



Chokehold on the poor tightens

For millions, the cost of living has been rising for three years. A record fuel price hike made everything worse overnight



Workers are under pressure from both sides: prices are rising while wage growth is losing momentum.

Zahid Hussain, former lead economist, World Bank's Dhaka office



SUKANTA HALDER and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

On a Friday midday in West Agargaon, Shahnaz Akhter stood at a vegetable stall in the summer heat, bargaining over the price of eggplants. Sweat traced lines down her forehead. The colours of her sari had faded.

Four hundred taka used to be enough for daily groceries she needed for her family of six. That was weeks ago. Now she comes home without cooking oil.

When she spoke, her voice was low, barely rising above the noise of the market. "Without oil, it's simply not possible to cook," said Shahnaz, 35.

Her husband drives an auto-rickshaw. Weeks ago, the family could cover groceries without going into debt. Now they buy on credit at the local store, or deliberately buy less than they need.

Shahnaz is searching for work as a domestic worker but hasn't found anything yet. If she can't, she says she'll have no choice but to take her children and her mother-in-law back to the village.

Her situation is not unusual. Across Bangladesh, low-income families have spent most of the past three years absorbing wave after wave of price increases, each one arriving before the last had fully settled. Wages, for the most part, have not kept up, and the distance between what people earn and what it costs to live has been widening.

The numbers tell the story plainly. Inflation stayed close to 9 percent

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Sacks of Boro paddy being transported by tractor past farmers' homes in Bakulia Haor in Itna upazila of Kishoreganj. The grain harvested from the haor not only meets local demand but is also supplied to other parts of the country. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ

Fuel price hike unlikely to stoke inflation

Commerce minister tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktabir yesterday said it was unlikely that the recent

fuel price hike would exacerbate inflation, terming Saturday night's mid-month adjustment "moderate".

The minister made the remark in parliament while replying to



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Talks still uncertain

Iran says 'positively reviewing' participation in negotiations as US delegation set to depart for Pakistan

World powers push for deal as truce nears end

Iran says US not serious about diplomacy

Trump denies he is under pressure to make a deal

Oil jumps, stocks retreat

AGENCIES

Iran is considering attending peace talks with the United States in Pakistan, a senior Iranian official told Reuters yesterday, following moves by Islamabad to end a US blockade of Iran's ports, a major hurdle for Tehran to rejoin peace efforts.

However, the official stressed that

no decision had been made.

Adding to the uncertainty, a source told Reuters that Vice President JD Vance was still in the US, denying reports that he was already on his way to Pakistan's capital Islamabad for talks.

With a two-week ceasefire set to expire this week, the senior Iranian official said Tehran was "positively

reviewing" its participation, but no final decision had been made. The comments conveyed a clear change of tone from earlier statements, ruling out attendance and pledging to retaliate for US aggression.

The Iranian official said mediator Pakistan was making positive efforts to end the US blockade and ensure

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Prime Minister Tarique Rahman observes as a child gets vaccinated for measles at Bagbari in Bogura's Gabtoli upazila yesterday. The government has targeted to jab around 1.8 crore children during a campaign, which began yesterday, in response to rising measles cases. Story on page 3.

PHOTO: PID

BNP unveils list of 36 women set to enter JS

Nominees span old and new faces; ex-AL member's inclusion draws flak

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP yesterday announced its final list of 36 nominees for the 50 reserved seats for women in the 13th Jatiya Sangsad, putting forward a mix of seasoned politicians, young organisers, and family-linked figures.

Of them, 10 are former lawmakers and senior party leaders, while eight come from established political families, according to the list. Three were defeated in the 2026 general election, six have roots in student politics, and the rest are new faces. Meanwhile, one inclusion has stirred discontent among some party members.

Prime Minister's Adviser and BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi announced the

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OPPOSITION PICKS ON PAGE 3

Some groups out to confuse people about reforms

Says PM, upgrades Bogura to city corporation, launches canal excavation

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday alleged that certain political groups are attempting to mislead the public regarding the reforms and accused them of ignoring pressing issues.

"Some political parties, both in and outside parliament, have started to confuse the public. The interim government had formed 11 commissions covering the constitution, judiciary, administration, health, and women's affairs. Today, we sense a conspiracy afoot," he told a rally organised by Bogura district BNP at Altafunnessa playground.

The premier described such groups as "covert manipulators" who, he said, have repeatedly sought to mislead the nation at critical moments, including during the Liberation War, the 1986 election, and the 1/11 period in 2008, reports our district correspondent.

He went on to say that those trying to mislead the public in the name of reforms and misrepresent the July charter say nothing about women's freedom or development.

Tarique, also the BNP chairman, said these groups remain silent about the health reform commission's report in ensuring people's access to medicine and healthcare. "They don't talk about how to fix the administration or how to stabilise law and order. They only talk about the constitution."

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Turkey says COP31 will push for more global action under its presidency

REUTERS, Antalya

This year's UN climate summit will seek to turn past decisions into action, with financing the main focus, Turkey's Environment and Climate Change Minister Murat Kurum told Reuters, as the country prepares to host and chair COP31 in November.

The minister, Murat Kurum, said financing was the most important task, with nearly \$1 trillion needed to help developing countries meet climate change targets, adding that raising public awareness about climate policies was essential at a time when wars and security crises dominate the global agenda.

"Important decisions have been taken in every COP so far. We will follow up these decisions, but what is essential is putting them into practice. The expectation of the world, of humanity from us is to move to practice," Kurum said in an interview at a diplomacy forum in Antalya at the weekend.



After having trekked long distances, men and women queue to collect fresh water from a tubewell at Deluti village in Paikgachha upazila of Khulna yesterday. Every dry season, coastal villages face an acute water crisis, leaving thousands without safe drinking water.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Philippines, US and allies start huge military drills

REUTERS, Manila

Philippine and US forces will carry out maritime strike drills on a remote Philippine island near Taiwan during annual exercises that started on Monday, which Manila's military chief said would test their readiness under "real-world conditions".

The April 20 to May 8 exercises known as "Balikatan", or "shoulder-to-shoulder", will be the largest yet in terms of participating countries, with Australia included again and Canada, France, New Zealand and Japan joining as active participants for the first time, highlighting Manila's widening network of security partnerships.

The exercises will involve practising precision strike and interdiction operations in coastal waters of the Philippines and will feature integrated air and missile defence exercises, multinational maritime operations, and counter-landing, live-fire drills.

Launching the exercises, Philippine armed forces chief Romeo Brawner said their purpose was to reaffirm the strength of their alliance and their responsibility to secure the region.

"We train across the breadth of our archipelago ... testing our readiness in real-world conditions across all domains," Brawner said.

More than 17,000 troops are taking part, including about 10,000 from defence treaty ally the United States, even as Washington remains heavily engaged in the Middle East.

Talks still uncertain

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Iran's participation.

The ceasefire had appeared in jeopardy after the US said it had seized an Iranian cargo ship that tried to run its blockade and Tehran vowed to retaliate.

A Pakistani security source said Pakistan's key mediator, Field Marshal Asim Munir, had told US President Donald Trump the blockade was an obstacle to talks, and that Trump had promised to consider ending it.

The US was hoping to start negotiations in Pakistan shortly before the ceasefire expires, with sweeping security preparations under way in Islamabad.

However, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said that "unconstructive & contradictory signals from American officials carry a bitter message; they seek Iran's surrender."

"Iranians do not submit to force," he added on X.

Meanwhile, a senior Pakistani government official told Reuters yesterday that Pakistan is confident it can get Iran to attend talks with the US.

"We have received a positive signal from Iran. Things are fluid, but we are trying that they should be here when we start the talks tomorrow or a day after," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Trump yesterday said he believed that a nuclear deal the US is currently negotiating with Iran will be better than a 2015 international agreement to curb Tehran's nuclear program.

"THE DEAL that we are making with Iran will be FAR BETTER than the JCPOA, commonly referred to as 'The Iran Nuclear Deal'," Trump wrote

in a social media post after concerns expressed by Democrats and some nuclear experts that he is rushing negotiations on a highly complex topic.

During his first White House term, Trump in 2018 withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreed to by Iran, the United States and world powers, calling it "the worst deal ever."

"I am under no pressure whatsoever, although, it will all happen, relatively quickly!" Trump added in a Truth Social post.

Trump announced the two-week ceasefire with Iran on April 7, and has not specified when precisely it ends.

A Pakistani source involved in the talks said it would expire at 8:00pm ET on Wednesday, which would be midnight GMT or 3:30 am Thursday in Iran.

The US has maintained its blockade of Iranian ports, while Iran lifted and then reimposed its own blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which typically handles roughly one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied gas supply.

Oil prices rose around 5 percent as traders remained fearful that the ceasefire would collapse. Traffic through the Strait of Hormuz was at a virtual standstill with just three crossings in the space of 12 hours, according to shipping data.

The US military said it had fired on an Iranian-flagged cargo ship headed towards Iran's Bandar Abbas port on Sunday after a six-hour standoff, disabling its engines. US Central Command released video showing

Marines descending ropes from helicopters onto the vessel.

The vessel is likely to have been carrying

what Washington deems dual-use items that could be used by the military, maritime security sources said yesterday.

Iran's military said the ship had been travelling from China and accused the US of "armed piracy", according to state media. They said they were ready to confront US forces over the "blatant aggression", but were constrained by the presence of crew members' families on board.

China, the main buyer of Iranian crude, expressed concern over the "forced interception", and Chinese President Xi Jinping called for ships to resume passage through the strait as normal and for the conflict to be resolved through political and diplomatic channels, state news agency Xinhua reported.

