

"You have about 300 million people who suffer from acute food insecurity already. That'll go up by about 20 percent very, very quickly."

WB chief economist Indermitt Gill on economic fallout of ME conflict

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Govt mulls hike in power price as subsidy mounts

Proposal sent to cabinet amid worsening outages

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government is preparing to raise bulk and retail electricity tariffs, citing an "unsustainable surge in subsidies" amid the ongoing fuel crunch triggered by the US-Israel war on Iran.

A power division proposal, issued in early April and now awaiting cabinet approval, seeks to increase the bulk tariff by up to Tk 1.20 per unit from the current Tk 7.04.

The plan is in motion at a time when the national power deficit widened to 1,900MW yesterday afternoon, nearly double last week's shortfall, leaving large parts of the country under prolonged outages in the sweltering heat.

Regions including Khulna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, and Cumilla have been facing prolonged and unannounced power cuts, making daily life increasingly unbearable, with households, hospitals, and businesses



Motorcyclists are now required to use the "Fuel Pass" app to purchase octane at Trust Filling Station at Bijoy Sarani and Shonar Bangla Filling Station at Asad Gate. The photo was taken at the latter yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



PM urges austerity amid global crisis

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday assured the country's people not to be worried about the global crisis caused by the US-Israel war on Iran and urged them to be frugal and avoid extravagance in state functions and family spending.

"Even amid the global war situation, we are trying to keep everything normal. Although fuel prices, including diesel, have increased in all countries across the world, the current government has not raised prices to avoid public suffering," he said.

Addressing the Independence Award-2026 ceremony at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital, the PM said the government is spending hundreds of crores of taka every day on subsidies in the fuel and energy sector to maintain stability and keep the situation normal.

He said the BNP-led government has started its journey amid a fragile

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

According to a power division proposal – issued earlier this month and now awaiting cabinet approval – a Tk 0.50 hike in wholesale prices would cut subsidies by Tk 5,000 crore, a Tk 1 hike by Tk 10,000 crore, and a Tk 1.20 hike by Tk 12,500 crore.

World being ravaged by a 'handful of tyrants': pope

REUTERS, Bamenda

Pope Leo b l a s t e d leaders who spend billions on wars and said the world was "being ravaged by a handful of tyrants", in unusually forceful remarks in Cameroon yesterday, days after US President Donald Trump attacked

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Hope rises as Trump claims Lebanon truce

US-Iran talks focus on interim deal as progress reported on 'sticky issues'

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump yesterday announced that Lebanon and Israel had agreed on a 10-day ceasefire and said the next meeting between the United States and Iran may take place over the weekend, adding to optimism that the Iran war may be nearing an end.

Though there was no indication whether Iran-backed Hezbollah was on board.

Meanwhile, a key Pakistani mediator said US and Iranian officials are close to a

breakthrough on "sticky issues". However, Iran warned that the fate of its nuclear programme remains unresolved.

Two Iranian sources told Reuters that US and Iranian negotiators have scaled back ambitions for a comprehensive peace deal and are instead seeking a temporary memorandum to prevent a return to conflict.

A senior Iranian official said the two sides had started to narrow some gaps, including over how to manage the Strait of Hormuz.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

struggling to cope.

In Noakhali, nearly 9.5 lakh consumers across nine upazilas are receiving only a fraction of the required supply.

Power officials say supply in some areas has fallen to less than half of demand due to reduced generation stemming from fuel shortages.

"In 24 hours, we get no more than five to six hours of electricity," said Poli Akhter, a resident of Chatkhil. "We only get 30 to 40 minutes of power before the next outage."

Students preparing for exams are struggling to study or sleep during prolonged outages, while hospitals are incurring additional costs to run generators.

In Khulna, demand stood at 1,800MW on Wednesday against supply of 1,500MW, leaving a deficit of 300MW, according to PDB. Residents yesterday reported outages every hour, even at night, with children, the elderly, and the sick suffering the most. In rural Dhaka, consumers of the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board faced a shortfall of up to 300MW.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



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Recipients of Independence Award-2026 pose for a photograph with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PTD

Dato Amin not behind new labour recruitment system

Says Malaysian HR minister

STAR REPORT

Malaysian Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri R Ramanan has refuted a report by Bloomberg that says Malaysia is planning to adopt a new foreign worker recruitment system developed by Bestinet Sdn Bhd, the company founded by labour tycoon Aminul Islam.

He described the report as “unverified and inaccurate”, the Malaysian newspaper The Star reported yesterday.

“It is shocking to me that they seem to know more about the proposed system than I do. I have not tabled anything to the Cabinet, yet they are able to explain it in detail,” he said during a dialogue session with the Concorde Club at Wisma Bernama in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday.

The issue carries significance for Bangladesh, as Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur last week agreed to expedite the reopening of Malaysia’s labour market for Bangladesh, which was frozen on May 31, 2024, following allegations of oversupply of labour and corruption in the recruitment system.

During a meeting between Bangladesh’s Labour SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Govt mulls hike in power price

FROM PAGE 1

On February 26, Energy Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku pledged not to raise electricity prices for two years, aiming instead to ease fiscal pressure by reducing system losses. But the war, which began on February 28, has disrupted fuel supplies and driven up import costs of LNG, coal, and furnace oil, which are key inputs for power generation.

With efforts to maintain coal supply and continue LNG imports at high prices, the fiscal burden has escalated sharply. Current electricity prices do not reflect actual generation costs of the Power Development Board (PDB), resulting in a widening gap covered through government subsidies.

In FY 2024-25, the actual cost per unit was Tk 12.36 while the wholesale price was Tk 7.04. As a result, the PDB incurred a loss of Tk 10,600 crore, despite Tk 45,000 crore in government subsidies. For FY 2025-26, the budget had planned to cap subsidies at Tk 37,000 crore, but the fuel crisis made this impossible.

Latest projections show subsidies rising to around Tk 56,000 crore this fiscal year, as import costs of primary fuel surge.

According to multiple officials aware of the proceedings, the power division proposal was sent before the cabinet in early April, which was sent

back for further clarification, and officials are working on it now.

Before Pahela Baishakh, a committee led by the finance minister was formed to finalise the power tariff proposal.

The outlines suggest a Tk 0.50 hike in wholesale prices would cut subsidies by Tk 5,000 crore, a Tk 1 hike by Tk 10,000 crore, and a Tk 1.20 hike by Tk 12,500 crore.

Officials say they have proposed keeping retail tariffs unchanged for “lifeline consumers”, those using up to 75 units (kWh), while raising rates for higher consuming users by Tk 0.70 to Tk 1.80 per unit.

“This would align with the conditions and recommendations of the International Monetary Fund, which has pressed for reducing subsidy burdens under economic reform measures while safeguarding marginal consumers,” a power division official told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

If the proposal is approved by the cabinet, it would be placed before the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission for final nod, following public hearings.

The proposal also references trends in neighbouring countries, including Sri Lanka and Singapore, which have raised electricity tariffs across sectors.

Meanwhile, the PDB data shows

it produced 12,324MW of electricity during the day peak hours yesterday against a demand of 14,380MW, which is 1,900MW more.

However, in the evening hours, the gap was reduced to around 500MW, although the demand rose to 15,350MW. Of the 14,800MW production, 5,300MW was from gas, 4,200MW from coal, and 2,500MW from furnace oil. The electricity import from India was around 2,500MW.

Fuel shortages have left a significant portion of installed capacity underutilised. At least 66 of 143 power plants reported fuel shortages yesterday.

Earlier assessments had shown that around 60 percent of gas based power plants would remain idle due to fuel constraints, a situation that appears to have worsened in recent days.

The PDB’s summer plan expected 5200MW of electricity from gas, 5700MW from coal, and 3500MW from furnace oil.

Besides, three major coal-fired power plants, with a combined 4,200MW of capacity, have been running below half of their capacities due to shortages in coal supply – SS Power in Chattogram, Matarbari in Cox’s Bazar and RNPL in Patuakhali.

[Our correspondents from the respective districts contributed to this report.]

World being ravaged by a ‘handful of tyrants’: pope

FROM PAGE 1

him on social media.

Leo, the first US pope, also decried leaders who used religious language to justify wars and urged a “decisive change of course” in a meeting in the biggest city in Cameroon’s anglophone regions, where a simmering conflict going back nearly a decade has left thousands dead.

“The masters of war pretend not to know that it takes only a moment to destroy, yet often a lifetime is not enough to rebuild,” the pontiff said.

“They turn a blind eye to the fact that billions of dollars are spent on killing and devastation, yet the resources needed for healing, education and restoration are nowhere to be found.”

Trump’s attacks on Leo, first launched on the eve of the pope’s ambitious four-country tour of Africa and repeated late Tuesday, have caused dismay in Africa, where more than a fifth of the world’s

Catholics live.

Leo, who kept a relatively low profile for most of his first year as leader of the 1.4-billion-member Church, has emerged as an outspoken critic of the war that began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally, spiritual leader of 85 million Anglicans worldwide, yesterday said that she stood with the pope in his “courageous call for a kingdom of peace”.

Speaking in the anglophone city of Bamenda, the pontiff also sharply criticised leaders who invoked religious themes to justify wars.

“Woe to those who manipulate religion and the very name of God for their own military, economic and political gain, dragging that which is sacred into darkness and filth,” he said.

“It is a world turned upside down, an exploitation of God’s creation that must be denounced and rejected by

every honest conscience.”

The pope made similar remarks last month, saying God rejected prayers from leaders with “hands full of blood”, in comments widely interpreted as aimed at US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who has invoked Christian language to justify the Iran war.

Trump began his criticism of Leo on Sunday, when he called the pope “WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy” in a post on Truth Social.

The US president attacked Leo again on social media late on Tuesday. On Wednesday Trump posted an image of Jesus embracing Trump, after an earlier image he posted that portrayed him as a Jesus-like figure, prompting widespread criticism.

Leo told Reuters on Monday that he would not stop speaking out about the Iran war and has avoided responding to Trump directly since then.

Hope rises as Trump claims Lebanon truce

FROM PAGE 1

The United States and Pakistan have been talking up the prospects for a deal in the more than six-week war, with US President Donald Trump saying that if a deal with Iran to conclude the war is reached and signed in Islamabad, he might go, and that Iran has agreed to almost everything.

Trump told reporters outside the White House that Iran had offered not to have nuclear weapons for more than 20 years.

“We’re going to see what happens. But I think we’re very close to making a deal with Iran,” he said.

Trump said he was not sure a ceasefire with Iran would need to be extended beyond next week. “We have a very good relationship with Iran right now, as hard as it is to believe”.

Closure of the strait has triggered the worst oil price shock in history and forced the International Monetary Fund to downgrade its outlook for the global economy, warning prolonged conflict could push the world to the brink of recession.

Pakistan’s army chief and a key figure in the mediation, Field Marshal Asim Munir, arrived in Tehran on Wednesday to try to prevent a renewal of the conflict after marathon talks held in Islamabad last weekend ended without a deal.

A senior Iranian official told Reuters yesterday that the trip had led to renewed hopes for a second round of talks and an extension of the two-week ceasefire, but said fundamental differences remain over its nuclear programme.

Pakistan’s foreign ministry yesterday said that both sides are willing to resume talks, though no date had yet been set.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told a Pentagon briefing yesterday that troops were poised to restart combat operations if a deal was not reached.

Standing alongside two of the US military’s most senior officers, Hegseth said Iran needs to choose wisely as it prepares for negotiations with the United States.

“We are reloading with more power than ever before, and better intelligence,” Hegseth said at a Pentagon news

briefing. “We are locked and loaded on your critical dual-use infrastructure, on your remaining power generation, and on your energy industry. We’d rather not have to do it.”

Hegseth also said the US blockade on Iranian ports will continue “as long as it takes”.

The issue of a ceasefire in Lebanon, where Israel has been waging a parallel campaign against Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah, would also be an essential component of any peace talks, Pakistan said.

Trump yesterday said the truce followed “excellent” conversations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Lebanese President Joseph Aoun. Israel and Lebanon envoys in the US held peace talks in Washington two days ago.

“These two Leaders have agreed that in order to achieve PEACE between their Countries, they will formally begin a 10 Day CEASEFIRE at 5 P.M. EST,” Trump said on his Truth Social network.

Trump said he had directed US Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and top US military officer Dan Caine to work with the two countries “to achieve a Lasting PEACE.”

“It has been my Honor to solve 9 Wars across the World, and this will be my 10th, so let’s, GET IT DONE!” said Trump, who launched the war on Iran alongside Israel on February 28.

Trump also said he would invite the leaders of Israel and Lebanon to the White House.

In southern Lebanon, fighting continued to rage yesterday.

A senior Lebanese security official said an Israeli strike had severed the last bridge linking southern Lebanon to the rest of the country. One person was killed in an Israeli strike targeting a car on the road that links to Syria, the country’s state news agency said.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on either strike.

Iran’s nuclear ambitions were a key sticking point at last weekend’s talks. The US proposed a 20-year suspension of all nuclear activity by Iran, an apparent concession from longstanding

demands for a permanent ban, while Tehran suggested a halt of three to five years, according to people familiar with the proposals.

Iran, which has faced crippling US sanctions for years, wants a memorandum to include Washington unfreezing some Iranian funds, in return for allowing more ships through the strait.

A source briefed by Tehran said on Wednesday that Iran could let ships sail freely through the Omani side of Hormuz without risk of attack under proposals it has offered in talks with the US, providing a durable deal is clinched.

If a memorandum to halt the conflict is reached, the two sides are expected to have 60 days to negotiate a final deal, which would require the involvement of experts and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Iranian source said.

Iran has also in the past refused a US demand to ship out its entire stockpile of uranium, which has been enriched to 60 percent, a level that is far higher than levels needed for civilian uses.

However, Iranian sources said there were signs a compromise could emerge. One source said that, while Iran was not ready to send all its highly enriched uranium (HEU) abroad, part of it could be sent to a third country. Iran said some HEU was needed for medical purposes and for a research reactor in Tehran, which runs on relatively small amounts of uranium enriched to around 20 percent.

Meanwhile, the US yesterday widened its blockade on Iranian shipping to include what it called contraband, including weapons, weapons systems, ammunition, nuclear materials, crude and refined oil products, as well as iron, steel and aluminium.

Any vessel suspected of trying to reach Iranian territory will be subject to “visit, board, search and seizure”, the US Navy said in an advisory.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Dan Caine said as of Thursday morning, the US military had not boarded any ships, and that 13 had turned around.

Members of the National and Provincial Assemblies who were in India also constituted a constituent assembly.

The Proclamation of Independence was also made on this day. It served as the Constitution of Bangladesh from March 26, 1971, to December 16, 1972.

PM urges austerity amid global crisis

FROM PAGE 1

economy weakened by corruption and mismanagement, along with a weak governance structure and a deteriorating law and order situation.

Restoring peace and security in public life through improving law and order and strictly controlling corruption is one of the government’s key priorities, Tarique observed.

Stating that Bangladesh currently has a large working-age population, he said that creating employment opportunities for this group is one of the major challenges at present.

“Not only the economy, but the education system also suffered a major setback during the fascist rule. Unfortunately, even during the interim government period, order in the education system has not been restored.”

In today’s competitive world, the education system must be modernised and made job-oriented to ensure survival, he said, adding that work has already begun to make the education system more practical.

Tarique said more than half of the country’s population is women and no initiative can succeed easily unless a safe Bangladesh is ensured for them.

The premier said the government earlier presented its election manifesto to people and signed the July charter

with a commitment to state reform.

