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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

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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

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## 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.

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## 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

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## 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.



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.

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