Moscow yesterday called for the US-Iran ceasefire to be maintained and for diplomatic efforts to continue, after Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov spoke with his Iranian counterpart, a close Russian ally.

French President Emmanuel Macron also called for the US and Iran to de-escalate.

"Our position remains the same. We need to settle things through diplomacy. Everyone must calm down," Macron said during a joint press conference with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk.

Trump warned on Sunday that the US would destroy every bridge and powerplant in Iran if it rejected his terms, continuing a recent pattern of such threats.

Iran has said that if the United States were to attack its civilian infrastructure, it would strike power stations and desalination plants in its Gulf Arab neighbours.

FROM PAGE 1

in March, continuing the elevated level. That sustained pressure has had a direct and measurable effect on household incomes.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, inflation has outpaced wage growth for 50 consecutive months, with the wage growth rate sitting at 8.09 percent in March, nearly one percentage point below the inflation rate.

In practice, this means that real incomes are negative, steadily eroding household purchasing power even as workers nominally earn more.

"Workers are under pressure from both sides: prices are rising while wage growth is losing momentum," said Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office.

Into that already strained reality, the government delivered another blow. On April 18, the energy ministry raised fuel prices to record highs. The increases amount to roughly a 20 percent jump across the board. In lockstep, the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission raised the prices of liquefied petroleum gas.

Past trends show that when fuel prices rise, the cost of related goods tends to increase even more. The LPG price increase will only add to the pressure.

For Rezanur Rahman Rifat, who works at a private packaging company, the arithmetic is simple and grim. Fuel will cost him 20 percent more overnight, but his salary won't increase until next year. So something has to give.

The 31-year-old father of one will cut spending, save less, and absorb the rest, even though his wife also works. Together, they must care for Rifat's elderly parents as well.

What worries Rifat most is the long run: the amount he can set aside each month will shrink, leaving his financial future more exposed than it was a week ago.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, put it in broader terms. Fuel price increases have wide-

ranging effects, he said, raising costs across transport, domestic industries, export-oriented sectors, and import-substituting industries -- all of which eventually feed into broader inflation that households cannot avoid.

After years of elevated inflation, he said, this latest increase will erode purchasing power further at a moment when many families have little left to give. He expressed hope that the government would adjust domestic prices downward if global fuel costs decline, but was cautious about the near term: under current conditions, the impact is largely unavoidable.

The effects moved quickly through the city's markets. At Karwan Bazar, vegetable vendor Mosharaf Hossain said rising transportation costs, combined with the end of the season for some produce, had pushed prices up by Tk 15-20 per kilogram in just the past week.

The state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh confirmed the trend in data that made for uncomfortable reading. Coarse rice, which sold for Tk 52.5 per kilogram a week ago, now costs Tk 57.5. Flour price is up 2 percent, garlic 2 percent, ginger 13 percent, cinnamon 10 percent, and green chillies have surged 50 percent.

Kamal Hossain sells fruit near Kalyanpur New Market and said his children often ask for chicken. He can no longer afford the Sonali variety, so he buys a broiler instead. Rice prices have gone up too, he said. He used to avoid Pangas fish, an option of last resort. Now, struggling to balance what he earns against what everything costs, he buys it without a second thought.

Sajedur Rahman runs a small eatery in Ibrahimpur Bazar, and his daily vegetable budget has climbed from Tk 700 to Tk 1,000 in a single week. Palm oil, which cost Tk 170 per kilogram just days ago, now sells for Tk 185. He is thinking about raising his menu prices to compensate, but he is also afraid that if he does, customers will simply stop coming.

The pattern these stories describe is what prolonged inflation looks like at the household level. Responding to high inflation, people would initially

cut back on non-food expenses such as entertainment and clothing. If that is not enough, they would start reducing their food consumption, eventually skipping nutritious foods and opting for cheaper, lower-quality alternatives. It is a sequence that plays out gradually enough to be easy to miss, until a fuel hike in the middle of the night makes the whole thing visible at once.

In April, the World Bank projected weaker economic growth for Bangladesh and estimated that an additional 12 lakh people will remain below the three-dollar international poverty line this fiscal year, largely due to the economic fallout from the US-Israel war on Iran.

The World Bank predicted that the conflict will likely affect Bangladesh's economy materially, compounding existing vulnerabilities that already include high inflation, financial sector stress, limited policy space, and weakened confidence.

Since the taka broke the long-held Tk 85 stability level against the dollar in early 2022, it has lost about 30 percent of its value, inflating the cost of every imported commodity, from fuel to cooking oil, before it reaches a market stall.

AHM Shafiquzzaman, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said the poverty rate has been rising for three years and that the middle class has been quietly sliding into the lower-middle class, squeezed by a lack of new employment and a growing burden on those who are still earning.

People are switching to cheaper food, he said, and the concern is not just financial. When families are forced to consistently eat less and worse, children do not develop properly, either mentally or physically, and the long-term cost of that is harder to measure than a fuel price, yet no less real.

Back in West Agargaon, Shahnaz Akhter is still looking for work. She has no timeline, no guarantee. What she could manage three months ago, she can no longer manage today -- and nothing suggests next week will be any easier.

Some groups out to confuse people

FROM PAGE 1

This was Tarique's maiden visit to Bogura since he assumed office as the head of the government following the February 12 polls. During the visit, he attended a series of programmes.

The PM unveiled the plaque of Bogura City Corporation, upgrading the 150-year-old municipality to city corporation status, reports UNB.

It will be the 13th city corporation in the country.

Speaking at the ceremony, the PM said the long-standing demand of people has been fulfilled through the creation of the city corporation.

"Bogura must be turned into a model town. This cannot be done by the government alone; everyone's cooperation is needed," he said.

Earlier, the PM arrived at Bogura Circuit House by bus around 10:00am. His wife Zubaida Rahman was among his companions on this one-day tour.

Tarique also inaugurated an emergency measles-rubella vaccination campaign at Ziaur Rahman Gram Hospital in Bagbari of Gabtali upazila and distributed Family Cards among women at the Shaheed Zia Degree College ground. He launched the excavation work on the Chowkidah canal at Nasipur by cutting soil with a spade.

He visited his ancestral home "Zia Bari" in Bagbari in the afternoon.

At a rally, he said, "We want to introduce Family Cards and Farmers' Cards for our people. We want to provide honorariums for imams and muezzins. We want to excavate canals, plant trees, and create jobs for young

people at home and abroad. These critics have done nothing on any of these issues."

He questioned the credibility of those misleading the public about the July charter, arguing that they never believed in the country's independence or even its existence.

The PM assured the crowd that every promise made by the BNP to the people would be fulfilled.

Addressing local demands, he said construction of the Sirajganj-Bogura railway line was a top priority and would begin soon.

Describing Bogura and surrounding areas as major agricultural hubs, Tarique said he wanted to increase exports of agricultural products abroad.

He added that work would soon begin at Bogura University to introduce specialised departments in agriculture, engineering, and medicine.

He opened the "e-bail bond" system in seven more districts, including Bogura, on the District and Sessions Judge Court premises in the morning.

At the event, the PM said that after being freed from one and a half decades of fascist rule and exploitation, an accountable and democratic government has been established in the country through direct votes of the people, reports BSS.

"The people have regained their lost democratic political rights."

Besides, he inaugurated the newly constructed building of the Bogura District Bar Association on the court premises.

Tarique said unless the rule of justice is established in the country through coordination among the three branches

-- legislative, executive, and judiciary -- the benefits of citizens' democratic rights will not be ensured.

Noting that the role of judges is key in establishing the rule of law, he said therefore, president Ziaur Rahman had opened the door to the independence of the country's judiciary, which had been taken away through the fourth amendment of the constitution.

"But during the fascist regime, the judiciary was turned into a partisan court."

Tarique said the government is implementing the "e-bail bond" system to reduce harassment of people in the judicial process by establishing a corruption-free, transparent, and independent judicial system, as part of transforming judicial administration and judicial process into a fully electronic system and modernising the judiciary.

If the system can be introduced in all courts across the country, it would help establish justice by removing delays and discrimination in getting justice, he added.

Launching the second phase of the Family Card programme, the PM said his government would fund key welfare programmes, including Family Card and Farmers' Card, by recovering money laundered during the previous regime.

"As we said before the election, we will work to stop the corruption that took place during the previous autocratic regime, when hundreds of crores of taka were laundered abroad and public wealth was stolen."

[Our Bogura correspondent contributed to this report.]

FROM PAGE 1

names at a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office.

They include BNP standing committee member Selima Rahman, a former state minister for cultural affairs and a two-time reserved-seat lawmaker; and Shirin Sultana, a central committee member and a former lawmaker from 2001 and the wife of current BNP MP and Joint Secretary General Khairul Kabir Khokon.

Rasheda Begum Hira, BNP training affairs secretary and a reserved-seat lawmaker in 2001 and 2008; and Rehana Akter Ranu, assistant training affairs secretary, who also served in reserved seats in 2001 and 2008, are also on the list.

Others with prior parliamentary experience include Bilkis Islam, a former reserved-seat lawmaker and BNP executive committee member; Helen Zerin Khan, assistant education affairs secretary and a former lawmaker from a reserved seat; Nilufar Chowdhury Moni, assistant self-reliance affairs secretary and a former reserved-seat member; Sultana Ahmed, Mohila Dal general secretary and a former lawmaker from a reserved seat; and Shammi Akter, a BNP media cell member and assistant local government affairs secretary who also served in parliament through a reserved seat.

The family-linked nominees include Newaz Halima Arly, sister of current State Minister for Cultural Affairs Ali Newaz Mahmood Khyom. Arly was also a former lawmaker.

