



Fuel price hike lays bare stress on economy

Energy minister says govt trying to keep the situation at a 'tolerable level'

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SUKANTA HALDER

A sharp increase in fuel prices – one that will ripple through every layer of the economy – signals that the government has reached the limits of its fiscal endurance.

By raising the prices of diesel, octane, and petrol by Tk 15-Tk 20 per litre, the government has effectively conceded that the subsidy burden is no longer sustainable.

While economists have welcomed the move as a necessary correction, it shifts the economic strain directly onto a population already worn down by prolonged inflation, underscoring the country's shrinking capacity to shield consumers from global volatility.

Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku described the situation as "wartime", noting that global markets



Amid the summer heat, a man cools off and rehydrates with a drink of water after queuing for fuel since 5:00am. By noon, he was expecting to reach the pump around 2:00pm. After Saturday's mid-month fuel price hike, lines outside city pumps yesterday remained long. The photo was taken from the queue at Sonar Bangla Service Station in the capital's Asad Gate area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Daily Supply (tonne)	April 1-17	From now on	Rise in supply (%)
Diesel	1,107	13,048	17.5
Octane	1,129	1,422	25.9
Petrol	1,253	1,511	20.6

have already adjusted.

Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat yesterday, he said Bangladesh had been selling fuel below import cost to keep prices tolerable.

"Fuel must be purchased with foreign currency. By increasing prices slightly, we are trying to keep the situation at a tolerable level," he said, adding that war inevitably carries global repercussions.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the adjustment reflects mounting fiscal pressures and limited policy options.

He warned that the hike will erode purchasing power after prolonged inflation, while raising costs across transport, industry, and trade.

Fuel imports will continue to strain reserves, requiring careful management and external financing, he told The Daily Star.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at World Bank's Dhaka office, also supported the move, saying subsidies drained public funds and disproportionately benefited wealthier groups.

Failing to adjust prices would force the government to finance

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

12kg LPG bottle now Tk 1,940

Consumers paying well above Tk 2,000 already

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government yesterday increased the price of 12kg of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) to Tk 1,940, its second hike this month, with consumers fearing that the retail price in reality could climb even higher.

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US delegation to go to Pakistan for Iran talks

Tehran may not join negotiations as long as there is US blockade on Iranian ports

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump yesterday said he was sending negotiators to Pakistan today for talks with Iran just days before a ceasefire in the Middle East expires, though Tehran has reportedly yet to decide whether it will participate.

Announcing the fresh diplomatic push, Trump also renewed his threats

against Iran's infrastructure, saying in a post on his Truth Social account Sunday that without a deal, the US was "going to knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran. NO MORE MR. NICE GUY!"

Iran, however, appeared cool to the prospect of talks, particularly in light of the ongoing US blockade of its ports, according to Iranian media reports.

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Hold the govt accountable for reform delivery

Urges Rehman Sobhan

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Eminent economist Prof Rehman Sobhan has called for holding the government accountable for implementing reforms that largely remain on paper in Bangladesh.



"Legislation is not enough; reforms must be translated into operational documents implemented by the bureaucracy, and their outcomes must be measured on the ground. An active opposition should collaborate with civil society to act as a watchdog over reform implementation," he said.

Prof Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), spoke as a special guest at a session titled "Romancing the Reform: The Bangladesh Story" during the three-day 9th SANEM Annual Economists' Conference 2026 at the BRAC Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

His remarks came as many reforms proposed during the interim government following the July 2024 uprising are fading, while laws traditionally remain on paper.

Drawing on his experience as a member of the Planning Commission, he said reforms in Bangladesh largely remain academic but must be delivered on the ground.

He recalled that in the early 1990s, judicial and budgetary reforms were initiated with support from the World Bank and the UK government, yet no one assessed the outcomes of those efforts.

By contrast, Southeast Asian countries have practised performance budgeting since the 1970s and 80s to measure public expenditure outcomes, something Bangladesh has yet to adopt in the 21st century.

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A man clings precariously to the end of a moving train, gripping its metal handles while balancing on the narrow coupler. The risky act highlights the grave dangers of riding outside carriages -- one slip could be fatal. The photo was taken at the Moghbazar level crossing area in the capital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Chasing European dream, fraught with danger

Deaths, abuse fail to stop Bangladeshis from Libya sea crossings

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and TOUSIF KAUM

For more than a year, Shakil Ahmed from Sunamganj Sadar survived in Libya on a single meal a day – a piece of hard, stale bread; some vegetables; and half a litre of water.

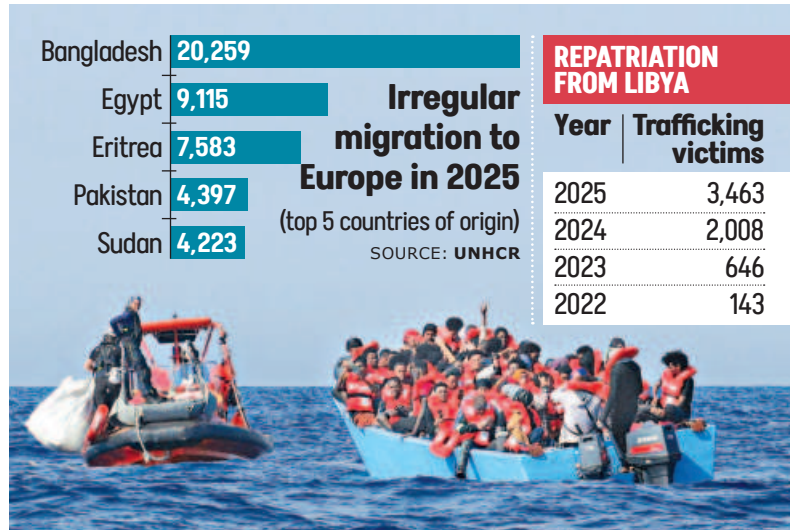
With a dream of finding a better life in Europe, Shakil, a college student, accepted a broker's offer to take him to Greece for Tk 10.5 lakh in 2023. He flew to Egypt via Dubai and was then taken to Libya by road.

The 21-year-old never made it to Europe. Instead, he, along with 147 others, remained stranded in Libya.

Finally, he was brought back home at the end of 2024 with the help of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Shakil, whose father died years ago, said his mother and sister borrowed Tk 10.5 lakh from relatives and other sources to finance his journey.

"The money I paid the broker has



not yet been recovered. My family is still trying hard to gradually pay off the debt," he said.

His narrative underscores a persistent reality: the mounting number of deaths and systemic

exploitation have not deterred Bangladeshis from taking perilous journeys from Libya to European shores.

UNHCR data show that in 2025, SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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বাংলাদেশে এই প্রথম সর্ববৃহৎ বিশ্বমানের পেপার বোর্ড ম্যানুফ্যাকচারিং প্রান্ট নিয়ে যাত্রা শুরু করলো যমুনা গ্রুপ

নতুন সময়ের পাতায় আঁকি স্বনির্ভর বাংলাদেশের ছবি

আর নয় বিদেশ থেকে আমদানি নির্ভরতা, এখন যমুনা পেপার মিলস লিমিটেড দেশেই উৎপাদন করছে বিশ্বমানের ডুপ্লেক্স বোর্ড, সুইটিশ বোর্ড ও আর্ট কার্ড ফিনিসিং ১৮০-৪৫০, যা সাধারণ করবে বিপুল পরিমাণ বৈদেশিক মুদ্রা এবং দেশীয় শিল্প-কৃত্তিক অর্থনীতিকে করবে সমৃদ্ধ।

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MY DHAKA

PAHELA BAISHAKH ALPONA

When Dhaka turns into a canvas

RBR

Now that the hullabaloo of Pahela Baishakh is over, the festival colours have yet to fade. The sprawling asphalt streets of Dhaka became a canvas for residents, when the age-old Baishakh alpona painting took place. This Pahela Baishakh 2026, decorative street painting took centre stage and, for once, stole a bigger spotlight than the parade.

I say this because in Uttara Sector 5, the green lane beside the lake -- a sanctuary for birds and a favourite walkway for morning strollers -- was painted with a decorative stretch of white alpona. It was a first in my 23 years



of living in this suburban township. Folk floor art, or alpona, is a decorative tradition created on the ground using rice paste, chalk, coloured powders, and paint, mostly during cultural festivals. My first encounter with alpona was at my uncle's wedding



in the late seventies. It had to be painted at night because the red stone staircase and courtyard were always busy during the day.

To cut the story short, my association with alpona drawing is inseparable from cousins, music, food, fun, and laughter in the dead of night. To relive that joy, I always make it a point to attend street alpona events.

In modern urban celebrations like Pahela Baishakh, alpona has expanded from courtyards and homes to entire streets, where artists and community members paint intricate designs overnight, turning roads into vast canvases. Dhaka's streets come alive with this traditional Bengal art form -- a temporary, ornamental painting that transforms public spaces through colour, motifs, and symbolism.

Manik Miah Avenue, the sidewalk beside the Fine Art Institute at Dhaka University, and more recently Gulshan, Banani Road II, and Uttara have all joined the list. Here, alpona is considered both art and ritual, embodying joy, unity, and tradition

while creating a festive atmosphere that draws crowds together and turns the city into a living canvas of heritage.

Nowhere was this more vivid than Banani Road II, where the cultural celebration Rong Dhonger Utshob 1433 unfolded overnight. Organised by Together for Bangladesh and the Banani Society, the event transformed the road into a sprawling mural of intricate alpona patterns, painted by artists, volunteers, and residents who gathered under the night sky. The atmosphere was electric -- filled with laughter, music, and the aroma of traditional food stalls -- creating a communal spirit that carried into the dawn, as Faisal Ahmed Bhubon, a system engineer at Amber IT, described.

The word "alpona" in Bangladesh carries a broader cultural meaning -- it is tied to community celebration, artistic expression, and national identity. During the Bengali New Year, streets in Dhaka are transformed into vast alpona canvases, where geometric motifs, lotus flowers, fish, birds, and folk symbols are painted to welcome

prosperity and joy.

My cousin brought along her expatriate colleague, newly posted in Dhaka, and her first Pahela Baishakh experience was jaw-droppingly awesome. Yet, we struggled to explain the finer nuances and full cultural depth of an alpona painting event in English.

Alpona is best left untranslated in cultural contexts, because it embodies a uniquely Bengali tradition that goes beyond mere decoration -- it is a living art form of community and festivity.

At Rong Dhonger Utshob 1433 in Banani II, creativity and spontaneous public participation made alpona painting the centrepiece. And just as the sun rose to a new dawn, the Bangladesh Street Kids Aid Group performed skateboarding across the alpona-covered street, blending youthful energy with cultural artistry.

The presence of the DNCC administrator and the presidents of Banani Society, Gulshan Society, and other dignitaries in these mass celebrations reinforced the message of culture, creativity, and social harmony in urban life, connecting younger generations to their cultural roots.

This year's alpona celebrations across Dhaka -- from Shahabagh to Banani, Gulshan -- were more than just decorative art; they were a collective expression of identity and resilience. The night-long festivity, blending paintbrushes, performances, and community spirit, reaffirmed Pahela Baishakh as the cultural heartbeat of the city, where tradition and modernity meet on the streets in vibrant colour.

And until the colours fade, the festivity remains in the heart, reminding you of the red strokes you once painted at the turn of the road.

Mob beats man to death over robbery allegations

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A man was beaten to death by a mob during an attempted robbery in Pirojpur's Nazirpur upazila early yesterday.

The victim is Dulal, 26, from Hijla in Barishal, said Nazirpur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Tarikul Islam.

Quoting locals, the police official said a group of around eight men entered the house of college teacher Nazmul Hasan, also known as Ujjal, in Kalaroania village early Sunday and held the family hostage to try and rob the place.

At one point, Nazmul was attacked with a sharp weapon. He and his son Miskat were seriously injured and later taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Neighbours rushed in after hearing screams and managed to catch one of the gang members, Dulal. He was later beaten by locals, leaving him dead on the spot, the OC said.

He said they are working to identify and arrest the other suspects.

A case is being prepared in connection with the incident and the body has been sent for autopsy, OC Tarikul added.

Dulal was accused in at least 15 cases across different police stations, the OC said.

'Multiple' injured in midwestern US campus shooting: police

AFP, Washington

Police said "multiple" people were injured in a shooting at the University of Iowa early yesterday, after the midwestern US school issued an alert reporting gunshots in an area popular for nightlife.

The United States, where firearms are readily available, has a long history of gun violence that kills thousands of people every year.

"The Iowa City Police Department is investigating a shooting that occurred Sunday," Iowa City officials said in a statement, adding that "no arrests have been made."

"At this time, multiple victims have been taken to area hospitals to be treated for wounds suffered in the shooting."

Their conditions were unknown, authorities said. The ICPD said its officers responded to a report of a "large fight" on campus just before 2:00 am local time (0700 GMT), adding that officers arriving at the scene "heard gunfire."

Chasing the European dream, fraught with danger

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh was at the top of the list of countries whose citizens arrived in Europe through the Mediterranean. At least 20,259 Bangladeshis reached Europe by sea, accounting for 30.5 percent of total arrivals -- far ahead of Egypt (9,115), Eritrea (7,583), Pakistan (4,397), and Sudan (4,223).

The trend persisted in the first two months of 2026, as Bangladesh again topped the list of sea arrivals to Europe with 1,358 entries, ahead of Somalia (557), Pakistan (383), and Egypt (317).

These figures come despite persistent reports that many Bangladeshis have been detained and physically abused in Libyan camps. Human trafficking gangs held many of them hostage to extort money from their families, while many others lost their lives during treacherous sea voyages from Libya to Europe.

In the latest such tragedy, at least 18 Bangladeshis died while trying to cross the Mediterranean from Libya to Greece. The incident came to light after a boat with several other Bangladeshis reached Greece on March 30.

Several officials of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) told this newspaper that around 70,000 people, mostly aged between 25 and 40, went to Europe via the notorious sea route over the last decade.

A significant number of them are from Madaripur, Shariatpur, Sunamganj, and Habiganj, where brokers continue to lure people with promises of jobs and a better life in Europe, they said.

A recent BRAC study found that 60 percent of the over 2,000 fortune seekers it surveyed had been promised good jobs, but 89 percent of them found no work after reaching Libya. At least 63 percent of them were detained along the way, and 93 percent of the detainees were held in camps. Among them, 79 percent suffered physical abuse.

According to the study, 68 percent said they lost their freedom of movement

after reaching Libya. About 54 percent said they never got three meals a day, while 22 percent said they received only one meal a day.

Most travelled from Dhaka to Libya through Dubai in the UAE and Egypt, while others travelled via Istanbul, Qatar, or Syria.

Shariful Hasan, associate director of BRAC's Migration Programme, said there has recently been a change in destination for Bangladeshi fortune seekers.

In recent months, many Bangladeshis who had earlier tried to enter Italy are now attempting to reach Greece from Libya, he pointed out.

"Our concern is that thousands more are now waiting in Libya for the same perilous journey," he told The Daily Star.

Trafficking networks, once concentrated in areas near Tripoli and Zuwara, have expanded across Libya's coastline. "New departure points, including Tobruk in the east, are increasingly being used to send boats towards Greece."

Shariful said the desperation to reach Europe is so intense that many Bangladeshis who were rescued during sea voyages remain unwilling to return home, even after their near-death experiences.

He called for stronger government action at home as well as greater engagement with Libya, Greece, and Italy to dismantle trafficking networks and prevent further deaths.

Migration expert Asif Munir said that a highly organised and powerful transnational network is involved in human trafficking through the Mediterranean, making it difficult for any single country to tackle the issue on its own.

"It can only be effectively curbed through coordinated efforts among all countries connected to this route," he told The Daily Star.

Munir also stressed the importance

of increasing public awareness and enforcing stricter immigration controls to tackle the issue more effectively.

Contacted, Md Nurul Haque Nur, state minister for expatriates' welfare and overseas employment, said the government has been carrying out awareness campaigns in areas where a significant number of people appear willing to embark on perilous journeys to Europe.

He said the campaigns are meant to warn people that these journeys carry grave risks and also damage Bangladesh's image abroad, as undocumented migration creates many problems for destination countries.

The state minister further said the government's legal scope for intervention remains limited because these migrants do not use formal channels.

CID officials said that over the last few years, there has been a rise in the number of human trafficking victims repatriated through initiatives by the Bangladesh embassy in Libya with support from the IOM.

At least 3,463 Bangladeshis were brought back home from Libya last year compared to 2,008 the previous year. The number was 646 in 2023 against 143 in 2022, according to a database of the Trafficking in Human Beings Unit of the CID.

Mohammad Badrul Alam Mollah, special superintendent of CID's Serious Crime Unit, said, "Thousands of Bangladeshis entered Europe last year through irregular routes, the highest in recent times. Several routes are being used to reach Italy via Dubai.

"In many cases, people fall prey to fraudulent syndicates that lure them with promises of quick and substantial earnings abroad. To address this, we are focusing on raising public awareness," he said, adding that campaigns have been launched and documentaries are being produced to highlight the dangers of perilous journeys to Europe.

"We depend on district administration and consumer rights bodies for field-level monitoring. We have asked companies to ensure that distributors and retailers sell at the correct price," he added.

However, M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser to the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), rejected the basis of the latest hike, alleging that freight costs have been arbitrarily inflated without proper verification.

"It's all the business people's interests." He cited an earlier assessment by CAB that showed freight costs were much lower than the number quoted by the businesses.

"We presented documents and asked them to verify with NBR records and submissions made to courts, but that was not done. Instead, they took the highest prices quoted by a few companies and took their average.

"The market [price] has been distorted, and the BERC's role in enabling this is highly questionable," he said.

Fuel price hike lays bare stress on economy

FROM PAGE 1

subsidies through higher taxes, borrowing or cuts in other spending, each carrying broader economic costs, he said.

Selling fuel below international prices, he argued, creates losses for the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation that ultimately fall on taxpayers.

