many workers who had received clearance are now also reluctant to travel due to security concerns.

"Employers are naturally hesitant to issue visas amid the business slowdown," he said, warning that remittance inflows could be affected.

Shakirul Islam, chairman of the Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Programme, stressed that immediate attention must be given to migrants affected by the crisis.

"A significant number of Bangladeshi migrants are daily wage earners with irregular work. They are bearing the brunt of the crisis," he said.

Field reports suggest many have lost jobs or seen incomes fall sharply, with some struggling to afford food and shelter after being displaced, he said, urging Bangladesh missions in the Gulf to provide emergency

support.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said higher energy import costs due to the Middle East crisis are already straining Bangladesh's economy.

"If overseas employment declines due to a prolonged conflict, it will further aggravate economic challenges," she said. "Migrant families would suffer from reduced income and job losses."

Each year, over 20 lakh youths enter the job market, of whom about 10 lakh seek jobs abroad, while only around one lakh are absorbed into formal employment.

"With private investment already low, a decline in overseas jobs would create a double burden for the employment sector," Fahmida said.

She emphasised diplomatic engagement with Gulf countries to protect migrant jobs and ensure support during the crisis.

Fahmida also recommended seeking assistance from international organisations and bilateral partners and creating a special fund for migrant workers to support evacuation and reintegration if necessary.

### 31 eminent citizens slam repeal

FROM PAGE 12

(Repeal) Bill, and the Supreme Court Secretariat (Repeal) Bill.

The signatories said the move amounted to showing a "thumbs-down to the aspirations of the people of the country."

They added that revoking ordinances tied to "fundamental reform, the independence of the judiciary, and ensuring human rights" was done "ignoring the people's demands and despite the strong objection of the opposition party."

The statement said, "This is contradictory to the current government's election manifesto and their repeatedly pronounced commitments. We strongly protest this."

The citizens also criticised recommendations for further scrutiny of the Right to Information (Amendment) Ordinance and the Enforced Disappearance Prevention and Remedy Ordinance, calling such moves "not at all desirable."

They stressed that passing the latter was part of the government's obligation under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

The statement pointed out that the law minister, who was attorney general when the ordinances were passed, had been involved in drafting the Supreme Court Secretariat and Human Rights Commission

ordinances.

Against that backdrop, the government's objection was described as "truly surprising".

On the Human Rights Commission, they said successive governments had promised to make the body effective but failed.

The existing law, they argued, needed urgent amendment to meet international standards.

Had the ordinance been passed, victims could have received proper redress, and the commission could have acted against human rights violators.

However, since that did not happen, the fear has grown stronger that, as before, the Human Rights Commission may become an ineffective, bureaucratic institution or one dominated by politically loyal individuals, the statement added.

They further noted that the ruling party had pledged in its manifesto to make the Supreme Court Secretariat effective.

Repealing the measure, they cautioned, would undermine judicial independence and restore executive influence over subordinate courts.

The signatories said the 13th parliamentary election was not an ordinary one, but the outcome of a mass uprising that carried a promise to build a discrimination-free state and society after 15 years of misrule.

They urged the government to enact the ordinances through parliament. "Otherwise, there is

### Suspect dies after DNC raid

FROM PAGE 12

pending against him at different police stations.

Mohammadpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman confirmed that a DNC team conducted a raid at Akubbar's home in Charpara village around 10:00am and detained him.

"During questioning, he allegedly refused to provide information, prompting members of the team to beat him," said the OC, quoting locals and Akubbar's family.

"He fell ill and was first taken to a village doctor. When the practitioner refused to provide treatment, Akubbar was taken to the district Sadar hospital, where the on-duty doctor declared him dead," the OC told The Daily Star.

Angered by the incident, villagers attacked DNC personnel and injured one of them. Police later rescued them from the scene.

A general diary has been filed and the body has been sent for autopsy. If the death is found to have been caused by assault, a case will be filed accordingly, the police officer said.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Dr Sadia Selina Jhora, an emergency department physician at Magura 250-bed Sadar Hospital, said the man was brought dead to the hospital around 12:15pm. "The exact cause of death will be determined after an autopsy."

Speaking to this correspondent, Sub-Inspector of Magura DNC Sahara Yasmin said an 11-member team conducted the raid based on prior information and

no doubt that the people will once again become vocal in protest and undertake active programmes."