Meanwhile, Nipun Roy Chowdhury, Dhaka district BNP general secretary, who is the daughter of former cultural affairs minister Nitai Roy Chowdhury and the daughter-in-law of BNP leader Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, is also nominated.

Shakila Farzana, daughter of former BNP chairperson adviser and former chief whip Syed Wahidul Alam, and Bithika Binte Hossain, wife of late BNP leader Shafiul Bari, are also set to become members of parliament.

Also included are Ferdousi Ahmed, joint convener of Dhaka North BNP and sister of BNP leader Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu, and Jahrat Adib Chowdhury, daughter of former state minister for disaster management and relief Ebadur

Rahman Chowdhury.

Jahrat, of Sylhet's Moulvibazar, is also a former deputy CEO of mobile operator Banglalink.

The list features a strong presence of first-time nominees: Mosammat Farida Yasmin, a BNP central committee member; Zeeba Amina Khan, a member of the BNP executive committee; Fahima Nasrin Munni, assistant secretary of international affairs; and Suraia Zarin Rony, joint general secretary of Bogura district Mohila Dal.

Fahmida Haq, wife of Zillur Rahman, was also added in the list. Zillur is the host of Channel i's popular talk show "Tritiyo Matra" and the executive director of Centre for Governance Studies, while Fahmida is a member of its board of directors.

Shamim Ara Shapna, general secretary of Cox's Bazar district BNP and the district's first female public prosecutor, and Madhabi Marma, former general secretary of Bandarban district Mohila Dal, are also set to become members of the 13th Jatiya Sangsad.

Among the more notable first-time entrants is Anna Minj, from the indigenous Oraon community and a former senior director of programmes at BRAC International, who is set to enter parliament for the first time. Her husband, John Gomez, is BNP's assistant religious affairs secretary.

Mahmuda Habiba, a BNP media cell member, and Montaj Alo Ahmed of Munshiganj, international affairs secretary of the central Mohila Dal and president of France Mohila Dal, have also received nominations.

The list also features several leaders with backgrounds in student politics.

Mansura Akter is currently joint general secretary of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal central committee, while Sanzida Yasmin is also a joint general secretary of the central committee and the immediate past member secretary of Eden College.

Others nominated from the student front include Arifa Sultana, a former joint general secretary of Chhatra Dal and a member of Dhaka South BNP; Nadia Pathan Papon, a former assistant general secretary of the same committee and also a member of Dhaka South BNP; Selina Sultana Nishita, a former joint general secretary

of Chhatra Dal; and Shawkat Ara Akter, an Eden College Chhatra Dal leader and joint secretary.

Rezeka Sultana, president of Rangpur city Mohila Dal and assistant organising secretary of the central Mohila Dal, is another inclusion.

The three nominees who had lost in the 2026 national election are Sabira Sultana, president of Jikargacha upazila BNP in Jashore; Mayer Daak coordinator Sanjida Islam Tulee in Dhaka; and Sherpur BNP joint convener Sunсила Jabrin Priyanka, daughter of Hazrat Ali, former convener and general secretary of Sherpur BNP.

Meanwhile, the inclusion of Subarna Thakur, who reportedly joined the BNP ahead of the national polls after previously being associated with Kashiani upazila Awami League in Gopalganj, has drawn attention following the announcement.

Local BNP leaders, speaking on condition of anonymity, said nominating someone who recently joined from another party is "unfair to loyal workers and could create internal divisions within the party".

They also warned that such decisions may negatively affect party unity and electoral activities if dissatisfaction grows at the grassroots level.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Subarna said, "Yes, a point needs to be clarified. At one time, I was listed as the Environment Affairs Secretary of Kashiani Upazila Awami League, but I did not give any consent for this. My name was included without my knowledge, and I never saw it or took part in any meetings, rallies, or party activities. For this reason, I never formally resigned either, because I never accepted the position in the first place."

"My involvement in politics actually dates back to my student life. While studying at Khulna City College, I was involved with BNP's student wing and was actively engaged in politics at that time. There are also some records of that period, including newspaper coverage of my activities."

Meanwhile, senior party leaders said the 36 nominations were made to strike a balance between experience, family political background, young leadership, and social diversity.

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‘BANGLAR JOYJATRA’
Khalilur requests
Iran for safe passage
through Hormuz

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman has yet again requested Iran to facilitate the safe passage of the Bangladesh-flagged vessel ‘Banglar Joyjatra’ through the Strait of Hormuz.

He made the request while meeting Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh on the sidelines of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Turkey on Sunday night, according to a foreign ministry statement.

During the meeting, Khalilur Rahman thanked Iran for including Bangladesh among the six countries whose vessels would be permitted to cross Hormuz, reiterated Bangladesh's balanced position on the war, and underscored the importance of restraint and resolution of differences through diplomacy.

Saeed Khatibzadeh followed up on the matter immediately and informed that while the situation continues to remain tense, necessary directives have been given to the authorities concerned in Iran.

He appreciated Bangladesh's constructive stance and expressed hope that the Bangladesh foreign minister

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A large number of battery-powered rickshaws exacerbate the Dhaka University campus road traffic yesterday. Despite a ban imposed by the authorities on such vehicles, they continue to ply there freely, often driving on the wrong side and posing significant risks to students and pedestrians.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Govt decision on
transport fares
likely tomorrowOperators already charging
higher rates amid fuel price hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even after a day-long discussion between the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority and leaders of bus, truck and launch owners' associations, transport fares remained unsettled till yesterday, with a decision expected tomorrow (Wednesday), said an official of the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges.

The BRTA sat on Sunday evening to revise public transport fares at its Banani headquarters after the government raised fuel prices on Saturday night. However, they could not finalise the fares.

The new rates would be fixed after a meeting on Wednesday, said Nobel Dey, information officer at the Road Transport and Highways Division.

However, transport operators have already begun raising fares on their own at varying rates, particularly for Dhaka intercity and long-route buses, as well as goods trucks.

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JS RESERVED SEATS
Jamaat-led alliance
names 13 candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-e-Islami led 11-party electoral alliance yesterday announced a list of 13 candidates for the reserved women's seats in the 13th parliament, hours after the BNP released its own list.

Jamaat's central publicity department sent the list to the media in the evening, signed by Hamidur Rahman Azad, coordinator of the 11-party alliance and assistant secretary general of Jamaat. The names were later formally announced at a press conference.

According to the list, eight candidates are from Jamaat-e-Islami, two from the National Citizen Party, and one each from the Jatiya Gonotantrik Party (Jagpa) and Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis. One is from a July martyr's family.

The Jamaat nominees are Nurunnisa Siddika, secretary of its central women's wing; Marzia Begum, assistant secretary; Sabikun Nahar Munni, secretary of the law and human resources department; Mardia Montaz, a teacher at Daffodil International University; Nazmun Nahar Nilu, secretary of publicity and cultural affairs; Mahluza Hannan from Sylhet; Sajeda Samad, a Bogura-based leader and former upazila women vice-chairman; and Shamsunnahar Begum from Chattogram.

The NCP nominees are Monira Sharmin, convener of its women's platform Jatiya Nari Shakti, and member secretary Mahmuda Alam Mitu.

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PARTY-WISE NOMINEES	
Jamaat	8
NCP	2
Jagpa	1
Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis	1

*One nominee represents a July martyr's family.

‘Vaccination for
every child’Says PM, inaugurates nationwide measles-
rubella vaccination campaign

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A nationwide emergency measles-rubella (MR) vaccination campaign was launched yesterday amid efforts to curb a sharp rise in measles cases and deaths.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman inaugurated the emergency MR vaccination campaign at Ziaur Rahman Gram Hospital in Bagbari under Gabtoli upazila of Bogura.

Speaking on the occasion, the PM said every child should be brought under the vaccination coverage, and field workers should be vigilant to ensure that no child is left out.

PM's wife Dr Zubaida Rahman, State Minister for Health MA Muhiit, State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Mir Shahe Alam were present, among others.

Meanwhile, inaugurating the drive in Narayanganj's Rupganj upazila, Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain said the government is planning to collect vaccines and other logistics, considering the demands of 15 months.

A stock of six months will be



A total of 21.8 lakh children from 30 high-burden upazilas and four city corporations and 1.58 lakh more children from the rest of the country are expected to be vaccinated.

ensured so that no shortage is reported, he added.

Amid the surge in measles cases and deaths, the government earlier began an emergency MR vaccination campaign in 30 high-burden upazilas across 18 districts on April 5.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

SSC, equivalent
examinations
begin today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Secondary School Certificate and equivalent examinations begin today, with authorities rolling out enhanced surveillance to prevent question leaks and ensure smooth conduct.

A total of 18,51,423 candidates – 9,30,305 boys and 9,21,118 girls – under 11 education boards are sitting the exams at 3,902 centres nationwide.

As per the schedule, Bangla compulsory first paper and Sahaj Bangla first paper exams will be held on the first day.

Written tests will continue until May 20, followed by practical examinations from June 7 to June 14.

At a briefing at the Secretariat yesterday, Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon said special monitoring cells had been set up at the ministry and other government offices to oversee the exams. CCTV feeds from centres will be monitored centrally.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

‘The state must
protect survivors
of sexual violence’
MJF condemns attack on
Noakhali girl, family after
filing attempted rape case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has condemned the attack, vandalism, and threats against the family of a teenage girl in Noakhali's Subarnachar after they filed a case against a madrasa superintendent accused of attempting to rape her.

In a statement yesterday, the organisation expressed deep concern that the survivor and her family faced further violence and intimidation instead of receiving protection.

Citing reports, MJF said a group attacked their home and pressured them to withdraw the case, describing the incident as a serious abuse of power and a failure to ensure justice.