"Keeping prices artificially low often leads to shortages, long queues and black markets, while price gaps with neighbouring countries encourage smuggling, meaning subsidised fuel may benefit consumers outside Bangladesh," he told this newspaper.

Zahid suggested targeted support such as cash transfers or vouchers to shield vulnerable households, citing global examples where direct aid proved more effective.

He warned that global fuel costs may remain elevated, making delayed adjustments more painful and prolonging supply pressures.

Energy expert Prof M Tamim, vice-chancellor of Independent University, Bangladesh, said the hike was justified and should have been implemented earlier.

Although the hike will lead to a rise in inflationary pressure as fuel costs feed into transport and production, he argued the impact was unavoidable given the subsidy burden.

He said people were expecting an adjustment next month, and were in a rush in panic buying.

Besides, keeping prices artificially low had encouraged hoarding and black-market sales, particularly after the government signalled in advance that prices could be raised.

Prof M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser to the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, criticised the decision to raise fuel prices as a "breach of

trust", saying the government had assured citizens that prices would not rise mid-month.

"By violating their own rule of monthly adjustments, they have undermined credibility," he said.

He said hoarding by some private suppliers was evident as supply increased immediately after the hike.

Yesterday, the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation instructed the state distribution companies Padma, Meghna, Jamuna to increase diesel and petrol supply by 10 percent and octane supply by 20 percent compared to last year's supply.

In April last year, average daily diesel supply was 11,862 tonnes, Octane 1,185 tonnes and petrol 1,374 tonnes.

From April 1-7 this year, amid uncertainties over import and increased global prices, the average daily supply of diesel was cut to 1,107 tonnes, octane 1,129 tonnes and petrol 1,253 tonnes, deepening the crisis at fuel pumps.

Compared to the first 17 days of April, the supply of diesel will now increase by 17.5 percent to 13,048 tonnes, octane by 25.9 percent to 1,422 tonnes, and petrol by 20.6 percent to 1,511 from today.

Shamsul also questioned why domestically produced petrol and octane were priced in line with imports.

"The BPC has long engaged in manipulations without accountability. Mismanagement has reached a point where the government itself is trapped, enabling profiteering by distribution companies," he said.

According to him, distribution companies are using profits from consumers to expand assets and pay bonuses, while inflated costs are built into pricing. "Without addressing

these issues, the government is repeating the mistakes of its predecessors," he warned.

Agricultural economist Jahangir Alam Khan highlighted severe risks for the farm sector, especially during the ongoing Boro season when irrigation demand peaks.

He said higher diesel prices are raising irrigation costs, while shortages and queues at filling stations are disrupting crop growth in the northern districts.

"Fuel cost increases will raise costs across the agricultural value chain, from irrigation to harvesting, transport, and marketing, driving up food inflation," he said.

He warned that reduced production could force rice imports, while fertiliser shortages caused by gas supply disruptions are compounding risks.

"Crops are now in critical growth stages, but fuel shortages are already drying fields. Higher kerosene prices will further strain rural households," he added.

Transport fares on both roads and waterways are also set to rise in response to the fuel price hike.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority held a meeting last evening to review public transport fares, though no new rates were finalised until the report was filed.

Transport owners' associations indicated they may propose raising fares to Tk 4 per kilometre in cities and Tk 3.80 for long-distance buses, which could mean up to a 64 percent increase in metropolitan fares.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Inland Waterway Passenger Transport Organisation has proposed a 36-42 percent hike in launch fares, including a higher minimum fare.

Hold the govt accountable for reform delivery

FROM PAGE 1

"This lack of efficiency means there is no way to tell parliament what was promised with public money versus the actual outcome," Prof Sobhan said.

He noted that health and education budgets are consistently underutilised, with the allocated 2 percent not fully spent even as aspirations grow to raise public expenditure to 5-6 percent of GDP.

"There is a lack of practical analysis regarding why these ministries are underperforming, while citizens experience low-quality healthcare and poor-quality public education despite reports of high pass rates," he said.

According to him, these are no problems in planning reforms but in implementation and the way the state functions. Substantive reforms require identifying key players and building a coalition inside the government willing to make reforms a political campaign issue.

He cited the Six Point Programme as a genuine reform agenda during the Pakistani regime, which mobilised

citizens and culminated in the Liberation War of 1971.

In contrast, current reform agendas, such as the BNP's 31 points, have seen little effort to conscientise party members or voters, he said.

"Election manifestos are often paper exercises where members contesting elections would fail an exam on their party's content because they have no idea what it contains," he said.

Prof Sobhan added that in India, broad civil society coalitions were mobilised for reforms such as the right to food, education, and work. In Bangladesh, however, civil society representatives remain divided into fundraising silos and have not built such coalitions.

"Without mobilising constituencies on the ground to generate pressure on politicians and parliament, stronger coalitions who do not want reform will prevail," he warned.

He stressed that accountability must be built from the prime minister's office down to the grassroots, and reform must be institutionalised in the political DNA of Bangladesh.

CPD Distinguished Fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya said the interim administration was Bangladesh's most pro-reform government, but it failed to deliver reforms because it lacked an economic vision, an integrated design, and electoral legitimacy.

He added that while parliament has recommended reviewing ordinances on judiciary, corruption, and human rights, these should have been approved instead of shelved.

He emphasised that reforms should be pursued by the government itself rather than imposed by the World Bank or IMF.

Former finance secretary Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury suggested separating the local government civil service from the central civil service and integrating digitisation in service delivery to improve efficiency.

To combat politicisation of the bureaucracy, he advocated merit-based appointments and accountability at all stages.

SANEM Executive Director Selim Raihan moderated the session.

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JS RESERVED SEATS

BNP's women
leaders unhappy
as it opens door
to outsiders

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

A section of BNP's women leaders is unhappy that the party has opened the door to outsiders and little-known figures in the race for women's reserved seats in parliament.

They feared that long-serving loyalists, who stood by the party despite years of repression and political struggle, may be overlooked while importance is being given to outsiders who neither held party posts nor made any visible contribution in the last 17 years. Such a move has already demoralised leaders and activists across the country, they added.

According to party insiders, the BNP interviewed a number of outsiders over the two days, including Meghna Alam, Farzana Sithi, Rukaiya Jahan Chamak and others.

Many of them are relatives of party leaders but do not hold any party post, sources said.

Speaking anonymously, an aspirant from Dhaka unit of Mohila Dal said, "With

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A private firm employee operates his e-bike amid fuel shortages, as many turn to electric vehicles to avoid long waits at pumps. According to industry insiders, monthly sales surged from 800-1,000 units to about 2,200 in March during the fuel crisis and could reach 3,000 if the trend continues. The photo was taken on Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Road in the capital's Agargaon area yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

'They threatened to
shoot me if I spoke'
Enforced disappearance
victim testifies at ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A victim of enforced disappearance told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday that as he pleaded for release, saying he had two children, plainclothes men who detained him threatened to shoot him if he spoke up.

Masrur Anwar Chowdhury, a 36-year-old electrical and electronic engineer, said five to six men abducted him near Gulshan on March 1, 2020, while he was on his way to the office. They dragged him into a microbus, handcuffed and blindfolded him, and took him to a secret detention centre.

Testifying as a prosecution witness in a case linked to a Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) cell allegedly operated under the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Masrur said he was held in two locations for about a week, during which he was tortured twice and threatened with death.

He said he was first taken to a small cell and interrogated about social media posts critical of the then Awami League government and India.

"When I denied links to any militant group, I was beaten twice -- once with a belt and again with a hard object. They threatened to kill me if I did not confess," he said.

Masrur said he was later moved to what he believed

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Solar no longer a
choice, but a necessityExperts urge immediate shift to
renewables amid energy crunch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Generating 10,000MW of solar power by 2030 is no longer just an ambitious target but a critical necessity for Bangladesh to cope with the global energy crunch, experts said at a panel discussion yesterday.

They made the remarks at the 9th Sanem Annual Economists' Conference at BRAC Centre Inn in Mohakhali, as the escalating Middle East conflict exposed the country's vulnerability to volatile global fuel markets.

At the session titled "The Global Energy Crunch Driven by Middle Eastern Conflicts: South Asian Perspective," Shafiqul Alam, lead energy analyst at Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) Bangladesh, said the country's dependence on imported primary energy has risen to 62.5 percent from 47.7 percent in 2021.

"Last year, we spent around \$12 billion on energy imports," he said, warning that rising crude oil and spot

LNG prices could lead to severe summer load-shedding, higher inflation, and an unsustainable subsidy burden.

To address the crisis, Syeda Sultana Razia of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) urged the government to prioritise local

Solar is coming, whether the government wants it or not. We must make the transition easier for investors while ensuring regulations remain both investment- and eco-friendly.

SYEDA SULTANA RAZIA, Member, BERC

gas exploration, noting the country's strong 1-in-3.3 success ratio compared to the global average.

She also stressed the need to expedite the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, warning that delays are costing around Tk 12 crore per day in fines.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

13TH PARLIAMENT

'If no fuel crisis,
why long queues
at pumps?'

Rumeen Farhana slams govt

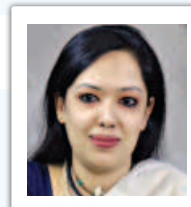
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawmaker Rumeen Farhana yesterday slammed the government over its stance on the fuel situation.

Addressing the parliament, the Brahmanbaria-2 MP questioned, "If there is no fuel crisis, then why are there such long lines in front of filling stations?"

During a discussion in parliament under Rule 71 on urgent public importance, she questioned why

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Will invite int'l bids
for energy blocks
Energy minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku yesterday told the parliament that there are plans to invite international bidding for oil and gas exploration blocks in the Bay of Bengal soon.

While responding to MP Nurul Islam, the minister said with the experience of "Bangladesh Offshore Bidding Round 2024" and based on the review of production sharing contracts (PSC) of

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

PM to visit
home district
Bogura today

BSS, Bogura

Prime Minister and BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman will visit his home district Bogura today.

During the daylong tour, after a long gap of nearly two decades, he is expected to go to his ancestral home, Zia Bari, at Bagbari.

This is his first visit to Bogura after assuming office as prime minister following a victory in the February 12 national elections.

In Bogura, he will inaugurate various development activities and take part in a public rally.

সরকারি
সব শিক্ষা উপবৃত্তির টাকা
সহজেই নিন
রকেট-এনিরাপদে নিশ্চিত্তে ঘরে বসে উপবৃত্তির টাকা
পাওয়ার জন্য আজই নিজ নিজ শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে
আপনার রকেট নাম্বারটি নিবন্ধন করুন।

NCP steps up expansion drive

45 join party; some discontent emerges within ranks

SHAMIMA RITA

The National Citizen Party (NCP) is going through a fresh phase of internal strain while seeking to showcase organisational expansion.

The party is working to bring in dozens of new members from other political platforms. However, insiders say this has sparked a renewed rift within the party and its affiliated bodies.

Earlier, joining the Jamaat-led alliance became a major source of internal discord for NCP, with more than 20 leaders opting to resign, while several others have since become inactive in party activities.

Amid this backdrop, 45 leaders from Amar Bangladesh Party (AB Party), United Peoples Bangladesh (UP Bangladesh), and Students Against Discrimination (SAD) joined the NCP yesterday.

Notable figures include former SAD president Rifat Rashid, former AB Party general secretary Sunny Abdul Haque, UP Bangladesh president Ali Hasan Junayed and its spokesperson Shehriin Sultana Itra.

Welcoming them with flowers, NCP Convener Nahid Islam stressed for a "broader alliance" among pro-July uprising youth.

He alleged that the BNP government was undermining the prospects created by the July uprising through the politicisation of institutions, alongside rising extortion and corruption.

"We need to build an alternative force to complete the struggle for a discrimination-free, democratic, and inclusive Bangladesh," he said.

Nahid also said previous political identities or affiliations would not be a barrier to joining the NCP.

"Whether one belongs to Chhatra Dal, Chhatra Shibir, Chhatra Odhikar Parishad, or even Chhatra League - their past affiliation is not our primary concern," he said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



A farmer props up his crops hit by rain and a mild storm. On Saturday evening, the outpour was followed by heavy rain and strong winds damaging paddy fields across the region. The photo was taken at Darusha Beel in Paba upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Formulation process They threatened

FROM PAGE 3

petitions related to the implementation of the 9th Wage Board are ongoing.

He made these remarks in response to a question from opposition MP Sheikh Manjurul Haque Rahad during the parliamentary session chaired by Deputy Speaker Kaiser Kamal.

Answering another question from ruling party MP Mohammad Ali Asgar, the minister said, "To ensure media freedom, the Press Council Act of 1974 is being updated to make the Press Council stronger, more effective, and media-friendly."

He added that the Journalist Welfare Trust is providing assistance to journalists who are unable to work, suffering from physical or mental illness, or unable to afford medical treatment while also recognising special contributions to journalism.

Up to March of FY 2025-2026, financial grants have been given to 1,110 unwell, insolvent, and injured

journalists and to families of deceased journalists. In addition, scholarships worth Tk 73.26 lakh have been awarded to meritorious children of 402 journalists. During Ramadan 2026, iftar and Eid gifts worth Tk 1.12 crore were distributed among 2,000 journalist families.

In response to a question from Chandpur-2 MP Jalal Uddin, the minister said currently there are four state-owned TV channels in Bangladesh. Out of 55 approved private TV channels, 37 are in full operation. No new TV channel approvals are pending. Future applications will be processed according to regulations.

PRAYER TIMING	
APRIL 20	
Fazr	Zohr
4-25	12-45
4-45	6-27
8-00	
JAMAAT	5-00
1-15	5-00
6-31	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

STATUTORY NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
Company Matter No. 267/2026
An Application under section 81(2), 85(3) read section 396 of the Companies Act 1994
AND
IN THE MATTER OF:
Mr. Shamima Sultana share holder and Managing Director, Tojo Plastic Limited of Flat-1, House-7/C, Road-8/3, Block- D, Bonosree, Rampura, Dhaka-1219
-----Petitioner

VERSUS
Tojo Plastic Limited of having its address at Plot-5852, Satarukul Road, STR, Kazi Barir Moor, Satarukul Road, North Badda, Dhaka-1212 and another.
-----Respondents

Take notice that an application under section 81(2), 85(3) read section 396 of the Companies Act 1994 was filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named petitioner for condonation of delay in holding Annual General Meeting of Tojo Plastic Limited for the calendar year 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 and to give necessary direction for holding the said Annual General Meeting, upon hearing the application on 12.03.2026 the Hon'ble Company Judge Madam Justice Kazi Zinat Hoque was pleased to admit the application. Interested person may appear before the hon'ble Court on or before the date fixed for hearing of the matter. Copy of the application may be obtained on payment of necessary cost.

Ripan Barai
Advocate, Supreme court of Bangladesh
Kabbokas Super Market, 3/D, Plot-(8th floor), Room-8/11, 8/12, Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-121. Cell- 01705-074227

FROM PAGE 3

was a Rab compound, where he was kept in a narrow cell, often blindfolded and handcuffed. Detainees were given only a few minutes for basic needs and were beaten if they exceeded the time.

While in Rab-II custody, he met three to four detainees who said they had been held for one to three years and that many others had been killed.

He was repeatedly questioned about alleged links to the Holy Artisan attack, other militant incidents, his political views, and his construction work on mosques and madrasas in Rohingya camps. He denied all.

"Five to six days into my detention, a guard told me I was safe and asked me to offer Nafl prayers," he said.

After nearly a week, Masrur said he and three others were handed over to police and presented to the media as militants. He spent around 10 months in jail before getting bail and could not contact family.

He demanded punishment for those involved in his detention

and torture.

Meanwhile, the prosecution urged the tribunal to frame charges against former Awami League lawmaker AKM Shamim Osman and 11 others over the alleged killing of 10 people and injuring dozens during the July uprising in Narayanganj. Prosecutor Abdus Sattar cited an audio transcript in which Shamim allegedly told then bridges minister Obaidul Quader that he had taken up firearms after police sought his help.

The tribunal fixed April 23 for defence arguments. Separately, ICT-2 showed Maj Gen (ret'd) Ziaul Ahsan and former lawmaker ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury arrested over the enforced disappearance of Syed Md Abu Zafar, ex-chairman of Bagoan union in Raozan.

Prosecution said Zafar was abducted on March 27, 2010, from Khulshi. Witnesses said armed men, reportedly led by Ziaul Ahsan, forced him into a microbus. Investigators say there is initial evidence linking the accused to crimes against humanity.

Govt's tobacco tax policy flawed

Speakers tell conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an event yesterday opined that the government's tobacco tax policy is flawed and remains constrained by misconceptions, which need to be removed in order to impose a pragmatic tax on tobacco products for protecting public health.

They also said that while prices of other essential goods rose significantly in recent years, tobacco product prices have not risen to the same extent in Bangladesh.

They were speaking at a pre-budget press conference on "Tobacco Tax Policy for Protecting Health and Rising Revenue" at Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka. Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) organised the conference to present their tax proposal.

PPRC Executive Chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman said while taxation and legislative processes are the primary tools for tobacco

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

If no fuel crisis

FROM PAGE 3

fuel prices had to be raised and why office hours and programme schedules had to change.

"We're seeing long queues stretching for kilometres. Drivers waiting (in queues) until midnight, unable to get fuel. Yet, the government shows no concern," Rumeen said.

She added that ministers often claim in the parliament that there is no fuel shortage in Bangladesh, but when people go to buy fuel, they face 3km lines.

Addressing the speaker, she said, "Through you, I want to ask this parliament: when energy ministers speak to the media, they make it seem as though there is no crisis in Bangladesh. Why don't they clearly say how many days' worth of octane and diesel reserves the country has, how long those stocks will last, and why fuel stations are not receiving adequate supplies?"

Rumeen, a former BNP MP and now an

independent lawmaker, faced objections from ruling party MPs during her speech.

Some ruling party MPs were seen waving their hands, and after her remarks, they created an uproar. The speaker then urged MPs to maintain discipline in the House.

Opposition Leader and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman criticised "certain gestures" made by some treasury bench members while Rumeen was speaking.