Among the signatories are Anu Muhammad, economist and former professor at Jahangirnagar University; Sultana Kamal, veteran human rights activist and founding chairperson of Foundation for Human Rights Culture; Iftekaruzzaman, executive director of TIB; ZI Khan Panna, senior lawyer and chairperson of Ain o Salish Kendra; Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; Shireen Parveen Huq, member of Naripokkho; Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education; and Shamsul Huda, executive director of Association for Land Reform and Development.

### Artemis crew urges

FROM PAGE 12

their shared humanity.

"What struck me wasn't necessarily just Earth, it was all the blackness around it. Earth was just this lifeboat hanging undisturbedly in the universe," said Koch.

"There's one new thing I know and that is: Planet Earth—you are a crew."

Hansen called on fans of the Artemis mission to see themselves in the crew of four, who marked a series of milestones: Glover was the first person of color to fly around the Moon, Koch was the first woman, and Canadian Hansen the first non-American.

recovered approximately half a kilogram of cannabis from the suspect's house. He was then arrested and a seizure list was prepared.

"After his arrest, we handcuffed him and were preparing to take him away when he suddenly fell ill. His family also said he was unwell. On humanitarian grounds, we removed the handcuffs and left him inside the house.

"We were outside near our vehicle when we heard he had become seriously ill. Soon after, locals got agitated, attacked us and vandalised our vehicle," she said, denying the allegation that DNC officials beat Akubbar.

Deputy Director of the Magura DNC, Md Nasir Uddin, could not be reached for comment despite several attempts.



# THE NAKSHI KANTHA

## Tradition and transformation

The kantha tradition, perhaps linked back to the embroidered quilts commissioned by the Portuguese from Satgaon, helped create some very fine kanthas in the regions of Jessore, Faridpur, and Khulna in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rajshahi and Kushtia also made kanthas, thicker and with fewer motifs. Notably, a kantha from Kushtia was given as a gift to Rabindranath Tagore, who lived in Shelaidaha between 1891 and 1901, and is preserved in Santiniketan.

NAIAZ ZAMAN

Originally made of worn-out saris, lungis or dhotis, the kanthas of Bengal had a functional, domestic use as coverlets, wrappings, pillow covers, *ashons*. However, they were occasionally embellished by floral motifs or even entire scenes drawn from rural life, myths, and folklore to give as gifts to loved ones – a daughter leaving home, a son getting married, a revered father. By writing *Nakshi Kanthar Maath* (1929), Jasim Uddin immortalised this women's domestic art in poetry and gave the embroidered quilt the name that has become popular over the years.

In 1964, Tofail Ahmed, a collector of folk art, lamented that the kantha was "a lost art." He noted that Jasim Uddin's poem had become better known than the article itself and that, when the average Bengali spoke of the *nakshi kantha* or heard the term, it was the poem that was referred to or understood. With changing tastes and lifestyles, the popular craft of kantha was becoming a lost art. He believed that it would be in Jasim Uddin's poem alone that the kantha would be preserved. "*Drishtibhanga o paribartaner sange purba Pakistaner e gana shilpa lupta hoye jacche. Pallikabi Jasimuddin 'Nakshi Kanthar Maather' bhitar diye amar thakbe e lupta shilper smriti.*"

The kantha tradition, perhaps linked back to the embroidered quilts commissioned by the Portuguese from Satgaon, helped create some very fine kanthas in the regions of Jessore, Faridpur, and Khulna in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Rajshahi and Kushtia also made kanthas, thicker and with fewer motifs. Notably, a kantha



A traditional nakshi kantha.

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA



Women sewing nakshi kantha in a mango orchard near their homes in Chapainawabganj.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

promote the kantha by using its motifs and embroidery on household ware and garments. Karika was followed by Aarong – the outlet for the Mennonite Church Council and then for Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) – and Kumudini. In 1979, BRAC introduced kantha-making at its centre in Jamalpur. However, the catalyst for the kantha revival was the setting up of the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in 1981.

Martha Alter Chen, an American working with BRAC, had been working with kanthas at the BRAC centre in Jamalpur. When a Japanese firm involved in the development of the hotel approached BRAC for a traditional design, Chen called upon Surayia Rahman, an artist who had earlier worked with WVA, to design a triptych kantha wall hanging. Drawing upon photos from the Stella Kramrisch Collection of the