“People have supported all our commitments. Now it is time for implementation. We have already started working on fulfilling our promises.”

Tarique said his government will implement the party manifesto and every clause and word of the signed July charter.

“Personally, I believe that a change in mindset is more important than changes on paper. The BNP government has proved it repeatedly whenever it has had the opportunity to run the state.”

The PM said Bangladesh gained independence at the cost of many lives and has now completed 55 years as an independent nation. “We have both achievements and shortcomings. To build a self-reliant and prosperous Bangladesh, we must avoid revenge, retaliation, and unnecessary controversy.”

Quoting BNP founder and former president Ziaur Rahman, Tarique said, “National unity is our strength; division is our weakness.”

Tarique said differences of opinion are natural in a democracy but they should not turn into hostility. “We must remain alert about the country’s interest, as anti-Bangladesh forces are still waiting for opportunities.”

‘Time for ambitious reforms’

FROM PAGE 12

Minister Tarique Rahman, Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Bangladesh Bank Governor Mostaqur Rahman and other stakeholders.

“We had a good discussion in terms of the challenges the country faces. So they heard us and now we will wait to see how they react to that.”

Bangladesh particularly needs to get its act together in mobilising revenue, he said.

“They need to really work towards improving their revenue intake, which is among the lowest in the world. I would say that in terms of revenue intake, Bangladesh has not done well – it’s on the lower side. Actually, revenue intake has slipped over the last three years.”

The revenue GDP ratio dropped to 7.81 percent in fiscal 2024-25 from 8.17 percent in fiscal 2022-23, when the three-and-a-half-year IMF programme began.

Srinivasan went on to compare Bangladesh’s progress under the programme with Sri Lanka’s.

“In the case of Sri Lanka, over the last three years, they made significant improvements in boosting their tax revenues as a share of GDP, so they have gradually built up fiscal buffers. So, in some sense, I would say they are better placed to provide support to people who are hurting from this energy shock.”

Bangladesh, on the other hand, is

much more hard-pressed to provide support to those affected by the energy shock brought on by the Middle East war, he said.

“People are hurting in Bangladesh, so it is even more important to use whatever resources you have to make it as targeted as possible. We are working with the authorities in terms of policy support and on the programmes,” Srinivasan added.

Bangladesh will need an additional \$2.61 billion in foreign exchange between March and June to cover the surging energy and fertiliser import costs because of the ongoing Middle East war.

Over the four-month period, the total import cost for oil, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and fertiliser is estimated to be about \$5.62 billion, up 86.7 percent from a year earlier, according to a finance ministry impact analysis.

In March, the diesel price surged by 250 percent, while the LNG price doubled and the fertiliser price rose by 50 percent.

Bangladesh will require an additional Tk 38,542 crore (about \$3.2 billion) in subsidies between March and June to cover energy and fertiliser imports.

Of this, around Tk 18,000 crore would be needed for fuel oil alone, an extraordinary requirement not seen in previous years. Gas subsidies are estimated at Tk 13,930 crore, electricity at Tk 4,612 crore and fertiliser at Tk

2,000 crore.

This will take the total subsidy bill for this fiscal year, originally budgeted at around Tk 59,000 crore, to Tk 97,542 crore, the report said.

Subsequently, the government is aiming to secure about \$3 billion in emergency assistance from development partners, including the IMF and the World Bank (WB). Earlier this week, Khosru placed the request for more funds during a meeting with officials of the two multilateral lenders on the sidelines of the ongoing IMF-WB Spring Meetings in Washington DC.

The WB has assured Bangladesh of both policy guidance and financial support, Khosru told reporters after meetings in Washington.

“I hope we will receive the additional funds by June and in the next budget. Overall, the discussions have been successful,” he said.

Srinivasan though said the negotiations are ongoing.

“Discussions are ongoing, so we will have to just wait and see how those things pan out.”

The government also needs to work towards financial sector reforms.

“They also need to take into account the other impediments in the financial sector and so on, so that they can get growth going over the near term and over the longer term,” Srinivasan added.

Over 40 lakh cases pending in lower courts

Law minister tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 4,041,924 cases remained pending in the lower courts as of December 31, 2025, Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman informed parliament yesterday.



He disclosed the figure while responding to a question from ruling party MP Jahandar Ali Miah during a question-answer session.

Outlining recent legal reforms, the minister said the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Act, 2026, introduces provisions for issuing summons via SMS and voice calls.

It also allows petitions and written replies to be filed through affidavits and enables direct cross-examination. In addition, decrees can now be issued within the main case without the need to file a separate suit.

Addressing the backlog, Asaduzzaman said 871 new courts and 232 judicial posts have been created, with another 304 positions currently in process. Recruitment of 150 new civil judges is underway.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

PRAYER TIMING		APRIL 17	
Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:35	12:30	4:45	6:24 7:45
JAMAT 5:10	1:15	5:00	6:28 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Two students share an umbrella while returning home during heavy rain amid dark clouds, gusty winds and thunder in Khulna yesterday afternoon. The sudden downpour briefly cast the city into near-evening gloom typical of Baishakh storms. The photo was taken at the Navy Colony School intersection in Khalishpur.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

‘Hospital itself is like a patient’

MPs sound alarm over failing health facilities, cite poor infrastructure and staff shortage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several members of the parliament yesterday voiced concern over the deteriorating state of hospitals across the country, pointing to crumbling infrastructure, severe manpower shortages, and stalled development projects.

They urged the government to take urgent steps to strengthen healthcare delivery and ensure adequate staffing.

Speaking during discussions under Section 71 of the Rules of Procedure, which empowers MPs to draw a minister's attention to matters of urgent public

importance and to move Private Members' Resolution Proposals, lawmakers highlighted examples from their constituencies where hospitals remain in poor condition and patients are left without essential services.

Brahmanbaria-2 independent MP Rumeen Farhana termed the 50-bed hospital in Brahmanbaria's Sarail upazila as being "like a patient" itself.

She noted that 64 posts remain vacant, including nine for physicians and consultants, six for nurses, two for medical technologists, 15 for field staff, eight for health assistants, and 19

for other staff.

She added that while a Tk 10 crore project was undertaken to construct a six-storey building, the contractor abandoned the work after August 5, 2024, leaving medical services confined to the old, dilapidated two-storey building.

The discussion arose from a proposal by Azharul Islam Mannan (Narayanganj-3) to establish a new 200-bed hospital in Siddhirganj.

Rumeen spoke while debating an amendment to that proposal. Several other MPs echoed similar concerns, demanding

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

JS RESERVED SEATS BNP to begin interviewing aspirants today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP will be interviewing candidates who submitted nomination papers for the reserved women's seats in the parliament from today till tomorrow.

The interviews will be held at the BNP chairman's office in Gulshan from 3:00pm on both days.

Candidates from Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barishal and Faridpur divisions will be interviewed today, while those from Chattogram, Sylhet, Cumilla, Dhaka and Mymensingh divisions will face interviews tomorrow.

Members of the party's standing committee, who also serve on the BNP parliamentary board, will conduct the interviews. BNP Chairperson and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will preside over the process.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi announced the schedule yesterday at the party's Nayapaltan central office.

"The party's parliamentary board will take the decision. I think past roles in the movement, educational qualifications, and the ability to carry out parliamentary activities properly will all be considered," he said.

Party sources said nearly 1,300 aspirants bought nomination forms from BNP over three days.

According to the Election Commission, there are 50 reserved women's seats in parliament. BNP alliance will get 36 reserved seats.

Under the EC schedule, the deadline for submission

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

NCP looks to expand footprint in city polls

Party closing in on candidates for 7 cities

SHAMIMA RITA

After announcing mayoral candidates for five city corporations, the National Citizen Party (NCP) is set to expand its plans for the upcoming local government polls by fielding candidates in seven more cities.

The new list is likely to include a mix of central leaders, regional organisers, grassroots figures, and well-known faces, as the party seeks to broaden its organisational base beyond parliamentary politics, party sources said.

Among those under consideration, NCP's chief organiser for the northern region, Sarjis Alam, is the frontrunner for Rangpur City Corporation.

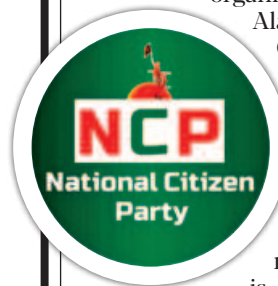
He previously contested the 13th parliamentary election from Panchagarh-1 as part of a Jamaat-led alliance but lost to BNP candidate Barrister Mohammad Nawshad Zamir.

In Chattogram, former city mayor Mohammad Monjur Alam is the most likely candidate. NCP leaders are already in talks with him to join the party and contest under its banner.

Sources said Monjur was first elected a councillor with Awami League support. In 2010, he contested with BNP backing and defeated then-mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, winning by nearly one lakh votes to become mayor of Chattogram City Corporation. He later served as an adviser to the BNP chairperson.

After losing the 2015 city election, he announced his retirement from politics but was later seen in AL-aligned activities. He also

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



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INTERNATIONAL CRIMES TRIBUNAL

Former DGFI chief linked to Ilias Ali disappearance

Says chief prosecutor citing his statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former DGFI chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Sheikh Mamun Khaled is providing information about his links to the 2012 enforced disappearance of BNP leader Ilias Ali, ICT Chief Prosecutor Md Aminul Islam said yesterday.

"Mamun Khaled is giving information about both his own involvement and that of others in the enforced disappearance of Ilias Ali," Aminul told The Daily Star.

Earlier, speaking to journalists at his office, Aminul said Mamun revealed certain connections during interrogation by the International Crimes Tribunal's investigation agency and the

Detective Branch.

Replying to a query, he said further evidence has also emerged from witness testimonies in the ongoing case against Maj Gen (ret'd) Ziaul Ahsan.

"We believe future witnesses in that case may provide additional information related to Ilias Ali's disappearance," he said, expressing hope that the truth will be uncovered.

Ziaul stands accused of orchestrating the enforced disappearance and murder of 104 people between 2010 and 2013. He is currently on trial at ICT-1.

On April 13, ICT-2 showed Mamun Khaled arrested in

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

‘Hands tied, abdomen slit’

Wife recounts BGB man's killing at ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday heard testimony alleging that a Border Guard Bangladesh member was brutally murdered after being abducted in 2010, as proceedings continued in crimes against humanity cases involving multiple high-profile accused.

Munni Akhter, wife of the victim, Md Nazrul Islam, told the tribunal that her husband's body was recovered from the Baleshwar river in Bagerhat's Sarankhola with his hands and legs tied, abdomen slit, and a cement bag placed inside.

She made the statement after the defence suggested Nazrul had died of suffocation, citing what they said was police information.

Ziaul Ahsan, a relieved major general, is on trial over allegations of orchestrating the enforced disappearance and murder of 104

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Illegally parked human hauliers (legunas) choke a busy road in front of Golap Shah Mazar in Dhaka's Gulistan area, worsening traffic congestion. This unauthorised practice occupies a large portion of the road and also hampers pedestrian movement due to poor management. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Change of Date

25th

The Daily Star Prime Bank

O&A
LEVEL
AWARDS

Saluting the Nation Builders of Tomorrow

New date:
Saturday, 25 July 2026

~~Previous Date: 18 April 2026~~

Due to an unforeseen technical issue at the venue, the event has been rescheduled to 25 July 2026.

We regret any inconvenience caused.

Infant abandoned on launch

Man identifying himself as her father disappears

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

An eight-month-old infant was abandoned on a Dhaka-bound launch in Patuakhali's Bauphal upazila on Wednesday night after a man identifying himself as the child's father disappeared.

Passengers said the launch had left Kalaiya launch ghat in Bauphal for Dhaka around 4:00pm.

At Dholia, a man boarded with a baby girl, spoke briefly with passengers and sat on the deck.

He later told nearby passengers he would bring the child's mother aboard and asked them to look after the baby before getting off. When the launch resumed its journey, he did not return.

Passengers grew concerned when the baby began crying and no guardian was found. They informed the launch authorities, who placed the child under the care of several female passengers as the vessel continued towards Dhaka.

Md Sohel, a passenger, said, "The man boarded the launch at Dholia ghat and sat beside us for a while. Just before the launch departed, he left the baby with us, saying he would bring the child's mother. But he never came back."

Supervisor of MV Bandhan-5, Md Sajal, said the reason behind the man's disappearance remains unknown. "The

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Farmers sort through spoilt potato stocks to salvage good produce for sale at lower prices. Despite good yields in Rajshahi, high cold storage costs (Tk 6-7 per kg) have forced many to store potatoes in the open, where a significant portion has rotted, leaving them to sell the rest below the current market price of Tk 10-11 per kg. The photo was taken at Molandi village in Mohanpur upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

31,800 litres of stockpiled diesel seized in 2 districts

STAR REPORT

Mobile courts have seized a total of 31,800 litres of illegally stockpiled diesel during drives in Netrakona and Pabna over the last two days, report our correspondents.

On Wednesday night, the Santhia upazila administration in Pabna seized 800 litres of diesel and later sold it to local farmers under its supervision, depositing the proceeds into the government treasury.

According to Assistant Commissioner (Land) Asif Raihan of Santhia, the mobile court acted on a tip-off and raided the Kashinathpur area.

The team intercepted a van carrying diesel for a hoarder's warehouse and seized the fuel, storing it at Santhia Police Station for safekeeping.

Yesterday, the diesel was sold in the open market at the government-fixed price. The AC confirmed that the entire sale amount has been deposited into the government fund.

In Netrakona Sadar upazila, a mobile court seized 31,000 litres of diesel during a drive at Thakurakona Bazar yesterday, fining two traders a total of Tk 40,000.

Illegal diesel storage was found at two

Thakurakona Bazar firms, prompting immediate action by the mobile court.

Assistant Commissioner (Land) Md Shamsuzzaman Asif led the drive in Netrokona Sadar upazila, and the district administration said the seized diesel was confiscated in favour of the government.



At the same time, in two separate cases, the traders were fined Tk 20,000 each, totalling Tk 40,000. The market value of the seized diesel is estimated at around Tk 2,95,000.

Additional District Magistrate Wahiduzzaman stated that such drives against illegal hoarders will continue to ensure a stable fuel supply in the district.

MRDI journalism conference in May

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Media Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) will organise a two-day journalism conference in Dhaka next month, bringing together journalists, editors, researchers, civil society members, teachers, students and international experts to discuss challenges facing the profession and how to plan for its future.

The event, titled Bangladesh Journalism Conference 2026, will be held on May 8 and 9 at Hotel Radisson, MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman said at a press conference at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

"We want to create an opportunity for our journalists to learn from and connect with international experts," said Hasibur.

The conference will feature 12 sessions and over 20 discussants, with more than 500 participants expected. Journalists and experts from more than 10 countries, including the US, the UK, India, Pakistan, and Canada, are also expected to join, he said.

The organisation aims to continue supporting objective, investigative and public-interest journalism. The conference will include plenary and thematic sessions, parallel tracks and masterclasses, offering opportunities for journalists to exchange experiences and learn from one another.

Registration will open on a dedicated microsite at 12:01am tomorrow. It will be first-come, first-served, but final selection will be made by the organisers.

Journalists working at local, national and international media outlets, including those based outside Bangladesh, will be eligible to register.

Teachers, researchers, fact-checkers, development partners, civil society members and MRDI alumni will also be able to apply. Students will need to complete MRDI's online basic journalism course to participate. Those who score highest, within the limited number of seats, will be selected.

Two killed in lightning strikes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Two people were killed in lightning strikes in Chuadanga yesterday.