Shafiqur said, "This parliament is the highest place of honour in the country. Those elected here have come with the support, votes, love, and respect of the people. We must respect all members. When a member speaks, only the speaker has the authority to allow or control it."

"Today I noticed that when an independent MP was speaking, unfortunately some treasury bench members made gestures that hurt my conscience. I did not expect this," he added.

LEGAL NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
Company Matter No. 268 of 2026

IN THE MATTER OF:
An application under section 81(2) of the Companies Act, 1994.
AND
IN THE MATTER OF:
Nazmus Sadat Al Mahmood, Shareholder and Managing Director of Food Euphoria Ltd. of Kha: 66/8, Lakeside Road, Shahjadpur, Gulshan, Dhaka-1212.
..... Petitioner

-VERSUS-
Food Euphoria Ltd. of Kha: 66/8, Lakeside Road, Shahjadpur, Gulshan, Dhaka-1212.
and The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies & Firms, TCB Bhaban (6th Floor), 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka.
-----Respondents

Take notice that an application under section 81(2) of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh on behalf of the above named Petitioner for condonation of the delay in holding the Annual General Meeting for the calendar year 2024 and to give necessary direction for holding the said meeting within a reasonable time. Upon hearing of the application on 07.04.2026 the Hon'ble Company Judge Mr. Justice Sikder Mahmudur Razi has been pleased to admit the said application.

If you are interested to oppose the said application you may appear before the Hon'ble Court either in person or through an advocate on or before the date fixed for hearing. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of necessary cost.

Dr. Md. Mahub Hasan
Barrister-at-Law
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
73 Kakrail, Eastern Commercial Complex, Suit No. 10/6 (10th floor), Ramna, Dhaka-1000.
Phone no. 01861586600

EAST WEST UNIVERSITY
Progoti Foundation for Education and Development
Permanent Sanad Holder

Join East West University: Be a Mentor for Future Leaders

Vacancy Announcement

Position: Treasurer

East West University, a leading private university and an equal opportunity employer, invites applications for a top management position of Treasurer on a contractual basis.

Duties and responsibilities: To provide leadership in initiating, formulating, and overseeing business and financial strategies, monitoring of preparation of the Annual Budget, and reporting on the implementation of the strategic policy plan thereof, and ensuring compliance with accounting standards as well as other reporting requirements. The Treasurer of East West University works under the direct supervision of the Vice Chancellor. Also, will be responsible for proper financial management, discipline, and maintaining accounts properly.

Qualifications: Post-graduation in Accounting, Finance, Management or Economics. MBAs with a concentration in Finance are also eligible (No Third Division / Class). Candidates should preferably be a Chartered Accountant, sufficiently experienced in company affairs and corporate sector, and in a Public/Private university or in a similar organization. Those who have served as a Treasurer in a university will carry an added advantage.

Experience: At least 20 (twenty) years of experience as a Professor, or in Administration or in Financial Management.

Age limit: From 50 to 60 years. Age limit may be relaxed for exceptionally qualified/experienced candidates.

Compensation: The position carries an attractive compensation package based on qualifications and experience, and the salary will be fixed through negotiation.

Please send your complete CV to the **Vice Chancellor, East West University, A/2, Jahurul Islam Avenue, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Dhaka-1212** with 02 (two) copies of recent passport-size photographs, copies of all academic and experience certificates, or apply through the university website link (jobs.ewubd.edu).

Application Deadline: 10 May 2026

BIRDEM GENERAL HOSPITAL
(An Enterprise of Diabetic Association of Bangladesh)
12, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
☎: 41060501-24, Fax: 41060476
Website: www.birdembd.org, www.dab-bd.org
E-mail: birdemprocurements@gmail.com

INVITATION FOR TENDER

1. Division /Entity	Diabetic Association of Bangladesh																										
2. Procuring Entity	Director General, BIRDEM General Hospital																										
3. Source Of Fund	Public Private Fund.																										
4. Reference No	BIRDEM/Purchase/10-Group (Medicine & MSR Items)/2026/ 03, Dated: 19 th April 2026																										
5. Details of Work	Group-01: Medicine and Related Items.																										
	Group-02: Surgical and Related Items.																										
	Group-03: Linen / Laundry, Apparel & Related Items.																										
	Group-04: Gauge-Bandage, Cotton, Dressing and Related Items.																										
	Group-05: Chemical, Reagents and Related Items																										
6. Procurement Method	Open Tender Method (OTM)																										
7. Source of fund	Revenue, Donation, Govt. Grant																										
8. Name, designation & address of official inviting tender	Director, Hospital Administration and Procuring Entity (PE), BIRDEM General Hospital, Shahbag, Dhaka-1000, On behalf of Director General, BIRDEM General Hospital																										
9. Name & address of the office selling tender documents	Procurement Section, Room: 230, 1 st floor of OPD Building, BIRDEM General Hospital, Shahbag, Dhaka-1000.																										
10. Date of selling of tender documents	Tender documents will be available from 21 st April 2026 to 21 st May 2026 on all working days (09.00 am to 12.00 pm) and may be dropped within the stipulated period.																										
11. Tender opening date	21 st May 2026 at 12.30 Noon (In presence of the tenderers or their authorized agent, if anybody available).																										
12. Price of tender document (For each group)	Group: 1, 2 & 5 = 6,000/ (Six Thousand) Taka Only. Each Group Group: 3, 4, 8 & 9 = 3,000/ (Three Thousand) Taka Only. Each Group Group: 6, 7 & 10 = 2,000/ (Two Thousand) Taka Only. Each Group																										
13. Tender Security	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Name of Group</th> <th>Tender Security Amount (BDT)</th> <th>Name of Group</th> <th>Tender Security Amount (BDT)</th> <th>Comments</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Group-01</td> <td>3,000,000</td> <td>Group-06</td> <td>50,000.00</td> <td rowspan="5">Said amount for each group have to be deposited in the form of Demand Draft or Pay-order from any local commercial bank in favor of Director General, BIRDEM General Hospital.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group-02</td> <td>1,000,000</td> <td>Group-07</td> <td>50,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group-03</td> <td>50,000.00</td> <td>Group-08</td> <td>50,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group-04</td> <td>50,000.00</td> <td>Group-09</td> <td>50,000.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Group-05</td> <td>1,000,000</td> <td>Group-10</td> <td>50,000.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Name of Group	Tender Security Amount (BDT)	Name of Group	Tender Security Amount (BDT)	Comments	Group-01	3,000,000	Group-06	50,000.00	Said amount for each group have to be deposited in the form of Demand Draft or Pay-order from any local commercial bank in favor of Director General, BIRDEM General Hospital.	Group-02	1,000,000	Group-07	50,000.00	Group-03	50,000.00	Group-08	50,000.00	Group-04	50,000.00	Group-09	50,000.00	Group-05	1,000,000	Group-10	50,000.00
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Group-05	1,000,000	Group-10	50,000.00																								
14. Eligibility of tenderers	<p>a. The tenderers should be manufacturer or their authorized supplier/distributor/dealer or seller of the items with proof.</p> <p>b. Each group's item shall be evaluated separately.</p> <p>c. The tenderers should have valid & updated trade license, TIN, BIN, VAT & Income Tax Certificates and their proof.</p> <p>d. Bank Guaranty of liquid asset.</p> <p>e. Similar work completion certificate for last 5 (five) years.</p> <p>f. Audit report of last 2 (two) years.</p> <p>g. Membership of local business authority.</p> <p>h. Credit limit facility certificate.</p> <p>i. Authorized letter from principal.</p>																										
Detail Specifications, Terms & Conditions, Warranty & After sales services are enumerated in the tender schedule. BIRDEM authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof.																											
Note: In case of holiday or any unavoidable circumstances last date of dropping & opening will be the next working day.																											

Brig Gen Dr. Md. Nasir Uddin Ahamed (Rtd)
Director, Hospital Administration
BIRDEM General Hospital, Shahbag, Dhaka-1000.

Israel applies Gaza playbook to 'yellow line' in south Lebanon

AGENCIES

Israel's military on Saturday said it has established a "Yellow Line" demarcation in southern Lebanon – a boundary it says mirrors a similar separation used in Gaza.

The development comes just days after Israel and Lebanon agreed to a 10-day ceasefire aimed at halting weeks of fighting between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah. Referring to the newly established "Yellow line" for the first time, the Israeli military said its forces identified individuals approaching from beyond it.

"Over the past 24 hours, IDF forces operating south of the Yellow Line in southern Lebanon identified terrorists who violated the ceasefire understandings and approached the forces from north of the Yellow Line in a manner that posed an immediate threat," news agency AFP quoted the Israeli forces as saying.

The military added that it acted swiftly. The IDF said its "forces attacked the terrorists in several areas," adding that "actions taken in self-defence and to remove immediate threats are not restricted by the ceasefire."

The "Yellow Line" is essentially a military demarcation – a notional boundary drawn on the ground to separate



Palestinian demonstrators hold pictures of jailed Palestinians during a rally in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank yesterday, marking Prisoners' Day and protesting the Israeli parliament's approval of a new death penalty bill for Palestinians convicted of deadly attacks.

PHOTO: REUTERS



opposing zones of control. Israel says it has now created such a line in southern Lebanon, marking the limit between its forces and areas beyond which potential threats could emerge.

A similar "Yellow Line" has been in place in Gaza since October 10, where it effectively split the territory into two parts: one under Israeli military control and the other under Hamas. By invoking the same term in Lebanon, Israel appears to be applying a familiar operational framework to manage troop movement and perceived threats along a volatile front. In a separate update later in the day, the military said its air force carried out strikes near the same zone.

"The IDF eliminated a terrorist cell operating in proximity to IDF soldiers in southern Lebanon, in the area of the forward defence line," it said, again referring to the Yellow Line. It did not specify how many militants were killed. The announcement comes against the backdrop of a fragile ceasefire agreed on Thursday, meant to pause six weeks of intense conflict.

Mismanaged US–Iran posts stall peace progress

AGENCIES

Premature and mismanaged media announcements by Donald Trump and Tehran have derailed progress toward a peace settlement between Iran and the US.

Iran announced it would reinstate a complete block on commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and refuse to export any of its stockpile of highly enriched uranium, marking the culmination of recent missteps.

The chain of events started when the Iranian Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi, posted on X on Friday soon after the markets opened in the US. Donald Trump claims to have ended a 10th war – but will the Lebanon ceasefire hold?

"In line with the ceasefire in Lebanon the passage of all

commercial vessels through the strait of Hormuz is declared completely open for the remaining period of the ceasefire [Lebanon ceasefire] on the coordinated route as already announced by the Ports and Maritime Organisation of the Islamic Rep of Iran."

His announcement knocked \$12 off the price of a barrel of oil and was welcomed by Pakistan, reports The Guardian online. Araghchi's poorly framed post sparked backlash, worsened by falling oil prices and Trump's upbeat Truth Social response thanking Iran for opening the strait and agreeing to export uranium.

Tasnim, close to the IRGC, quickly called the post wrong or incomplete, saying it lacked clarity on passage conditions and drew heavy criticism. The impasse

prompted Trump to threaten renewed bombing after the ceasefire ends Wednesday, raising the risk of confrontation in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran also told mediators it would not restart talks in Islamabad, rejecting US demands as excessive and insisting the strait remains its leverage.

Iran's tough stance reflects the IRGC's dominance in foreign policy and its concern that Araghchi was conceding too much to Washington.

Resentment grew after Trump's upbeat Truth Social posts, which Speaker Mohammad Ghalibaf dismissed as lies. Araghchi later clarified the Strait of Hormuz was open only to IRGC-authorized ships using designated routes and paying tolls.

Trump orders probe into 11 scientists' mysterious deaths

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump has ordered an investigation into the mysterious deaths and disappearances of nearly a dozen American scientists with access to some of the nation's most closely guarded nuclear and space secrets.

The cases have fueled online speculation ranging from foreign espionage to a government cover-up of classified UFO research, reports RT online.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday, Trump stated that he "just came out of a meeting on this," noting that "It's pretty serious stuff."

"I hope it's random, but we're going to know in the next week and a half. Some of them were very important people, and we're going to look at it over the next short period," the president said.

Since 2023, at least ten individuals with ties to advanced research have died or vanished under puzzling circumstances.

Reports of at least 11 deaths and disappearances involving experts in space, defense, and nuclear fields have circulated this month, prompting speculation within the scientific community. Authorities have not confirmed any official connection among the cases.

Two men killed in ambush on Manipur highway

AGENCIES

Suspected extremists ambushed the vehicles of civilians on National Highway 202 in the northeast Indian state of Manipur's Ukhrul district on Saturday, killing two Tangkhul Naga men, including a retired soldier.

The incident occurred at 2:35 pm near Yaolen Kuki village, about four km from Litan on the highway linking Ukhrul town and the State's capital Imphal. Tension has been prevailing in the Litan area since February 7, when a localised fight snowballed into a conflict between the Kuki and Tangkhul Naga communities.

The attack came a day after Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh met villagers along the highway as part of a mission to "remove the trust deficit" between the Kukis and Tangkhuls.

US delegation to go to Pakistan for Iran talks

FROM PAGE 1

The Fars and Tasnim news agencies cited anonymous sources as saying Tehran had yet to decide whether it would take part and that "the overall atmosphere cannot be assessed as very positive", adding that lifting the US blockade was a precondition for negotiations.

State-run IRNA, meanwhile, pointed to the blockade and Washington's "unreasonable and unrealistic demands", saying that "in these circumstances, there is no clear prospect of fruitful negotiations".

Iran and the United States, along with Israel, are just three days away from the end of the two-week ceasefire that halted the Middle East war, ignited by surprise US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28.

There has so far been only a single, 21-hour negotiating session held in Islamabad on April 11 that ended inconclusively, though groundwork for fresh talks continued

afterwards.

"We're offering a very fair and reasonable DEAL, and I hope they take it," Trump said in his post.

Iran's speaker of parliament and senior negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf had insisted as recently as Saturday night that the two sides were "still far from the final discussion".

HEIGHTENED SECURITY In spite of the uncertainty, security was visibly stepped up in Islamabad yesterday in anticipation of new talks.

Authorities announced road closures and traffic restrictions across the city, as well as in neighbouring Rawalpindi.

AFP journalists saw armed guards and checkpoints near Islamabad's most secure hotels – the Marriott and the Serena.

"Citizens are earnestly requested to cooperate with the security agencies," a city official posted on X.

The US president said his negotiators, whom he did

not name, would arrive in the Pakistani capital today.

As with the last round, the delegation will be led by Vice President JD Vance and include Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, a White House official said.

A major sticking point of negotiations has been Iran's stockpile of near-weapons-grade enriched uranium.

Trump said on Friday that Iran had agreed to hand over its roughly 440 kilograms of enriched uranium. "We're going to get it by going in with Iran, with lots of excavators," he said.

But Iran's foreign ministry has said the stockpile, thought to be buried deep under rubble from US bombing in last June's 12-day war, was "not going to be transferred anywhere", and surrendering it "to the US has never been raised in negotiations".

Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned that any

Masoud Pezeshkian questioned why Iran should give up its "legal right" to a nuclear programme.

HORMUZ CLOSED AGAIN Trump has been under pressure to find an off-ramp to the war since Tehran moved early in the war to choke off the Strait of Hormuz.

The vital waterway is a conduit for a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas in peacetime, and its closure has hammered the global economy and roiled markets.

Having failed to force it open again, Trump countered with a US naval blockade on Iranian ports in an attempt to cut off Tehran's oil revenues.

Iran briefly reopened the strait on Friday in recognition of an Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire in Lebanon but closed it again the following day in response to the US maintaining its blockade.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned that any

attempt to pass through the strait without permission "will be considered cooperation with the enemy, and the offending vessel will be targeted".

"If America does not lift the blockade, traffic in the Strait of Hormuz will definitely be limited," Ghalibaf said.

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei on Sunday said the blockade was "a violation" of the ceasefire and illegal collective punishment of the Iranian people.

A handful of oil and gas tankers had crossed the strait early on Saturday during the brief reopening, but by early Sunday morning tracking data showed the waterway empty of shipping.

The afternoon before, a trio of incidents involving Iranian fire and threats towards commercial vessels demonstrated the danger of any attempted crossing.

In his post yesterday, Trump said of the incidents: "That wasn't nice, was it?"

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
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তারিখঃ ১৯/০৪/২০২৬ইং

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বিভাগীয় সেক্রেট ও টেলিযোগাযোগ প্রকৌশলী, বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, ঢাকা, কর্তৃক National Electronic Government Procurement Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) এ নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা হয়েছেঃ

ক্রম	টেন্ডার আইডি, নথি নং	ক্রয়ের ধরন ও কাজের নাম	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	দরপত্র প্রকাশ, মাফিলের তারিখ ও শেষ সময়
১	1260357, 54.01.1500.256. 03.010.25	Procurement different types of LED SIGNAL ASPECT for CTG Division.	NCT, OTM	20-Apr-2026 03-May-2026

বিদ্রূপঃ
১. শুধুমাত্র ই-জিপি সিস্টেমে নিবন্ধিত eligibility শর্তাবলী পূরণকারী দরদাতাগণ সরাসরি অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন।
২. নিবন্ধিত ও অগ্রহী দরদাতাগণ বিনা খরচে দরপত্র দাখিল দেখতে পারবেন; তবে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য দরপত্র দাখিল ও দরপত্র জামানত বাদ অর্থ নির্ধারিত ব্যাংকে জমা করতে হবে।

এস (২৬) (২০৬)

১১-০৪-২০২৬

মোঃ আশিকুর রহমান
বিভাগীয় সেক্রেট ও টেলিযোগাযোগ প্রকৌশলী
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, পাহাড়তলী, ঢাকা
Email: dstectg@railway.gov.bd

GD-860

Gazipur Development Authority
Ministry of Housing and Public Works
Gazipur, Bangladesh

Reference No. gda-dev-2025-2026-3-3 Date: 19-04-2026

Corrigendum of e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited by National e-GP System Portal (www.ggp.gov.bd) for the procurement of

Tender Id	Name of work	Last selling date and time	Opening date and time
1253428	Supply of vehicles under the project titled Survey, Random Selection, and Feasibility Study on Low-income Housing	26-04-2026 17:00	

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline hard copies will be accepted.