It warned that such incidents discourage families of sexual violence survivors from filing cases and seeking justice.

“This incident shows how survivors and their families are often punished for seeking justice. The state must protect survivors and their families and ensure the arrest and prosecution of the accused.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

A daily struggle for
water in the hillsDrying streams, wells leave remote
Rangamati communities in crisis

RIKORS CHAKMA, Rangamati

For people in remote hilly areas, late spring and the onset of summer dry up springs and wells, creating a shortage of drinking water.

Their year-round reliance on spring water forces many to dig holes near sources and install pipelines to collect what little water remains.

More than 50 families in the Sapchari Joint Farm area of Rangamati Sadar upazila face a shortage of potable water during the summer, particularly from March.

To cope, residents installed a pipeline from a nearby jhiri (small stream) under Furoman Hill to collect water for cooking, bathing and drinking.

But the jhiri has recently dried up, leaving them struggling. Even when a small amount of water flows through



the pipeline, they have to wait for hours.

The Roads and Highways Department in Rangamati recently supplied 5,000 litres of drinking water to ease their suffering, but residents say it is far from enough.

“We placed a water tank



next to the jhiri to collect water through a pipeline, but we still suffer during the summer and have to wait from early morning till noon to collect water. The situation will worsen in a few days,” said Kalindi Chakma, a resident.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A dense layer of plastic bottles, polythene bags, and other non-biodegradable waste floats on the waterbody at Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka, highlighting a severe lack of maintenance at the historic site. The park's ecosystem is severely polluted and neglected, threatening both the environment and public health. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Couple burnt to death in Dinaipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

A couple were burnt to death early yesterday after a fire broke out at their house in the Suihari Ashrampara area of Dinaipur municipality.

The deceased were identified as Tapan Kumar Sarcar, 45, and his wife Lata Sarcar, 37.

Mohammad Nurnabi, officer-in-charge of Dinaipur Kotwali Police Station, told The Daily Star over the phone that the fire broke out on the first floor of the house around 1:00am.

The couple, who were inside at the time, could not escape and were burnt to death.

The victims' son, Tibra Sarcar, said he had gone to a petrol pump in the town around midnight to collect fuel. About an hour later, a neighbour called and informed him about the fire.

He rushed home but could not go upstairs due to the blaze.

Obaidul Islam, senior station officer of Dinaipur Fire Service and Civil Defence, said the fire might have originated from a gas cylinder leak. Police said an unnatural death case was filed with the police station in this connection.

PRAYER TIMING	
APRIL 21	
Fazr	Zohr
4:25	12:45
Asr	Maghrib
6:27	8:00
JAMAAT	5:00
1:15	5:00
6:31	8:30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION	



PHOTO: COURTESY

The Dahir-Sohani-Suraiya Foundation awards scholarships to meritorious and financially challenged students of the Faculty of Business Studies at Dhaka University on April 19 at the Professor Dr Abdullah Farouk Multipurpose Hall. Prof Mahmood Osman Imam, dean of the Faculty of Business Studies, DU; and Chowdhury Mohammed Hanif Shueb, president of the foundation and managing director of Salma Group, handed over the scholarships. Foundation vice presidents Salma Chowdhury and Md Arfan Ali were, among others, present.

Power outages cripple daily life in three dists

STAR REPORT

People across Sylhet division are enduring worsening power cuts as load-shedding has intensified over the past week.

Bangladesh Power Development Board and Rural Electrification Board officials say supply remains far below demand, forcing offices and businesses to close early.

In Sylhet, BPDB recorded a peak demand of 210 megawatts at 5:00pm yesterday, against a supply of 180MW. "We are scheduling around 30MW of load-shedding based on the allocation from Power Grid Bangladesh," said Mohammed Imam Hossain, BPDB's chief engineer in Sylhet.

The situation is more acute in rural areas, where only about two-thirds of demand is being met,

resulting in prolonged outages.

Paresh Chandra Mondal, superintending engineer of REB's Sylhet zone — covering all four districts of the division and Brahmanbaria — said peak demand on Sunday stood at 576MW, against a supply of 361MW, leaving a 215MW deficit.

Residents say the outages are disrupting livelihoods and studies.

Abir Hasan, who runs a mobile repair shop in Tahirpur of Sunanganj, said, "We are asked to close by 7:00pm but get only two to three hours of electricity during the day. Running a business like this is impossible."

Tanim Ahmed, a student of Murari Chand College, said frequent outages are hampering exam preparation.

Meanwhile, in Noakhali,

residents across nine upazilas are facing severe load-shedding. Around 1.29 lakh BPDB consumers and 8.2 lakh users under the Noakhali Palli Bidyut Samity are affected.

Palli Bidyut sources said a demand of about 200MW is being met with only two-thirds of supply. BPDB officials reported receiving just 15-17MW against a demand of 36MW in Noakhali municipality and surrounding areas.

"In 24 hours, we get no more than five to six hours of electricity, and that too in short intervals," said Poli Akhter of Chatkhil upazila.

The crisis is also hitting healthcare services hard. Shipon Saha of Prime Hospital Ltd said the 150-bed facility faces 4-5 daily

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Man dies five days after being hacked over land

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Chattogram

A man, who was hacked during a clash over a land dispute in Patiya upazila of Chattogram, died at Chattogram Medical College Hospital early yesterday.

Abul Kashem, 55, a resident of Dakkhin Gobindarkhil of Patiya municipality, succumbed to his injuries around 6:00am, hospital sources said.

Police said Kashem had a long-standing dispute with a neighbour over a piece of land. The conflict escalated when Kashem tried to stop the neighbour from constructing a road through the disputed property.

During the ensuing altercation, Kashem and his two brothers, Abul Kalam, 50, and Abu Musa, 47, were indiscriminately hacked with sharp weapons on Wednesday, said police.

Locals rescued them and rushed them to CMCH. While Kashem succumbed to his injuries yesterday, the condition of Abul Kalam is reported to be critical.

Patiya Police Station Officer-in-Charge Jiaul Huq said a case was filed on Sunday naming three individuals along with several unidentified others. "The initial case will now be converted into a murder case following the victim's death. We are conducting drives to apprehend the accused," the OC added.

FUEL CRISIS ISSUE

Parliament rejects adjournment motion of Shafiqur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament yesterday rejected the opposition leader's adjournment motion on the fuel crisis, opting to debate the issue without suspending the session.

After moving the motion, opposition leader and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman criticised the government's handling of the fuel crisis and questioned the credibility of its statements.

Deputy Speaker Kayser Kamal said as the House is currently engaged in the discussion on the thanksgiving motion on president's address, the opposition leader's adjournment motion cannot be entertained.

Under the rules, the subject raised in the notice may be discussed without suspending the session. Moreover, the Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources has already made a statement

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

SECRETARIAT FOR SC

HC defers hearing on writ petition challenging repeal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday deferred hearing on a writ petition challenging the legality of repealing the ordinance issued by the interim government to establish a separate secretariat for the Supreme Court.

The bench of Justice Ahmed Sohel and Justice Fatema Anwar said the petition will remain on its cause list until the Appellate Division decides on an appeal the state plans to file against the HC verdict that directed the government to establish the SC Secretariat.

The bench also expressed its expectation that the government will not alter existing structures of the SC Secretariat in the meantime, petitioners'

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 348/2026

IN THE MATTER OF: An application under section 81(2) read with section 85(3) of the Companies Act, 1994.

AND

IN THE MATTER OF: Dr. A M Shamim, son of Late Ali Ahmed Bhuiyan, Shareholder and Director THE MULTIMEDIA LTD. of House-01, Road-04, Dhanmondi, Dhaka. —Petitioner

-VERSUS-

THE MULTIMEDIA LTD. Office address: House-1, Road-4, Dhanmondi, R/A, Dhaka-1209 and The Registrar, Joint Stock Companies & Firms, TCB Bhawan (6th Floor), 1, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka. —Respondents

Take notice that an application under section 81(2), read with section 85(3) 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 Meetings of **THE MULTIMEDIA LTD.** for the calendar years 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 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 Justice Mr. 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.

Md. Asraful Hasan Siddique (Barrister-at-Law)
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Room No.336, Supreme Court Bar Main Building, Shahbagh, Dhaka-1000

A daily struggle for water

FROM PAGE 3

Another resident, Jiken Chakma, echoed the concern, "We couldn't install a deep tube well due to rocks underground, and digging a well is unlikely to yield water. We will always struggle to get water," he said.

The crisis is not limited to one area. Remote upazilas such as Baghaichari, Barkal, Juraichari, Belaichari and Kaptai are also facing shortages.

In Devtachari village of Wagga union in Kaptai, home to about 70 families, a stream that once held

water year-round has nearly dried up. "We used to bathe in the stream and use it for household chores, but now it stays dry most of the year except during the monsoon," said resident Liton Tanchangya.

"Those who can afford it install tube wells and use motor pumps, while others collect water from distant wells. In some areas, even well water is unavailable."

Rekhin Chakma of Chelachhara village in Kawkhali said, "During Falgun-Chaitra, we can sometimes get water by

digging 8-10 feet, if we are lucky."

Sadhana Devi Chakma from the same village said, "Sometimes we have to fight for water. After waiting in long lines for hours, we often manage only a pitcher."

Sabuj Chakma, founder of the Biodiversity Conservation Society of CHT, said the main cause of the crisis is the destruction of natural forests.

"Deforestation and monoculture plantations, including teak, are drying up mountain streams and waterfalls. Climate change is worsening the situation with droughts and erratic rainfall. Planting native species along waterways could help," he said.

Parag Barua, executive engineer of the Public Health Engineering Department in Rangamati, said, "Water demand rises during the dry season. We are identifying the worst-affected areas and prioritising them in our work."