Philadelphia Museum of Art, Surayia Rahman designed a composite nakshi kantha. A sample kantha was made. BRAC, however, was unable to take up the work for the larger piece. As a result, Kumudini, which also had been working with kanthas, finally did the work on the larger piece. Apart from Surayia Rahman, Razia Quader also designed two pieces for the hotel: one replicated different forms of the lotus motif down its length, the other was a marriage scene which used the basic running stitch, but a stylised parallel form. Both this second kantha and Surayia Rahman's have influenced later kantha-making in Bangladesh. These pieces were very different from the functional kanthas as well as from the traditional kanthas in that they were made from new cloth and were designed to be viewed frontally rather than from the top as in traditional pieces. And in making these pieces – and training women to do the embroidery – the kantha was revived and made new again. However, even as the revival of the kantha was made possible by these pieces, the kantha was also changed by them. Sister Michael Francis, or Sister Mike as she was generally called,

an American nun of the order of the Holy Cross, had left the college to work in craft organisations. She was working with Kumudini at the time and offered to teach the Kumudini workers the needlework skills that they would need in order to complete the work. She helped needlewomen hone their traditional needlework skills, but also taught them a stitch to fill in large expanses of colour. Locally called the Kashmiri stitch or *bhorat* – which simply means filling – it is what is known in the western repertoire of embroidery stitches as the Romanian stitch. In traditional kanthas, large expanses of colour are filled by a variety of kantha stitches: the simple running stitch, darning stitches, pindot stitches, *kaiya*, or *chatai*. The use of traditional kantha stitches produces a muted effect. The Romanian stitch creates large expanses of colour. Surayia

needs to swirl around motifs but fills in the gaps between them. The moulding effect is, therefore, often missing from these kanthas. So too is the playfulness and experimentation with motifs and stitches found in old pieces where the needlewoman relied on her imagination. The ripple effect of traditional kanthas is also missing in many wallhangings. The characteristic kantha stitch is a ripple stitch created partly because of the pattern of running stitches and partly because the needlewoman did not use an embroidery frame. These "kanthas," however, use the darning stitch and an embroidery frame, thus creating a smooth surface instead of the rippled one created by the kantha stitch.

Older kanthas juxtaposed traditional motifs with contemporary ones. The kantha revival is, however, a conscious revival of a traditional

Bangladesh. In the lower left and right hand corners are kadamba flowers – common to traditional kanthas and associated with Krishna, the god of love.

The kantha expresses a woman's love, but it can also express her sorrow and anger. In a kantha at the Bangladesh National Museum, the woman making the kantha expresses her anger at her husband who is too attached to his father. She embroiders a sentence about her husband's attitude and writes at the end, "Ja, shala, ja." The kantha may also be used to protest against patriarchy. Banche Shekha Hasta Shilpa has embroidered a kantha based on a poster by Banche Shekha which shows the many tasks performed by a woman whose husband claims that his wife does not work.

The figures of the number of women employed in commercial kantha-making will give some idea of how many lives have been affected by the revival. In July 2008, at an exhibition of kanthas organised by Aarong to celebrate its third decade, the figures of women employed for kantha work at their different centres were as follows: Jamalpur 4512, Jessore 4026, Kushtia 3324, and Sherpur 3935. If we add other organisations as well as Bangladeshi women who turn old saris into kanthas for domestic use – for their families or for customers who want functional kanthas – the numbers could easily be quadrupled. The town of Jamalpur has become a kantha town, with many women entrepreneurs setting up kantha shops which employ large numbers of women.

Apart from nakshi kanthas which are used for decorative purposes, their stitches, borders and motifs are explored by designers and boutiques to design high end saris, shawls, and western-style outfits. At the same time, some NGOs and craft shops are using printed saris to make colourful, functional kanthas embroidered with large running stitches. Basha Boutique, for example, advertises "kantha blankets" made with colourful, printed saris.

What is perhaps very interesting is that men are taking an interest in embroidering kanthas. A World Crafts Council Award of Excellence was given to Md. Aminul Islam in 2024 for his nakshi kantha. Ibraheem Renglink, from Holland but with roots in Bangladesh, discovered the kantha on his visit to his Bangladeshi grandmother and made kanthas himself. He was also part of a team which worked on a kantha book for children based on *Chander Buri*.

The journey of the kantha from a simple layered coverlet to a work of art has not been smooth. On the way it absorbed external influences, looked at a changing world, and, in the process, changed the way we use or look at it.

Niaz Zaman, who has written *The Art of Kantha Embroidery*, is a retired academic.