Md. Mumtazur Rahman
Member (Administration and Finance)
Gazipur Development Authority

GD-858

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

Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd
স্মারক নং- ২৭.২১.০০০০.৪৪৭.১৮.০০১.২৬.৮৬ তারিখঃ ১৫/০৪/২০২৬ইং

e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের জিএমডি, নরসিংদী দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টালে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Reference	Title of Works
1258459	27.21.0000.447.07.001.26.22	Supply of different types of Materials (MCB, magnetic contactor, space heater, control room light, LED Flood Light, and related items) for substations under GMD, Narsingdi.
1194311	27.21.0000.447.07.001.25.23	Yearly Basis Grass Cutting and Sweeping, Cleaning work of Control Room, Toilets, Roads, Drain, Septic Tank, etc. at Ghorashal 230/33 kV Sub-Station under GMD, Narsingdi, Power Grid.
1258976	27.21.0000.447.07.001.26.24	Supply & Installation of Tetrapod, Muffling & Painting Works of Different Transmission Towers under GMD, Narsingdi.
1258448	27.21.0000.447.07.001.26.25	Temporary Ansar Barrack Work "Making Partition on the Ground Floor of Substation Building by Using Hardboard and Making Temporary Kitchen and Toilet for Ansar" at Bajitpur 132/33kV SS under GMD, Narsingdi.

অগ্রহী তিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোঃ আরিফুর কবির
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, জিএমডি, নরসিংদী

Institute of Environmental Science
Rajshahi University
Motihar Rajshahi-6205
Phone: +88-02-588864166
E-mail: admin_ies@ru.ac.bd

Memo No. 117/A-16/IES/2026 Date: 19.04.2026

e-Tender Notice
(Notice Number: IES-001/2025-26)

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

SL No.	Tender ID	Name of works	Tender/proposal publication date and time	Tender document last selling date and time	Tender closing date and time
01	1258320	Supply Office Equipment (Lab Equipment) at the Institute of Environmental Science, University of Rajshahi	19-Apr-2026 13:30	30-Apr-2026 14:00	30-Apr-2026 15:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP 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 through any registered bank's branch.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Director
Institute of Environmental Science
University of Rajshahi
Motihar, Rajshahi-6205

GD-857

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

The price of subsidised delay

Govt must manage impact of fuel price adjustments on economy

Governments that try to hold back the tide of global commodity prices usually end up paying more than necessary. Bangladesh has now learned this lesson for the second time in four years, and the price is steep.

Late on Saturday, the energy ministry announced the increase of fuel prices to record levels. Across the four fuel types, including octane and petrol, the average increase was roughly 16 percent. It was also the first mid-month adjustment since Bangladesh introduced its automatic monthly pricing mechanism in February 2024—a reform pushed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, designed precisely to prevent politically driven price suppression. In lockstep, the energy regulator also raised liquefied petroleum gas prices, adding another shock in a single week.

The increase was seemingly inevitable. The Strait of Hormuz continues to be effectively shut amid the protracted Middle East conflict. Brent crude, which began the year at \$61 a barrel, surged to \$118 by the end of March. Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE shut production, while several suppliers invoked force majeure. Bangladesh, which imports nearly all of its refined petroleum, saw its import bill expand by the week. The government chose to absorb the shock through subsidies rather than passing it on immediately. An additional \$3 billion is estimated in subsidy requirements for the March-June period, mostly for fuel and fertiliser. Bangladesh is now seeking \$2 billion in external support to cushion its exposure to volatile fuel markets.

The timing of the latest price hike makes it worse. On Friday, the day before the gazette notification, Brent crude fell 9 percent to below \$90 a barrel after Iran announced that the Strait of Hormuz was “fully open” to commercial traffic, before closing it again. But prices are forecast to fall further, with Brent expected to drop below \$90 in the fourth quarter of 2026 and average \$76 in 2027. But the government opted for a politically painful correction at precisely the moment global prices began to reverse.

The consequences will be uneven and largely negative in the near term. Transport and logistics costs will pass through quickly, pushing up freight charges across the economy. In northern Bangladesh, where the Boro paddy season drives the country’s largest rice harvest, irrigation depends heavily on diesel; higher fuel costs will squeeze farmers directly unless offset by policy support. Price effects will push already elevated inflation higher still.

The opposition has already called the hike “very unfortunate.” It is, but not for the reasons they suggest. The unfortunate part is not that prices rose. It is that they had to rise this far, and this fast, because the government waited until it had no choice. Every month of subsidised delay shifted the burden from the present to the future, from the exchequer to the consumer, and from a manageable adjustment to a record-breaking shock. That is a failure of policy design, not of circumstance. Bangladesh cannot control the Strait of Hormuz, but it can control whether its pricing mechanism is strong enough to function when tested. On this occasion, it was not.

Stop abusing cyber security ordinance

Content creator’s arrest reminiscent of Hasina-era limit to freedom of expression

We are outraged by the attack on freedom of expression through the misapplication of Cyber Security Ordinance, 2025. This happened through the recent arrest and detention of content creator AM Hasan Nasim allegedly over his social media post on Jatiya Sangsad Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni. This arrest highlights the stark gap between BNP’s rhetoric and actions. On Saturday, BNP boasted about ensuring freedom of expression in the country—one of the 60 milestones the party claimed to achieve in its first 60 days. Ironically, the night before, around 8 pm on Friday, April 17, police picked up Nasim from the city’s Agargaon area, allegedly for “blackmailing” Moni using social media posts.

The case filed by BNP activist Nazrul Islam at the Gulshan Police Station later on Saturday, April 18, under sections 25 and 27 of the Cyber Security Ordinance is also flawed because Section 40 of the ordinance states that only the aggrieved person, or someone authorised in writing by such aggrieved person, or a member of a law enforcement agency can file cases under this law. Nazrul Islam had no written authorisation from the chief whip. Yet, the police not only took the case but also detained the person even before the FIR was drawn. Such behaviour by the police is reminiscent of the Sheikh Hasina-era arbitrary detention and arrests of thousands under the draconian Digital Security Act, 2018 and Cyber Security Act, 2023. The July uprising was a collective protest against such human rights violations. Yet, Nasim’s arrest indicates that police have reverted to their decades-old nature of catering to the ruling party’s whims, instead of upholding the law. Sadly, the justice system failed the arrestee as well—his bail hearing was postponed on Sunday, April 19, further extending his detention.

The premise of the case is equally disturbing. One of the Facebook posts allegedly used to “blackmail” the chief whip is a cartoon depicting Moni serving three MPs a whale and a shark on a plate. The caption quotes Moni himself, who jokingly said in parliament on April 10 that such items would be served at a lunch. How can a joke made in a public forum, printed in newspapers, and a cartoon based on that joke constitute “blackmail”? Does this signal the return to an authoritarian climate where political cartoons are effectively censored? This was not expected from BNP, whose electoral pledge suggests otherwise.

We urge BNP to uphold its promise of protecting freedom of speech and expression and to prevent overzealous supporters from undermining this right. We also call for Nasim’s immediate release and an end to arbitrary arrests and the misuse of laws.

We need a stronger lightning policy, and fast

Asaf Ibne Salim and Rassiq Aziz Kabir are, respectively, a policy analyst and an academic and researcher.

ASAF IBNE SALIM and RASSIQ AZIZ KABIR

In recent years, lightning has emerged as one of Bangladesh’s most fatal climate hazards, although policy responses have yet to evolve proportionately. Since lightning was formally declared a natural disaster in 2016 and incorporated into national disaster management frameworks, including the National Plan for Disaster Management (NPD) 2021-2025, annual death tolls have continued to exceed 300 in most years. This persistence of high casualties indicates a lack of proper policy recognition that would translate into effective protection for those most vulnerable to this hazard.

Between 2015 and 2024, lightning strikes resulted in at least 3,485 deaths, with annual fatalities ranging from 226 in 2015 to a peak of 427 in 2020. Although reported deaths declined to 322 in 2023 and 271 by mid-2024, the pattern in 2025 seemed to take a severe turn again, with April 28 alone recording the deaths of 23 people, including 19 farmers. This year, as per a report by *Samakal*, there have been 60 fatalities as of April 18. On Saturday, *The Daily Star* reported at least 13 deaths from lightning strikes, causing renewed concerns. Districts often identified as high risk include Rangpur, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Kishoreganj, Sunamganj, Netrokona, and Sylhet. Parallel reporting by non-governmental organisations suggests that official statistics may not fully capture the scale of mortality.

The intensification of lightning risk has a strong correlation with climatic change. Lightning frequency is estimated to increase by about 12 percent for every one-degree Celsius rise in global average temperature. Regional projections also indicate that convective available potential energy over Bangladesh could rise by up to 45 percent during the pre-monsoon season, creating conditions conducive to more frequent and intense thunderstorms. According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, 62 percent of lightning strikes occur during this short pre-

monsoon period, which overlaps directly with the agricultural calendar. This convergence of climatic and occupational factors has significantly increased fatality risk.

Environmental and land-use changes also play a role in further amplifying exposure. In the haor regions, the removal of tall trees to expand agricultural land has all but eliminated natural conductors that previously helped dissipate lightning discharges. As a result, farmers and fishers working in open fields and wetlands have effectively become the

impact. Nearly 80 percent of lightning victims are farmers and fishers who work outside, and rural residents face an almost ninefold higher risk of being struck than their urban counterparts. Fatalities occur especially when people are engaged in essential livelihood activities such as harvesting rice, fishing in open water, or tending livestock. It goes without saying that when the primary earner of a rural family is killed, many households face immediate financial collapse. Families are forced to borrow at high interest rates, exhaust savings, and

investments also tend to focus largely on static infrastructure, even though effective protection also depends on rapid human response as well as accessible shelter in high-risk rural settings.

Given these realities, there is no alternative to stronger policy interventions to ensure that early warnings reach those most at risk. The full activation of the Cell Broadcast system in high-risk districts would allow location-specific alerts to be delivered instantly to all mobile phones without any prior registration or cost. This should be reinforced through local dissemination using mosque loudspeakers, union parishad announcements, megaphones, and established volunteer networks, ensuring rapid and clear communication of warnings through trusted local systems.

Protective infrastructure must also be aligned with behavioural realities. Small, strategically located concrete shelters in agricultural hotspots would provide farmers and fishers with accessible refuge during storms, provided they are directly linked to early warning triggers and clear operating protocols. Updating the National Building Code to require certified lightning protection systems for public buildings and new tall structures—particularly schools and health centres in rural areas—would further play an instrumental role in reducing exposure.

Finally, lightning must be addressed as a source of household-level financial shock. The introduction of subsidised micro-insurance or a dedicated social protection window for registered rural workers would enable rapid payouts after strikes, preventing distress sales of land and livestock and supporting recovery. Without such financial protections, early warnings and shelters alone cannot break the cycle of vulnerability perpetuated by lightning.

Bangladesh has taken some steps to mitigate lightning risks, but much more needs to be done, if the annual fatality rates are any indication. We need a coherent policy framework that integrates early warning, infrastructural support, and social protection. As climatic conditions continue to intensify, failure to respond properly will continue to result in deaths and destruction, and those whose labour sustains our rural economy will continue to suffer disproportionately.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE MADE WITH AI

“tallest objects” in the landscape. This has created a harmful feedback loop in which agricultural expansion aimed at maximising output simultaneously increases disaster risk, which in turn raises mortality, particularly during labour-intensive periods such as the Boro rice harvest.

Atmospheric pollution has also emerged as a contributing factor. Increased lightning activity has been associated with higher concentrations of fine particulate matter and aerosols during the pre-monsoon season. Transboundary dust and sulphate particles, largely originating from agricultural burning and industrial emissions across the Indo-Gangetic Plain, can alter cloud microphysics and enhance electrical charge separation, potentially leading to higher lightning flash rates. Because these pollutants are transported over long distances, lightning risk is being shaped not only by domestic conditions but also by regional environmental dynamics.

The human and economic toll of lightning reveals its deeply unequal

sell productive assets, trapping them in a vicious cycle of poverty. These distress sales compromise long-term food security, housing stability, and children’s education.

Moreover, lightning strikes also kill livestock, damage homes, and cause fires. But there is no comprehensive national data capturing these losses. For many rural households, livestock is the primary store of wealth as well as economic security. The absence of systematic accounting means that the full economic burden of lightning remains underestimated, weakening the design of any mitigation and compensation measures.

Government initiatives such as palm tree planting, installation of lightning arresters, and expansion of early warning services have established a foundation for risk reduction, but lightning remains institutionally under-prioritised to this day. There is no dedicated mandate or ring-fenced budget for detection, forecasting, and warning, and resources are frequently diverted to other hazards. Existing

The case for a National Security Council that is truly fit for purpose

Brig General (Retd) Md Manzur Qader is a security and intelligence analyst, and executive director of Rohingya Advocacy Centre.



MD MANZUR QADER

In its election manifesto, BNP mentioned plans to establish a National Security Council alongside formulating a new national security strategy (page 21, under “Defence System”). Tarique Rahman, the party chairperson and now prime minister of Bangladesh, reiterated the plan while addressing retired officers of Bangladesh Armed Forces on February 7, 2026, where he said if BNP assumed office, the government would engage former and serving army officers to set the groundwork for an effective National Security Council. As I was attending the address that day, I thought this emphasis on structural security reform was noteworthy.

Bangladesh’s security environment has gone through some major changes in the last few decades. Cross-border militant networks, cyber threats, digital financial vulnerabilities, maritime competition in the Bay of Bengal, geopolitical rivalry in the region, violent extremism, radicalisation, and transnational crime now intersect in ways that blur the line between internal and external security. Domestic stability may now be influenced by foreign clandestine activities and digital campaigns. Maritime security affects economic resilience, and regional tensions can quickly generate internal consequences. Managing such complexity requires a structured, permanent system that synthesises intelligence, aligns defence policy with

national strategy, and anticipates risk before it escalates.

Bangladesh currently relies on several coordination mechanisms. The National Committee for Security Affairs (NCSA)—established in 2019 after the cabinet approved the National Defence Policy 2018—is headed by the prime minister and includes senior ministers, the service chiefs, intelligence heads, and top civil servants. The NCSA is the highest policy-making authority on national security in Bangladesh. Then there is the National Committee for Intelligence Coordination (NCIC), established in 2009, that focuses on intelligence sharing among key security agencies. The National Security Affairs Cell under the Cabinet Division, formed in 2019, provides administrative support, although it does not have the authority or resources to act as a strategic nerve center.

These mechanisms represent steps towards coordination. However, they remain committee-based rather than system-based. The NCSA is large and consultative, but it does not operate through a permanent strategic secretariat with defined analytical divisions. The intelligence coordination structure improves information sharing, but it does not institutionalise unified national assessment or long-term planning. This results in fragmentation. Bangladesh has

capable intelligence institutions such as the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), National Security Intelligence (NSI), Special Branch (SB), Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and the Coast Guard, etc. Yet responsibilities are dispersed, and there is no single professional authority tasked with synthesising assessments from different security agencies into consolidated national advice.

This model can create confusion over who defines national security priorities, who harmonises internal and external intelligence, and who ensures that defence modernisation aligns with broader strategic objectives. Large committees are effective for consultation but are not substitutes for continuous analytical work supported by dedicated professional staff. Hence, the absence of a national security adviser’s (NSA) role can be considered a weakness, as without an NSA-led secretariat, coordination remains dependent on leadership bandwidth rather than institutional design, and security governance becomes reactive rather than anticipatory.

However, reform does not mean diminishing existing agencies. On the contrary, it can strengthen them. For example, the DGFI can continue to provide defence and external intelligence. NSI may remain central to internal security intelligence and counterterrorism. And law enforcement and border agencies may retain operational mandates. An effective national security council secretariat would not replace these institutions. It would integrate their outputs, identify intelligence gaps, harmonise reporting cycles, and ensure that national leadership receives unified assessments rather

than fragmented briefings.

India undertook similar structural reforms and institutionalised a secretariat led by the national security adviser beneath the political leadership. The innovation here was not simply the creation of a council but the establishment of a permanent analytical engine with defined verticals for strategic planning, intelligence synthesis, and defence coordination. Bangladesh can adopt a similar strategy with its own constitutional framework. Most importantly, national security must be nonpartisan, as security threats do not distinguish between governments. An effective National Security Council must be institutional, accountable, and continuity-focused.

A reformed structure should include a national security council chaired by the prime minister, supported by a permanent national security council secretariat led by a security adviser. Beneath that office, defined directorates for strategic planning, intelligence coordination, defence affairs, foreign policy integration, cybersecurity, maritime security, and crisis response would provide analytical depth and structured oversight. Staffing should blend experienced civil servants with former military officers, former intelligence professionals, and former foreign service officials.

Bangladesh stands at a point where incremental adjustments are no longer sufficient. Our growing geopolitical and economic profile demands a mature and disciplined security architecture. Establishing a structured, accountable, and non-partisan security council system would not be a political victory for any party. Instead, it would be an institutional investment in the long-term stability and resilience of the state.

Are teachers failing, or is the system failing them?



Dr Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at BRAC University. He was the convener of the consultation committee on primary and non-formal education appointed by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, as well as of the consultation committee on secondary education appointed by the Ministry of Education. Views expressed are his own.

MANZOOR AHMED

Recently, Education Minister Ehsanul Haque Milon told the parliament that 60,295 teaching posts are currently vacant in about 26,000 MPO-listed (government grant-receiving) secondary schools and colleges in the country. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) reported that Bangladesh lags behind most in terms of qualified teachers in secondary schools in South Asia. Only 55 percent of the teachers at the secondary level in Bangladesh were considered qualified, whereas the Maldives rated 98 percent of its teachers as qualified. The rates were 97, 92, 80, and 68 percent, respectively, for Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan.