Jamaat-led

FROM PAGE 3

Jagpa Chairman Tasmia Pradhan, as well as Mahbuba Hakim of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis's women's wing, are also on the list.

Mahbuba Hakim is reportedly a niece of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Ameer Mamunul Haque. Rokeya Begum, the mother of July martyr Jabir Ibrahim, has also been nominated.

Nomination papers are scheduled to be submitted tomorrow to the Election Commission office in Agargaon. Voting is set for May 12, according to the EC schedule.

The 50 reserved seats for women in parliament are allocated to parties in proportion to their representation in general seats, with one reserved seat for every six general seats. The BNP-led alliance is expected to get 36 seats, the Jamaat-led alliance 13, and independents one seat.

Speaking at the press conference, Hamidur Rahman Azad said candidates were selected based on academic qualifications, integrity, and political experience.

On nominating a member of a July martyr's family, he said the move was intended to honour the sacrifices that made the current political environment possible.

INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH (IUB)

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Office of Career Guidance, Placement and Alumni Relations

• Senior Analyst (Senior Officer)

Application Deadline
Monday, May 4, 2026

For detailed information and to apply, please visit:
http://iub.ac.bd/news-and-events/jobs-at-iub or scan the QR code

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR THE POST OF SECRETARY

Applications are invited for the post of **Secretary, Board of Trustees**

Details can be obtained from the website (www.aust.edu)

Candidates are requested to fill up the online form, download the online generated CV and send it to reg@aut.edu with cc to vc@aut.edu. Send the hard copy of the online generated CV to the Registrar along with a full resume, two recent passport-size colored photographs, and attested copies of all certificates, mark sheets/ transcripts, testimonials, etc. on or before **30 April 2026**.

INNOVATION :: CREATION :: LEADERSHIP

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE ENGINEER
LAKSHMIPUR PWD DIVISION, LAKSHMIPUR

Phone: +8802-334441328
Email: ee_laxmi@pwd.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice (OTM)

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of works	Tender Closing Date & Time
01.	1261540	G-13/Sadar/ Ramgonj	Supply of bedding for Sadar Upazilla and Ramgonj Upazilla Model Mosque in Lakshmipur District under the project 'Establishing 560 Model Mosque and Islamic Cultural Centre in Zilla & Upazilla (2nd Revised)'	30-Apr-2026 17:00

This is an online Tender. Where only e-Tenders 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. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(Md. Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury)
Executive Engineer
Lakshmipur P.W.D. Division, Lakshmipur.

GD-8710

IBRAHIM CARDIAC HOSPITAL & RESEARCH INSTITUTE
(A Centre for Cardio Vascular, Neuroscience & Organ Transplant Unit)
122, KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM AVENUE, SHAHBAG, DHAKA-1000
Tel: +880-2-41060451-58, Fax: +880-2-41060459, e-mail: info@ibrahimcardiac.org.bd Web: www.ibrahimcardiac.org.bd

INVITATION FOR TENDER

Sl.	Invitation for Tender Reference Number	Nomenclature of Tender
1	ICHRI/SC/OTM/April-01/2026 Dated. 21.04.2026	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 01 No's OT Light With Camera System.
2	ICHRI/SC/OTM/April-02/2026 Dated. 21.04.2026	Supply, Installation, Testing & Commissioning of 01 No's Floor Mounted 800-1000 mA X-ray Machine with Flat panel Detector at Radiology & Imaging Department.

Other Information :

05	Procurement Method	: Open Tendering Method (OTM)
06	Source of Fund	: Own Fund of Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital & Research Institute (ICHRI)
07	Name and Address of the Office & Place of Selling Tender Documents	: Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital & Research Institute (ICHRI), 122, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Shahbag, Dhaka-1000 Will be available at Cash Counter (3 rd Floor)
08	Price of Tender Documents	: Tender Documents Price is BDT. 3,000.00 (Three Thousand) only for OT Light & BDT. 5,000.00 (Five Thousand) only for X-Ray Machine (Non-refundable) Per set.
09	Date & Time of Selling Tender Documents	: Tender Documents are available from 21 April, 2026 to 19 May, 2026 on all working days (9.00am to 3.30pm)
10	Pre-Bid Meeting (Optional) Date & Time	: 02.05.2026 at 10.30am at Blood Bank Conference Room 6th Floor
11	Tender Closing Date & Time	: 19 May, 2026 within 11.00pm
12	Tender Opening Date & Time	: 19 May, 2026 within 12.00pm (In presence of Bidder(s) or their Representative, if there be any.)
13	Tender Dropping Place	: Tender Box kept in Corporate Office (5 th Floor), Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital & Research Institute
14	Tender Opening Place	: Blood Bank Conference Room (5 th Floor) Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital & Research Institute (ICHRI), 122, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Shahbag, Dhaka-1000
15	Name, Designation & Address of Official Inviting Tender	: Prof. Dr. Sahela Nasrin CEO, Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital & Research Institute (ICHRI)
16	Eligibility of Tender	: I. The Bidder(s) should be manufacturer or their authorized Agent/Distributor or Dealer of the offered equipment. II. Bidder(s) should have valid up-to-date legal documents like Trade license, TIN / BIN, VAT, Incomer Tax & Bank Solvency Certificate etc. III. All required eligibility and conditions of the Bidder(s) are stipulated in Tender Documents.
17	Tender Security	: 3% (Three) of quoted amount in favor of Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital & Research Institute in the form of Payment Order / Demand Draft from any Schedule Bank to be submitted along with Tender.
18	Validity of offer for placement of order / NOA	: 90 (Ninety) Days from the date of opening of Tender.
19	Time for Completion of the Supply / work	: 90 (Ninety) Days from the date of Contract Agreement / Notification of Award.
20	Special Conditions	: I. If the Tender is not possible to receive and open on the scheduled date for unavoidable event, then the same will be received and opened on the next working days at the same date and places. II. The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders in fully or partially without assigning any reason thereof and to extend the tender receiving and opening date. III. All terms & conditions to be applied as mentioned in Tender Documents.

Prof. Dr. Sahela Nasrin
Chief Executive Officer
Ibrahim Cardiac Hospital & Research Institute



Israel never talked me into the war with Iran.

DONALD TRUMP
US president



A woman stands amid the debris of a destroyed building in the Haret Hreik area of Beirut's southern suburbs yesterday.

Aim is to take full control of borders

Says Lebanon president ahead of talks with Israel

AGENCIES

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun yesterday said that planned talks with Israel aim to end hostilities and the occupation in the south, despite the rejection of negotiations by Hezbollah and its supporters.

"The choice to negotiate aims to stop hostilities, end the Israeli occupation of southern regions and deploy the (Lebanese) army all the way to the internationally recognised southern borders" with Israel, Aoun said in a statement.

A 10-day ceasefire, pausing more than six weeks of war between Hezbollah and Israel, started on Friday after being announced by US President Donald Trump.

The truce in Lebanon was also one of Iran's conditions for resuming talks with Washington to extend their separate ceasefire.

Aoun's moves yesterday came after a forceful address to the nation Friday night in which he said



"we negotiate for ourselves... we are no longer a pawn in anyone's game, nor an arena for anyone's wars, and we never will be again".

Hezbollah is not part of the talks, and its supporters strongly oppose Lebanon-Israel talks. Lebanon is officially at war with Israel and has no diplomatic ties with it.

Israeli attacks killed nearly 2,300 people and forced over a million to flee their homes, Lebanese authorities said, since Hezbollah dragged the country into the Middle East war last month.

The talks came after Israel

yesterday told residents of south Lebanon to stay out of a belt of territory running the length of the border and not to approach the area of the Litani River, entrenching its grip over southern Lebanon despite a ceasefire in the war with Hezbollah.

The Israeli military posted a map on social media with a red line through 21 villages across the south, and said residents should not move into the area between it and the border, saying Israeli troops were maintaining positions in the south "in the face of ongoing terrorist activities" by the Iran-backed group.

The map named more than 50 other villages in the south to which residents should not return. The Israeli military also said it was not permitted to approach the area of the Litani River, which mostly flows to the north of the area the Israeli military said residents should stay out of.



Children wade through floodwaters following heavy rainfall in Assam's Guwahati yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bangladesh, EU eyeing FTA after partnership deal

FROM PAGE 12

translated into 24 European languages before it is signed.

Officials said Bangladesh's relationship with the EU, the country's largest export destination, has been that of development cooperation under the Cooperation Agreement signed in 2001.

Since then, Bangladesh's exports to the EU have risen to around \$26 billion, while the EU is placing more importance on Bangladesh, a rapidly growing country.

The EU's duty-free market access for Bangladeshi goods will end by 2029, and Bangladesh will be required to meet certain conditions, including on labour rights, environment, and human rights.

"The PCA is a foundational agreement. We will have different joint

committees on various sectors, including trade, investment, environment, labour, etc.," said a foreign ministry official, preferring anonymity.

Against this backdrop, Bangladesh is seeking market access and the launch of negotiations on an FTA and IPA. "We would like our exports to the EU to be protected and also ensure the protection of European investments in Bangladesh," he told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh has been part of the EU's Global Gateway Initiative, under which the country can get funding for renewable energy projects. The EU also included Bangladesh in its Talent Partnership, under which a skilled workforce can migrate to EU countries.

Altogether, the

relationship with the EU is set to be elevated, and the two sides discussed all areas of cooperation, ministry sources said.

Khalilur Rahman and Kaja Kallas yesterday discussed political, economic, and development cooperation, focusing on trade and investment, Indo-Pacific cooperation, migration, skills development, labour standards, and the Rohingya crisis.