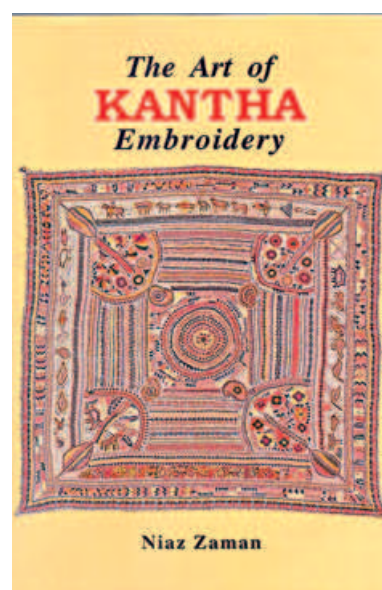
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from Kushtia was given as a gift to Rabindranath Tagore, who lived in Shelaidaha between 1891 and 1901, and is preserved in Santiniketan.

Though functional kanthas never stopped being made, a recognition of its significance in the cultural life of the people of this region took place twice: once, in Bengal, during the early years of the twentieth century which saw the rise of the swadeshi movement for independence from Britain and, second, in Bangladesh, after liberation. The swadeshi movement was a political movement but also a cultural one, attempting to recover the past traditions of Bengal. Dinesh Chandra Sen collected ballads and kanthas from the region – work in which he was aided by a young Jasim Uddin who would later write *Nakshi Kanthar Maath*, translated as *The Field of the Embroidered Quilt* by E. M. Millford. Gurusaday Dutt, apart from starting the bratachari movement, also collected different forms of folk art, including the kantha. It was also at this time that Stella Kramrisch started collecting kanthas and writing about them.

The creation of Pakistan in 1947 encouraged an "Islamic" culture, which rejected many indigenous arts and crafts. Nevertheless, with the language movement, especially after February 21, 1952, a Bangladeshi nationalism arose which would ultimately lead to Bangladesh. The alpana, designs made traditionally with rice paste for Hindu religious ceremonies, was used to decorate the area around the Shaheed Minar. However, the "revival" of the kantha took place after independence.

Following the War of Independence, when many women had been left destitute, widowed or separated from their families, kantha-making was developed as an economic activity, particularly in Jessore, Kushtia, Faridpur, and Rajshahi, regions of Bangladesh with strong kantha traditions. In 1974, a National Handicrafts Exhibition, inspired by the artist Zainul Abedin, initiated a resurgence of interest in traditional arts. Karika, a handicrafts cooperative, was set up and helped



Philadelphia Museum of Art, Surayia Rahman designed a composite nakshi kantha. A sample kantha was made. BRAC, however, was unable to take up the work for the larger piece. As a result, Kumudini, which also had been working with kanthas, finally did the work on the larger piece. Apart from Surayia Rahman, Razia Quader also designed two pieces for the hotel: one replicated different forms of the lotus motif down its length, the other was a marriage scene which used the basic running stitch, but a stylised parallel form. Both this second kantha and Surayia Rahman's have influenced later kantha-making in Bangladesh. These pieces were very different from the functional kanthas as well as from the traditional kanthas in that they were made from new cloth and were designed to be viewed frontally rather than from the top as in traditional pieces. And in making these pieces – and training women to do the embroidery – the kantha was revived and made new again. However, even as the revival of the kantha was made possible by these pieces, the kantha was also changed by them. Sister Michael Francis, or Sister Mike as she was generally called,

Rahman's piece was embroidered using the *bhorat*. Instead of using the kantha stitch for the background, the empty spaces between the motifs were filled in with the darning stitch which eliminates the ripple effect of the traditional kantha running stitch. Sister Mike also made significant changes in Razia's piece. Razia had planned that it would be worked in traditional kantha stitches, and designed feathery and light stitches to suggest the type of stitches to be used. However, Sister Mike substituted Razia's suggested stitches with the *chatai*. Kanthas made at Banche Shekha and Banche Shekha Hasta Shilpa in Jessore use this stitch exclusively for their work.



Today, because kanthas are meant to be hung and viewed frontally, the traditional design has undergone a change. Instead of a centre and four corners, many kanthas have a top and a bottom. Furthermore, as the kantha is designed by an artist or designer and the designs then traced onto the kantha to be given to craftswomen to embroider, the needle is not used to mark out the motifs to be filled. With all the designs being traced onto the cloth, the needlewoman no longer

art. Many kanthas therefore portray rural scenes – as Razia Quader's kantha does. However, in old kanthas there is often a juxtaposition of the traditional and the contemporary. Thus, Manadasundari's kantha from Jangalbadhal depicts rows of British soldiers and rows of English gentlemen alongside Indians of different classes, "good" women, their heads covered, along with entertainers and Indian gentlemen watching the dancers, an old beggar woman, a fisherman, two *gachhis* in loin cloth, among others.