In Jibannagar, Russell Hossain, 25, of Ghoshnagar village, was working in a nearby field, when a sudden lightning strike hit the area with a loud thunderclap, said locals.

He collapsed on the spot after being struck by lightning. He was rushed to the upazila Health Complex, where he was declared dead, said police.

In Darshana, Azim Uddin, 15, of Damurhuda upazila, was struck by lightning while delivering food to his father. Azim, a ninth-grade student, died on the spot, confirmed Darshana Police Station OC Md Mehedi Hasan.

Bar council suspends Masder Hossain's licence

He denies allegation of Tk 1.25cr misappropriation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Bar Council has suspended the licence of Md Masder Hossain, barring him from practising as a lawyer, over allegations of misappropriating Tk 1.25 crore from a client.

Masder Hossain, a former district and sessions judge and also a member of the Judiciary Reform Commission formed during the interim government, has been directed to explain within 15 days why his licence should not be permanently revoked.

In a press release, the bar council said the decision was taken unanimously at a meeting on Wednesday.

The council acted after taking note of a report published in a daily newspaper on April 12, which alleged that Masder Hossain had misappropriated the funds.

According to the report, he admitted to the allegation. Considering the prima facie truth of the claim and issues of professional ethics, the bar council found sufficient grounds to initiate proceedings against him.

His licence will remain suspended during the 15-day period, the press release said.

Masder Hossain, however, yesterday refuted the news report, saying it contains misleading, exaggerated, and baseless allegations.

"In reality, I have filed an appeal in accordance with the law in the relevant case. At different stages, the amount determined has changed, and I have already deposited a portion of it into the government treasury in accordance with proper procedures. Currently, approximately Tk 17,35,000 remains outstanding. Upon payment of this remaining

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

Girl found dead in Jhenaidah pond

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

A teenage girl was found dead in a pond near a brick kiln in the Municipal College area of Kotchandpur upazila in Jhenaidah yesterday.

Police recovered the body of Nasima Khatun, 14, daughter of late Nazmul Meer from Sabdarpur. Since last Ramadan, her family had been living at Solemanpur in Kotchandpur, said police.

Kotchandpur Police Station OC Md Asaduzzaman said locals spotted the body in the pond near Eco Bricks, beside the Kotchandpur-Kaliganj highway. The body was sent for autopsy.

Family members said Nasima left home on Wednesday morning, telling them she was going out with friends, but did not return.

Additional Superintendent of Police Sayem Yusuf said police started investigation.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Chief Commercial Manager (East)
Bangladesh Railway, Chattogram

e-Tender Notice No. 54.01.1500.107.05.144.25-907 Date: 16-04-2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited on the e-GP website for the procurement given below:

Sl No.	e-GP Tender ID	Title of the procurement
1.	1256302	Procurement of Physical Services to Provide Onboard Services on 813/814 Cox's Bazar Express train.
2.	1256305	Procurement of Physical Services to Provide Onboard Services on 815/816 Parjotak Express train.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration on e-GP System (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is mandatory. For more details contact e-GP help desk.

এস (২৬) (২৩৫)

Md. Mahbubur Rahaman
Chief Commercial Manager (East)
Bangladesh Railway, Chattogram

GD-845

গ্যারান্টিড ভাড়া ও জমি বিক্রয়
৩১,০০০ (SQ. FT.) গ্যারান্টিড ভাড়া হবে। এবং ফ্যান্ডিং বা গ্যারান্টিড করার জন্য প্রাইম লোকেশনে জমি বিক্রয়। লোকেশন: ঢাকা-ময়মনসিংহ মহাসড়ক সংলগ্ন, মালেকের বাড়ি বাসস্ট্যান্ড।
01730-707962, 01730-006752

পাত্র চাই
ইল্যভের স্বামিনা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে এলএলবি (অনলি), এল এলএম ও বার-এট-এল ডিগ্রি সম্পন্ন করে ইল্যভের প্রতিষ্ঠিত একটি পাত্র চাই করছি। বয়স ২৫, উচ্চতা ৫'২", বাবের ৩০ ফর্সা পাতালি জনা ইল্যভে বদলাসের/কলকাতা ইল্যভ সজ্জা মুসলিম পরিবারের মেয়ে পাত্র চাই। যোগাযোগ: sefk.golam.maksud@gmail.com

Commercial Building for Rent
3100sqft building on 10.33 decimal land at House # Gi/41, Road # 04, Block # Gi, Banasree, Rumpura. Includes gas connection & submersible pump. Ideal for School, College, Hospital, Restaurant, Bank & office.
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Residential property on 4.98 decimals of land with a 3-storey building (5 units), modern and spacious rooms, and a prime location. Situated just behind the Upazila, only minutes from the Dhaka-Aricha Highway. Close to mosque, schools, hospitals, and all essential amenities. All documents up to date. Attractively priced for a quick sale. Genuine buyers only. No brokers, please.
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TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL BANGLADESH
Social movement against corruption

Anti-Corruption Investigative Journalism FELLOWSHIP 2026

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) is inviting proposals from journalists working with print and electronic media owned and operated from Bangladesh for Anti-Corruption Investigative Journalism Fellowship-2026. This year's fellowships will be offered for investigative reports to expose corruption in any of the following categories-

Category	Number of Fellowship
General (any issue related to education, health, land, construction, etc.)	04
Energy Governance	01
Waste, Environment & Climate Governance	05

To submit proposal and further information: <https://ti-bangladesh.org/ijf>
Last Date for Submission: 15 June 2026

খুলনা কৃষি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
অস্থায়ী অফিস: ৩২৭, যশোর রোড, উত্তর মুজগুনি, খালিশপুর, খুলনা-৯০০০

Memo No. 37.01.4703.057.34.027.26.441 Date: 15/04/2026

e-Tender Notice (Re-Tender)

e-Tender has been invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for procurement of:

Sl. No.	Re-Tender ID No.	Ref./Package No.	Description	Online tender notice publication date	Online tender closing date
01	1231554	37.01.4703.057.34.027.26.419; Date: 09/04/26	Procurement and Installation of Laboratory equipment	16-Apr-2026	26-Apr-2026

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for last selling/downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Engr. S. M. Moniruzzaman
Chief Engineer
Engineering Division
Khulna Agricultural University
Khulna

GD-846

Bangladesh Bank
Bankers' Selection Committee Secretariat
Head Office, Dhaka
Website: www.bb.org.bd

Invitation for Tender Through Web

Tender No. 123/2026 Date: 15/04/2026

Tenders are hereby invited through Electronic Media (e-Tenders) from bona fide, government-approved higher educational/training institutes/firms for following package:

Sl	Tender ID	Package No.	Name of work	Tender closing date & time
1	122/2026	BSCS/2025/01	Selection of Institution/Firm for conducting recruitment examination for the post of Senior Officer (G) (9th Grade, Job Id: 25101) for State Owned 09 Banks and 02 Financial Institutions	29/04/2026 02:00pm

The interested parties may visit the website www.bb.org.bd/en/index.php/about/tenders & tender.bb.org.bd to get the details of the tender.

DCP: 48/2026-982
Date: 16-04-2026

Signed/
Mizanur Rahman Akon
Director (BSCS), Bangladesh Bank &
Member Secretary, BSC
Phone: 88-02-9530226

ব্যাবসায়িক ও আর্থিক সেবা পেতে হওয়ার শিকার হলে কিংবা কোনো অজিযোগ থাকলে ১৯২৩৬ নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

GD-840

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

Ref No. 27.11.0000.716.77.26.655 Date: 15/04/2026

Invitation for e-Tenders

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID & Ref. No.	Name of works	Tender publication date	Tender closing date
1	Tender ID: 1258174 Ref. No. 27.11.0000.716.77.26.454 Dt: 15.04.2026	Supply Installation and Commissioning of 02 Nos. Rack Mounted Server for Dhaka Computer Center of BPDB with Necessary Support Service for 3 years.	15.04.2026	04.05.2026 6 Time: 12:00

বিদ্যুৎ/জন-১০২৪(২)/১৬/০৪/২৬

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

GD-842

Iran ready for 'every possible scenario'

Analyst says sense of distrust remains, talks less positive than portrayed

AGENCIES

Iran's nuclear ambitions were among the biggest sticking points in the negotiations between both sides in Islamabad last weekend.

A Pakistani source earlier told Al Jazeera that there seems to be a breakthrough on that front with the arrival of Pakistani army chief Asim Munir in Tehran on Wednesday.

"Iran believes that the nuclear sphere is among those areas that, if the intent is there, they can find a solution to the problem," Abbas Aslani, a senior fellow at the Centre for Middle East Strategic Studies in Tehran, told Al Jazeera.

"Tehran is open to transparency, provided that the US genuinely seeks an agreement, so it's not surprising to see if they have made ... progress," he



Smoke rises over Kyiv after a Russian strike yesterday. A drone and missile barrage killed at least 19 across Ukraine, with Moscow saying the overnight attack targeted missile and drone factories. PHOTO: AFP

TRUMP'S WAR ON IRAN US allies avoid fight, but not fallout

AGENCIES

It's not their war. But it's becoming their political and economic nightmare. World leaders who opposed the US-Israeli attack on Iran are being torn between Donald Trump's ire at their failure to join the conflict and electorates who are deeply hostile to the war and America's president.

Their dilemma is shifting the dynamic between the US and its allies. Leaders who once tried to appease and flatter the world's most powerful man are now daring to criticize him and seeking distance.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni on Monday said Trump's attacks on Pope Leo XIV were "unacceptable." British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, whose friendship with Trump shattered over the war, said last week he was "fed up" that Britons were facing higher energy bills because of Trump's actions.

Relations between Trump and Starmer took another turn for the

The IMF forecasts made clear that the Iran conflict is more than a distant foreign policy crisis for allied governments

worse on Wednesday. The president hinted in an interview with Sky News that he could try to change terms of a trade deal that is a huge priority for the British government.

Starmer however insisted that he would not be pushed into joining

the war on Iran.

Leaders are reacting to war consequences they can't control, epitomized by an International Monetary Fund warning Tuesday that the world is trending toward an "adverse" scenario of only 2.5 percent growth this year, down from 3.4 percent in 2025.

Countries reliant on Middle

Trump's trade wars with allied nations, on Tuesday sought to minimize the impact of the Iran war on non-combatant nations, saying that the IMF "probably overreacted."

European leaders might be becoming more overt in their criticisms of Trump. But they have only so much rope. Their positions



East gas and oil supplies could fare worse. The IMF forecasts made clear that the Iran conflict is more than a distant foreign policy crisis for allied governments. It has become a domestic and political threat. This, combined with growing antagonism between allied leaders and the US president, means that standing with him would be a liability.

Trump seems to believe he's popular abroad and argues that his displays of American power have made the United States more feared and respected than ever as the "hottest" nation on the planet.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, the tip of the spear of

are frequently undercut by their greatest liability in relations with the US — their weakened militaries.

When Trump mulls withdrawing from Nato, he is playing a significant card: Serious rearmaments in Europe could break governments because of the unpopular cuts in health and social programs they would entail.

So even as they turn on Trump for their own political preservation, his estranged European counterparts cannot risk a total break with the United States.

But the more the president demands their entry into an unpopular war, the less political room they have to help him end it.

US Navy loses \$240m MQ-4C Triton drone in war

AGENCIES

The US Navy has confirmed the loss of an expensive spy drone amid the Iran war, its first known loss of this particular uncrewed aircraft.

As of last year, the Navy was operating 20 MQ-4Cs, making the loss of one significant. These drones are estimated to cost \$240 million apiece, roughly eight times more expensive than the Air Force's MQ-9 Reaper, a combat drone that has also seen losses during the US war with Iran.

Naval Safety Command revealed in a new aviation mishaps report that an MQ-4C Triton crashed on April 9, with no injury to personnel. The document did not specify where the drone went down, citing operational security, reports Business Insider.

Last week, an MQ-4C out of Naval Air Station Sigonella in Italy was flying a mission over the Persian Gulf when it suddenly and rapidly descended and disappeared from flight-tracking sites, leading to speculation that it had crashed in the Middle East.

Neither US Central Command, which oversees American operations in the Middle East, nor the Navy provided a comment on or an explanation for the MQ-4C crash. The War Zone, a military news site, first reported the drone's inclusion in the mishap report.

POLITICIANS, OFFICIALS

Nepal panel to probe property, assets

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Nepal's new government, led by rapper-turned politician Balendra Shah, has set up a panel to investigate the property and assets of past and present politicians and officials, a move aimed at controlling corruption in the Himalayan nation.

Shah, 35, became prime minister after his Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) scored a sweeping victory in the March 5 parliamentary election — the country's first vote after the anti-graft 'Gen Z' protests last September.

During his three-year stint as mayor of Kathmandu, Nepal's capital city, Shah gained popularity for his fight against corruption and reformist credentials.

Sasmit Pokhrel, a cabinet spokesperson, said the five-member panel would be headed by Rajendra Kumar Bhandari, a retired Supreme Court judge.

"An impartial investigation will be carried out on the basis of evidence based on legal standards ... Its report and recommendations will be implemented by concerned agencies of the government," Pokhrel told reporters after a cabinet meeting late on Wednesday without mentioning the time frame given to the panel to complete work.

The probe is expected to cover hundreds of politicians and officials who held public offices after the movement that led to the abolition of the 239-year-old monarchy in 2008, analysts said.



WEST BANK SCHOOL Settlers block Palestinian pupils' path with barbed wire

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Dozens of Palestinian children have been unable to go to school in the Israeli-occupied West Bank this week because of barbed wire erected by Jewish settlers across the path they normally use.

Dozens of children tried on Monday to get to school in the small village of Umm al-Khair near Hebron for the first time since the US-Israeli war with Iran began. They found their way blocked by barbed wire which villagers said had been placed there by Israelis from the nearby Carmel settlement.

Khalil Hathaleen, head of the Umm al-Khair village council, said the barbed wire prevented children from the outskirts of the village taking their usual safe path through a valley to the school in the village centre.

Otherwise, he said, the children would have to walk along a road which he described as dangerous, because it passes closer to the settlement. "We insist on using the main path that our children have always taken," he said, accusing Jewish settlers of trying to take over the land so that they can expand their settlement.

Israeli human rights group B'Tselem said the barbed wire was part of a coordinated campaign by settlers and the Israeli military to intimidate Palestinians and drive them from their land in the West Bank, which it said amounted to "ethnic cleansing".

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Sunamganj Medical College, Sunamganj
Email: sunamganjmc@ac.dghs.gov.bd

Memo No. 59.14.9000.061.99.021.26-287

Date: 16/04/2026

e-Tender Notice

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

Sl No.	Tender ID	Package No. & Package Description	Last selling date & time	Opening and closing date & time
1	1259079	Outsourcing GR-20 Outsourcing of Manpower (Technical, Administrative, and Support Staff) for Sunamganj Medical College, Sunamganj.	30-April-2026 12:00pm	30-April-2026 02:30pm

Note:

- This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
- To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.
- The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online at any registered bank branches within the above stated time limit.
- Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from the e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Prof. Dr. Mostaque Ahmed Bhuiyan
Principal
Sunamganj Medical College, Sunamganj

GD-839



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

গ্যাস ব্যবহারে সশ্রদ্ধী হোন এবং
সময়মত গ্যাস বিল পরিশোধ ককন

বিনা কারণে গ্যাসের চুলা জ্বালিয়ে রাখা
আর বিপদকে ডাকা একই বিষয়

Ref. No. 28.16.9100.097.07.003.26/239

Date: 16-04-2026

e-Tender Notice

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID, Package No. & date of publishing	Description	Tender document last selling and tender closing date & time
01.	Tender ID: 1250808 Reference No: 28.16.9100.097.07.002.26/03 Date of Publication: 15 April, 2026	Procurement of 3/4"×3/4"×3/4" Dia Service Tee & 1"×1"×1" Dia Service Tee and 3/4" Dia End Cap	Tender Document Last Selling Date & Time: 29 April, 2026; 17:00 Tender Closing Date & Time: 30 April, 2026; 15:00 Tender Opening Date & Time: 30 April, 2026; 15:00

The interested Tenderer may visit the website <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd> to get the detailed tender notice and to purchase the tender document.