They also said the agreement will help strengthen cooperation on regional and global issues of shared interest.

He briefed her on Bangladesh's recent democratic developments and ongoing reform and development efforts, while thanking Kallas for sending a strong election observation mission during the recent parliamentary elections.

Kallas highly appreciated Bangladesh for its very successful and credible elections.

Separately, Khalilur also met Ekaterina Zaharieva, commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation of the European Commission, in Brussels and discussed expanding Bangladesh-EU cooperation in research, science, technology, and innovation.

They highlighted the importance of artificial intelligence, digital innovation, climate resilience, green transition, health, and sustainable development.

The meeting reaffirmed a shared commitment to building a forward-looking and innovation-driven partnership.

The Bangladesh foreign minister also held a bilateral meeting with Maxime Prévot, deputy

prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, European affairs and development cooperation of the Kingdom of Belgium.

The meeting reviewed the state of Bangladesh-Belgium relations and explored avenues for enhanced cooperation in trade, investment, connectivity, innovation, and multilateral engagement. The two sides agreed to hold the third Bangladesh-Belgium Consultations in Brussels later this year.

Khalilur encouraged greater engagement by Belgian businesses and institutions in Bangladesh, particularly in areas where Belgium has recognised strengths, including logistics, port management, biotech and pharmaceuticals, technology, and water management.

Fuel price hike

FROM PAGE 1

a question from independent MP Rumeen Farhana, saying it is important to understand why inflation is unlikely to rise significantly.

He said that compared to the global surge in fuel prices, Bangladesh's increase has been relatively moderate.

"For example, diesel has gone from Tk 100 to Tk 115 per litre. In an industrial plant, fuel accounts for about 7-8 percent of production costs. If the price of diesel rises by 15 percent, the impact on overall costs remains minimal," he explained.

He added that in the transport sector, a bus covering 200 kilometres consumes around 25-30 litres of diesel. "The extra cost of about Tk 450 for those 30 litres, when spread across 10,000 kilograms of goods in a truck, adds only a negligible burden per unit," he said.

"This means that while fuel prices have risen, the effect on inflation is not as dramatic as it may seem. The economy's fundamental balance remains intact. Like other countries, Bangladesh has adopted a moderate policy, keeping the increase modest," he added.

The minister also noted that in the United States, fuel prices vary from state to state due to local taxes. Before the war in the Middle East, many US states had fuel prices around \$2.70-\$2.80 per gallon, which later rose to over \$5.

He further said that, compared with neighbouring countries and similar economies, petroleum prices have risen more sharply elsewhere, adding that in many countries fuel prices are adjusted automatically without requiring direct government intervention.

NIRCH deputy

FROM PAGE 12

police investigating, he said.

Asked whether the assault was linked to tender-related issues, he said that Ahmed is the key person for such work at the hospital and those involved in tender matters often receive threatening phone calls.

Whether yesterday's attack is connected to that will be known after the investigation, he added.

Faridul Islam, the officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station, said they have collected CCTV footage from the spot and nearby areas. Police could not yet ascertain the reason behind the attack as they have not been able to talk to the injured.

Israel kills 2 more in Gaza

UN-EU assessment says over \$71b needed over next decade to rebuild Gaza

REUTERS, Cairo

Israeli strikes killed at least two Palestinians in separate incidents in the Gaza Strip yesterday, health officials said, and fighters from Hamas clashed with gunmen from an Israeli-backed militia, witnesses said.

Medics said one man was killed in an Israeli airstrike in the Bureij camp in the central area of the enclave, while another strike killed one person and wounded others in Gaza City.

The two deaths were the latest violence to overshadow the US-brokered ceasefire deal signed in October after two years of full-blown war between Israel and Hamas.

The ceasefire left Israeli troops in control of a depopulated zone that makes up well over half of Gaza, with Hamas controlling the narrow coastal strip that remains.

More than 750 Palestinians have been

killed since the ceasefire deal took effect.

Israel says it aims to thwart attacks by Hamas and other militant factions.

Also on Monday, residents and sources close to Hamas said members of an Israeli-backed militia operating in an area under Israeli control clashed with Palestinian fighters after crossing into a Hamas-run area east of Khan Younis.

More than \$71 billion will be needed over the next decade for recovery and reconstruction in war-ravaged Gaza, according to an EU-UN assessment published yesterday.

After more than two years of Israel's war in the Palestinian territory, "recovery and reconstruction needs are estimated at around \$71.4 billion", said the final Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment developed by the United Nations and the European Union, in coordination with the World Bank.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Planning

Planning Division

Improvement of Public Investment Management System (IPIMS) Project
Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Ref.No.20.00.0000.404.014.01.25(part 1).85

Date: 20 April 2026

Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI)

For Project Executive Coordinator (Public Investment Management) under
Improvement of Public Investment Management System (IPIMS) project
[Contract Package No.: IPIMS/S-3]

1. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GOB) has received financing from the World Bank for implementing "Improvement of Public Investment Management System (IPIMS)" project under IDA credit of Strengthening Institutions for Transparency and Accountability (SITA). Planning Division of Ministry of Planning has been implementing the project and it intends to apply a part of the proceeds of this credit for the services of an Individual Consultant (National Assignment) as Project Executive Coordinator (Public Investment Management).
2. The broad scope of consulting services includes providing integrated project coordination, management and technical advisory support to the IPIMS project and executing/implementing agencies to enhance planning processes and institutionalize public investment management system. S/he will also support strengthening staff and managerial capacity in the Planning Commission and across Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDA) through adequate training in various planning, appraisal, and forecast tools. S/he will compile the project progress data, identify the issues related to implementation delays and suggest recommendations. The consultant will extend support to Project Implementation Units (PIUs) and Project Coordination and Monitoring Team to monitor the overall implementation of the "Strengthening Institutions for Transparency and Accountability (SITA) Project". Additional tasks may be assigned related to the core functions and agreed by the PIU and the consultant.
3. The expected date for commencement of the services is 15 May 2026 and the tentative duration of the entire assignment is about 24 (Twenty-four) man-months. Detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) and other information will be available upon request from the address provided below either through email or in person.
4. Planning Division now invites eligible individuals to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested individual should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. In support of qualifications and experiences, the applicant must submit documentary evidences.
5. The consultant have a Master's degree in Project Management/ M. Com/ MBA in Accounting/ Finance or in any other relevant discipline. The consultant should be familiar with GOB and World Bank's Policies/Guidelines/Directions/Regulations on project processing and implementations including recent updates. S/he will have more than 20 years' work experience in public sector development planning and managing resources (internal and development partners) for implementing development projects and programs in Bangladesh. The consultant have more than 10 years of experience in development budgeting processes (ADP/RADP) of the GOB. The consultant is preferred to have experience in the digitization of Public Investment Management system including hands on experience in using project management system such as ADP/RADP Management System (AMS), Project Processing System (/PPS), public investment management tools, preparing planning guidelines, etc. The experience in managing project in development partner-financed project(s), particularly World Bank will be considered as added advantage. The detail requirement for qualification and experience is delineated in TOR.
6. During the term of the contract the consultant shall not be associated with any other Government agency, consulting firm or private business entities. Individuals who are currently working as consultants on another World Bank-financed project may also compete in this selection process, but if they are selected they will be required before signing the proposed contract to provide documentary evidence of having satisfactorily complied with their existing contract's requirements with respect to early termination of the contract by the consultant, including advance notice period, to avoid disruption in implementation of that project.
7. The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to the Section III, Para 3.14,3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, February 2025 (6th edition) setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.
8. A consultant will be selected following the Open Competitive Selection of Individual Consultant method set out in the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, February 2025 (6th edition).
9. Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours (09:00 AM to 04:00 PM Bangladesh Standard Time).
10. REOI (e-GP ID No. 1261219) is invited in the National e-GP system Portal (eprocure.gov.bd) for the position of Project Executive Coordinator (Public Investment Management). This is an online EOI, only electronic submission of EOI will be accepted in the e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The interested applicant may visit the website to get the details of the assignment. To submit EOI, registration in the National e-GP system Portal (eprocure.gov.bd) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd). Interested consultants are invited to submit their EOI along with updated Curriculum Vitae (CV) demonstrating their qualifications and experience relevant to the assignment through e-GP portal (eprocure.gov.bd) by 05:00 PM (Bangladesh Standard Time), 5th May 2026.

Project Director

Improvement of Public Investment
Management System (IPIMS) project
Room No. 8, Block-4, Planning Commission Campus
Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
e-mail: pd.ipims.ecnec@plandiv.gov.bd

Protect youth from irregular migration

Implement targeted programmes to prevent human trafficking

The fact that Bangladesh continues to top the list of sea arrivals of migrants to Europe indicates that we have largely failed to nurture and capitalise on our demographic dividend—the youth. According to a report in this daily, citing UNHCR data, at least 20,259 Bangladeshis reached Europe in 2025, enduring perilous sea journeys through illegal routes. They made up 30.5 percent of the total arrivals by sea, far more than any other country.

That the number of people, even from war-ravaged Sudan, is far lower than the number of Bangladeshis lured to Europe by human trafficking gangs, underscores the depths of anxiety and uncertainty that shape the outlook of many of our young people. Sadly, high levels of irregular migration from Bangladesh persist, with 1,358 Bangladeshis reaching Europe by sea in the first two months of this year. Worse still, many end up losing their lives in this venture. In March alone, at least 18 Bangladeshis died while crossing the Mediterranean Sea on a small boat from a port in eastern Libya to Europe. The survivors, including 21 Bangladeshis who were rescued off the Greek coast, later recounted the dangerous journey traffickers had compelled them to undertake. Many of them spent months locked in “game ghars” or detention centres without their phones or documents, and even without sufficient food and water, before being sent off to sea in small rubber boats. Often, these migrant hopefuls are rescued by patrolling ships, but their ordeals do not end there. Sometimes, they are sent home broke and burdened with enormous debt, like 21-year-old Shakil Ahmed from Sunamganj, who had paid Tk 10.5 lakh to a broker to take him to Greece. He never reached Greece; instead he was kept in Libya until his rescue and deportation in 2024.