Many of Surayia Rahman's pieces are based on rural Bengal. In addition, she drew upon Mughal subjects and scenes of Bengal under the Raj. She was also inspired by Jasim Uddin to design kanthas based on *Nakshi Kanthar Maath* and *Sojan Badiyar Ghat*. When the US Embassy planned to shift to a new building, Surayia was commissioned to design a wall-hanging. The wall-hanging portrays President Ershad of Bangladesh and Ambassador De Pree of the United States opening the embassy on July 4, 1989. Behind them, is a picture of the embassy while the lower right and left features scenes of life in

## MABIA'S DOPING BAN Does it expose system gaps?

ANISUR RAHMAN

Weightlifter Mabia Akter Simanta has been handed a two-year suspension from both international and domestic competitions after the two-time South Asian Games gold medalist tested positive for banned substances in a doping test.

The ban of the 28-year-old athlete, who has competed internationally for the past 15 years and has undergone numerous anti-doping tests without any previous violations, has raised questions over whether the incident involved intentional use, negligence, or a lack of awareness of anti-doping regulations.

Following a report from the South Asian regional anti-doping organisation, the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) informed the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA), which on Thursday officially notified Mabia of her suspension. The ban is effective from October 29, 2025 – the date when her sample was collected by BOA.

In preparation for the 2025 Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, scheduled for November 7–21, the BOA collected blood samples from 26 selected athletes based on performance criteria. Mabia's test reportedly returned positive for the banned substances furosemide and canrenone.

Mabia maintains that she unknowingly



PHOTO: STAR

"I was undergoing treatment for a knee injury for seven to eight months when the sample was taken," Mabia told The Daily Star, adding that she had submitted her prescription during the process but it was not given due consideration by the authorities.

She further explained: "I was on medication prescribed by a doctor and

**"During anti-doping seminars, we were never told to consult the anti-doping committee before taking medication. We were only advised to keep doctor's prescriptions."**

Weightlifter Mabia Akter Simanta

had no idea that furosemide is a banned substance. I was informed about this substance by the BOA anti-doping committee on January 15. I later searched online and learned that it is used to reduce water retention in the body."

Dr Islam, however, emphasised the importance of compliance with anti-doping protocols. "As per WADA policy, athlete health comes first. However, there are restricted medicines in sports, and

athletes must consult the anti-doping committee before taking them.

"If Mabia had obtained prior approval from WADA through BOA, there would have been no issue. She did not follow the same process as shooter Armin Asha did years ago, who was granted permission to use certain medications under legitimate medical conditions," he said, adding that WADA follows strict rules in such cases.

The incident has also raised broader concerns about whether federations and BOA are adequately educating athletes about anti-doping regulations and banned substances.

"During anti-doping seminars, we were never told to consult the anti-doping committee before taking medication. We were only advised to keep doctor's prescriptions. Even common medicines like paracetamol were said to be safe," Mabia said. "Why would I knowingly take something that could ruin my 15-year career?"

Mabia has already served five months of her 24-month suspension but remains eligible to appeal the decision within 14 days.

She has confirmed that she will challenge the ruling, hoping for justice, and has called on BOA, her federation, and other concerned authorities to support her in seeking a reduction or reversal of the ban.

## Mohammedan part ways with Alfaz

SPORTS REPORTER

Mohammedan Sporting Club on Sunday sacked head coach Alfaz Ahmed following a poor run of form that saw the club slip to seventh place in the ongoing Bangladesh Football League (BFL).

**"A coach alone cannot make a club champion – he needs a complete team. The squad I had was riddled with deficiencies."**

Alfaz Ahmed told The Daily Star



- Club statement (signed by director-sports Mostakur Rahman) cited frustrating performances and disappointment among board, officials, and supporters.
- Decision taken to improve performances; assistant coach Abdul Kayum Sentu given temporary charge.
- Alfaz blamed poor transfer window planning, saying the squad had major deficiencies and a coach alone cannot ensure success.
- Former national striker Alfaz became head coach in 2022-23, after serving 3 years as assistant to Sean Lane.
- He won Federation Cup (Mohammedan's first in 14 years), beating Abahani in final.
- He also won Mohammedan's first professional league title last season, ending Bashundhara Kings' dominance.
- However, Mohammedan sit just a point above the relegation zone this season. His side lost 2-1 to archrivals Abahani on Friday, marking their fifth league defeat.

## Black Caps set to arrive today

SPORTS REPORTER

New Zealand are set to arrive today in two separate contingents for their white-ball tour of Bangladesh, BCB officials confirmed yesterday.