This is a LTM 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/e-GP help desk helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd

Engr. Md. Masud Rana
Deputy General Manager (Procurement)
E-mail: dgmpurchase13@gmail.com

GD-838

Fix the accountability gap in NBFIs sector

The regulator must not fail depositors as six NBFIs did

Trust is the only commodity a financial system truly sells. Interest rates and contract terms are secondary; what depositors ultimately buy is the belief that their savings are protected. Over the years, as six non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) in the country has drifted towards insolvency on the watch of an inattentive regulator, that trust has been broken. And now, nearly 2,000 families are paying for a promise that was never kept. The six institutions, including FAS Finance, People's Leasing, Premier Leasing and International Leasing, collapsed due to mismanagement, governance failures, and bad loans. The Bangladesh Bank ordered them into liquidation in January. What's striking is how long the regulator took to act, and how little has been done since to protect those depositors.

The NBFIs sector occupies a peculiar blind spot in our financial system. When banks wobbled, the central bank moved, albeit belatedly and imperfectly. Deposit protection schemes, restructuring and public attention followed, but no equivalent efforts have been applied to the 35 NBFIs. Depositors were not making reckless bets; they simply parked funds in licensed entities that offered slightly higher returns. So the implicit contract was breached both by the institutions and by the regulator that licensed them.

At a press conference on Wednesday, the affected depositors articulated a simple principle: a depositor is a depositor. It should not matter whether one's savings sit in a bank or a leasing company. Both are licensed. Both issue receipts. Both attract ordinary people of ordinary means seeking ordinary security. We concur with the argument that leaving NBFIs depositors exposed is not an acceptable practice.

The new BB governor has signalled that reform will continue, including pressing ahead with NBFIs liquidation. That is the right instinct. Zombie institutions that cannot return deposits are better wound down than kept on life support. But liquidation without a credible deposit recovery mechanism is not reform. Instead, the authorities should act on three fronts. First, they must establish a time-bound repayment schedule. A three-to-six-month window—as the depositors' alliance has demanded—is not unreasonable for principal recovery, given the assets that remain to be liquidated. Second, deposit protection must be extended to NBFIs with appropriate calibration. Third, those responsible for the mismanagement and regulatory forbearance that enabled this crisis must face accountability.

There is an argument that bailing out NBFIs depositors sets a moral hazard—that it is akin to rewarding those who chased higher yields. But the depositors in question were not hedge funds speculating on distressed debt. They were retired civil servants, charitable trusts funding orphanages, and families saving for medical emergencies. Moral hazard arguments carry weight when sophisticated actors take calculated risks.

Regulators are now attempting, with mixed results, to restore confidence in a financial system shaken by years of political interference and poor governance. Foreign investors are watching for signals. The handling of this NBFIs crisis is, in miniature, a test of whether those signals are meaningful. The government therefore must remember that confidence is harder to rebuild than it is to squander, and nothing will restore confidence faster than ensuring those depositors are repaid.

Measles treatment draining pockets

Govt must enforce mechanisms to reduce healthcare costs

It is unfortunate that parents are often driven to poverty simply to keep their children healthy and alive in Bangladesh, where citizens pay more than two-thirds of their total health expenditure out of their pockets. The gravity of the situation becomes evident when we are hit with health emergencies such as the ongoing measles outbreak. According to a recent *Prothom Alo* report, many parents of measles-affected children are struggling to afford the treatment costs, especially when the patients require paediatric intensive care (PICU), which is in inadequate conditions at public hospitals.

The report quoted several parents from low-income families who have spent between Tk 1 lakh and Tk 7 lakh for their children's treatment. Many are having to borrow money to pay for lengthy hospital stays, ambulance services, expensive PICU care (sometimes in private hospitals), medicine and diagnostic costs, and even attendant food and accommodation expenses. Even after all this, some parents have had to suffer the misfortune of watching their cherished children breathe their last. Between March 15 and April 15, there have been 166 cases of suspected measles deaths in the country. In 24 hours till 8am on April 16, six more children died with measles symptoms while 811 children were admitted to hospitals, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Although costs at government hospitals are comparatively low, many lack the capacity to provide care during disease outbreaks. Several district hospitals lack adequately equipped ICUs, let alone PICUs. Even when ICU beds are available, staff shortages make it impossible to provide patients with much-needed care. Even divisional hospitals, like the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH), deal with such crises. In March alone, 229 patients died at RMCH while waiting for ICU beds. Among them, 19 were children.

What's unfortunate is that these deaths could have been prevented to a large extent had we ensured a 95-percent immunisation rate through timely measles vaccination. Thankfully, the government has started an immunisation drive, and it must not stop until the necessary coverage to rein in the outbreak is achieved. At the same time, as it did during the height of the Covid pandemic, the government must open a special measles cell with emergency contact numbers; collect, update, and disseminate information on available PICUs in both public and private hospitals; urgently address the staffing and ICU crises at public hospitals outside Dhaka; and issue early disease detection and quarantine protocols if needed. Most importantly, authorities must formulate innovative policies to reduce our high out-of-pocket health expenditure, which is pushing more and more people into poverty.

Reinstating a weaker NHRC is a dangerous regression



Khan Khalid Adnan is advocate at the Supreme Court of Bangladesh, fellow at the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, and head of the chamber at Khan Sajjur Rahman and Associates in Dhaka.

KHAN KHALID ADNAN

A country that has lived through secret detention sites, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and the slaughter of July protesters does not strengthen its human rights architecture by reviving a weaker watchdog. But the parliament, elected two months ago, has done precisely that by passing the bill that repeals the interim government's National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Ordinance, 2025 and revives the old framework. The government says this is a temporary step, that more scrutiny and stakeholder consultation are needed. This defence is not convincing. The 2025 reform process itself was built on consultations involving more than 600 stakeholders, and even organisations that later criticised parts of the ordinance argued for amendment, not wholesale rollback. Consultation can justify refinement, but it does not justify a return to a structure with a much longer record of dependency and failure.

The difference between the 2009 act and the 2025 ordinance was not cosmetic. Under the NHRC Act, 2009, the appointment structure was dominated by state power, with the speaker, law minister, home minister, Law Commission chair, cabinet secretary, and two MPs shaping the process. The ordinance project moved in a more credible direction. It required public advertisement, verification, shortlisting, and interviews, and it opened space for consultation with civil society and relevant stakeholders. Most importantly, in Section 3(2), it stated in express terms that the commission would not remain under any ministry or division. That was a serious attempt at building institutional distance from the executive. Yes, later changes drew justified criticism for reintroducing some bureaucratic influence. But that only proved the ordinance needed correction, not that it should be discarded entirely and the older, weaker law should be restored.

The real issue, however, was never ceremonial independence—it was operational power. Under Section 18 of the 2009 act, allegations against disciplined forces were effectively trapped within the state. The commission could ask the government

for a report and then recommend action. That is not independent investigation. That is administrative petitioning. The ordinance framework was fundamentally different. It expressly brought security forces within the commission's mandate, empowered the NHRC to demand records and cooperation, allowed it to create investigation teams, barred the accused institution from investigating its own personnel, permitted urgent interim protection measures, and authorised inspections of places of detention without prior permission



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

from the controlling authority. A human rights commission is tested where abuse is most likely, not where the government is least embarrassed. On that test, the ordinance was plainly more independent and more effective.

That conclusion is reinforced by the history of the NHRC under the older law. Bangladesh's commission remained stuck at B status under the international accreditation process, with long standing concerns about weak powers, an executive-heavy selection process, and dependency on the state. The record was equally dispiriting in practice. In the killing of Akramul Haque, the commission visited the family and wrote to the home ministry, but did not carry out a robust public inquiry of its own. In the case of Shahidul Alam, a formal complaint detailing custodial torture was submitted to the NHRC.

Yet, consistent with its practice under the 2009 act, the commission did not undertake an independent investigation, instead operating within a framework that largely depended on seeking reports from the government. Amnesty noted that, during the government crackdown on the July protesters in 2024, the then NHRC chair responded with a restrained statement, saying the situation was "unfortunate and a violation of human rights." That is the central lesson of the old framework. When the state is accused, a structurally timid human rights watchdog becomes an institutional spectator.

The collective resignation of the entire NHRC after the 2025 ordinance was repealed should therefore not be dismissed as theatre. It was an institutional distress signal. The members effectively acknowledged that once the legal foundation of their appointment had been extinguished, remaining in office would only

The timing makes the rollback even more indefensible. The OHCHR fact-finding report found reasonable grounds to believe that the Awami League government and its security and intelligence apparatus committed serious violations during the July-August protests in 2024, including hundreds of extrajudicial killings, mass arrests, arbitrary detention, and torture. Bangladesh also continues to live with the unfinished moral and legal wreckage of enforced disappearances. In that setting, the need was not for a commission that must lean on government reports when security forces are accused, but for a commission with unannounced access to detention sites, public credibility in appointments, interim protection powers, and legal authority strong enough to make the state answer to victims. If ever there was a moment to strengthen the NHRC, it was after July 2024, and now when there is again a political government. Reinstating a weaker model at precisely this moment sends the wrong signal.

The takeaways here are stark. First, legal design matters. A human rights commission cannot be independent in practice if its appointment process, investigative powers, and access to coercive institutions are structured around executive comfort. Second, the government's consultation argument fails on its own terms. If the ordinance had defects, it could have been amended clause by clause in public. Repeal was the most regressive option available. Third, the resignation of the whole commission shows that this was not perceived, even by those at the centre of the institution, as a benign technical adjustment.

The way forward is clear. Parliament should publish a clause-by-clause comparison of the old law, the repealed ordinance, and any proposed replacement, and then legislate transparently with the victims' groups, July survivors, lawyers, rights defenders, journalists, and minority communities in the room. Any new law worthy of Bangladesh must preserve the ordinance's strongest features: explicit freedom from executive control, a transparent and plural appointment process, full jurisdiction over security forces without prior government permission, unannounced inspection powers, interim protective authority, and protected institutional autonomy. The 2025 ordinance was imperfect, and some of its later dilution deserved criticism. But imperfect reform is still reform. Reinstating a weaker NHRC after the gravest abuses the country has suffered in recent memory is regression dressed up as prudence.

Even if dormant, the RTI Act's promise remains powerful

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SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

As the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009 remains effectively dormant in Bangladesh, RTI advocates must now rely on the new government's resolve to operationalise it. The law has been inoperative due to the absence of information commissioners since the interim government assumed power in August 2024 following a mass uprising—a situation that appears to reflect deliberate inaction intended to shield its activities from public scrutiny. While prioritising pressing issues in its early days, the current government has chosen to postpone consideration of the slapdash RTI (Amendment) Ordinance, along with a few others, left behind by the interim administration. While that matter must now wait, what cannot be delayed any further is the urgent need to fill the vacant posts of information commissioners and restore the law to full functionality.

This is important not only in its own right but also because the law's effective use can help the government fulfil its commitments—commitments in which citizens themselves have an important role to play through the proper use of the RTI Act.

However, as we await its revival, citizens would do well to acquaint

themselves with the law's broader possibilities beyond the routine uses observed since its adoption. For this, we need not look far: experiences of our neighbouring countries that embarked on the RTI journey around the same time offer valuable lessons. We highlight a few recent cases from India and Sri Lanka for their relevance to Bangladesh.

Indeed, RTI enthusiasts in Bangladesh—and the new team of information commissioners, once appointed—would do well to consult, among other sources, the decisions of the Right to Information Commission of Sri Lanka and the Court of Appeal's role in strengthening RTI jurisprudence. These experiences underscore the critical importance of an independent and neutral dispute resolution mechanism in advancing the effective use of the RTI law.

We begin with the story of former Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who fled the country in 2022 at the height of a popular uprising—a situation not entirely unfamiliar in our own context. A citizen sought information on whether he had left aboard a naval vessel and what public resources were used. The authorities refused, citing national security.

Sri Lanka's RTI Commission, and ultimately the Court of Appeal, rejected this blanket refusal. While allowing limited withholding of sensitive operational details, they held that financial information regarding the use of public resources must be disclosed. The court affirmed that

"national security" cannot serve as a blanket excuse for withholding information when public money and executive accountability are at stake, underscoring the primacy of transparency even in moments of crisis.

By contrast, public engagement with such sensitive uses of the law in our own context remains limited. Unless civil society, equipped with knowledge and a sense of responsibility, actively utilises the RTI framework, its full potential will remain unrealised.

Another Sri Lankan case, *M.J.K. Dissanayake v. Asia Broadcasting Corporation (Pvt) Ltd.*, further illustrates the law's reach. The Court of Appeal upheld a ruling by the Information Commission that a private television broadcaster, Hiru TV, could be treated as a "public authority" under the RTI Act. The case arose from an RTI request seeking information on the editorial verification of a disputed news report. Rejecting the claim that the broadcaster was purely private, the Information Commission and the Court of Appeal underlined that entities performing public functions under a state licence, such as the use of public frequencies, are subject to RTI obligations, while allowing for the protection of journalistic sources.

This decision is significant for extending RTI's reach beyond the state to private actors exercising public influence. In Bangladesh, we often lament that the law does not extend to private entities while doing little to explore its existing possibilities,

including recourse to the High Court.

An instructive example from India concerns the disclosure of a committee report. In *Sajimon Parayil v. State of Kerala and Others*, a citizen sought access to the Justice Hema Committee Report on gender discrimination in the Malayalam film industry. Although it was submitted in 2019, the government withheld it, citing sensitivity.

The Kerala State Information Commission ordered disclosure with redactions, and the Kerala High Court upheld the decision on August 13, 2024. It affirmed that the RTI Act does not permit blanket refusal merely because parts of a document are sensitive; rather, it permits partial disclosure, with protected information removed. The court emphasised that privacy concerns can be addressed through redaction and that matters of public interest warrant disclosure. In Bangladesh, many such committee reports remain out of public reach, largely because citizens seldom seek them under the RTI Act.

The lesson is clear. Even in its current state, the RTI Act retains immense, largely untapped potential. Realising its full promise will depend not only on the government's political will but also on an informed and engaged citizenry ready to use it. The responsibility, therefore, lies with them—to understand the law, test its limits, and begin reclaiming it as an instrument of accountability, even before the information commissioners are appointed, and more so once they are.

Opening the door for owners of looted banks poses a serious risk



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KALLOL MUSTAFA

The Bank Resolution Ordinance, issued during the previous interim government, has recently been passed at the national parliament. However, the way the ordinance was amended at the time of its passage—creating an opportunity for the merged banks to return to their former owners—has raised some serious questions and concerns.

The objective of the Bank Resolution Ordinance formulated during the interim government was to bring any bank under resolution if its beneficiary owners directly or indirectly used the bank's assets or funds fraudulently for their own or others' interests. Resolution measures include appointing an administrator to a distressed bank, temporarily bringing it under government ownership, establishing a bridge bank, and transferring shares, assets, and liabilities to a third party—all aimed at protecting depositors' interests and maintaining financial stability.