A manageable class size to teach is a basic working condition for a teacher to perform adequately. The average teacher-student ratio in Bangladesh's secondary schools is reported to be about 1:35 compared to a standard of 1:15 in a well-performing system. The average hides the fact that many high school classes in Bangladesh have 60-70 or more students. This reality is reflected by the government's rule for the MPO grant that allows a school to open a new section only when enrolment in the class exceeds 55 students. Due to MPO budget limitations, this rule is not applied often, and the enrolment reaches even higher. More critically, remote schools find the bureaucratic process and requirements of the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education and the Ministry of Education for hiring additional teachers difficult.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), a 2024 report found that of around 59,700 designated English teachers in secondary schools, a quarter had not studied English beyond 12th grade, and only 17 percent held a degree in English at honours or master's level. The situation in mathematics is even more precarious. Of 61,700 mathematics

teachers in secondary schools, 57 percent had not studied mathematics at the college level, and only 17 percent had mathematics as a subject at honours or master's level. It is not surprising that low scores in English and mathematics are a major contributor to low pass rates in public examinations. The MPO rules for teaching staff allocation set a standard pattern. As noted above, the permitted staffing is often inadequate for the number of enrolled students, especially in the core subject areas.

A consultation committee appointed by the Ministry of Education in 2025, under the interim government, to recommend reforms in secondary education devoted a chapter of its report to teachers. The committee identified eight major obstacles to good teacher performance: First, there is no clearly defined framework for teachers' responsibility, effort, and performance standards for assessment and incentives. Second, the current allocation of teaching posts is fundamentally inadequate for maintaining manageable student-teacher ratios, ensuring subject-specific instruction, and facilitating co-curricular activities. This systemic deficit is further exacerbated by a high volume of vacant teaching roles. Third, delays and inefficiencies in the selection, appointment, placement, promotion, and transfer of teachers are a common feature. Moreover, frequent complaints are voiced about corruption, nepotism, the role of syndicates in controlling decisions, and the lack of recourse for wrongdoing in personnel management.

Fourth, pre-service professional preparation, in-service professional support, and a culture of mentoring of new teachers in school are absent. Teaching quality is also severely hindered by poor foundational training at private teachers' training colleges

and Open University distance courses, coupled with infrequent, impractical on-the-job training. Fifth, there is no career path for teachers. Most teachers appointed as assistant teachers end up retiring as assistant teachers—a serious disincentive to teacher professionalism.

Sixth, teachers of only a few government secondary schools (three percent of total) are placed at the government salary level of grade

in behaviour and attitudes; however, a study found that two-thirds of high school students do not see their teachers as role models, and half of the teachers do not see themselves as role models for their students.

The problems described are not a discovery of the consultation committee. In fact, various initiatives to improve teachers' performance have been taken over the last two decades by the two ministries of education with technical

achievement has been from the multibillion-dollar investment of government and external funds for over two decades in enhancing the quality and performance of our teachers. Certainly, much less than expected if the criterion is the learning outcome of students. A newly elected government has pledged better performance of the education system and has raised people's expectations once again. Development partners are willing to help. The ball is in our court; the government has to take the lead in setting priorities and strategies, and establish a result-focused implementation process and mechanism. This is where we have largely failed so far. Can we now move away from the rut of unfulfilled promises and unrealised expectations?

The consultation committee report on secondary education (and a similar report on primary and non-formal education) has put forward a set of recommendations on the eight issues noted above about teachers' role and performance. The committees have underlined the importance of early and medium-term actions, largely within the present structure of a large and complex system (because the system has to be kept running). They have also emphasised the need for a longer-term view to bring about transformative change in our schools and the role and performance of teachers, attracting the "best and the brightest" to the profession. They have urged "out-of-the-box" thinking about teachers and the education workforce in the 21st century. They also underscored the need for systems thinking, rather than isolated remedies for symptoms of the disease.

The system is now failing both students and teachers. The diagnostics and remedies indicated by the consultation committees are not necessarily the last words on education reform. But their ideas merit serious consideration, particularly the suggestions about the process of initiating and carrying out reform. They emphasise that a devoted and specially designated task force of experts has to be assigned the task of initiating and guiding the reform effort holistically for the entire school education, pre-primary to pre-university, supported by strong political backing. Personnel in the existing organisational structure, mostly risk-averse and inclined to maintain the status quo, are not likely to be up to the task.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

10 (out of 20 civil service grades). The salary starts at a basic level of Tk 16,000, with 60 to 70 percent more added as benefits. The MPO-listed teachers (in 97 percent of the schools) are paid the basic salary and roughly a quarter of the benefits. The non-MPO teachers paid from the schools' own funds receive substantially less. Primary school teachers are placed at grade 12 (basic starting salary of Tk 11,300). Bangladesh school teacher salary is the lowest among the South Asian countries, while the average salary level is two to three times higher in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Seventh, there is no system of forming teachers' organisations. Multiple organisations exist, often linked with political parties, mostly engaged in bargaining for material benefits, with little attention to improving the quality of education and system performance. And eighth, teachers are expected to be role models for their students

and financial support from international development partners. Notable among them are the Teacher Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Projects (TQI 1 and 2 carried out between 2005 and 2020); Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project (SEQAEP, 2008-2017) and ongoing Learning Acceleration in Secondary Education (LAISE, 2023-2028)—all at the secondary level. Under the Primary Education Development Program phases 1 to 4 (PEDP 1 to 4, 1998 to 2026), teacher capacity building and training have been a major strategy for quality improvement in primary education. PEDP5 is expected to begin in July this year. Multilateral institutions such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF, UNESCO, and various bilateral aid providers have been associated with these projects.

A legitimate question is what the

When mobile journalism crosses the line into public shaming



Arafat Rahaman is a journalist at The Daily Star. He can be reached at arafat.mcj@yahoo.com.

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Journalism is meant to hold power to account, and mobile journalism, using smartphones for reporting and storytelling, should have ideally taken that mission to new heights. In too many corners of Bangladesh, however, we are witnessing a rather disturbing reality where mobile journalism is used as a tool for moral policing and public shaming of the vulnerable members of our community, especially women.

For example, imagine a woman attending a public event; she takes a moment to adjust her saree, stands in a crowd, or walks down the road. There is a good chance that somewhere nearby, a phone camera has already decided that she—not the event—is the focal point. The result? A barrage of clickbait content that exposes moral degradation masquerading as public-interest journalism.

There was a time when mobile journalism felt like a democratic breakthrough. A phone in a reporter's hand meant speed and reach. Stories could be told from places where professional cameras did not have access. It was supposed to expand the boundaries of reporting, but somewhere down the line, that idea was lost. However, the problem here is not the cameras. Journalists must film public events. Citizens, too, record public moments. The problem arises when the angle is chosen not to inform but to expose; when the selected frame does less to explain and more to embarrass; when the caption exists not to provide context but to direct the viewer's gaze towards a woman's body, clothing, or posture. And at that moment, the woman becomes consumable content.

YouTube channels, and pseudo-portals trading in degradation. Even some recognised media outlets have, at times, published clips and still shots of women that had less to do with public interest and more with spectacle. Pseudo-portals operate without standards, and recognised media outlets sometimes betray the very standard it claims to uphold. In the end, the result is the same: women exploited to increase traffic. Let us not confuse this with

Journalists must film public events. Citizens, too, record public moments. The problem arises when the angle is chosen not to inform but to expose; when the selected frame does less to explain and more to embarrass; when the caption exists not to provide context but to direct the viewer's gaze towards a woman's body, clothing, or posture. And at that moment, the woman becomes consumable content.

journalism. It most certainly is not. A page attaching words such as "TV" or "news" to its name does not automatically become a credible source of news simply because it has learned how to upload humiliation.

Recently at TSC, students confronted a multimedia reporter for inappropriately filming a female activist during a protest. A video

showed the woman asking him why he had taken such clips. This newspaper also came across a handwritten undertaking on the letterhead of Dhaka University Journalists' Association stating that the reporter had been caught unnecessarily zooming in on a woman while filming. He admitted wrongdoing and was released on a bond.

The same trend exists elsewhere as well. At police checkpoints, routine checking often turns into a show, as reporters gather around with cameras or phones and continue to film long after all the public interest justification has disappeared. The same thing happens during police raids, especially in hotels, where people are recorded in vulnerable moments. Their faces are exposed without consent, whether or not they are guilty of anything. Then the clips go online with outrageous captions, and the trial by media begins.

The damage does not stop with the sexualised framing of women. According to reports published by *The Daily Star* and *The Business Standard*, four people were assaulted by a mob in the evening of April 10 in the capital's Shahbagh area following accusations of being members of the queer community. The victims later told *The Business Standard* that people identifying themselves as mobile journalists obstructed their movement, filmed them without consent, and subjected them to embarrassing, indecent, and suggestive questioning even as the violence unfolded. What is being normalised in all these incidents is not merely bad journalism but a broader instinct to treat vulnerability as content. The camera culture has digitised and monetised harassment.

It is also about law, regulation, and state responsibility. Section 509 of the Penal Code states that anyone who, intending to insult the modesty of a woman, utters any word, makes any sound or gesture, exhibits any object, or intrudes upon her privacy can face imprisonment for up to one year, or a fine, or both. Yet we rarely see

that seriousness applied to media-branded actors who trade in women's humiliation. Cyber security laws and digital enforcement mechanisms often become visible when politics is involved or when powerful interests are affected. They seem far less apparent when the dignity of women or vulnerable community members is under question. Bangladesh's legal framework has already been criticised for failing to provide effective protection when it comes to online violence against women. If the present framework is too weak and far too easy to evade, there is no question why it should not be amended.

Here, the state's responsibility begins with registered media houses. If the government grants registration, it cannot then pretend it has no role when that legitimacy is abused.

It can issue warnings, demand explanations, impose sanctions through proper channels, and, where warranted, move towards legal action. Registration cannot become a shield for predation.

The state's responsibility is even clearer when the offender is not a registered newsroom, but an unregistered page or portal using the word "News" in its name. Such actors do not carry the protections of a recognised media institution, yet they exploit the name of journalism to prey on people for clicks. The government should not wait for victims to speak up—many may not even know their images have gone viral. It should create a working mechanism for rapid reporting and warning issuance and takedown requests alongside strengthening platform coordination

and repeat-offender tracking through law enforcement agencies.

I write this as a journalist because I know what this culture is doing not only to women, but also to the profession. Every time humiliation is packaged as content under the label of media, journalism is tainted. Every time a woman is reduced to bait beneath a news logo, the public learns to trust journalism a little less. That is also why this cannot be brushed aside as a matter of press freedom. Protecting a woman or any vulnerable member of society from predatory lenses is not a restriction on the press; it is the enforcement of a citizen's right to dignity. And, if we continue to excuse this in the name of media, journalism might become part of the very problem it should work to expose.

বাংলাদেশ গম ও ভুট্টা গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট

নশিপুর, দিনাজপুর ৫২০০

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Memo No: 12.26.0000.019.07.001.25- 488 Date: 19/04/2026

e-Tender Notice (Goods)/2025-2026

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

Sl No	ID	Name of Goods	Last selling Date and Time	Closing Date and Time
01	1260280	Procurement of Compact Optical Sorter Machine for Hybrid Wheat	27-Apr-2026 09:55	27-Apr-2026 12:00

This is 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 procuring entity deserves the right to accept or reject any/all tender(s) without assigning any reasons whatsoever.

19/04/2026
MD. Nazmul Haque
Assistant Programmer
BWMRI, Nashipur, Dinajpur.

GD-856

DEEPIKA-RANVEER announce second child

Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh have announced that they are expecting their second child. The actress shared the news through a social media post that featured their daughter, Dua.

The couple got married in November 2018 in Italy in a ceremony that blended Sindhi and Konkani traditions, and welcomed their first child, Dua, in September 2024.

On the professional front, Deepika is set to appear in Siddharth Anand's upcoming film *King*, starring alongside Shah Rukh Khan, Suhana Khan, Abhishek Bachchan, Jaideep Ahlawat, and Arshad Warsi. The film is scheduled for a theatrical release on December 24. She also has Atlee's *Raka* in development, co-starring Allu Arjun.

Ranveer Singh, meanwhile, is enjoying the success of his recent release *Dhurandhar: The Revenge*, which has reportedly grossed over Rs 1,700 crore worldwide and crossed Rs 1,000 crore in India. He is next set to appear in Jay Mehta's *Pralay*, alongside Kalyani Priyadarshan.



A STALWART'S SIXTY

Tauquir Ahmed celebrated by cultural personalities

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

At sixty, Tauquir Ahmed stands at a point where a life in the arts begins to take on its full shape. Yesterday (April 19), at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, colleagues gathered to take stock of a career that has moved steadily across theatre, television, and film.

Organised by the Actors' Equity Bangladesh, the seminar, held from 10 am to 9 pm under the title *Sixty Years of Tauquir Ahmed*, brought together artistes to reflect on Tauquir Ahmed's life and work. Notably, the artiste was born on March 5, 1966. Among



PHOTOS: STAR



those present were Ekushey Padak-winning artistes including Abul Hayat, Mamunur Rashid, and Afzal Hossain, alongside Mahfuz Ahmed, Azizul Hakim, and Deepa Khandakar, among others.

The evening opened on a musical note with a performance by Pintu Ghosh. Soon after, a ceremonial candle-lighting, joined by senior and contemporary artistes including Tauquir Ahmed himself, formally inaugurated the programme, setting the tone for an evening of remembrance and reflection.

Speakers revisited personal memories and professional milestones, sketching a portrait of an artiste whose journey has traversed theatre, television, and cinema with equal conviction. Mahfuz Ahmed recalled their early years as students;



he at the University of Dhaka, Tauquir at BUET, and a simple yet enduring memory of a ride to the Ekushey Book Fair on Tauquir's red motorcycle. "He was someone we admired, even envied," he said, before adding, "Today, I can say, he is our teacher. Tauquir Ahmed is the most progressive man of our generation."

For Abul Hayat, the reflection was more personal. "I tried to think of his flaws today, I could not find any," he remarked, calling

Tauquir a committed and visionary creative whose habit of reading and constant learning sets him apart. Recalling Tauquir's performance in the television serial *Hasuli Baker Upkotha*, he described it as one of the finest of his career.

Reflecting on decades of collaboration, Azad Abul Kalam spoke of Tauquir's multifaceted career — spanning acting, writing, and directing; while emphasising his unwavering love for the stage.

In his own remarks, Tauquir Ahmed remained measured and grounded. Thanking those in attendance, he described age as "just a number," reiterating that the true measure lies in the work itself. "I have tried to stay committed to my craft, whether in theatre or cinema, always keeping quality at the centre," he said. Looking ahead, he revealed plans to direct new films and bring *Oggatonama* to the stage, seeking the continued support of audiences.

What emerged from the evening was not merely a celebration of longevity, but a recognition of sustained relevance — the weight of six decades carried in a body of work the years have steadily built, one that speaks for itself, even as the veteran artiste moves forward in his work.



Chitrlekha Guha returns to stage with 'Lutfar Pradeep'

Theatre troupe Samotol is set to stage its acclaimed production *Lutfar Pradeep* today at 7 pm at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy's Studio Theatre Hall in Dhaka.

The play, written by Tanvir Mokammel and directed by Sagir Mostafa, features a solo performance by Chitrlekha Guha. This will be the sixth staging of the production.

Set against a historical backdrop, the play revisits the fall of Bengal's last independent Nawab while centring on the emotional journey of Lutfunnisa, wife of Siraj ud-Daulah.

Lutfar Pradeep is not merely a story of the defeat of Bengal's last independent Nawab; it is a living narrative of Lutfunnisa's unwavering love, immense patience, and a lifetime of grief.

Hridoy Khan to release new single 'Hahakar'

Popular singer and music composer Hridoy Khan is set to release a new solo track after a long hiatus. Titled *Hahakar*, the song is written by contemporary lyricist Someshwar Oli, while the artiste himself has composed and arranged the music.

The song will be released on April 24 on the singer's official YouTube channel.

Earlier this year, Hridoy released his short film *Trapped* on his official YouTube channel. Apart from directing the project, he also acted in it, alongside popular model and actress Monalisa.

He also released another song titled *Shada Kalo* on January 16. For the track, Hridoy not only lent his voice but also composed and arranged the music. He also directed the music video, with cinematography by Ali Afroz Arnob.



NEWS

Mobile number portability languishing

FROM PAGE 12 imposed a SIM tax on MNP users, treating a porting request as equivalent to acquiring a new SIM card.

Globally, there is no SIM tax for switching operators as the subscriber retains their unique number.

The situation worsened when the government significantly increased the VAT and supplementary duty to Tk 200 starting in July 2019 for new SIMs.

In July 2024, the VAT and supplementary duty were hiked to Tk 300. As a result, the operators now charge Tk 400 to Tk 465 for porting a number.

In stark contrast, many countries offer MNP either completely free or at a nominal cost, highlighting how Bangladesh's pricing structure has become a significant deterrent to a service originally designed to empower users.

What handicapped the MNP service further was the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's (BTRC) position on awareness campaigns.

Despite licensing directives that explicitly mandate both the BTRC and mobile operators to educate consumers through print, electronic and digital media, no meaningful campaign has been undertaken to

inform the public.

But just a few days after issuing the licence, the regulator banned all promotional activities related to MNP.

This contradictory move not only undermined consumer rights but also stifled competition — allowing poor service and market complacency to persist unchecked.

The obstacles go beyond awareness or affordability, said Md Mustafa Kamal, chief executive officer of Infozillion, which paid Tk 11.5 crore in 2017 along with a Tk 10 crore bank guarantee to obtain the MNP licence for 15 years.

The company has to pay a Tk 28 lakh yearly renewal fee and forward 5.5 percent of its revenue to the BTRC and 1 percent to the social obligation fund.

"Many subscribers face deliberate resistance. Operators frequently reject porting requests citing vague, sometimes non-compliant reasons."

Exacerbating the issue, the MNP service is not readily available at most retail outlets, making it difficult for users to initiate the switch even when they are willing, he added.