"A small group will arrive in the afternoon, while the majority will come on a second flight at around 11:00pm," a BCB cricket operations official said.

After a rest day on April 14, New Zealand will hold practice sessions on April 15 and 16 ahead of the first two ODIs on April 17 and 20 at Mirpur's Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium. The third ODI will be held in Chattogram on April 23.

New Zealand are sending a second-string squad for the tour, with most of their regular players currently engaged in the Indian Premier League and the Pakistan Super League.

Bangladesh have named an unchanged squad from their previous home series against Pakistan in March, as selectors opted for continuity. The series presents an opportunity for the Tigers to build on their ODI form – having won their last two home series against the West Indies and Pakistan – and strengthen their chances of direct World Cup qualification.

## Tigresses balance ODI push with T20 World Cup build-up

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's team are set to depart for Rajshahi on Monday for a three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka which will kickstart their campaign in the ICC Women's Championship 2025 29 cycle, the qualifying competition for the next Women's ODI World Cup.

However, focusing solely on ODIs is not an option for Nigar Sultana and Co as right after the ODI series, which will begin on April 20, they will play three T20Is against the same opponents in Sylhet from April 28, which would kickstart their preparations for this year's ICC Women's T20 World Cup in June-July.

The Tigresses had narrowly missed out direct qualification to the 2025 Women's ODI World Cup in India after finishing seventh. They equalled sixth-placed New Zealand on points, who received the last direct spot, but finished placed one slot below as the White Ferns had one more win than them.

Bangladesh eventually qualified for the World Cup through the qualifiers, but would be hoping to steer clear from that this time. Even though the ODI World Cup still seems far away, starting the campaign on the right foot at home will be crucial.

"There are points up for grabs. Last year we had to play the qualifiers... We want to play good cricket so we don't have to play the qualifiers again," batting coach



**BANGLADESH SQUAD:**  
Nigar Sultana Joty (c), Nahida Akter (vc), Farzana Haque, Sobhana Mostary, Fahima Khatun, Sharmin Akter Supta, Ritu Moni, Shorna Akter, Rabeya Khan, Sarmin Sultana, Marufa Akter, Fariha Islam Trisna, Sultana Khatun, Shanjida Akther Maghla, Juairiya Ferdous  
**Stand By:** Dilara Akter, Shorifa Khatun, Farjana Easmin, Tajnehar

Nasiruddin Faruque Shojib told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Tigresses underwent a camp at BKSP till April 8 as part of their

preparations for the upcoming ODIs and T20Is. Team management sources confirmed that alongside ODI-centric work, T20 specific work too had also been done in the camp.

"Our priority right now is the ODI series against Sri Lanka. So, this camp was ODI-based. Additionally, we worked on small details, focusing on match-ups between ODIs and T20s to bridge that gap," Nasiruddin told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced the 15-member squad for the ODI series yesterday night, where Juairiya Ferdous, who played in the T20 World Cup qualifiers this year, received a maiden ODI call up. Top-order batter Sarmin Sultana, a 32-year-old who last played ODIs for the Tigresses in 2019, was also included.

"Juairiya is a next generation player and has good power-hitting abilities. Sharmin is making a return after a six-year gap. What has improved recently is her strike-rotation and ability to play shots. We are focusing on the same areas as we are slow in the Powerplay and want to improve on that aspect in ODIs to get 250-plus scores," national team chief selector Sajjad Ahmed Shipon told The Daily Star yesterday.

With the T20I World Cup preparations going into full swing, women's team's busy schedule is set to continue after the Sri Lanka T20Is with a camp in Dhaka before a tri-nation series in Scotland.

59 DAYS TO GO



## Oldest to glory

The record for the oldest coach to win the World Cup belongs to Vicente del Bosque. Under a 59-year-old Del Bosque's guidance, Spain lifted their first-ever World Cup title at the 2010 tournament in South Africa, edging the Netherlands 1-0 in extra time in the final.

**\*\* Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Klose: The goal machine who left his mark of greatness with quiet steps.'**

## THE BAVARIAN JUGGERNAUT

Bayern Munich smashed the record for the most goals ever scored in a single Bundesliga season as they hammered St. Pauli 5-0 in Hamburg on Saturday. They are now 12 points clear at the top, with just five games remaining.

- Jamal Musiala's opener was Bayern's 101st league goal, matching the long-standing record set in 1971-72, also by Bayern.
- Further strikes from Leon Goretzka, Michael Olise, Nicolas Jackson and Raphael Guerreiro took the tally to 105.
- Bayern's goal difference stands at a staggering +78.
- Vincent Kompany's side have scored at least twice in 27 of their 29 league games.