Under this ordinance, in December 2025, five Shariah-based private banks, that became distressed by being looted and were unable to return depositors' money, were merged into a state-run entity titled Sommilito Islamic Bank. These five banks were First Security Islamic Bank, Social Islamic Bank, Union Bank, Global Islamic Bank, and Exim Bank. The chairman of Exim Bank was Nazrul Islam Mazumder, one of the owners of Nassa Group. The ownership of the remaining banks was linked to the Chattogram-based S Alam Group.

The paid-up capital of this Sommilito Islami Bank stands at Tk 35,000 crore, of which the government has contributed Tk 20,000 crore. The remaining Tk 15,000 crore will be provided as shares to depositors. In addition, Tk 12,000 crore has been provided from the Deposit Insurance Trust Fund, and Bangladesh Bank has extended another Tk 36,000 crore as loans.

According to Bangladesh Bank data, as of December 2025, the total loans of the five merged banks stood at Tk 196,827 crore. Of this, Tk 165,781 crore has turned into default loans. That means 84.23 percent of the total loans of these banks are non-performing.

Even after the merger, it remains unclear how thousands of crores of defaulted loans will be recovered, how depositors' funds will be returned, and where new lending capital will come from. None of the owners who looted deposits in the name of loans, the officials who facilitated the looting, or the Bangladesh Bank officials responsible for oversight have faced any trial or punishment. Under such circumstances, there are already doubts about how successful this merged bank can be. Amidst this, the recent amendment of the Bank Resolution Ordinance to create an opportunity for these five Islamic banks to return to their former owners further deepens the existing crisis of confidence in the banking sector.

The question is: what justification can there be for returning ownership to those whose looting led the banks into such distress? The argument of respecting private property rights is not acceptable here. Banks are not like other private family-owned businesses. A paid-up capital of Tk 500 crore is required to establish a bank. After that, thousands of ordinary people deposit their savings there. By investing only Tk 500 crore, the bank owners are able to control the deposits of thousands of crores of taka, decide where to invest it, and whom to lend it to. This is how the owners of the distressed Islamic banks withdrew many times more money than their initial investment in the name of loans. Returning ownership to them now means allowing those who previously syphoned off public money through anonymous loans or laundered it abroad to regain control of these banks by reinvesting only a small portion of

that laundered money.

This provision of returning ownership also contradicts ongoing efforts to recover money laundered abroad by these looters. Ten banks in the country have already signed 36 non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) with multiple multinational firms to recover funds laundered by six major industrial groups, with a total of 59 agreements expected. Among these industrial groups are those responsible

rescheduled loans with minimal down payments of just two percent, and repeatedly defaulted—suddenly become compliant with these conditions? And how will the same regulatory institutions which failed to enforce compliance before now be able to do so?

The way the Bank Resolution Ordinance was amended at the last moment to return looted banks to their former owners recalls the amendment of the Bank Company Act

This time, the BNP government formed a 10-member committee to draft the law converting the interim government's Bank Resolution Ordinance 2025 into legislation. The committee included four members from the Ministry of Finance, two from the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, and three from the central bank, with Bangladesh Bank serving as the secretariat.

The committee proposed several amendments. However, according to the daily *Samakal*, it did not recommend any provision to return looted banks to their former owners. The newspaper reported speaking to three members of the committee who said that from the outset, a "certain quarter" had suggested including such a provision, but due to objections from most members, it was not included in the final draft. On the night of April 9, just before the bill was passed on April 10, Bangladesh Bank became aware of the inclusion of this provision. The next morning, Bangladesh Bank requested the Ministry of Finance not to proceed with it.

However, ignoring the objections of both the committee formed to amend the ordinance and Bangladesh Bank, the provision allowing banks to return to their former owners was added. It is not difficult to understand for whose benefit this last-minute amendment was introduced.

It seems that what the then Jatiya Party MP Mujibul Haque said in parliament in 2023, protesting the last-minute amendment of the Bank Company Act, remains equally relevant today: "It seems that many bank directors, who are aligned with the ruling party, have convinced the finance minister to bring this for passage. If that is the case, we withdraw all our amendments. Because nothing could be more unjust than this. Banks are being looted, money is being laundered abroad, and Bangladesh Bank just sits idle. Bank chairmen and directors take thousands of crores and go abroad. You do not see this. You are here to favour certain people."

Ultimately, the recent amendment to the Bank Resolution Ordinance lends credence to fears that, rather than learning from the wrong practices and policy failures of the previous autocratic regime, the BNP government is going to accommodate them—at the cost of accountability, financial stability, and public confidence.



FILE VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

for looting the Islamic banks in question. In this situation, returning ownership to these groups would effectively weaken the entire process of recovering laundered funds.

To justify the amendment, it is being argued that certain conditions must be met to regain ownership. According to these conditions, former directors or owners of banks merging or listed for mergers can pay 7.5 percent upfront of the amount injected by the government or the Bangladesh Bank to reclaim the banks. The remaining 92.5 percent is to be repaid within two years at 10 percent simple interest. Additionally, all claims and liabilities of pre-merger depositors, domestic and foreign creditors, and third parties must be properly settled.

The question is: how will the same business groups—who over the past one and a half decades repeatedly violated Bangladesh Bank regulations, took anonymous loans,

during Sheikh Hasina's tenure. At that time, too, a last-minute amendment extended the tenure of bank directors from nine to 12 years.

The incident unfolded as follows: on June 8, 2023, then Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal placed the Bank Company (Amendment) Bill, 2023 in parliament. The original proposal contained no provision regarding extending or reducing the tenure of directors. It was later sent to a parliamentary standing committee for review, which also did not propose any such amendment. However, just before the bill was passed on June 21, 2023, the then-ruling party MP Ahsanul Islam proposed an amendment to extend directors' tenure to 12 consecutive years. Despite protests from the opposition, it was passed.

The recent Bank Resolution Ordinance amendment also followed the same pattern.

The many lives of Asha Bhosle's voice



Raffat Binte Rashid
is editor of My Dhaka at The Daily Star.

RAFFAT BINTE RASHID

Dum Maro Dum (*Hare Rama Hare Krishna*, 1971), that rebellious psychedelic cult anthem, followed by the sweet, flirty Chura Liya Hai Tumne Jo Dil Ko from *Yaadon Ki Baaraat* (1973), are universal Bollywood favourites.

Then come my two ultimate personal picks: Kitni Haseen Hain Nasheeli from *Yeh Nazdeekiyan* (1982), and the soulful Phir Se Aaiyo Badra Bidesi from Gulzar's beautifully crafted social drama *Namkeen* (1982). These filmi soundtracks made me fall head over heels for Zeenat Aman and Shabana Azmi.

Little did I know back then that these lyrical melodies and catchy Hindi pop numbers weren't sung by the actresses on screen; they were merely lip-synching. The real voice belonged to someone else: the legend Asha Bhosle. And thus began my obsession with the star playback singer.

Asha was nothing like the heroines she lent her voice to; in fact, looking back, it feels as though the onscreen characters had to rise to the challenge of matching her high-energy sound acting. She was a musical actor par excellence, effortlessly blending into the director's vision. Her expertise gave depth to the voice, mood, and tone, providing the emotional and musical soul of a character while the actor performed it visually.

Playback singers in South Asian cinema, especially in India and Bangladesh, are trained, recognised artists, often referred to as ghost singers or studio vocalists. Icons like Lata Mangeshkar, Kishore Kumar, and Asha Bhosle have cult followings, and since Bollywood is such a massive industry, their



Asha Bhosle (1933-2026).

FILE PHOTO: AFP

fandom has reached global heights. In fact, some say that Asha's fanbase grew even bigger than her elder sister Lata's, whose soulful melodies defined an era.

What I love most is how she owned the cabaret and oomph songs. Her dramatic cabaret songs, with their sultry, seductive vibe, defined old-school sophistication. Even

today, my girls' night karaoke sessions are dominated by tracks like Yeh Mera Dil Yaar Ka Deewana (*Don*, 1978), Piya Tu Ab Toh Aaja (*Caravan*, 1971), and Aaiye Meherbaan (*Howrah Bridge*, 1958), while Chhod Do Aanchal (*Paying Guest*, 1957), considered highly sassy and infectious for its bold, playful flirting, remains mandatory on our list.

Asha carved her own niche by embracing these numbers that many playback

and playful, her versatility made her the undisputed queen of Bollywood's iconic cabaret numbers.

Asha Bhosle's singing was never boxed in; she could slip from unrestrained cabaret beats to the elegance of classical and ghazals without missing a beat. I realised this when *Umrao Jaan* (1981) by Muzaffar Ali hit theatres in India—and here in Dhaka, during our VCR rental days, I watched in awe as Rekha rose to embody Asha's poignant vocals.

One moment, she was pouring her soul into Dil Cheez Kya Hai from *Umrao Jaan*, and the next she was setting the screen on fire with Raat Baaqi Baat Baaqi from *Namak Halaal* (1982). Asha Bhosle became synonymous with unforgettable songs, her seductive yet sassy numbers showcasing immense vocal versatility.

Her voice carried attitude—breathy, teasing, playful, sometimes mischievous—but always layered with texture and emotion. She didn't just sing notes; she acted through her voice, giving every song its own personality.

Asha deliberately carved her own path. She experimented, adapted, and kept evolving—from classical to rock-and-roll, from filmi romance to jazz-infused cabaret. That's why she ruled the industry both in Bangla and Hindi for over 70 years: she never stood still, and her voice never stopped surprising us.

Her first connection with Bengal dates to 1958, when she recorded a duet with Binod Chattopadhyay, composed by Manna Dey and released under HMV. That moment opened the door to a long and intimate relationship with Bengal's music. In later years, she became the muse of RD Burman, whom she married in 1980, becoming the daughter-in-law of SD Burman, one of India's greatest composers.

With RD Burman, she helped redefine playback singing, blending jazz, rock, disco, and folk into both Hindi and Bangla music. She turned tracks into high-energy, modern club numbers that still feel fresh decades later. Yet she could just as easily break your heart with a ghazal or charm you with a light,

romantic tune like Chura Liya Hai Tumne.

It was Manna Dey who first introduced her to the Bangla music scene, but her extensive collaborations with SD Burman in the 1950s and 1960s produced some of her most memorable songs in both Bangla and Hindi.

This practice of creating twin versions—Bangla originals and Hindi adaptations—gave her work a unique bilingual resonance. Chokhe Chokhe Kotha Bolo remains a Bangla favourite, while its Hindi counterpart Nahi Nahi Abhi Nahi from *Jawani Diwani* (1972) rendered the same melodic energy to cinema audiences. Similarly, Jete Dao Amay Dekona echoed the emotive depth of Raina Beeti Jaye. These songs captured both the delicacy of Bangla poetry and the glamour of Hindi film music, leaving listeners giddy with romantic imagination.

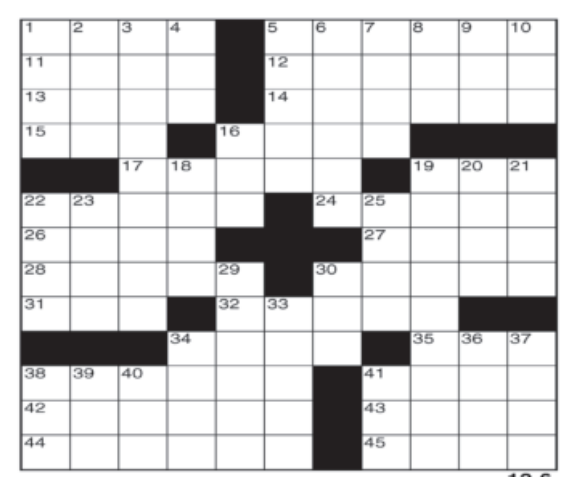
Her early struggles from a teenage bride in an abusive marriage to a bold and versatile artist are a testament to resilience. The three-way legacy of SD Burman's folk roots, RD Burman's modern experiments, and Asha's fearless voice shaped the sound of Indian cinema across generations, leaving behind a legacy that is both deeply personal and profoundly cultural.

Her swan song was *The Shadowy Light*, a haunting collaboration with Gorillaz, Gruff Rhys, and sarod maestros Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash, featured on the album *The Mountain (Parvat)*. This final track is a fusion of her timeless voice with experimental alt-pop, reflecting on life's journey and the soul's transition towards moksha—ultimate liberation. Released shortly before her death on April 12, 2026, it stands as a luminous, spiritual offering: poignant, otherworldly, and deeply human. *The Shadowy Light* is an unconventional electronic experiment with avant-garde techniques. She was never afraid to evolve or break free from being typecast, and her final song reminds us of that.

For me, she transcended mortality to become pure sound, carrying light even into shadow.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 School course
- 5 Third-party account
- 11 Pale tan
- 12 Horse-related
- 13 Clothing line
- 14 Massaged
- 15 Nile serpent
- 16 "Buenos —"
- 17 Tribal leader
- 19 Reservoir maker
- 22 Stunned states
- 24 Marry in haste
- 26 A party to
- 27 Concept
- 28 Early computer
- 30 Wave's top
- 31 Baseball's Williams
- 32 Writer Asimov
- 34 Made a sketch
- 35 Drama division
- 38 Ill will
- 41 Like an eyesore
- 42 Ancient
- 43 Shortly
- 44 Andy Hardy's portrayer
- 45 Poker payment
- DOWN
- 1 Butte's kin
- 2 Good pair
- 3 Geometric shape
- 4 Engine sound
- 5 Spine-tingling
- 6 Geometric shape
- 7 Chicago team
- 8 Vault part
- 9 Low digit
- 10 Marry
- 16 Dentist's deg.
- 18 Singer Horne
- 19 Geometric shape
- 20 Gorillas and gibbons
- 21 Ham or lamb
- 22 Losing scheme
- 23 Writer Rice
- 25 Old Italian coin
- 29 Geometric shape
- 30 Crow call
- 33 Squalid
- 34 Singer Celine
- 38 Spoil
- 39 Before today
- 40 Summer sign
- 41 Much of N. Amer.



TUESDAY'S ANSWERS



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Meghdol, Chandrabindoo set for Kolkata concert debut

Bangladeshi band Meghdol will perform alongside Indian group Chandrabindoo for the first time at a joint concert in Kolkata on September 5. The event, announced on Meghdol's official social media pages, has been teased as "Megh meets the Moon" and is being organised by Talent Wall. Venue details are yet to be confirmed.

Meghdol frontman Shibu Kumar Shil said the collaboration reflects shared musical roots in Bengali traditions. He said the joint performance marks an honour for the band. He also indicated further concerts in West Bengal during an upcoming tour.

Meghdol has recorded a new track for the film *Roid* by member Mejbaur Rahman Sumon, expected next month. The band is also preparing to release three songs from its third album *Aluminium er Dana*.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Falling in love with acting XEFER RAHMAN

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Imagine two popular singers coming together for a romantic web film—directed by Shihab Shaheen, a filmmaker known for weaving heartfelt love stories in projects like *Tumi Ami Shudhu*. Audiences are loving their chemistry, but what makes it even more interesting is that Xefer Rahman shares a close friendship with Pritom Hasan.

"Pritom and his wife, Shahtaj Monira Hashem, are among my closest friends. We've always shared a different dynamic. We've worked together on songs before, but acting together was a first. Moving beyond that comfort and making the relationship feel real on screen—that was the real journey for me," Xefer



Screengrab of Xefer's from 'Tumi Ami Shudhu'

reflects.