A recent BRAC study found that most of the people whom brokers had promised good jobs did not find any after reaching Libya. Instead, many were detained along the way and suffered physical abuse. They usually travel to Libya via Dubai, Egypt, Qatar, Istanbul, or Syria. From there, some are sent on notorious sea journeys, often with insufficient food and water. Quoting a Criminal Investigation Department official, this daily reported that around 70,000 people, mostly aged between 25 and 40, have gone to Europe this way over the last decade.

Since news reports of irregular migration do not appear to deter young people from attempting such journeys, more targeted programmes in areas prone to human trafficking should be undertaken by the government. Young people can be trained for skilled migration or provided with entrepreneurial opportunities. At the same time, intelligence must be gathered on local recruiters to bring to account the ringleaders of trafficking gangs. The government must ensure that the lives and aspirations of this country’s young people are not lost in the pursuit of the so-called European dream.

Delayed testing hampers treatment

Ensure immediate stockpiling of measles testing kits

The ongoing measles situation has been a wake-up call for us all, but it should be especially so for the country’s health sector. After myriad issues regarding vaccine procurement and stocks, the government finally launched a nationwide measles-rubella vaccination campaign on Monday. Under the programme, around 1.8 crore children aged six months to 59 months will be vaccinated until May 20. We advise relevant authorities to ensure that this campaign runs smoothly and effectively, especially in rural and high-risk areas. However, it is most concerning that there is a dismal shortage of measles testing kits in the country.

According to a *Prothom Alo* report, the Institute of Public Health (IPH) in the capital’s Mohakhali receives around 300 samples and has the capacity to test 300-400 samples daily. However, it can only test 120 samples due to a kit shortage. The measles testing kits are supplied by the World Health Organization (WHO), and each kit can be used to test 90 samples. As of Sunday, the IPH had 63 kits, with 60 more arriving that evening. Many of these kits are stuck at the Dhaka airport, delayed by documentation hurdles. Given this situation, a large number of samples are not being tested in time.

What is unfathomable is that the IPH is the only public organisation in the country where samples are tested for measles. How is it that, even a month into this crisis, testing capacity has not been expanded to include facilities in other major cities? Why is it that measles samples from public hospitals outside Dhaka are sent all the way to this one institute situated in the capital?

It is true that the government’s response so far, considering all aspects of the crisis, has been admirable. But there are still several holes in its “plan,” and this might be one of the biggest so far. Given the seriousness of the situation and the death toll so far (with 181 suspected and 36 confirmed measles deaths till Sunday afternoon), we ask the relevant authorities to not only work on freeing the kits stuck at the airport, but to urgently communicate with the WHO to secure an adequate stock of measles testing kits. Vaccination is crucial for prevention, but timely diagnosis is equally important to ensure that patients older than the vaccination age receive the best possible care. Most importantly, diagnostic capacity in other divisions besides Dhaka must be strengthened to reduce the time between sample collection and diagnosis countrywide.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

500 years of the Mughal empire



On this day in 1526, Babur, a Central Asian prince, defeated the Delhi sultanate ruler Ibrahim Lodi in the first battle of Panipath and laid the foundations of the Mughal empire in the Indian subcontinent. The dynasty continued to shape the political, economic, social landscape of the region until 1857.

How geopolitics is redrawing the Global South’s economy



MACRO MIRROR
Dr Fahmida Khatun
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FAHMIDA KHATUN

The 2026 Spring Meetings of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank Group took place from April 13 to April 18 amid ongoing geopolitical tensions, persistent inflation, and slowing growth. These meetings demonstrated a reactive rather than a transformative system. At the meetings, it was acknowledged that the global economy is experiencing prolonged turbulence in the absence of robust multilateral cooperation.

The World Economic Outlook report released at the meetings appears grim. Global growth remains sluggish and uneven, with the IMF forecasting 3.1 percent growth for 2026 and 3.2 percent for 2027. The report warns that escalating geopolitical risks could further dampen the outlook. The IMF also expects global headline inflation to rise slightly in 2026 before declining again in 2027. The growth slowdown and rising inflation are expected to be particularly pronounced in emerging markets and developing economies, reflecting a deeper structural problem. The global economy is no longer dealing only with cyclical, quickly reversible shocks. Instead, it faces persistent, interconnected disruptions, including conflict-driven energy volatility, supply chain adjustments, and financial tightening.

A key aspect of the meetings was the widespread recognition that geoeconomic fragmentation has become deeply entrenched. Trade, investment, and technology exchanges are increasingly driven by geopolitical alliances rather than by cost and efficiency. Many are also severing economic ties with rivals, particularly in critical areas such as technology and energy. Consequently, global supply chains are being reshuffled to prioritise security. This shift complicates international cooperation and diminishes the effectiveness of global institutions. Such fragmentation undermines the fundamental goal of the Bretton Woods system, which has traditionally relied on consensus among major powers.

For the global economy, the implications are profound. A fragmented system is inherently less

stable and more volatile. However, the developing world feels these impacts most acutely. During the meetings, the recurring concern was the tightening of external financing conditions, which constrain the policy options available to emerging economies. Rising global interest rates have increased borrowing costs, while weaker global demand has reduced export revenues. Consequently, these countries face a fragile macroeconomic situation marked by currency pressures, falling



VISUAL: SIFAT AFRIN SHAMS

reserves, and rising debt levels.

Bangladesh exemplifies these dynamics. With high inflation, pressure on foreign exchange reserves, and low revenue mobilisation, the country has limited fiscal capacity to absorb external shocks. As the global economic outlook indicates, these constraints are likely to persist in the near future. Therefore, countries like Bangladesh need to prepare for a prolonged period of external vulnerability and limited concessional aid.

Debt distress was a key topic at the meetings. Despite commitments, global debt restructuring faces delays, coordination challenges, and limited creditor involvement. The IMF report suggests that global public debt will reach record levels, raising concerns about fiscal sustainability and financial stability. For low-income countries, rising food and energy costs, reduced

aid, and climate shocks have heightened vulnerabilities. The IMF suggests that tens of billions of dollars in additional funding may be needed to support the most vulnerable economies. Nonetheless, current resources remain inadequate given the scale of the need.

In this context, the question arises: did the IMF and the World Bank make significant new commitments? The response is somewhat mixed. There were announcements of increased support. The World Bank launched new initiatives targeting climate resilience and vital services, including water security projects intended to serve large populations in vulnerable areas. However, these commitments do not meet the expectations of many developing countries. They are incremental, reflecting a cautious stance shaped by the fiscal constraints of donor countries and the intricate politics of multilateral governance. Significant breakthroughs in debt

Private capital remains unpredictable and cautious, especially amid global uncertainties. Therefore, focusing on catalytic financing might not generate the necessary scale of resources.

Another key issue is the growing importance of climate in macroeconomic policy decisions. Climate change is now seen as a central factor affecting economic stability and growth, rather than merely a peripheral concern. Nonetheless, a major issue persists. The gap between climate finance commitments and the funds actually disbursed remains large. Developing countries still face substantial obstacles in securing affordable financing for adaptation and mitigation efforts, especially as climate risks increase.

The meetings highlighted how geopolitical tensions hinder consensus among countries within multilateral organisations and restrict coordinated efforts. Consequently, the global system becomes more fragmented and less effective at delivering collective solutions to global issues.

For developing countries, including Bangladesh, the message is clear but critical. External factors are expected to remain restrictive. In this case, domestic policy decisions are even more vital. Boosting revenue collection, improving expenditure efficiency, and strengthening financial sector stability are crucial for resilience. Additionally, it is important to be more active in global forums to push for reforms that serve the interests of the Global South.

Without faster debt relief, increased concessional funding, and stronger climate support, low-income countries risk falling behind and facing prolonged stagnation. The current trend suggests that the most vulnerable nations could bear a disproportionate economic burden of adjustment in a fragmented global system.

The 2026 Spring Meetings highlight a key paradox of recent times: while global challenges grow more complex and urgent, the capacity for collective action is shrinking. The IMF and World Bank remain vital institutions, yet they cannot overcome the limitations imposed by geopolitical divisions and national interests alone. The path forward requires renewed dedication to multilateralism, significant institutional reforms, and commitments from major economies to foster a more inclusive and efficient global financial system. Without these changes, future Spring Meetings may continue to identify the same issues without providing the solutions the world desperately needs.

Fifty seats for women, but who will they really represent?



Farah Kabir
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FARAH KABIR

By mid-May, the parliament will have completed the process of filling the 50 reserved seats for women. On Monday, the ruling BNP announced the names of its candidates for the 36 seats allocated to it in proportion to its representation in parliament, while Jamaat-e-Islami and others are expected to announce theirs soon. But in the wake of a mass uprising that intensified calls for parliamentary reforms—including increasing women’s reserved seats and holding direct elections for them—this otherwise routine procedure has become a test of whether the country is willing to move from symbolic inclusion to meaningful power-sharing.

And unless the current system is fundamentally reimagined, it risks reinforcing the very inequalities it claims to dismantle.

Ensuring equal participation and representation of women in parliament is not just a matter of democratic justice; it is foundational to democracy itself. But representation must go beyond tokenistic gestures. It must reflect the full diversity of women’s lived realities across class, ethnicity, religion, disability, and identity. Without this, inclusion becomes illusion, and democracy becomes exclusionary by design.