The implementation of MNP in Bangladesh has deviated considerably from these global benchmarks, said Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer of Robi Axiata.

Customers have encountered various obstacles, including unjustified rejections of porting requests, issues with one-time passwords (OTPs) and prolonged delays, all of which have undermined public trust in the service.

"Although a regulatory audit could have remedied the issue of unwarranted rejections, such an audit has not been conducted despite persistent advocacy."

Moreover, mobile operators have been prohibited from actively promoting MNP, which has significantly limited public awareness and understanding of the service.

To make matters worse, the imposition of SIM tax on ported numbers further discouraged users from availing this facility, he added.

The MNP service has not met the expectations it was launched with, said BTRC Chairman Md Emdad Ul Bari.

"MNP is a measure of competitiveness and we aim to promote it as a tool to enhance competition. However, we have realised that MNP alone cannot significantly increase competitiveness. Therefore, we are introducing a broader competitiveness initiative in the new guidelines, which will also help boost the MNP."

Teenager's family, home attacked

FROM PAGE 12 grandmother went to the madrasa to see the girl. At that time, Abul Khayer told the grandmother that the girl was attacked by evil power and she needed exorcism.

Then Abul Khayer took the girl to his bedroom on the madrasa premises and tried to rape her under the pretext of exorcism.

When the girl started screaming, Abul Khayer released her. Then the victim shared the incident with her grandmother.

Later, the victim's family members informed local union parishad's acting chairman Jamal Uddin about the matter. But Jamal kept wasting time in the name of social arbitration to settle the issue.

Finally, the victim's father filed a case with Charjabbar Police Station

on Thursday morning against Abul Khayer, said the police station's Officer-in-Charge (OC) Md. Lutfur Rahman.

Later in the day, around 100 people attacked the victim's house, assaulted the family members and carried out vandalism and looting.

Talking to journalists, the victim said the madrasa superintendent touched private parts of her body in the name of exorcism and tried to rape her.

"As my father has filed case, they attacked on our house," she told.

Talking to The Daily Star, the victim's father said, "My daughter is not the sole victim. Rather, the man (Abul Khayer) did the same things with some other girls in the past. But none disclosed it due to social stigma."

"But I have protested and filed a case. That is why they attacked our house and are pressurising me to withdraw the case," added the father.

Asked, union chairman Jamal Uddin admitted that the victim's family members went to him, and he tried to arrange a social arbitration.

He claimed the attempt failed as no party came to him on the day scheduled for the arbitration.

Contacted, OC Lutfur Rahman said the girl's mother filed another case on Saturday in connection with the attack. Later police arrested a person, Jahangir, 35, for his alleged involvement with the attack on their home.

"However, attempted rape accused Abul Khayer went into hiding after the filing of the case. Police are trying to arrest him," added the police officer.

Nationwide vaccination drive begins

FROM PAGE 12 A total of 21.8 lakh children from the 30 upazilas and the four city corporations are targeted to be jabbed, while 1.58 crore children in the rest of the country are expected to be vaccinated, the ministry said.

The campaign launched on April 5 will continue until April 25, while the one that began on April 12 will end on May 12, Hasanul said.

The nationwide campaign, starting today, will run until May 20 in the city corporation areas and until May 12 in other parts of the country, he said.

He added that the shots will be administered from all fixed and outreach centres from 8:00am.

Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) recorded one more confirmed measles deaths in last 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, taking the number to 36. The victim was

from the Dhaka division.

Besides, the DGHS logged three more suspected deaths from the disease in the last 24 hours, rising the number to 181. The three deaths were reported in Dhaka, Rajshahi, and Barishal divisions.

In the 24-hour period, 165 more confirmed measles cases were reported, bringing the total number to 3,443. Some 1,197 suspected cases were recorded during the same time, increasing the number to 23,606.

He also released another song titled *Shada Kalo* on January 16. For the track, Hridoy not only lent his voice but also composed and arranged the music. He also directed the music video, with cinematography by Ali Afroz Arnob.

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Will invite int'l bids

FROM PAGE 3
different countries in the international context, a draft has been prepared to update the existing "Bangladesh Offshore Model PSC 2023" with the aim of attracting international oil companies. The Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division has vetted the prepared draft.

Taking this opinion into consideration after the final approval of the "Bangladesh Offshore Model PSC 2026" (draft), new gas and oil exploration activities in deep and shallow sea areas will be strengthened.

"And there are plans to convene a new offshore bidding round soon," Tuku said.

While answering another query from Mosharrar Hossain MP, the minister said currently the country has 29.74 trillion cubic feet (TCF) recoverable gas reserves.

Of this, 22.11 TCF of gas has been extracted as of December 31, 2025, and 7.63 TCF remain available. If no new gas field is discovered and gas is supplied at the current rate, approximately 1,700 million cubic feet per day, the remaining 7.63 trillion cubic feet of gas can be supplied for approximately 12 years based

on the available capacity. While answering another question from Sultan Mahmud Babu MP, the energy minister said the government has a multifaceted plan to reduce import dependence in the energy sector and increase domestic gasoline and fuel production.

Till date, 26 wells are being drilled and worked over under the 50 and 100-well drilling and workover plans at various stages.

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration & Production Company (BAPEX) has taken steps to conduct seismic survey activities.

Feasibility studies have been planned for the construction of open-pit coal mines in the northern and southern parts of the Barapukuria coalfield in Dinajpur, the development of an underground mine in a 15 sq km area in the north-western part of the Jamalganj coal field, spanning Naogaon and Joypurhat, and the establishment of an underground mine in the Khalaspir coalfield in Rangpur. In addition, there is a plan to develop an underground mine to extract coal from the Dighipara coalfield in Dinajpur.

Govt's tobacco

FROM PAGE 4
control, in Bangladesh, however, the tax policy analysis remains constrained by misconceptions.

He said the assumption that increasing prices will reduce revenue is flawed, as there is no solid research evidence to support this claim. On the contrary, evidence suggests that higher prices discourage adolescents from initiating smoking — thereby helping to protect youths, he added.

He also noted that the decision to revoke the ban on e-cigarettes in the recently passed Tobacco Control Ordinance in the parliament was made without any clear explanation, while sending a dangerous signal to the public.

He stressed raising public awareness about the risks of tobacco use alongside taxation and tobacco control laws.

Prof Shafiun N Shimul, director of the Institute of Health Economics (IHE) at Dhaka University, presented the proposal jointly prepared by IHE, Economics for Health, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

BNP's women leaders

FROM PAGE 3
the number of reserved seats so limited, even one or two nominations matter greatly to us. As such, giving outsiders a chance, even at the interview stage, was both surprising and disappointing."

Meanwhile, senior BNP leaders also criticised the process being followed, saying that the party allowed almost anyone who bought a nomination form to sit for the interview without proper screening or following the party's constitution.

Under the party constitution, the BNP parliamentary board is meant to nominate candidates through a panel-based system, with district leaders joining the board and final candidates being chosen from panels prepared by the relevant local units of the constituency.

The party has interviewed over 900 aspirants at its Gulshan chairperson's office, with the process led by BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman alongside members of the standing committee.

Party insiders said two former NCP leaders, who

resigned from the party, are also being considered for nomination.

Amid the situation, the BNP yesterday completed the list of 36 candidates for the reserved seats for women in parliament, party insiders said.

Among the candidates under discussion are BNP Assistant Secretary Nilufar Chowdhury Moni, BNP Assistant Training Affairs Secretary and former MP Rehana Akter Ranu, BNP Local Government Affairs Assistant Secretary Shammil Akter, BNP leader Sunila Jabrin Priyanka, and Dhaka District unit BNP General Secretary Nipun Roy Chowdhury.

Besides, Salima Begum, daughter of late Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder; Shakila Farzana, daughter of former BNP whip Syed Wahidul Alam; and Tasnima Sinha, daughter of former state minister Mizanur Rahman Sinha, are also under consideration.

BNP Media Cell member Mahmuda Habiba and Mayer Daak coordinator Sanjida Islam Tulee are also being discussed.

While the party is yet to decide when it will announce the final list of candidates, two standing committee members who took part in the interviews indicated the names may be sent directly to the Election Commission after being finalised by Tarique.

During the interviews, Tarique instructed the aspirants to accept the party's decision, adding that the party would evaluate those who fail to secure nomination and consider them for future responsibilities.

Meanwhile, a total of 431 aspirants seeking nominations from three political parties, including the BNP, have collected

nomination papers from the EC over the past 12 days to contest the 50 reserved women's seats in the 13th National Parliament.

Of them, 417 were from BNP, 13 from Jamaat-e-Islami, and one from Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis.

However, only three candidates — Sanjida Islam Tulee, Nilufar Yasmin Moni, and Mahbuba Rahman of BNP — have submitted their papers till yesterday afternoon.

EC's Deputy Secretary Mohammad Monir Hossain confirmed the information.

The deadline for submission of nomination papers is April 21. The voting is scheduled for May 12.

BNP and its alliance will get 36 seats, Jamaat-e-Islami and its partners will get 13 seats, and six independent candidates who have formed an alliance will receive one seat.

According to the EC's published voter list, 298 lawmakers are eligible to vote.

Solar no longer

FROM PAGE 3
Highlighting the urgency of renewable energy, Razia said, "Solar is coming, whether the government wants it or not. Look at Pakistan, where consumers and industry shifted without waiting for policy."

"Solar is our future. We must make the transition easier for investors while ensuring regulations remain both investment- and environment-friendly."

Md Rafiqul Islam, additional secretary and a member of the Bangladesh Energy and Power Research Council, suggested using the country's 7.8 billion metric tonnes of coal reserves to run its existing 7,000MW coal-based power capacity.

Prabir De, professor at the Research and Information System for Developing Countries in New Delhi, proposed a regional oil refinery and stronger cross-border energy cooperation to reduce vulnerability to price shocks.

He noted that supply

chain disruptions recently forced India to revise its GDP growth forecast down from 7.6 percent to 6.7 percent. Despite importing 90 percent of its crude oil, India is building resilience through refining capacity, ethanol blending, and diversified sourcing.

From a Himalayan perspective, Nabina Adhikari highlighted Nepal's rapid shift to electric vehicles following fuel disruptions in 2015. She said 70 percent of four-wheelers imported into Nepal are now electric.

She also stressed regional hydropower cooperation, noting that Nepal and Bhutan can stabilise regional grids by exporting surplus electricity during wet seasons.

The panel concluded that addressing the energy crisis will require an integrated approach — accelerating solar adoption with battery storage, improving industrial efficiency, and strengthening regional energy cooperation.

NCP steps up expansion drive

FROM PAGE 4
However, any individual who has been involved in fascism or genocide, supported genocide, or committed crimes such as extortion, corruption, and terrorism will not be allowed to join NCP, he added.

According to party insiders, more disagreements stemming from internal rifts and competing pressures within the party may surface in the coming days as the inclusion of leaders from the three platforms has caused resentment among some of the NCP's earlier organisers, who feel they are being sidelined.

"Following this inclusion, members of the party and its affiliated

bodies are now considering resigning. Those who stood by the party during its most difficult months are being pushed aside to make room for new arrivals," said a senior leader of NCP's youth wing Jubo Shakti, wishing anonymity.

Another NCP leader, requesting anonymity, said the unity within the party is eroding.


Meanwhile, tensions have emerged within the party over its newly formed women's wing, Jatiya Nari Shakti.

Following announcement of the wing's 53 member central committee, at least two leaders — Jubo Shakti Joint Member Secretary Dyuti Aranya Chowdhury and Cumilla Metropolitan

Joint Member Secretary Faraha Emdad — publicly distanced themselves from the body and the party through separate Facebook posts.

Dyuti said she had effectively been detached from the party since December over its decision to join the Jamaat-led alliance and expressed surprise at being named joint member secretary without her consent.

However, Nari Shakti Convener Monira Sharmin dismissed the criticism, saying the objections stemmed from dissatisfaction over assigned positions rather than ideology, and described the allegations as "theatrical".



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

গ্যাস ব্যবহারের সাক্ষরী হোন এবং সমস্ত গ্যাস বিল পরিশোধ করুন

বিনা কারণে গ্যাসের চুলা জ্বালিয়ে রাখা আর বিপদকে ডাকা একই বিষয়

Ref. No. 28.16.9100.098.07.001.26.642 Date: 19-04-2026

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify all concerned that the following National Tender published through the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) as stated below:

Sl. No.	Tender ID, Package No. & Tender publication date	Description of goods	Document last selling date & time	Closing date & time	Opening date & time
01.	Tender ID: 1254547 Tender/Proposal Package No. 28.16.9100.098.07.001.26.04 Tender publication date & time: 19-April-2026 Time: 15:00	Appointment of a Pre-shipment Inspection (PSI) Agent for conducting Pre-shipment Inspection and testing worldwide, and Post-Landing Inspection in Bangladesh of gas materials to be imported by JGTDSL for a period of three (03) years.	03-May-2026 Time: 15:00	04-May-2026 Time: 15:00	04-May-2026 Time: 15:00

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

Engr. Md. Masud Rana
Deputy General Manager (Procurement Department)
E-mail: dgm.procurement@jgtdsl.gov.bd

GD-859

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department
Bhola
E-mail: eedbhola.govbd@gmail.com

Invitation for e-Tender

Tender Notice No. e-GP/EED/BH/4931 SHED/2025-26/23 Date: 19/04/2026

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, who have registered in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.


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Invitation Reference No.	Tender ID	Package description	Method	Last date & time of downloading tender documents	Tender closing
37.07.0000.001.002.25/3/157 Date: 17.11.2025	1219175	Repair and Renovation Works of District Education Office at Bhola Sadar, Bhola	NCT, LTM	05-May-2026 17:00:00	06-May-2026 12:00:00
37.07.0000.001.002.26/3/205 Date: 29.01.2026	1244297	Repair & Renovation Work of Construction Works (FY:2024-25) of Main Gate & RCC Internal Road of District Education Office at Bhola Sadar, Bhola. (RMS NO-1050760)	NCT, LTM	05-May-2026 17:00:00	06-May-2026 12:00:00
37.07.0000.001.002.26/3/205 Date: 29.01.2026	1245073	Construction of Shahid Minar & RCC U Drain (FY:2024-25) of Bhola Government College at Bhola Sadar, Bhola. (RMS NO-1050749)	NCT, LTM	05-May-2026 17:00:00	06-May-2026 12:00:00
37.07.0000.001.002.26/3/205 Date: 29.01.2026	1244523	Construction Works (FY:2024-25) of Guardian Shelter of Bhola Govt School at Bhola Sadar, Bhola. (RMS NO-1050752)	NCT, LTM	05-May-2026 17:00:00	06-May-2026 12:00:00
37.07.0000.001.002.26/3/206 Date: 29.01.2026	1256510	Repair and Renovation Works (FY:2024-25) of Science Building of Govt Abdul Jabbar College at Borhanuddin, Bhola. (RMS NO-1050745)	NCT, LTM	05-May-2026 17:00:00	06-May-2026 12:00:00
37.07.0000.001.002.26/3/206 Date: 29.01.2026	1255336	Repair and Renovation Works (FY:2024-25) of Hostel & Mosque of Govt Abdul Jabbar College at Borhanuddin, Bhola. (RMS NO-1050746)	NCT, LTM	05-May-2026 17:00:00	06-May-2026 12:00:00
37.07.0000.001.002.26/3/206 Date: 29.01.2026	1260320	Construction of Boundary Wall (FY:2024-25) of Govt Abdul Jabbar College at Borhanuddin, Bhola. (RMS NO-1050747)	NCT, LTM	05-May-2026 17:00:00	06-May-2026 12:00:00

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

-Sd-
Md Mafiqul Islam
Executive Engineer
Education Engineering Department
Bhola

GD-861



গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক
প্রধান কার্যালয়
মিরপুর-২, ঢাকা-১২১৬।

বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং- ০৬/২০২৬

টেন্ডার বিজ্ঞপ্তি

তারিখ: ২০-০৪-২০২৬

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংকের বিভিন্ন অফিস ভবন নির্মাণের জন্য সরকারি/আধা-সরকারি/স্বায়ত্বশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানের তালিকাভুক্ত প্রকৃত ইমারত নির্মাণকারী প্রথম শ্রেণির ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে নির্ধারিত ফরমে সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনাল অফিস, রাজশাহী (হোল্ডিং নং-২৮১, বনলতা বানিজ্যিক এলাকা, আর.ডি.এ ভবনের পূর্ব পার্শ্বে, ডাক: সপুরা, রাজশাহী-৬২০৩)।

লট নং-০১ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, দামকুড়া পবা শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : আলোকছত্র, পোঃ দামকুড়া হাট, উপজেলাঃ পবা, জেলাঃ রাজশাহী।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনাল অফিস, বরিশাল (কুমুমবাগ-ফরাজী ওয়ার্কসপ সংলগ্ন, সি.এন্ড.বি রোড, বরিশাল-৮২০০)।
লট নং-০২ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, বাটাডোড় পৌরনদী শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : দেওপাড়া, পোঃ বাটাডোড়, উপজেলাঃ পৌরনদী, জেলাঃ বরিশাল।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনাল অফিস, সিরাজগঞ্জ (মাসুমপুর হাজী বাড়ী সংলগ্ন), সিরাজগঞ্জ-৬৭০০)।
লট নং-০৩ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, জামতৈল কামারখন্দ শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : জামতৈল, পোঃ জামতৈল, উপজেলাঃ কামারখন্দ, জেলাঃ সিরাজগঞ্জ।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনাল অফিস, ময়মনসিংহ (গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক আবাসিক এলাকা, কাদুর বাড়ির মোড়, দিঘারকান্দা, সদর ময়মনসিংহ-২২০০)।
লট নং-০৪ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, কুমাইল ফুলবাড়ীয়া শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : বরকা, পোঃ বরকা বাজার, উপজেলাঃ ফুলবাড়ীয়া, জেলাঃ ময়মনসিংহ।