That sense of ownership carries into the film's music as well. With *Tor Chaya*, Xefer doesn't just lend her voice—she shapes the song entirely, composing and singing it herself, alongside lyrics written with

Badhon. "People gave so much love to *Niye Jabi Ki* from *Daagi* film, directed by Shihab *bhai*. But this time, being seen and heard at the same time—it made *Tor Chaya* feel even more special to me," she says.

Though music has always been her primary space, Xefer's acting journey—beginning with Mostofa Sarwar Farooki's *Last Defenders of Monogamy* and continuing with *Myself Allen Swapan 2*—finds a deeper emotional anchor in this project.

"Both of us come from music, but Shihab *bhai*'s way of working made everything feel so intentional. The way audiences are connecting with this layered love story—it's honestly made me fall in love with acting," she adds.



Jafar Panahi enters TIME 100 as a voice of cinematic resistance

Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi has been included in the 2026 TIME 100 list in the "Artistes" category, recognised for his long-standing defiance of censorship and politically charged filmmaking.

TIME cited Panahi as a director who has turned restriction into resistance, continuing to make films despite bans, arrests, and state-imposed limitations. His work is noted for portraying life under political repression and its human consequences.

Panahi's career has been marked by repeated clashes with Iranian authorities, including imprisonment and travel restrictions. His latest film, *It Was Just an Accident*, reportedly shot covertly in Iran, won the Palme d'Or at Cannes 2025 and received two Academy Award nominations.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Buddhijibir Bashay Shoytan'

Anuswar Theatre presents a stark new production, *Buddhijibir Bashay Shoytan*,



where a midnight encounter between an intellectual and the devil becomes a moral reckoning. Set against the disquiet of global war, the play probes collapsing ethics, exhausted humanity, and the fragile boundary between thought, fear, and survival.

Date: Today | April 17, 2026

Time: 5 pm & 7:30 pm onwards

Venue: Anuswar Studio, 67/4 Pioneer Road, Segunbagicha

NEWS

Expansion of higher medical education

FROM PAGE 12 about their problems and make recommendations on how the ministry can help address them, health ministry sources said.

Prof Liaquat Ali, a member of the now-defunct Health Sector Reform Commission, said the authorities should expedite the projects to make the universities fully functional.

"Once that happens, it will help produce skilled manpower and decentralise health services," Liaquat, also a former vice-chancellor of Bangladesh University of Health Sciences, told The Daily Star.

At present, BMU, formerly known as Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), is the only full-fledged public medical institution offering a wide range of postgraduate courses, including MPhil programmes, alongside research and training since 1998. It also runs a large tertiary-care hospital in the capital.

Around 2,500 doctors are enrolled in these courses under BMU every year. Of the 1,56,750 registered doctors across the country, 22,460 hold postgraduate degrees, according to the Health Bulletin 2024 published early last month.

Apart from BMU, Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons, an autonomous professional body, offers postgraduate courses.

CTG MEDICAL UNIVERSITY Since 2016, Chattogram Medical University (CMU), the country's second medical university, has been operating from two floors in the main building of the Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases. From there, it oversees 51 public and private medical colleges, as well as nursing colleges and institutes in Chattogram division.

A Tk 1,859 crore project was approved in September 2023 to construct 27 buildings, including a 1,200-bed hospital on 24 acres of land at Fouzdarhat. But construction has not yet begun.

Farhad Rashid, executive engineer of CMU, said consultants have been hired, and the design drawing is now at the final stage.

The deadline for completing the project is June 2027, but it is likely to be missed, he told this correspondent, adding that a contractor will be hired soon.

Seeking anonymity, another CMU official said only 73 employees have been recruited so far, and the service

rules and regulations are yet to be enacted.

RAJSHAHI MEDICAL UNIVERSITY RMU runs its activities from two old buildings of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital and the first floor of the Regional Nursing and Midwifery Training Institute.

A project to build infrastructure for RMU and a hospital was approved in June 2022, around six years after its establishment as the country's third medical university.

The proposed location of the university was changed a couple of years ago, and 68 acres of land were acquired in the Cityhut area.

Meanwhile, the project cost rose to Tk 2,258 crore from Tk 1,867 crore, and the deadline for its completion was extended by a year to June 2027.

When contacted, RMU Vice Chancellor Jawadul Haque said the tender process for constructing the administrative building has been completed, while that of other segments is underway.

He said a draft of the service rules and regulations has been sent to the health ministry for approval.

Replying to a question, the VC said that given the project's progress, it may not be possible to introduce postgraduate courses within the next four years.

Jawadul said they have been conducting examinations for 72 public and private medical colleges, and nursing colleges and institutes in Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions.

He also mentioned that they sent a proposal to the health ministry, seeking authorisation to conduct postgraduate courses in RMU-affiliated medical colleges.

SYLHET MEDICAL UNIVERSITY The country's fourth medical university in Sylhet has been carrying out its activities from Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College since its inception in 2018.

Though the university has been able to formulate the necessary rules and regulations, its organogram has not yet been finalised. Apart from the VC and the treasurer, all other staffers are working on a contractual basis.

Following the approval of a Tk 2,036 crore project in July 2023, 68 acres of land were acquired in the South Surma area. The project deadline is June 2027.

SMU Vice Chancellor Ismail Patwary said the appointment of consultants is now at the final stage, and it will require at least three years to develop

the structures.

Referring to the pending recruitment of employees at various levels, he said, "It may not be possible to start postgraduate courses within the next four to five years."

KHULNA MEDICAL UNIVERSITY Established in 2021 as the country's fifth medical university, Sheikh Hasina Medical University was renamed Khulna Medical University (KMU) during the tenure of the interim government.

Currently, KMU operates from a rented house in Khulna city and regulates undergraduate courses of medical colleges and nursing institutes in Khulna division.

Talking to this newspaper last month, Ruhul Amin, the then vice-chancellor of KMU, said a Tk 1,874 crore project was approved in 2024, and June 2027 was set as the deadline for developing infrastructure and constructing a 1,200-bed hospital.

Replying to a query, he said it was not possible to say when the university will be able to launch postgraduate courses, as it would take several years to complete the project.

He also suggested that the university should be authorised to offer postgraduate courses in medical colleges affiliated with it.

Govt eyes

FROM PAGE 12 The cabinet also discussed expanding other renewable sources, including wind and biogas.

In the briefing, the cabinet secretary also said efforts are underway to modernise solar systems and promote domestic manufacturing to overcome existing limitations. He said the government aims to keep solar power tariffs between Tk 4 and Tk 8 per unit.

The cabinet also decided to observe November 7 as a public holiday to mark National Revolution and Solidarity Day.

The BNP has long observed the day, commemorating the civil-military uprising of November 7, 1975, which led to the release of then army chief Ziaur Rahman and his rise to national leadership.

In addition, June 6 will be observed annually as "National Rural Development Day", but it will not be a public holiday.

Dato Amin not behind

FROM PAGE 2 and Expatriates' Welfare Minister Ariful Haque Choudhury and Malaysian Human Resources Minister Ramanan Ramakrishnan in Putrajaya, the Malaysian side introduced a technology-driven labour recruitment system for all source countries, including Bangladesh.

According to a joint statement, the system would ensure that employers bear the full cost of recruitment, resulting in zero cost to workers, in line with the Employer Pays Principle under the guidelines of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

However, Bloomberg reported that the foreign worker recruitment system that Malaysia is planning to adopt is developed by Bestinet Sdn Bhd.

Quoting six people familiar with the matter, it reports the software is marketed as allowing companies

to hire workers directly, rather than using middlemen who charge them excessive fees.

The system known as the Universal Recruitment Advanced Platform, or Turap, will have a digital portal where employers can sign up and find employees, they said.

In January, Bloomberg published an investigation into endemic corruption in Malaysia's recruitment of migrant workers from Bangladesh.

Aminul, popularly known as Dato Amin, has denied contributing to migrant workers being charged high recruitment fees and said he has devoted his life to helping them.

Representatives for Ramanan, Malaysia's Prime Minister's Office and Bestinet did not respond to Bloomberg's requests for comment.

Bloomberg reports that Bestinet already operates a software system called the Foreign Workers

Centralised Management System, or FWCMS, which Malaysia uses to manage parts of its recruitment, especially from Bangladesh.

That system consists of various modules, such as worker health checks and insurance, and also involves recruitment agents.

In an interview with Bloomberg in July last year, Aminul said he was not responsible for the people who use it, referring to officials who approve bogus applications or agents who overcharge workers.

In 2024, Bangladesh's police asked Malaysia to stop using FWCMS and for Aminul to be extradited, alleging he played a key role in a system that "fraudulently extorted" workers, the report said.

Home minister Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said in October last year that Malaysia's police were in touch with their Bangladeshi counterparts. Aminul has not been extradited or charged.

College student dies after hurled

FROM PAGE 12 construction building, locking the gate. The attackers chased him, and the building's security guard, Enamul Haque, later opened the lock as the assailants tagged Ashfaq as a thief. They then went upstairs and began beating him.

At one point, the college student was pushed from the eighth floor into the lift shaft, leaving him critically injured. He was pronounced dead

after being taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital, according to the case statement.

Sources at Chawkbazar Police Station said the killing may have been linked to a rivalry between juvenile gangs.

They said the incident might have stemmed from a dispute over a mobile phone theft, although it remains unclear whether the victim was involved in any gang.

Chawkbazar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Babul Azad said police have collected CCTV footage and are trying to arrest the remaining suspects.

"The motive is still unclear, but we are investigating," he added.

The victim's father said, "My son was not involved in politics. We sent him to Chattogram for better education, but now he is dead. I want justice."

Rooppur gets licence for uranium loading

FROM PAGE 12 completed all necessary technical tests and preparatory activities. "These were evaluated against both national regulations and international standards to ensure maximum safety."

The exact date of the fuel loading ceremony will be finalised following a meeting with the Russian authorities, he said.

"Fuel loading is a critical phase in the commissioning of a nuclear power plant. Once the fuel is placed in the reactor, a series of step-by-step

tests will be conducted to prepare for power generation," said Zahedul Hasan, managing director of Nuclear Power Plant Company Bangladesh Ltd.

He added that within three months of starting fuel loading, a percentage of electricity from the first unit will be added to the national grid. Full-scale electricity production is expected within 10 to 11 months.

On April 7 this year, the fuel loading schedule faced a brief delay due to minor issues identified in the fire extinguishing system. However, after

a high-level delegation inspected the site and expressed satisfaction with the updated fire safety measures, the regulatory body proceeded with the issuance of licence.

The nuclear power plant in Pabna is being implemented at a cost of approximately \$12.65 billion, featuring two VVER-1200 reactors. The plant is viewed as a "game-changer" for Bangladesh's energy sector, marking a historic shift towards sustainable, high-capacity power production to ensure long-term energy security.

Hands tied, abdomen

FROM PAGE 3
people between 2010 and 2013.

In a separate case, a senior BTRC official testified that internet services were fully shut down from 9:00pm on July 18 to the afternoon of July 23, 2024, following a directive from then state minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak.

The witness said Palak, in a meeting with International Internet Gateway operators and media representatives, instructed that platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and TikTok remain blocked while limited connectivity be maintained at key installations.

The official, whose identity was withheld for security reasons, told the tribunal that services were fully restored on July 31,

2024, following another directive from Palak conveyed through the BTRC chairman.

Meanwhile, at ICT-2, Dhaka University student Maruf Al Hasan testified to attacks during the July uprising, naming several political figures.

He alleged that Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader instructed Chhatra League leaders to resist the movement, and that multiple students were injured in attacks led by then BCL president Saddam Hussain and general secretary Sheikh Wali Asif Enan.

Maruf also alleged that several leaders of the AL and its affiliated organisations made provocative remarks and displayed weapons during escalating tensions.

Bar council

FROM PAGE 4
amount, the matter would be fully settled," he said.

"However, due to an erroneous judgement (by the Customs Excise & VAT Appeal Tribunal), I have filed an appeal before the High Court, which is currently pending..." he also said.

Masder Hossain began his judicial career in 1983 and is widely known as the petitioner in the landmark "Masdar Hossain case" in 1999, seeking judicial independence, which led to the separation of the judiciary from the executive branch in 2007 following the verdict.

After retirement, he practised as an HC lawyer and recently served on the Judiciary Reform Commission during the interim government's tenure.

Hospital itself is like

FROM PAGE 3
more hospital beds in their constituencies.

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain responded by saying the 300 bed General Hospital near Siddhirganj is already being upgraded to 500 beds, and Victoria General Hospital is also nearby.

He assured that the government may consider new hospitals in the future if necessary.

Following this, Mannan expressed his intent to withdraw the proposal. That was later withdrawn via voice vote with the speaker's permission.

Earlier, Rajshahi-4 MP Abdul Bari Sarder said in his constituency, there is only one health complex serving around 400,000 people. It was upgraded to a 50-bed hospital in 2014.

He said he personally witnessed three doctors sharing a single room to provide healthcare services.

He added that the upazila health complex has one ambulance, but no driver. Consequently, when critically ill patients need to be taken to the district headquarters hospital -- 50 kilometres away -- they suffer greatly, and in many

cases die before reaching the hospital.

Bagerhat-2 MP Shaikh Monzurul Haque said his district has a population of two million.

Each upazila health complex is in a dilapidated condition, so people flock to the Bagerhat Sadar Hospital for treatment, he added.

"I wish to describe the condition of the Sadar hospital to draw the attention of the health minister," Monzurul said.

He said the hospital was upgraded to 250 beds in 2021. New posts were created for the upgraded facility in 2022. "There is a severe shortage of manpower. Of 10 senior consultant posts, eight are vacant. Of 16 junior consultant posts, 11 are vacant. Out of 57 doctor posts, 42 remain vacant."

"A 10-bed ICU was established here, but from the very day of its inauguration, it has remained closed and unused. It serves no purpose. I therefore call upon the health minister to urgently address this crisis and provide relief from this situation," the Bagerhat-2 MP said.

NCP looks to expand footprint

FROM PAGE 3
sought AL nominations in 2018 and 2020 but was unsuccessful.

In the 2024 parliamentary election, he contested as an independent candidate from Chattogram-10 but boycotted the polls on election day.

An NCP leader, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the party is prioritising candidates with grassroots support and public acceptability.

"For Chattogram, our first choice is Monjur Alam. We are already in talks with him," the leader said, adding that BNP could face a challenge if he contests, given his personal vote bank through charity work and past support from AL voters.

Other names under discussion for Chattogram include NCP Joint Chief Organiser Jobairul Arif and Joint Member Secretary Bushra Mishma.

In Khulna, Joint Member Secretary Faridul Huq is likely to be nominated, while central leader Asad Bin Roni is under consideration for Barishal.

For Gazipur, the party is leaning towards lawyer Ali Naser Khan, who previously contested from Gazipur-2 under a Jamaat-led alliance.

NCP district coordinator Shawkat Ali is likely to receive the nomination in Narayanganj, while central committee member Ashikin Alam is being considered for Mymensingh City Corporation.

Another NCP leader,

speaking anonymously, said the party is focusing on public image, organisational capacity, and local acceptability.

"The goal is to nominate candidates who can carry the party's message beyond its core support base," the leader said.

On March 29, the NCP announced candidates for five city corporations.