**BAYERN TOP SCORERS IN BUNDESLIGA**  
Harry Kane (31)  
Luis Diaz (15)  
Michael Olise (12)  
Serge Gnabry (8)  
Lenient Karl and Nicolas Jackson (5)



PHOTO: REUTERS

## Sinner topples Alcaraz to reclaim No. 1 spot

Jannik Sinner beat Carlos Alcaraz in straight sets to win the Monte Carlo Masters for the first time on Sunday and reclaim the world number one ranking from his Spanish rival. Sinner dethroned Alcaraz 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to capture his third ATP 1000 title of the year after completing the "Sunshine Double" last month with victories in Indian Wells and Miami.



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## 31 eminent citizens slam repeal of key ordinances

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-one distinguished citizens yesterday expressed "strong anger and condemnation" over parliament's repeal of several reform ordinances, saying the move ignored public expectations and contradicted government pledges.

In a joint statement, they noted that civil society, along with the people, had long demanded passage of ordinances on the National Human Rights Commission, the Supreme Court Secretariat, Supreme Court judges' appointment, prevention and remedy of enforced disappearances, and right to information.

They recalled that a special committee of the 13th parliament had recommended passing 98 of 133 ordinances without change, while suggesting repeal of some reform-related ordinances and reintroduction of others later as amended bills.

Parliament on April 9 passed the National Human Rights Commission (Repeal and Reinstatement) Bill, the Supreme Court Judges Appointment

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



First responders carry a body from the rubble of destroyed buildings at the site of an Israeli strike that targeted the southern Lebanese village of Qana yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Furnace oil price hiked by 35%

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Electricity bills and industrial costs are set to increase after the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) raised furnace oil prices by 35 percent to Tk 94.69 per litre, citing global market volatility linked to the US-Israel war on Iran.

The latest adjustment came into effect from midnight and will remain in force until further notice.

The decision was made under Sections 34(4) and 34(6) of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Act, 2003 following proposals from the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation and the oil marketing companies Padma Oil, Meghna Petroleum and Jamuna Oil, according to BERC.

As no crude oil was imported in March, a committee formed on March 15 recommended the adjustment based on the average international Platts rate and the prevailing US dollar exchange rate.

The new rate was determined based on the free on board (FOB) price of refined furnace oil for March, the average Platts rate between March 1 and April 12 and the FOB price of crude oil imported in February, BERC said.

Furnace oil is a primary fuel source for many independent power plants (IPPs) and captive power units within factories. IPPs account for around one-third of the country's electricity generation.

## Opposition's arena is streets Says Shafiqur, vows to fight for reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said the opposition's "primary arena" is the streets, not parliament, stressing that the party will remain in the House only as long as it can wage a meaningful fight within it.

"The distressed people of this country sent us to parliament hoping for change. If we cannot initiate that change, what is the use of this parliament?" he asked while addressing a discussion with families of July martyrs and fighters in Dhaka.

His remarks came amid the Jamaat-led I-Party Alliance's push, both inside parliament and through street protests, to implement the referendum verdict on state reforms under the July National Charter.

Shafiqur, the leader of the opposition in parliament, vowed that the opposition would fight alongside the people to bring about the "final defeat of fascism" and secure victory for citizens.

He also criticised attempts to politicise the martyrs' sacrifice, saying, "Martyrs do not belong to any party; they are the proud asset of the nation. We do not want any division along party lines."

The programme was organised by the I-Party Alliance at the Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh auditorium in Kakrail.

Presiding over the event, Opposition Chief Whip and NCP Convener Nahid Islam said the unity forged during the 2024 mass uprising still holds, but alleged that the current BNP government has become "the main obstacle" to reforms.



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## Suspect dies after DNC raid Wife alleges torture; officials claim illness

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

A suspected drug dealer was allegedly beaten to death during a raid by a team from the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) in Magura's Mohammadpur upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Akubbar Molla, 40, was from Charpara village.

However, DNC officials denied the allegation and said the man died due to illness.

The deceased's wife, Jyotsna Khatun, said around 10-12 individuals entered their home and introduced themselves as detective branch officers around 10:00am and began searching the premises.

When they failed to find anything, they detained and beat her husband, she said. "When my husband asked them for some water, they didn't give him any. They slapped him instead. He repeatedly said, 'please don't beat me; I have nothing'."