দরপত্র জমাদানের নিয়মাবলীঃ

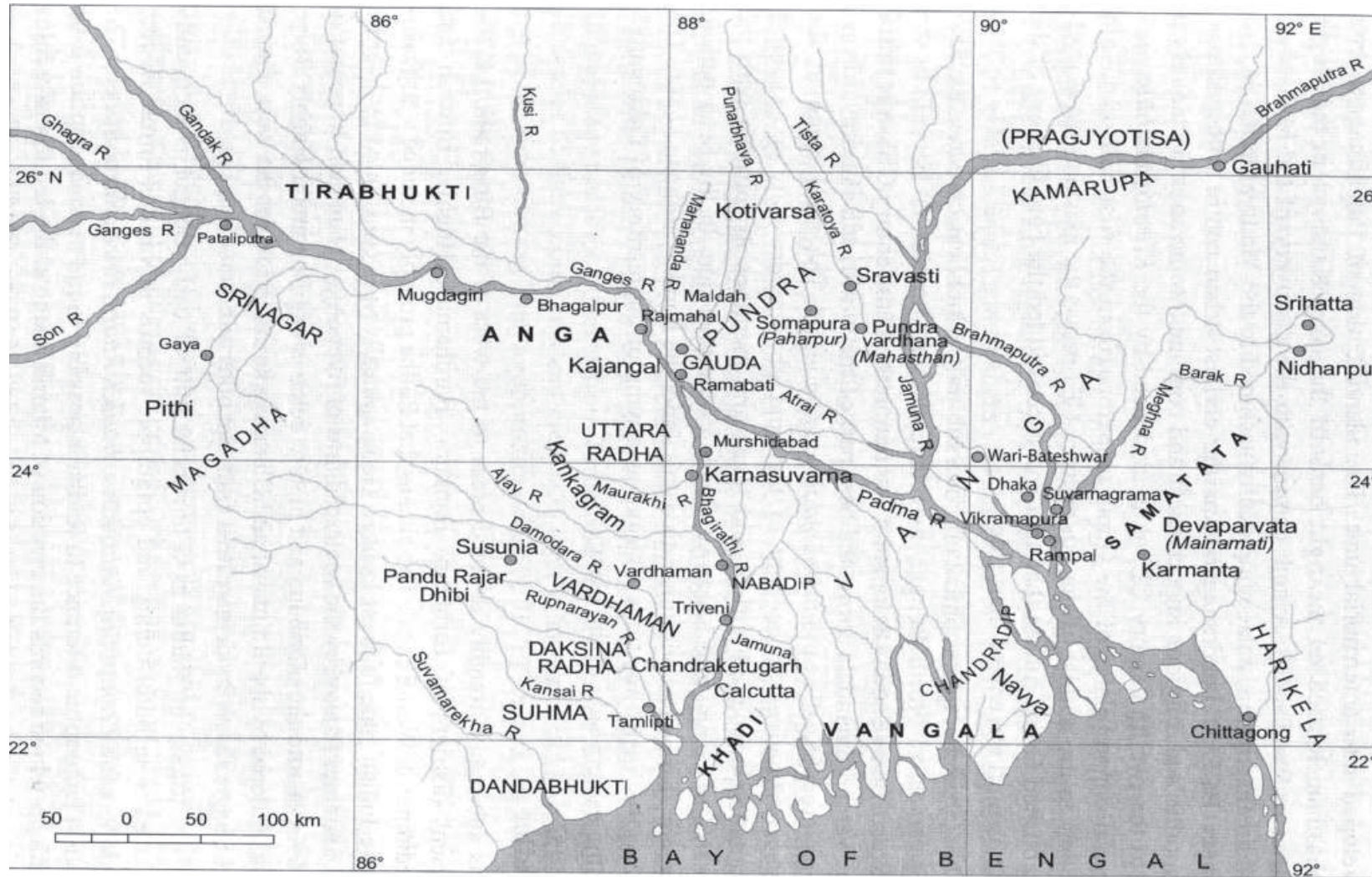
- উল্লিখিত কাজের টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি বাবদ মোট উদ্ধৃত দরের ২.৫% পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/ব্যাংক গ্যারান্টির মাধ্যমে যে কোন সিডিউল ব্যাংক হতে "গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, প্রধান কার্যালয়" এর অনুকূলে জমা দিতে হবে।
- প্রতিটি টেন্ডার দলিলের মূল্য ২,০০০/- (দুই হাজার) টাকা (অফেরৎযোগ্য)।
- প্রতিটি কার্য সম্পন্ন করার সময়ঃ ১২ (বারো) মাস।
- বাজেট ও অর্ধের উৎস: নিজস্ব অর্থায়ন।
- উল্লিখিত কাজের টেন্ডার দলিল গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক প্রধান কার্যালয় নির্মাণ শাখা, মিরপুর-২, ঢাকা-১২১৬ ও সংশ্লিষ্ট যোনাল অফিস হতে ২০-০৪-২০২৬ থেকে ০৪-০৫-২০২৬ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের লেটার হেডপ্যাডে আবেদন সাপেক্ষে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।
- ২০-০৪-২০২৬ তারিখ থেকে ০৪-০৫-২০২৬ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে এবং ০৫-০৫-২০২৬ তারিখ বেলা ১১:০০ টা পর্যন্ত উপরোল্লিখিত স্থানসমূহে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার ব্যাগে টেন্ডারসমূহ গৃহীত হবে এবং ঐদিন অর্থাৎ ০৫-০৫-২০২৬ তারিখ বেলা ১১:৩০ টায় ঠিকাদার বা তাঁদের প্রতিনিধিদের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) টেন্ডার ব্যাগ খোলা হবে। টেন্ডার ব্যাগ খোলার দিন কোন টেন্ডার দলিল বিক্রি করা হবে না।
- টেন্ডার দাখিলের নিয়মাবলী টেন্ডার দলিলের সাথে সংযুক্ত থাকবে।
- ক) দরদাতাকে প্রধান ঠিকাদার/উপ-ঠিকাদার হিসেবে কমপক্ষে ৩ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন হতে হবে।
খ) গত ৩ বছরের মধ্যে একক কার্যাদেশে সফলভাবে সম্পন্নকৃত ন্যূনতম ১.৬ (এক দশমিক ছয়) কোটি টাকার ভবন নির্মাণ কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।
- গ) গত ৩ বছরে গড় বার্ষিক আর্থিক লেনদেনের পরিমাণ ৩ (তিন) কোটি টাকার বেশি হতে হবে।
- ঘ) টেন্ডারদাতার ন্যূনতম Liquid Asset / Working Capital অথবা Credit Line (ঋণ সীমা) ৫০ (পঞ্চাশ) লক্ষ টাকা হতে হবে। তবে টেন্ডার জমাদানের পূর্ববর্তী ৭ (সাত) দিনের আগে ইস্যু করা তরল সম্পদের সনদ মূল্যায়নের জন্য গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।

কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকেই উক্ত টেন্ডার গ্রহণ/বাতিল, সংশোধন, পরিবর্তন করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

মহাব্যবস্থাপক
সেবা ও সম্পত্তি ব্যবস্থাপনা বিভাগ

THE DELTA PARADOX

Prosperity and plunder in late medieval Bengal



Historical geography of Bengal. Source: History of Bangladesh, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2018.

Overflowing saltwater from the sea destroyed settlements and promoted migration. Escalating global demand for cheap labour exploited this migratory trend and facilitated a slave-raiding culture in Arakan.

RILA MUKHERJEE

In the seventeenth century, the southeast portion of the Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna (GBM) delta underwent environmental pressures of crisis proportions. Social breakdown was evident from vicious slave raids and subsequent slave trading. Paradoxically, this was a period of renewed agricultural growth for the southeast, as the newly active delta generated fresh rice-producing lands. Therefore, although conventional history-writing tends to equate economic growth with social and political stability, this may not hold true for late medieval Bengal.

The argument

According to historian Richard Eaton, west-to-east riverine shifts from the sixteenth century onward rendered Bengal's western delta moribund and made the southeast delta very active. This enormously enhanced the revenue-paying capacity of southeast Bengal.

New rivers like the Bhairab,

riverine shifts, let us see how the southeast's chief rivers fared at this time. The *Tripura Vamsavali* mentions the sixteenth-century southeast's fluvial network: the Gomati, Jamuna, Brahmaputra, Dhaleswari, Kirtinasa, and the Meghna.

In Giovanni Antonio Magini's map (1597), the Meghna is clearly the chief river, but in Linschoten (1596), it is 'Cosmin Flu', not the Meghna, that waters the southeast. Sometimes the Lakhiya or Laquia (see Guillaume Delisle, 1740, and Nicholas Bellin, 1747-61) is noted as the principal river. A mysterious river called 'Caor' appeared in maps for over two hundred years. Scholars agree that both Caor and Lakhiya are surrogates for the Brahmaputra, and 'Caor' was likely to be a diminutive form of 'Karatoya'.

Karatoya was an old river. *Karatoya Mahatmya*, composed sometime before the second half of the twelfth century, states that the land along its course was wealthy with tanks and wells; its people were wise and pure; and its banks were fertile, elevated, and free of snakes. Spanning the Bhutan-Tibet route, this land—filled with citadels, monasteries, and temples—was twice blessed, since the Karatoya washed its shores.

The mighty Karatoya, which Bakhtiyar Khilji had described as immense as the sea while sailing on it during his Assam campaign at the start of the thirteenth century, declined in favour of the Lakhiya and the Brahmaputra when the latter changed its course in 1787.

As these rivers received more water, the Karatoya's banks turned moribund, its flow reduced to a stream, and a flood in 1820 effectively ended its course. It appears as a major river in Rennell's map of 1776; even in 1810, Francis Buchanan-Hamilton described it as 'a very considerable river'. By the start of the twentieth century, the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* reported that the Karatoya was a 'trickle'.

The Meghna, down which Ibn Battuta had sailed in the fourteenth century, also underwent drastic changes in its course. English traveller Ralph Fitch's sketch, c. 1585, showed the Ganges and Meghna joined at Sripur, south of Sonargaon. Two hundred years later, English surveyor James Rennell's maps (1764-72) show the confluence shifting to Dakhin Shabbazpur (Bhola) Island. The Padma and the present Brahmaputra (Jamuna) became more prominent.

The west-east shift created new ports, but it also destroyed older channels and made the southeast an area of environmentally disrupted human settlement, marked by 'lost' rivers, 'lost' civilisations, and 'lost' cities.

The Ganges' southward stretch from Jafarganj to Dakhin Shabbazpur is called Kirtinasha, or the Great Destroyer, and Sripur, the capital port-city of the Baro Bhuiyans Chand and Kedar Rai, was a casualty. Bakla was destroyed by a cyclone and

storm-wave in 1584. The Ichhamati, along which Jean-Baptiste Tavernier travelled from Jafarganj to Dhaka in 1666, now contains hardly any water during the dry season. Between 1811 and 1867, Sagor Island at the Hugli's mouth was swept by six major cyclones; those of 1833 and 1864 took thousands of lives.

In 1774-75, the Scottish colonial official and trader Robert Lindsay travelled down 'the Dacca river for twenty miles; we stopped at Feringee-bazaar. At this place the Dacca river, which is a branch of the Ganges, joins the great Brahmaputra; when both united, they are known by the name of Meghna, and form one of the largest rivers in the world.'

Twelve years later, in 1787, when it changed course a hundred miles south, the Brahmaputra crossed Mymensingh and emptied into the Meghna at Bhairab Bazaar, from which point a vast freshwater sea covered the land for half the year across large waterbodies (*haors*) spanning Netrokona and Sylhet from west to east. This inland sea deterred settlers from the west, but the term 'bazaar' indicates a thriving local economy. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Brahmaputra's main channel ran due south from below Chilmari, instead of around Mymensingh and Bhairab Bazaar as in Rennell's day. The two courses were nearly 70 miles apart at one point.

Delta imaginaries

The delta's unique hydrology meant that its rulers lay outside the main circles of power. This allowed them to build networks to stabilise their rule, protect themselves from neighbouring polities, and preserve access to the sea. Deltas are autarchic and self-sufficient, but unlike islands, they are amorphous, marked by ambiguity, lack of definition, and fluid boundaries—a zone where land and sea intertwine and merge, demonstrating the fungibility or interchangeability of land and sea. Delta imaginaries provide fertile ground for perspectives in which porous frontiers act as filters, through which the salt of the sea is gradually replaced by the silt of the land.

The British civil servant Francis Bradley Birt wrote in 1906: 'Memories still cling thick around these lower reaches of the Lakhiya, close by where the great rivers meet. But just below, the Meghna, the Ganges, the Brahmaputra, the Dullasery, and the Ishamutty all unite, and this meeting place of the giant watercourses is the most historic spot in all Eastern Bengal. The many tides that have ebbed and flowed this way have seen strange scenes... It has seen great principalities and kingdoms rise and fall, the fleeting glories of a fickle world. On its broad bosom it has borne brave fleets and armies to victory and defeat... Only the great river... flows onwards...'

A new urbanisation

Early European maps of the period

show that riverine shifts created new lands dotted with market towns and ports in the southeast. However, Bellin's maps from 1747 to 1761, issued in Abbé Prévost's *Histoire Générale des Voyages* (1770), designated the Bengal coast as 'Toute cette côte est peu connue et fort dangereuse' (translation: 'this coast is little known and very dangerous'), alluding to its dangerous tides and shifting sandbanks.

For the Portuguese, their bases in 'Bengala' were simply represented as being sited in Maluco (mulk or territory) and Nao Maluco/Nao Moluco (naya mulk). Willem Blaeu's 1638 map inscribes them with place names: 'Noldy' for Nao Maluco and 'Buram' for Maluco.

Let us now see what this newly urbanised southeast looked like.

João de Barros' *Quatra Decada da Asia* (1552, 1553, and 1563, edited by Lavanha in 1615) marks political divisions, towns, fortified ports (*bandar*), bazaars, and citadels in the newly emergent islands: Jugudia, Sundiva, Merculij (Meherkul), Guacala, Bulnei, Bicaram, Angara, Belhaldy, Cuipitavaz (the Husain Shahi mint town of Khalifatabad, Bagerhat, on the Bhairab's bank), Tipuria, and the eponymous Maluco and Naomoluco.

Blaeu's map of 1638, clearly derived from the Barros map, marks Pacuculy, Cuipitavaz, Tipuria, Dipuria, Bicaram, Guacala, Angara, Balbaldy, Jugudia, and Sundiva. Catrabo (Katrabuh, near Dhaka)

centres, and their milieu remained predominantly rural.

A land destroyed

This distinctive hydrography facilitated slave raiding. The rivers were capricious and the drainage system was unique; brackish water flowed inward rather than outward. Overflowing saltwater from the sea destroyed settlements and promoted migration. Escalating global demand for cheap labour exploited this migratory trend and facilitated a slave-raiding culture in Arakan. The southeast, with its larger rivers and with creeks and inlets extending far inland, underwent terrible Magh raids by Portuguese-Arakanese bands. The Mughals were unable to defend the eastern frontier.

In 1772, Scottish official and merchant Robert Lindsay wrote: 'This navigation [of the Sunderbans] is part of the Delta of the Ganges, extending more than 200 miles along the coast, through thick forests, inhabited only by tigers, alligators, and wild animals peculiar to a tropical climate; the human population is very scanty, the country being overflowed every spring-tide by salt water. It is a dreary waste of great extent, but beautiful in the extreme, the lofty trees growing down to the water's edge with little or no brush or underwood. The innumerable rivers and creeks which intersect this country in every direction form a passage so intricate as to require the assistance of a pilot; its windings are



Bellin's eighteenth-century map of Bengal, first issued in Prévost's *Histoire générale des voyages* (1747-61), later reproduced in a Dutch edition with added Dutch place names.

and Khizrpur, both under Isa Khan, were sixteenth century port towns supplementing Sonargaon, Isa's capital port city. Fathabad (modern Faridpur, situated on the bank of an old channel of the Padma) was a mint town. Bakla (British Backergunge) was an ancient capital and a medieval port town, and under the British, a grain mart.

The fortified sixteenth-century Yashohara-Ishwaripur and Dhumghat were, respectively, the capital and shipyard of the Baro Bhuiya Pratapaditya. Sripur and Sonargaon were port-based capitals and grain and cotton marts belonging to Kedar Rai and Isa Khan. Sandwip, belonging to no one, was a salt-producing centre and port. Loricoel on the Meghna, also called Norcoel, Meherkul, or Merculij, became a fortified bridgehead but functioned as a strategic maritime gateway for upstream polities. As a defensive outpost, salt-trading centre, and site of a Portuguese Augustinian settlement, Loricoel was under Isa Khan's rule. Because of its access to the sea, it was contested by Tripura, Bengal, Arakan, and the Portuguese.

In the period from 1433 to 1538, the southeastern delta contained four mint towns, as opposed to one in the western delta. In the period 1538-1760, this number grew to fourteen, compared to seven in the west. Many of these appeared on newly formed lands.

A similar predominance is seen in Bengal's inscription sites: between 1538 and 1760, the southeast had thirteen sites, compared to eight in the west. Clearly, the southeast retained its economic momentum despite the environmental ravages it underwent in the seventeenth century. At the same time, operating within a commercial boom but constrained by an emerging political and social crisis, these towns could not become stable urban

like the mazes of a labyrinth...'

Surveyor James Rennell wrote soon after: 'That part of the Delta bordering on the sea is composed of a labyrinth of rivers and creeks, all of which are salt, except those that immediately communicate with the principal arm of the Ganges. This tract, known by the name of the Woods, or Sunderbunds, is in extent equal to the principality of Wales; and is so completely enveloped in woods, and infested with Tygers, that if any attempts have ever been made to clear it (as is reported) they have hitherto miscarried. Its numerous canals are so disposed as to form a complete inland navigation throughout and across the lower part of the Delta, without either the delay of going round the head of it, or the hazard of putting to sea.'