It nominated spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain for Dhaka South, Senior Joint Convener Ariful Islam Adeb for Dhaka North, Jubo Shakti Convener Tarikul Islam for Cumilla, Rajshahi metropolitan Convener Mobassher Ali for Rajshahi, and Sylhet metropolitan Convener Abdur Rahman Afzal for Sylhet.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Planning
Planning DivisionImprovement of Public Investment Management System (IPIMS) Project
Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207Website: plandiv.gov.bd

Ref No.- 20.00.0000.404.014.01.25(part 1).71

Date: 16 April 2026

Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI)

For

Financial Management Specialist (Individual Consultant) (National Assignment) under Improvement of Public Investment Management System (IPIMS) project [Contract Package No.: IPIMS/S-5]

1. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GOB) has received financing from the World Bank for implementing "Improvement of Public Investment Management System (IPIMS)" project under IDA credit of Strengthening Institutions for Transparency and Accountability (SITA). Planning Division of Ministry of Planning has been implementing the project and it intends to apply a part of the proceeds of this credit for the services of an individual Consultant (National Assignment) as Financial Management Specialist.

2. The broad scope of consulting services includes hands on support to IPIMS project and executing/implementing agencies to facilitate efficient and transparent fund management in IDA financed projects. This includes, but not limited to, design and implement transaction recording, reporting and controlling systems for financing conforming GOB and IDA requirements, maintain books and accounts, identify logistics, information flow, and financial requirements of the system as part of the project activities, ensure smooth funds flow considering disbursement and reimbursement of the project activities, establishment of a transparent accounting system, etc. The consultant will also provide technical assistance on all aspects of financial management activities at each stage of the project implementation so that provisions of GOB and World Bank procedures and guidelines are complied. S/he will assist the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) in ensuring compliance of all financial management activities.

3. The expected date for commencement of the services is 15 May 2026 and the tentative duration of the entire assignment is about 48 (Forty-eight) man-months. Detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) and other information will be available upon request from the address provided below either through email or in person.

4. Planning Division now invites eligible individuals to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested individual should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. In support of qualifications and experiences, the applicant must submit documentary evidences.

5. Qualification and Experience Requirements:

- M. Com/ MBA in Accounting/ Finance and related subjects.
- Professional accounting qualifications (i.e., FCA or FCMA) accredited by the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) will be an added advantage. Membership /professional qualification through reciprocity agreements like Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) (without appearing examination) shall not be considered educational qualification.
- At least Twelve (12) years of work experience in financial management in government/semi-government institutions, or with international donors, implementing development projects, of which at least 5 years working experience in Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) finance projects is a must.
- Extensive knowledge of Government budgeting, fund release and reporting requirements.
- Extensive knowledge of IDA's financial management and disbursement procedures.
- Excellent computer skills in Microsoft Office tools (Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) and Internet use including database use
- Experience of using ERP & Tally software will get advantage;
- Excellent written and oral communication skills in English, to deliver technical financial documents, and reports.

6. During the term of the contract the consultant shall not be associated with any other Government agency, consulting firm or private business entities. Individuals who are currently working as consultants on another World Bank-financed project may also compete in this selection process, but if they are selected they will be required before signing the proposed contract to provide documentary evidence of having satisfactorily complied with their existing contract's requirements with respect to early termination of the contract by the consultant, including advance notice period, to avoid disruption in implementation of that project.

7. The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to the Section III, Para 3.14.3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, February 2025 (6th edition) setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

8. A consultant will be selected following the Open Competitive Selection of Individual Consultant method set out in the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, February 2025 (6th edition).

9. Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours (09:00 AM to 04:00 PM Bangladesh Standard Time).

10. REOI (e-GP ID No. 1260191) is invited in the National e-GP system Portal (eprocure.gov.bd) for the position of Financial Management Specialist. This is an online EOI, only electronic submission of EOI will be accepted in the e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The interested applicant may visit the website to get the details of the assignment. To submit EOI, registration in the National e-GP system Portal (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). Interested consultants are invited to submit their EOI along with updated Curriculum Vitae (CV) demonstrating their qualifications and experience relevant to the assignment through e-GP portal (eprocure.gov.bd) by 05:00 PM (Bangladesh Standard Time), 4th May 2026.

Project Director

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Former DGFI chief

FROM PAGE 3
an under-investigation crimes against humanity case over enforced disappearance and allowed the ICT's investigation agency to interrogate him for two days in safe custody.

Ilias Ali, former organising secretary of BNP's Sylhet division, was allegedly abducted from a road in Banani around midnight on April 17, 2012.

Aminul said two Sylhet-based student leaders -- Iftekhar Ahmed Dinar and another identified as Junaed -- were abducted days before Ilias's disappearance, and the incidents are linked.

He said investigators have collected call detail records of eight phone numbers connected to the case.

"We found unusual conversations in those records. Those who used those numbers followed Ilias Ali. We have proof of this," he said.

The prosecution is conducting what Aminul described as a "strong and constructive investigation" and hopes to submit a comprehensive report upon completion.

"More information is coming in, but for the sake of the investigation, we cannot disclose everything at this stage," he added.

Over 40 lakh cases

FROM PAGE 3
Through the Bangladesh Judicial Service Commission, recommendations have been made to appoint 708 staff members -- including stenographers, typists, office assistants and drivers -- to fill vacancies in subordinate courts. Recruitment of a further 553 employees is also in progress.

Responding to opposition MP Shahjahan Chowdhury, he alleged that under the previous Awami League government, judicial transfers and postings were influenced by party loyalty, with compliant judges placed in key positions and

independent-minded judges transferred to remote areas.

He said the current administration has decided not to follow that approach, instead prioritising integrity, competence and judicial conduct in appointments, adding that final decisions rest with the Supreme Court rather than the government alone.

Replying to a question posed by Magura-1 MP Monowar Hossain, the minister said the government has taken effective steps to withdraw politically motivated harassment cases filed during the tenure of the AL government.

BNP to begin

FROM PAGE 3
of nomination papers is April 21. Scrutiny will be held on April 22 and 23, followed by filing of appeals on April 26, and disposal of appeals on April 27-28. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is April 29. Election symbols will be allotted on April 30, and voting will be held on May 12.

Party sources said that, alongside women leaders from the BNP central executive committee and the Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal, young women leaders with links to the former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal

are also in the race for nominations.

Many are trying to reach out with their profiles to key party policymakers, senior leaders and other influential figures, highlighting their roles in past movements, party loyalty and organisational experience.

Party insiders said alongside experienced leaders, relatively young, educated and politically active women, especially those who rose through student politics, as well as some others from different professions, may get the opportunity.

Infant abandoned

FROM PAGE 4
baby girl is safe, and efforts are underway to locate her family," he said, adding that the child would be handed over to Bauphal police after the return trip.

"Currently, one of the female passengers is looking after the child and we are monitoring the situation," he added.

Bauphal Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Sirajul Islam said they had

not yet received detailed information but were looking into the matter.

Bauphal Upazila Social Services Officer Md Mushfiqur Rahman said he learned of the incident through social media. "Once the child is handed over to the police, we will be able to take necessary steps. At this moment, we are trying to trace the whereabouts of the alleged father," he said.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Planning
Planning DivisionImprovement of Public Investment Management System (IPIMS) Project
Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207Website: plandiv.gov.bd

Ref No.- 20.00.0000.404.014.01.25(part 1).70

Date: 16 April 2026

Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI)

For

Procurement Specialist (Individual Consultant) (National Assignment) under Improvement of Public Investment Management System (IPIMS) project [Contract Package No.: IPIMS/S-6]

1. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GOB) has received financing from the World Bank for implementing "Improvement of Public Investment Management System (IPIMS)" project under IDA credit of Strengthening Institutions for Transparency and Accountability (SITA). Planning Division of Ministry of Planning has been implementing the project and it intends to apply a part of the proceeds of this credit for the services of an individual Consultant (National Assignment) as Procurement Specialist.

2. The broad scope of consulting services includes hands on support to IPIMS project and executing agencies to facilitate efficient and transparent procurement in IDA financed projects. This includes, but not limited to, processing of procurement of goods, works and services such as preparation and examination of bidding documents, preparation of IFB, evaluation of Bids/EOI, etc. leading to timely awarding of contracts. The consultant will also provide guidance and consultation on procurement and project management in accordance with the applicable GOB and IDA rules, regulations, policies and guidelines, loan/financing agreement, contract agreement, procurement plan and other relevant legal/procurement documents. The consultant will also provide technical assistance to project executing agencies on all aspects of procurement activities at each stage of procurement process so that provisions of GOB and World Bank procurement regulations, PPR 2025 and e-GP guidelines are complied.

3. The expected date for commencement of the services is 15 May 2026 and the tentative duration of the entire assignment is about 36 (Thirty-six) man-months. Detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) and other information will be available upon request from the address provided below either through email or in person.

4. Planning Division now invites eligible individuals to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested individual should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. In support of qualifications and experiences, the applicant must submit documentary evidences.

5. Qualification and Experience Requirements: The consultant is preferred to have a Master's degree in procurement, project management, and engineering or in any other relevant discipline with 10 years' work experience in project/procurement management and 7 years of experience in managing procurement in development partner-financed project(s), particularly World Bank. Professional certifications/degree in Procurement from any recognized institution will be given preference. The consultant should have experienced with World Bank procurement Policies and procurement regulations, including recent updates in World Bank's procurement policy and its implication for the project, standard procedures and bidding documents for procurement and selection of consultants; experiences on using government's Public Procurement Act, and Public Procurement Rules will be required. The consultant has hands-on experience in managing all steps in the procurement process. The consultant is preferred to have practical knowledge on electronic government procurement system of Bangladesh which includes conducting e-procurement training, preparing e-Master bidding document, reviewing bidding documents and bids.

6. During the term of the contract the consultant shall not be associated with any other Government agency, consulting firm or private business entities. Individuals who are currently working as procurement consultants on another World Bank-financed project may also compete in this selection process, but if they are selected they will be required before signing the proposed contract to provide documentary evidence of having satisfactorily complied with their existing contract's requirements with respect to early termination of the contract by the consultant, including advance notice period, to avoid disruption in implementation of that project.

7. The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to the Section III, Para 3.14.3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, February 2025 (6th edition) setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

8. A consultant will be selected following the Open Competitive Selection of Individual Consultant method set out in the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, February 2025 (6th edition).

9. Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours (09:00 AM to 04:00 PM Bangladesh Standard Time).

10. REOI (e-GP ID No. 1260133) is invited in the National e-GP system Portal (eprocure.gov.bd) for the position of Procurement Specialist. This is an online EOI, only electronic submission of EOI will be accepted in the e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The interested applicant may visit the website to get the details of the assignment. To submit EOI, registration in the National e-GP system Portal (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). Interested consultants are invited to submit their EOI along with updated Curriculum Vitae (CV) demonstrating their qualifications and experience relevant to the assignment through e-GP portal (eprocure.gov.bd) by 05:00 PM (Bangladesh Standard Time), 4th May 2026.

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NASA's Artemis II crewed lunar flyby is a tale for the ages

SHOUMIK ZUBYER

On April 1, 2026, no joke – humanity left Earth's orbit once again for the first time since 1972 to profess ephemeral devotion to our dearest Moon. Four astronauts aboard NASA's Orion spacecraft, "Integrity", flew around the Moon and broke more than a few records before splashing down in the Pacific on Friday, April 10.

With their 10-day expedition and new chic spacesuits, having travelled boldly where no one has gone before, Artemis II astronauts swung their moonship back with a lunar flyby that has revealed views never beheld by eyes until now, from the Deep Space Network.

Artemis II is the first crewed flight beyond low Earth orbit since Apollo 17. Its objectives echo those of Apollo 8 in 1968: go around the Moon, don't land, prove the hardware works, and come home alive. Commander Reid Wiseman, Pilot Victor Glover, and Mission Specialists Christina



Earthset captured through the Orion spacecraft window at 6:41 PM EDT, April 6, 2026, during the Artemis II crew's flyby of the Moon. PHOTOS: NASA

what some call "moon joy" – the cognitive shift astronauts report when Earth appears small and alone in the window of space.

Artemis II carried four formal objectives. First, lunar surface photography. The crew used high resolution cameras and, for the first time ever, hand-held devices, to document impact craters, lava plains, and geological formations on both the near and far sides. This imagery will inform landing site selection for Artemis IV's South Pole touchdown in 2028.

At almost 6,500 kilometres from the lunar surface, the crew photographed craters, ridges, and lunar mares with Nikons and iPhones, like tourists with the best zoom in history.

Second, solar corona observation. During the lunar eclipse, with the Sun blocked behind the Moon, the crew studied the Sun's outer atmosphere, data typically only accessible during brief Earth-based total eclipses.

Third, meteoroid impact flash monitoring. Watching for brief light bursts from tiny rocks striking the lunar surface, using computational models to assess surface suitability for future astronauts.

Upon arrival, the astronauts requested permission to name two bright, freshly carved craters. The first was "Integrity", after their capsule, and the other, "Carroll" – Commander Wiseman's wife, who passed tragically of cancer in 2020. Wiseman wept as Hansen put in the request to Mission Control, and all four astronauts joined in an embrace. Tears were the memo all the way to Houston.

Wiseman and crew spent years studying lunar

geography to prepare for the big event. Topping their science target list: Orientale Basin, a sprawling depression with three concentric rings, the outermost of which stretches nearly 950 kilometres across. "Such a majestic view out here," Wiseman radioed once he regained his composure and started picture-taking.

Fourth and finally, deep space physiological assessment: crew members wore personal dosimeters throughout, establishing human radiation exposure baselines beyond Earth's protective magnetosphere. This is crucial for planning longer Artemis missions and an eventual Mars transit. Cardiovascular and cognitive performance were monitored continuously, building a medical dataset fed directly into mission planning for Artemis III, IV, and the proposed lunar base camp – the holy grail of NASA's ambitions.

As Orion approached the Moon, lunar gravity accelerated the spacecraft – pulling it inward and around the far side. Think of it like a ball on a string: swing it around a post, and it whips back in the opposite direction, faster than it started. NASA calculated the entry angle precisely so that instead of being captured into lunar orbit, Orion used that gravitational pull to bend its trajectory back toward Earth, emerging faster than it arrived. No major engine burn required.

Below them, the landing sites of Apollo 12 and 14 caught sight, poignant reminders of NASA's first age of exploration, more than half a century

gone. To bring all of this together, NASA drew on its signature institutional architecture of layered collaboration. Aerospace and defence giant Lockheed Martin built the Orion capsule; Boeing and Northrop Grumman engineered the Space Launch System (SLS) – atop which the crew capsule sits. The European Space Agency contributed Orion's critical service module, which enables the manoeuvring of the capsule. Aerojet Rocketdyne supplied the main engines.

Overseeing it all was NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman, sworn in December 2025.

Mission operations are anchored at Johnson Space Center, Houston, and launch operations are at Kennedy Space Center, Florida. The bill? Staggering. SLS development alone exceeded USD 20 billion altogether, with each launch estimated at roughly USD two billion.

Artemis II sets the stage for next year's Artemis III, which will see another Orion crew practice docking with lunar landers in orbit around Earth. The culminating moon landing by two astronauts near the moon's south pole will follow on Artemis IV in 2028.

On April 8, 2025, Bangladesh became the 54th nation to sign the Artemis Accords, committing to the safe and sustainable exploration of space. Bangladesh's Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, Md Ashraf Uddin, signed on behalf of the government, in the presence of US Charge d'Affaires Tracey Jacobson, at the 2025 Investor Summit in Dhaka.