"They beat him with plastic pipes and sticks and left him to die. I want justice for this killing."

Police said Akubbar had four drug-related cases

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## War threatens remittance lifeline

Bangladeshi migrants in Middle East report job losses, unpaid wages, business disruptions

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh's overseas employment market faces growing risks of shrinking amid the war in the Middle East, the largest destination for migrant workers from the country.

If the crisis persists, economists fear it could also put pressure on the domestic job market.

Thousands of Bangladeshis, along with other Asian migrants, have already been affected as tourism, construction, and business activities slowed down across Gulf countries, according to migrants, recruiting agents, and researchers.

Many migrants report job losses and unpaid wages, while thousands of prospective workers are not being able to migrate. Nearly 900 flights bound for the Middle East had been cancelled since the US-Israel war on Iran began on February 28.

Due to the war, at least seven Bangladeshi migrants have been killed and several others injured in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Lebanon. The two-week ceasefire agreed on April 7 remains fragile.

The Daily Star has spoken to several Bangladeshi migrants in

the Middle East over the phone.

Ripon Bepari, a construction worker living on the outskirts of Beirut, has been unemployed since Israel began targeting Hezbollah installations in Lebanon.

"I have not received any salary for February and March, as my employer stopped work," he told The Daily Star.

Lebanese and other nationals, have lost jobs and many have been displaced.

"Migrants are living in fear of bombing.... They are more worried over their jobs and wages," he said.

Security measures in Gulf countries, such as school closures, remote work, and restrictions near US bases, have further disrupted

**Overseas employment has dropped sharply in recent months, with emigration clearance falling from 95,095 in January to 65,634 in February, and further to 44,661 in March, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training.**

Surviving on \$300 (about Tk 37,000) in savings, he said he can no longer send money home to his family in Netrokona.

"The government speaks about us when there is a remittance shortage. Then, they forget it. I expect our authorities to come to our support when we are in an emergency," he added.

Abdul Karim, a leader of the Bangladeshi migrant community in Lebanon, said around 5,000 Bangladeshis, along with

livelihoods.

Md Emon, a Bangladeshi taxi driver in Kuwait, said his monthly income has fallen from 200-300 Kuwaiti dinars (KD) to less than 100 KD (under Tk 40,000) as he was able to work just for 10 days over a month instead of the usual 20-25 days.

"It is common for migrant workers to gather at specific locations to be picked up by employers. Since the war began,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## Masterminds in Kushtia pir killing identified

Say law enforcers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The masterminds behind the attack and killing of Abdur Rahman, also known as Shamim al-Jahangir -- a pir based in Kushtia -- have been identified, sources in law enforcement agencies have said.

The attack was incited through the deliberate circulation of videos via certain Facebook pages and accounts within a targeted area, they said.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a police officer told The Daily Star that the identities of admins behind some of the accounts spreading the videos have been traced. He added that 15-18 individuals involved in the attack and vandalism have also been identified.

Shamim was beaten and hacked to death by a mob at his darbar in Philipnagar, Daulatpur upazila, yesterday over allegations of hurting religious sentiments. The darbar was vandalised and

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## Artemis crew urges unity on 'lifeboat' Earth



AFP, Houston

Artemis II astronauts expressed awe on Saturday over their record-setting lunar flyby mission, urging unity on Earth after witnessing the planet's isolation like a "lifeboat" in space.

The crew spoke at a news conference as Nasa took a victory lap following the success of the mission.

The astronauts did the first slingshot around the Moon in more than 50 years and traveled deeper into space than any humans before -- culminating in a smooth splashdown Friday off the coast of California.

Flanked on stage by mission commander Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Jeremy Hansen, astronaut Christina Koch called for people on Earth to embrace

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



A child being jabbed in the capital's Korail slum as a special measles-rubella vaccination drive in four city corporations -- Dhaka north, Dhaka south, Mymensingh, and Barishal -- began yesterday. The health directorate recorded six more suspected measles deaths in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the number to 151.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Hezbollah denies role in Damascus attack plot

AFP, Beirut

Hezbollah yesterday denied any link to a cell accused by Syrian authorities of planning an attack on a religious figure in Damascus, saying it conducts no activity in the country.

Syria's interior ministry said Saturday that security forces had arrested a woman attempting to plant an explosive device in front of a house belonging to an unidentified religious figure in the Bab Touma area of the Syrian capital.

Security forces dismantled the device and arrested five members of the cell, a ministry statement said.

According to initial investigations, the cell was linked to the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and "its members received specialised military training abroad", the ministry added.