But navigation was not easy: the creeks dried up, and ships could run aground. During 1782-83, Lindsay's 400-ton *Augusta* sailed from Sylhet to Macau via Kolkata 'through a most intricate and hitherto unexplored navigation, to the vicinity of the sea'.

He anchored 'at a place called Luckypore, near the confluence of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, two of the largest rivers in the world... and crossed and recrossed this great river, at this place full twenty miles broad', but then ran aground. He searched for 'a passage to sea through the narrow channels, or creeks, with which this wide delta abounds; and we succeeded in finding deeper water in the river called Harringotta, a smaller branch of the Ganges.' Only the small, fast Magh boats could navigate this unique landscape.

Rila Mukherjee is a historian and the author of *India in the Indian Ocean World: From the Earliest Times to 1800* (Springer Nature, 2022) and *Europe in the World from 1350 to 1650* (Springer Nature, 2025).



Magni Mogolis Imperium, Willem Blaeu's *Novus Atlas*, Amsterdam, 1638.

Mathabhangha, Garai-Madhumati, and Arialkhan created fertile valleys. Agricultural yields jumped exponentially. Per Mughal statistics, between 1595 and 1659, revenue demand for the southeast saw a -117% jump, whereas the northwest saw a change of -13%.

In Eaton's words, 'A distinguishing feature of East Bengal during the Mughal period... was its far greater agricultural productivity and population growth relative to contemporary West Bengal. Ultimately, this arose from the long-term eastward movement of Bengal's major river systems, which deposited the rich silt that made the cultivation of wet rice possible'.

The notorious slave raids occurred in this peculiar situation of agrarian growth amidst physical destruction.

Fickle rivers

Before studying the effects of the

Star SPORT

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What to WATCH

T SPORTS
Bangladesh vs New Zealand
2nd ODI
Live from 11:00 am
T SPORTS YOUTUBE
Bangladesh women

vs Sri Lanka women
1st ODI
Live from 9:30 am
STAR SPORTS 1
IPL
Gujarat vs Mumbai
Live from 8:00 pm

STAR SPORTS
SELECT HD1
Premier League
Crystal Palace vs West Ham
Live from 1:00 am (Tuesday)

Bayern win 35th Bundesliga title

AGENCIES

Harry Kane scored his 32nd goal of the campaign as Bayern Munich cruised to a 4-2 home win over Stuttgart to claim a record-extending 35th Bundesliga title.

Raphael Guerreiro, Nicolas Jackson and Alphonso Davies joined Kane on the scoresheet, while Chris Fuehrich and Chema Andres scored for the visitors.

Borussia Dortmund's limp 2-1 defeat at Hoffenheim on Saturday, their second in two matches, left the door open for Bayern, who only needed a point at home to secure the title with four games to spare.

Coach Vincent Kompany left regular starters Kane, Michael Olise, Manuel Neuer, Aleksandar Pavlovic, Dayot Upamecano and Jonathan Tah on the bench with Wednesday's German Cup semi-final at Bayer Leverkusen in mind.



"It's been a fantastic season for us," said Bundesliga leading scorer Kane.

"To finish the league off in the way we have with the goals we scored... credit to the lads... we still have a lot to play for... but all the hard work, this makes it all worth it."

Bayern have been dominant once more in the Bundesliga this season, shattering the all-time league record for goals scored in one campaign (101), having already netted 109 times with four matches remaining.

Is hope enough to fix batting crisis?

SPORTS REPORTER

As it stands, Bangladesh cricketers and their fans seem to share one defining trait -- an almost stubborn tendency to cling to hope.

On the eve of the second ODI against New Zealand, pacer Shoriful Islam laid it bare. His words, intended as reassurance, instead underlined a worrying reality -- that hope, rather than performance, has become this side's fallback.

"Of course, they are working on it, and maybe most of the time they are failing. But even when you fail, you can always hold on to hope. In life, you don't always fail -- sometimes success comes. And with that hope, everyone is trying," Shoriful said.

But international cricket rarely rewards hope alone. Bangladesh's 26-run defeat in Friday's opener at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium exposed a batting unit that is not just out of form, but alarmingly short on conviction.

That has prompted a possible rethink. Soumya Sarkar, who had been on the fringes, is now likely to be drafted into the eleven as Bangladesh search for answers to their batting woes. Initially overlooked after head coach Phil Simmons backed the Saif Hassan-Tanzid Hasan Tamim opening pair, Soumya now appears set for a recall, potentially at number three. Sources suggest Najmul Hossain Shanto could be pushed down to number four as the order is reshuffled.

For now, though, the spotlight remains on those who have failed to deliver. Shanto continues to occupy a crucial role without results -- 13 innings without a fifty,



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

six of those producing single-digit scores, and just one effort beyond 40. His dismissal in the first ODI, beaten comprehensively by Nathan Smith's incoming delivery, only reinforced concerns about his form.

Liton Das's decline is even more pronounced. Once among Bangladesh's most reliable batters, he has now gone 18 innings without a fifty -- his last dating back to the 2023 World Cup. Even a shift down to number four has failed to arrest the slide, with four ducks in his last 10 innings. Brief starts have come, with 40-plus scores in his last three innings, but the inability to convert remains his main issue. However, one positive is that it took an impressive turner from Dean Foxcroft to outfox him in the first ODI, showing that the batter might just be able to turn it around with a

little more luck and grit.

Afif Hossain remains caught between roles. A batter who usually bats at number four in the domestic circuit, Afif continues to be used at six without showing the intent or finishing ability required. His laboured 49-ball innings at a strike rate of 55.10 in the first ODI typified that struggle.

Opener Saif Hassan also failed to capitalise after getting in, while captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz has yet to make a meaningful impact with the bat down the order.

There is nothing inherently wrong with hope. But when it becomes the central theme -- even within the dressing room -- it begins to sound less like belief and more like an admission of inadequacy. Soumya's likely return may offer a fresh variable, but it is hardly a guaranteed fix.

52 DAYS TO GO



Fastest red in World Cup history

Uruguay defender Jose Batista holds the record for the fastest red card in World Cup history -- against Scotland in the group stage of the 1986 edition. He was shown a straight red card by referee Joel Quiniou just 52 seconds after kickoff for a dangerous tackle.

****Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: A goal, a cradle, a moment beyond football**



Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana Joty and her Sri Lanka counterpart, Chamari Athapaththu, pose with the trophy at Shahid Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi on Sunday, ahead of their three-match WODI series which begins today. The second and third matches will be played on April 22 and 25.

PHOTO: BCB



ADVANTAGE CITY AS HAALAND NETS WINNER VS ARSENAL

Erling Haaland struck the winner as Manchester City beat leaders Arsenal 2-1 on Sunday in a potentially decisive blow in the Premier League title race. City's Rayan Cherkhi opened the scoring in the 16th minute with a fine solo effort, but Kai Havertz equalised less than two minutes later after a mistake by City goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma. Haaland then struck after the break for his 23rd league goal of the season. Pep Guardiola's side, on 67 points and with a game in hand, moved within three points of Arsenal and could go top with a win over relegation-bound Burnley on Wednesday, with five games remaining.

PHOTO: AFP

'Target is to qualify for Asian Games'

Bangladesh women's hockey team left for Jakarta in the early hours of Monday for the Women's Asian Games Qualifiers from April 23 to 29. **Orpita Pal** is leading the youthful team in their debut appearance at international stage. The Grade-12 student from BSKP spoke to **The Daily Star's Anisur Rahman** about the team's preparation, goals and challenges in the eight-team competition, from where four top teams will qualify for the tournament proper. Following are the excerpts:



The Daily Star (DS): You previously captained the U-21 team. Now you are leading the senior team in their debut tournament. What is the team's primary objective and how prepared are you?
Orpita Pal (OP): Our preparation has been quite good. Our team bonding is strong as we are training under a disciplined routine for a long period at BSKP. It would be premature to talk about winning the championship because we don't have much prior experience at this

level. Our target is to secure a place for the Asian Games by advancing to the semifinals.

DS: Bangladesh have been grouped with Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong and Uzbekistan. Do you think you can progress?
OP: Nothing is impossible. If there is willpower, anything can be achieved. Chinese Taipei are a strong side but we have to overcome Hong Kong and Uzbekistan to realise our dream.

DS: How does this team compare to the 2024 U-21 side?
OP: Back in 2024, we were not as matured as we are now because the sense of 'team feelings' was slightly lower.

Now, our collective mindset has improved, and everyone has a better sense of what is required to represent the country. In terms of technical performance, we previously lacked a clear understanding of skills like slices or overheads, which we have now mastered. Furthermore, we have changed our tactical approach; instead of running individually with the ball, we are learning to let the ball travel. This allows us to organise

our play more effectively without exhausting the players.

DS: Where has the team improved most?
OP: I would say our greatest strength is the penalty corner. We have trained PCs extensively, and our scoring ability in this area is high. In 2024, we secured most of our goals through PCs, which boosted our confidence. We have three to four PC specialists.

DS: Your personal goal?
OP: I am not focusing on personal goals rather my primary objective is to lead the team to get good results.

DS: Will lack of exposure hurt?
OP: We will certainly struggle a bit due to the lack of international exposure. If we could play regularly against international sides, we would understand our strengths and weaknesses better and compete with more confidence in AHF-sanctioned tournaments.

DS: Tell us about the Barua twins -- Niladri and Himadri.

OP: Our bonding with them is excellent. As a goalkeeper, Himadri is the backbone of our team. Niladri plays in defence and I feel confident when she is behind me.

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Decision on IMF loan tranche likely next month

Says finance minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The decision on the release of the next tranche of the IMF's \$5.5 billion loan will be made within the next month as the two sides endeavour to iron out disagreements over some of the conditions, said Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday.



The discussions may continue for 15 to 20 days or at most a month, he told reporters at his Secretariat office upon his return from the International Monetary Fund World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington, DC.

"After that, depending on where the talks stand, we will decide the

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



Using nets, locals catch shrimp fry in the Shibsra river during high tide. They sell them to local traders. One can get 600-800 fry by dragging nets along the riverbank for three-four hours a day. Currently, 1,000 fry are selling for Tk 700-900. The photo was taken in the Deluti area of Paikgachha, Khulna.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

FILING OF POLLS EXPENDITURE EC still waiting on 92 candidates

AHMED DEEPTO

Sixty-six days after the issuance of the gazette of the 13th national parliamentary election, the Election Commission is yet to receive expenditure statements from every candidates.

Although the stipulated deadline expired a month ago, the EC has extended it by a month. Still, several candidates remain non-compliant, leaving the constitutional body waiting for full disclosure.

By law, candidates must file their expenditure statements with returning officers within 30 days of the results being published. On February 25, the EC issued a letter instructing candidates to submit their statements by March 15.

The gazette with elected lawmakers was published on February 13, the day after the national polls.

A total of 2,033 candidates contested in the election. Excluding three constituencies, Sherpur-3, and Chattogram-2, 4, the number of contenders stood at 2,011. Of them, 92 candidates have yet to submit their election expenditure statements, according to EC officials.

Of the 56 registered political parties, 50 fielded their nominees in the polls. As per the Representation of the People Order (RPO), parties are also required to submit their election expense statements to the EC within 90 days of the gazette notification.

WHAT LAW SAYS

According to article 44(c) of the RPO, every contesting

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

WEST BENGAL POLLS Nearly 7 lakh voters added to electoral rolls

AGENCIES

Nearly seven lakh voters have been added to the electoral rolls in West Bengal ahead of the assembly elections, officials said, though detailed demographic data is yet to be released by the Election Commission of India.

Of the newly added electorate, about 3.22 lakh are set to vote in the first phase, while nearly 3.88 lakh will cast their ballots in the second phase, a senior official said, quoted by PTI said.

However, the commission has not clarified how many of these are first-time voters who have recently turned 18, nor provided a gender-wise break-up, reports TNN.



Data on Form 6 applications, used for inclusion in electoral rolls, and the number of rejections has also not been disclosed. Officials said only aggregate figures have been released so far, with detailed data maintained separately and likely to be shared later if required.

Following the latest revision, the total electorate in the state stands at 6,82,51,008, a number that may rise further depending on additions ordered by tribunals.

The development also follows last week's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) report, which showed West Bengal recorded net deletions of 10.9 percent, among the highest across states, with large-scale removal of deceased, shifted and duplicate voters.

Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress party, the state's chief minister, accused India's Election Commission of "working at the behest of the BJP" to strike off her supporters from the state's electoral rolls.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

RAPE ATTEMPT Teenager's family, home attacked 'for suing suspect'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A teenage girl's family came under attack allegedly for suing a local madrasa superintendent for attempting to rape her in Noakhali's Subarnachar upazila.

Her house in Madhya Charbagya village was vandalised and looted, while her family members were assaulted during attack on Thursday noon.

A video of the attack went viral on social media on Saturday afternoon, sparking huge criticism among netizens.

The five-minute video shows a large group of people attacking a house, with many of them carrying sticks in their hands. The victim's family members were seen crying, and the attackers were asking them to withdraw the case.

According to the case statement, the 14-year-old girl was a resident student at a local madrasa where Abul Khayer, 35, acts as the superintendent.

On February 5, the girl's

Mobile number portability languishing for BTRC indifference

MAHMUDUL HASAN

How many people know that one can switch operators in Bangladesh without losing one's mobile number? Not many.

Introduced in 2018 with great expectations, the mobile number portability (MNP) service has fallen by the wayside due to a combination of regulatory indifference, high switching costs, operator resistance, and a lack of awareness.

In more than 115 countries, including neighbouring India, the MNP is a widely used tool to enhance consumer freedom, drive competition among mobile network operators and improve service quality.

India, for instance, processes millions of porting requests each month, thanks to robust regulatory backing and widespread public awareness initiatives.

But in Bangladesh, availing the service is nothing short of an ordeal. Take the case of Mizanur Rahman from Tangail. Fed up with poor network coverage in his new home, he urgently needed to switch operators in March. Despite following every required step, his attempt failed.

- » Nearly 45% porting requests rejected, far above global standards
- » Users falsely flagged inactive, legitimate switching attempts blocked
- » Porting costs exceed Tk 450 due to taxes
- » Operators resist switching, citing vague or non-compliant reasons
- » Most users unaware of mobile number portability service

"I was told that my number had been inactive for over 90 days, which disqualified me. But the truth is, it was never inactive for even 24 hours. It's pure fraud with customers," said the private service holder.

The Daily Star spoke to a dozen mobile subscribers who reported the same issue: despite keeping their SIMs active and regularly recharged, their existing

operators flagged the SIMs as inactive when porting requests were made by the lone MNP service provider, Infozillion, a joint venture between a local and a Dutch firm.

Despite following all prescribed steps, nearly 45 out of every 100 porting requests are rejected – in contrast to the international best practice of rejection rate of less than 5 per cent – according to Infozillion, compelling them to abandon their plan to switch operators altogether.

In the first month of its launch in October 2018, more than 44,000 subscribers successfully ported their numbers. Within eight months, the figure surpassed 111,000. By the end of its first year, upwards of 700,000 users had utilised the service.

However, it took another five and a half years to reach the next 700,000 mark. In May 2025, only 4,341 subscribers successfully ported their numbers.

When the service was introduced, customers were charged Tk 50 along with a 15 per cent value-added tax (VAT) by the operators.

However, less than a year later, the National Board of Revenue

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Lebanese army restores road, bridge damaged by Israeli strikes

AFP, Beirut

Lebanon's military said yesterday it had reopened a road and bridge damaged by Israeli strikes in the country's south, as a 10-day truce holds between Hezbollah and Israel.

In a statement, the military said it "fully reopened" a road linking the city of Nabatieh with the Khardali area, and had "partially reopened the Burj Rahal-Tyre bridge".

"Work is also underway to rehabilitate the Tair Falsay-Tyre bridge... following damage caused by the Israeli aggression," the army added.

Israeli strikes on bridges that cross Lebanon's Litani river, which flows around 30 kilometres (20 miles) north of Israel, have largely cut off the area south of the waterway from the rest of Lebanon, according to the army.

On Friday a ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon took effect after the first direct talks between the two sides in decades, bringing a pause to weeks of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah that has killed nearly 2,300 people and displaced more than a million.

8 children killed in Louisiana shooting

AFP, Washington

Eight children were killed in a shooting spree yesterday in the southern US state of Louisiana, in what police said appears to have been an incident of domestic violence.

The gunman, who was not immediately identified, was fatally shot by police after a car chase, officials said. The incident took place in the city of Shreveport, in northwestern Louisiana.

"This is a rather extensive crime scene spanning between two residences," police Corporal Chris Bordelon told a press conference, adding that a third residence was also part of the scene being combed by investigators.

The victims ranged in age from one to 14, Bordelon said. "Some of the children inside were his descendants," he added.

Two other people were struck by gunfire, but their conditions were not immediately known.

The suspect carjacked a vehicle and led police on a chase before officers opened fire and the assailant was killed.

"We do believe him to be the only individual that fired gunshots at these locations," Bordelon said, calling the incident a "domestic disturbance".

The United States, where firearms are readily available, is a frequent scene of gun violence, with thousands of people killed every year.

"It's a terrible morning in Shreveport and we all mourn with the victims," Mayor Tom Arceneaux said at the press conference.



People help a motorcyclist cross a bridge damaged in an earlier Israeli strike, during a 10-day ceasefire, in Zraieh, southern Lebanon, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MEASLES-RUBELLA Nationwide vaccination drive begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will launch a nationwide emergency measles-rubella vaccination campaign from today, in an effort to curb a sharp rise in measles cases and deaths.

Around 1.8 crore children, aged between six months and under five years, are expected to be vaccinated during the drive, Hasanul Mahmud, assistant director of the Expanded Programme on Immunization, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will inaugurate the campaign in Bogura and Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain in Narayanganj's Ruppai, according to the health ministry.

Amid the surge in measles cases and deaths, the government began an emergency vaccination campaign in 30 high-burden upazilas of 18 districts on April 5. The drive was later expanded to four city corporations – Dhaka south, Dhaka north, Mymensingh, and Barishal – from April 12.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4