Artemis II was merely a declaration of intent in a new, bruising contest for lunar dominance. We are officially one of 61 nations and one of 15 from Asia to be a signatory to the accords that may spawn the ascension of humankind to an interplanetary species. NASA continues to target early 2028 for the first Artemis IV lunar landing – a date that has remained unchanged since mid-2025. The Moon is waiting. It always has been.

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The Artemis II crew – (clockwise from left) Mission Specialist Christina Koch, Mission Specialist Jeremy Hansen, Commander Reid Wiseman, and Pilot Victor Glover – pause for a group photo.

Koch of NASA and Jeremy Hansen of the Canadian Space Agency lifted off at 6:35 PM EDT, bound for a 1.1-million-kilometre round journey.

This was a mission to inspire the entire human race and instil hope in the most trying of times. Victor Glover became the first African-American, Christina Koch the first woman, Jeremy Hansen the first non-US citizen, and Reid Wiseman the oldest person ever to travel beyond low Earth orbit.

"This is an opportunity for us to remember where we are, who we are, and that we are the same thing – and that we've got to get through this together," said Glover to CBS News, clasping hands with his crewmates, overwhelmed by

YOU CAN'T WRITE YOUR WAY OUT OF GRIEF

On expressive writing therapy and its pitfalls

NUZHAT TAHIYA

Back in college, while attending a swimming class with my mum, I almost drowned in the deep end of the pool. I remember, as I clawed at the water and felt chlorine sting my eyes, a distant part of me thought, desperately, "Note this feeling so you can write it down later." Even as my lungs compressed and the blue light above the surface rippled and retreated, some cool, administrative fragment of my brain had opened a ledger. That split self – one drowning, one filing the incident report – has never entirely left me.

The compulsion to catalogue is older than therapy, older than literature, and arguably older than language itself. Prehistoric humans pressed handprints into cave walls. Mediaeval monks copied their own suffering into the margins of illuminated texts. Samuel Pepys wrote by candlelight about his fears, his jealousies, and his plague-haunted city, encoding it all in a private cypher.

We are a species that seems to believe, with tremendous stubbornness, that if we can get a feeling outside of ourselves – shaped into sentences – we will somehow be free of it.

The diary, in particular, has been elevated into a kind of sacrament. Therapists assign them. Self-help culture treats the blank journal as a portal: write your way through. And writing can be genuinely transformative – research on expressive writing, notably the work of psychologist James Pennebaker, has shown that putting difficult experiences into words can reduce stress markers and improve immune function. The science is real but partial.

However, there is a form of diary-keeping that is not processing at all, but rumination masquerading as productivity: you sit down, you describe the wound in loving detail, you give it a name, and then you do it again the next day. The entry becomes a ritual of return rather than departure. Psychologists call this co-rumination when it happens between two people, but it happens just as readily between a person and their own notebook. The act of writing begins to feel like progress because it requires effort and produces an artefact. But the feeling being documented has

not shifted; it has simply been given a permanent address.

What the compulsion to catalogue often obscures is a more uncomfortable truth: that some emotions are not puzzles to be solved through sufficient description but weather to be endured. Trauma, in particular, can be hard to contain in language. For some, a diary kept in acute grief functions less as a record of healing and more as a mausoleum.

I have spent evenings crying less from sadness than from a kind of writer's anxiety – the fear that I wasn't going to find the right words for what I was feeling and that the feeling would escape before I could get it down. But some things need to be felt in the body before they're fit for the page.

What actually moves emotion through the body is messy and less publishable. It's crying without knowing exactly why. It's sitting in a feeling long enough that it becomes boring. These processes resist documentation because they

happen below – or above – the level of language. Rilke, in his Letters to a Young Poet, wrote about living the questions rather than forcing answers. The swimmers who don't drown are usually the ones who stop fighting the water and let it hold them – who stop trying to climb out of the experience and instead go still within it. I know this now. I knew it then, technically. But there I was, clawing and making mental notes.

I did eventually make it out of the pool. A lifeguard pulled me to the edge, and as I sat on the tile, coughing, while my mother floated idly somewhere on the other side of the water, I remember thinking, "The tile is cold and rough like pumice." I remember thinking, "This is the kind of detail that makes a scene real." I didn't write it down. And I remember it more clearly than almost anything I ever have.

Nuzhat is a compulsive doodler and connoisseur of bad early aughts television. Send her recommendations at nuzhat.tahiya@gmail.com.

Reference: Idyll Arbor. (2014). *Expressive Writing: Words That Heal*.



PHOTO: SHIMIN MUSHSHARAT

The blue-hair narrative and the art of meaning

ALEENA YUSRA

TV Girl's "Blue Hair", a famous track from the album *Death of a Party Girl*, is a simple and ambiguous song. Carried by a dreamy, melancholic melody, the song turns to blue hair as a cryptic literary tool to grapple with identity and an intimate connection that is fading. The girl in the song doesn't just dye her hair; she builds a version of herself around it. But that version is fragile and ephemeral.

"What seemed so blue in the sunlight by night was a pale green."

This line from the song quietly speaks to something larger: the volatile nature of blue hair as a metaphor, as well as the ethos of blue-haired characters across media who are similarly in flux.

It acknowledges that blue is an unusual hair colour that has mastered the art of meaning. Ever evolving with rich symbolism that speaks many different stories, yet never fixed in essence. Blue thrives in multivalence, shifting through sorrow, grief, chaos, rebellion, and disconnection.

This spectacle finds a clear expression in *Coraline Jones* and her iconic blue hair. Coraline's blue exists in a world of sombre tones, signifying the stark contrast between her innate vibrancy and a world drained of colour that shapes the film's atmosphere. Her striking colour against the dullness renders her unfitting, but the blue marks her emotional vulnerability stemming from isolation. Her vulnerabilities connect her to the "Other World". The other world breathes colour; the rooms feel alive, and her blue hair in the middle of it makes sense. The environment of saturated blues, deep purples, and glowing skies has the belonging Coraline lacks in reality.

In *Life Is Strange*, Chloe Price's blue hair is born from something louder. Her electric blue hair is not incidental but dyed and deliberately maintained. Her haircut against the mundane Arcadia Bay is worn as a mark of rebellion. Chloe's blue hair is defensive but heavy with the weight of her past. Chloe exists in a constant state of instability, and her unnatural blue hair becomes a visible, rebelling assertion of control within this frailty. Yet more importantly, it

externalises her grief following the death of her father, the disappearance of her best friend, and abandonment by those closest to her.

The blue hair of Diane Nguyen from *BoJack Horseman* is complex and quietly insidious. Diane understands the world too well: its injustices, hypocrisies, and emptiness. She feels powerless to meaningfully change it, leading to depression and disillusionment and made worse by her belief that her trauma must amount to something "useful" to justify its existence. Diane's blue hair is a visual maestro of subtle, internal chaos, much like the questions she cannot answer about herself, her past or her purpose.



ILLUSTRATION: ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

Rei Ayanami from *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and 2-D from *Gorillaz* wear blue hair that echoes in the vacant spot left behind after the erosion of self. Rei exists on the periphery of emotion with an eerie indifference because she was never allowed to form a stable identity. Her pale blue hair is drained of warmth. It reflects a tragic life in a liminal state, caught between human emotions and artificial purpose. 2-D's blue hair signals a detachment shaped by repeated physical and psychological damage, which has left him disoriented. The blue is passive, almost accidental, as 2-D hazily drifts through the world with no control.

Lastly, a quintessential for blue-haired depictions: Jinx from *Arcane*. Jinx's hair is all anarchic power. The unique, styled braids, the electric blue, are an overwhelming force of nature that serves as an integral part of her characterisation. Within Zaun, her blue hair becomes a language of collective resistance against Piltover's oppression. Her hair, like powder, was an innocent blue and shorter with the messiness of a carefree child. As Jinx, it became a wild, ominous blue, deliberately long and architectural to show the weight of a fractured psyche spiralling. In the alternative timeline where she was spared trauma, it remains light, short, and unburdened.

Blue resists a singular interpretation.

Narrowing down the layers of blue diminishes this exact 'other-ness' that makes it brilliant. Blue hair is never just one thing but an intricate window into the nuclear core of the wearers' stories and identities. It's a visual storyline that reveals what the characters cannot articulate. Like the girl in the song, what seems so vividly blue is never fixed but slips between fluid meanings and connects us to these characters.

Aleena is a struggling 9th grader who loves robots and revolutions. Send her your esoteric online archives at aleenayusra33@gmail.com



College student dies after hurled into lift shaft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

A college student was killed after he was allegedly beaten and thrown into a lift shaft from the eighth floor of a building in Chattogram.

The incident, which took place at an under-construction building in the Mousumi Residential Area on DC Road on April 12, came to light on Wednesday night after police arrested four suspects in connection with the killing.

The deceased was identified as Ashfaq Kabir Sazid, 17, from Cox's Bazar. He was a student of BAF Shaheen College in Chattogram and lived alone in a flat on DC Road in Bakalia, according to his father, Abul Hasem.

Hasem filed a case with Chawkbazar Police Station on April 13.

According to the case statement, Ashfaq was called by one of his friends, Fardin Hasan, on April 12 and asked to come to the Mousumi Residential Area intersection. When he arrived, Ayman, Anik, Rana, Michael, Eliash, Enayet Ullah, and Miskatul Kayes, along with others, allegedly held him at knifepoint and took him to a deserted place.

The statement said that, in an attempt to save himself, the victim ran and took shelter inside the under-



SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



'NEELKANTH': THE HARBINGER OF RENEWAL

A flash of electric blue breaks the quiet of the morning as an Indian roller returns to its nest with an insect firmly in its beak for its hungry chick. These master acrobats of the sky earn their name from the dramatic rolling dives performed during courtship. Locally known as the "Neelkanth", these birds are revered as harbingers of good fortune and renewal. The species is widely distributed across the Indian subcontinent and commonly spotted in open fields and agricultural landscapes. Last year, the Indian roller was categorised as "Near Threatened" on the IUCN Red List, with urbanisation and increased pesticide use attributed to the steady decline in its numbers. The photo was taken in Sreemangal, Moulvibazar.

PHOTO: NOBLE CHAKMA



11-party to march in July charter push

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11-party alliance led by Jamaat e-Islami yesterday announced that it would hold a series of programmes between tomorrow and May 2 to press for the implementation of the July charter.

The programmes include a mass procession in Dhaka tomorrow, followed by similar events in divisional cities on April 25 and in district towns on May 2.

Leaflets will be distributed, and seminars will be held in divisional cities and in key district towns during the period.

After a meeting of top leaders of the opposition alliance, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar announced the programme at a press conference at Al-Falah Auditorium, near Jamaat's central office in the capital's Moghbazar.

Opposition Leader and Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman chaired the meeting, which was attended by senior alliance leaders, including Opposition Chief Whip and NCP Convener Nahid Islam, Liberal Democratic Party President Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmad, Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis chief Mamunul Haque, and AB Party General Secretary Asaduzzaman Fuad.

Announcing the programmes, Porwar said the combine would also hold rallies in all city corporations and divisional headquarters, and that its liaison committee would finalise the dates.

After the programmes, a mass rally would be held in Dhaka, from where the next phase of programmes would be announced, he added.

The Jamaat leader alleged that the government was not respecting the public mandate and reiterated the demand for legal recognition of the July charter, adding that the alliance would continue its programmes until it was implemented.

Expansion of higher medical education stalled by project delay

Years after launch, 4 public medical universities unable to offer postgraduate courses; officials blame red tape

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Established in 2016, Rajshahi Medical University (RMU) has yet to develop the capacity to offer postgraduate courses — the core function of a medical university.

Without a campus of its own, the activities of the university largely remain limited to regulating undergraduate education at its affiliated public and private medical colleges, and nursing colleges and institutes.

A Tk 1,867-crore project was approved in June 2022 to develop the university's infrastructure and build a 1,200-bed hospital, but work has yet to begin.

When it comes to workforce, the university has a vice-chancellor, a treasurer and 80 other employees at various levels, but no pro-vice chancellors or deans who play vital roles in providing academic leadership.

Not only RMU but also three other medical universities in Chattogram, Sylhet and Khulna — all established between 2016 and 2021 — are grappling with major operational shortcomings, leaving

Bangladesh Medical University (BMU) as the country's lone fully functional medical university.

These universities were set up with the aim of improving medical education, promoting research, and producing skilled professionals to

strengthen the healthcare system.

However, the four universities are still far from becoming full-fledged institutions due to bureaucratic tangles, delays in initiating and implementing projects, and hurdles in acquiring land. Their functions are now largely limited to conducting exams and paperwork for undergraduate students of

MEDICAL UNIV	ESTABLISHED IN	PROJECT LAUNCHED	COST
CMU	2016	Sept 2023	Tk 1,859cr
RMU	2016	June 2022	Tk 2,258cr
SMU	2018	July 2023	Tk 2,036cr
KMU	2021	May 2024	Tk 1,874cr

Deadline for completing all 4 projects is June 2027 but physical work has not yet begun

anonymity.

Against this backdrop, Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain, recently sat with the high-ups of the four universities and the BMU, and asked them to take steps to enhance academic capacity.

He also directed them to inform the ministry in writing

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Govt eyes 10,000MW from solar

Declares nat'l revolution and solidarity day as holiday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has set a target of generating 10,000 megawatts of electricity from solar by 2030 as part of efforts to ensure the country's energy security.

Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Ghani announced the plan at a press briefing at the Secretariat yesterday following a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

The meeting discussed the Renewable Energy Policy 2025, ways to facilitate investment in renewable energy projects, and options for expanding renewable energy sources, he added.

Ghani said the policy aims to make the investment climate more attractive by easing entry for both public and private investors and ensuring profitability.

Large-scale investment opportunities on government land will be opened up not only for public entities but also for private entrepreneurs to help achieve the target, he said.

The Renewable Energy Policy 2025 targets at least 20 percent of electricity generation from renewable sources by 2030.

To achieve this target, a committee has already been formed to finalise the policy and oversee implementation. "The committee will quickly finalise the required laws and policies and begin implementation," he said, adding that previous plans had proved ineffective.

The government introduced a new policy framework last week to speed up renewable energy development by allowing unused or underutilised state-owned land to be used for clean energy projects under a public-private partnership (PPP) model.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

Rooppur gets licence for uranium loading

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

The Bangladesh Atomic Energy Regulatory Authority (BAERA) has granted the commissioning licence for the first unit of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant.

This removes the final regulatory hurdle for the first unit of the power plant and nudges it closer to the operational phase.

Top officials of the science and technology ministry last night stated that fuel loading is expected to begin by the end of this month.

According to a press release of the ministry, the licence was granted following rigorous inspections and reviews by both national and international regulatory bodies.

Yesterday, BAERA Chairman Mahmudul Hasan handed over the licence to Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission Chairman M Moinul Islam.

Tanveer Mia, public relations officer of the ministry, said project authorities have successfully

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Smoke rises after Israeli strikes hit a residential area in Nabatieh, Lebanon, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'Time for ambitious reforms'

Says Krishna Srinivasan, IMF's director for Asia-Pacific

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new BNP government with its two-thirds majority should push through with reforms needed to stabilise the economy, said the International Monetary Fund yesterday.

"A new government with a significant majority has come in and this is the right time to undertake ambitious reforms," said Krishna Srinivasan, director of the IMF's Asia and the Pacific department, at a virtual briefing on the region's local economic outlook.

A lot of reforms are needed in the fiscal side, the revenue side and the exchange rate and to rehabilitate the financial sector.

"There is work to be done on all the three pillars on which the programme is based."

Earlier on March 25, 2026, an IMF team led by Srinivasan was in Bangladesh and met with Prime

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4