Globally, women remain underrepresented in political life, particularly in decision-making

roles. For women from historically marginalised communities, the barriers are even steeper. While many countries have adopted gender quotas to close the representation gap, few have meaningfully addressed the layered disadvantages faced by minority women. Intersectionality remains the missing piece in most political systems, including Bangladesh’s, where structural inequalities continue to shape who gets to speak, who gets to lead, and who gets left behind.

The promise of gender parity in political leadership was set out decades ago, but progress has been uneven and, in many cases, superficial so far. Women continue to face structural barriers to participation: entrenched social norms, limited access to resources, and systemic discrimination within political parties themselves. These constraints shape their confidence, mobility, and access to political networks, ultimately limiting women’s capacity to lead and to act in the best interests of their communities and the nation at large.

The system of reserved seats for women in parliament has undeniably increased numerical representation. But numbers alone do not equal power. Too often, women elected to these seats are treated as second-tier legislators—without direct constituencies, without independent mandates, and without meaningful control over resources.

Their political survival depends not on voters, but on party leadership, reinforcing a hierarchy that sidelines their agency.

In such a setting, accountability flows upwards, not outwards. When MPs owe their positions to party patronage rather than public trust, their ability and willingness to challenge party lines or advocate for transformative change is curtailed. Reserved seats, in this context, risk becoming a ceiling rather than a foundation—a mechanism that contains women’s political empowerment rather than expanding it or strengthening democratic accountability.

Across the country, violence against women in politics, whether physical, psychological, or digital, remains pervasive. In the past, we have seen how women MPs have sometimes faced harassment, intimidation, and gendered attacks aimed at silencing them or diminishing their credibility. Without proper institutional safeguards and enforcement mechanisms, as well as cross-party commitments to address such abuses, the political arena will remain hostile terrain for many, deterring future generations of women leaders.

Media representation often compounds this problem. Women politicians are still judged less by their ideas than by their appearance, marital status, or personal lives. This trivialisation not only undermines individual leaders but also reinforces broader societal biases that discourage women from entering public life.

Given these realities, we must rethink how women are represented in politics, especially in parliament. Political parties must open up their nomination processes. At a minimum, they should be required to publish

transparent, merit-based criteria for selecting women to reserved seats, prioritising prior demonstration of leadership, community engagement, and public service over loyalty to or relationships with party elites. At the same time, reserved-seat MPs must be meaningfully connected to citizens through mandatory constituency linkages or structured public consultation mechanisms so that their accountability extends beyond party hierarchies to the people. And most importantly, we must move to direct elections for these seats.

Having cross-party women’s caucuses is also important. These platforms can enable women MPs to collaborate across political divides, advancing a shared agenda on issues such as gender-based violence, equitable budgeting, and social inclusion. But caucuses cannot function on symbolism alone; they require institutional backing and recognition to influence legislation, oversight, and national priorities.

There are models to draw from. In some advanced democracies, women’s parliamentary forums have shown that when women organise collectively, they can shift national priorities and hold systems accountable. Bangladesh does not lack capable, committed women leaders. What it lacks is a political structure that fully enables them to exercise power independently and effectively.

As the time for finalising reserved seats approaches, the public has a right to demand answers to the concerns surrounding these seats. The question is no longer whether enough women will be in parliament. The question is whether they will be allowed to matter, and sufficiently empowered to make a difference.

West Bengal poll politics tests the limits of Dhaka-Delhi reset process



Shakeel Anwar is a former journalist at the BBC.

SHAKEEL ANWAR

“Detect, delete, deport.” That three-word formulation has become the defining doctrine of India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the run-up to West Bengal’s two-phase assembly elections scheduled for April 23 and 29. The party has placed illegal migration at the centre of its political and security narrative, more sharply than in previous campaigns, so Bangladesh has naturally emerged as a reference point. That has implications far beyond state politics, especially at a time when Dhaka and New Delhi are trying to rebuild ties after a sharp downturn following the fall of Sheikh Hasina in August 2024.

For years, BJP has used the issue of so-called “illegal infiltration” from Bangladesh as a political tool in Assam, where demographic anxieties have long shaped electoral behaviour. The Assam assembly election is now over, but the narrative has not receded—it has shifted, recalibrated, and intensified in West Bengal. Terms like “infiltrators,” “outsiders,” and “illegal entrants” are dominating campaign speeches, frequently without naming Bangladesh directly. But the subtext is widely understood.

The strategy is deliberate. Bengal’s politico-cultural landscape demands a more calibrated tone than Assam. Direct references to Bangladeshis—especially Bengali-speaking Muslims—carry electoral risks. But the core message remains intact: migration is a threat to identity, resources, and security. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing a rally in Purba Bardhaman district on April 11, delivered one of the sharpest statements yet: “The infiltrators should start packing their bags; it is time to leave. Those who have helped the infiltrators will not be spared.”

The phrasing is striking not just for its directness, but also for its implied consequences. Across the campaign, BJP leaders have moved beyond general warnings. They are setting implicit deadlines for “infiltrators” to leave, linking migration to voter fraud and welfare leakage, and framing it as a national security issue.

In West Bengal politics, as an Atlantic Council columnist has noted, Bangladesh functions “less as a foreign policy concern



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

than a domestic political proxy through which citizenship, demography, and belonging are contested. For the BJP, references to Bangladesh collapse cross-border history into a narrative of undocumented migration and demographic threat.” In effect, Bangladesh is no longer just a neighbour but a symbol within India’s domestic political contests.

This transformation simplifies a rather complex, historically rooted migration issue into a binary political narrative: insiders versus outsiders. The political utility of the narrative is clear. By linking migration to jobs, welfare, and security, BJP taps into local anxieties while aligning them with a broader national ideology. The result is a message that resonates across constituencies. Even administrative measures are framed within this lens. The revision of electoral rolls through the controversial Special Intensive Revision (SIR), which saw millions of names removed in West Bengal, has been projected by some as a clean-up of “illegal Bangladeshis.”

At the same time, any report of communal

Islami in constituencies along the Indo-Bangladesh frontier.

All of this is unfolding at a sensitive moment in bilateral relations since the 2024 political transition in Bangladesh. The new government under Tarique Rahman has signalled a pragmatic approach, emphasising mutual respect and reciprocity under a “Bangladesh First” policy. New Delhi, too, has indicated a willingness to engage. But the contrast between diplomatic engagement and campaign rhetoric is stark. While officials on both sides speak of cooperation, political messaging in Bengal continues to cast Bangladesh in a negative light.

For the BNP government, this is both embarrassing and politically uncomfortable. Built historically on an anti-India sentiment, the party chief has consciously repositioned it towards a more centrist and moderate stance. Notably, its election campaign avoided overt anti-India rhetoric. Since assuming office, Tarique Rahman has moved quickly to signal a reset in ties with New Delhi. Yet what he sees

across the border is the public demeaning of Bangladesh by the very leaders he is keen to engage and rebuild ties with.

The Bengal campaign, in effect, is acting as a rhetorical drag on diplomacy. Some observers have already flagged this tension. Writing in *Deccan Herald* after a recent visit to Delhi by Bangladesh’s foreign minister, Smita Sharma suggested that India should tone down its rhetoric. “India would do

northeast as “landlocked” and Bangladesh as the “only guardian of the ocean,” illustrates how sensitive such language can be. From Dhaka’s perspective, the continued portrayal of Bangladeshis as “infiltrators” and sources of instability is equally sensitive. Ironically, India expects rhetorical restraint from Bangladesh on issues related to its security, but its own political discourse often overlooks Bangladesh’s concerns.

For the BNP government, this presents a delicate challenge. Although Tarique Rahman secured a strong electoral mandate, his government operates under domestic pressure. The Jamaat-NCP opposition coalition continues to mobilise anti-India sentiment, ensuring that any engagement with New Delhi is closely scrutinised. In this context, even routine diplomatic gestures may acquire political significance. If Dhaka appears overly accommodating while Indian leaders publicly link Bangladesh to infiltration and security threats, it risks triggering domestic backlash, a pattern evident during Sheikh Hasina’s tenure. Yet a confrontational approach would equally undermine the broader objective of stabilising bilateral ties. The space for manoeuvre is limited.

A significant segment of Bangladesh’s population, especially Gen Z youth who led the 2024 uprising, still view India with deep suspicion. The grievance is rooted, among other factors, in inflammatory rhetoric from sections of Indian media and political circles. This dynamic was evident during the interim government period, when Indian narratives about minority issues in Bangladesh triggered strong reactions in Dhaka. In West Bengal, the amplification of such issues for electoral gain further narrows the space for diplomacy.

At the heart of this strategy lies the politics of perception. Migration is a complex issue shaped by geography, economics, and history. But in electoral politics, it is often reduced to a simple narrative: outsiders taking what belongs to insiders. Research shows that perceived demographic threat, rather than empirical evidence, plays a decisive role in shaping voter behaviour. In this sense, the “Bangladeshi infiltrator” functions less as a measurable category and more as a political symbol.

The Bengal and Assam elections have turned Bangladesh into a central, if implicit, theme in India’s domestic politics. For BJP, the strategy is seen as electorally effective. For bilateral relations, the effects could be ruinous. Whether these contrasting scenarios—engagement in diplomatic corridors, confrontation on campaign trails—can be reconciled will determine the trajectory of Bangladesh-India relations in the months ahead.

WORLD CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION DAY

Why Bangladesh is losing the innovation race



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SABBIR AHMAD

If you walk into a random classroom in Bangladesh and ask the students what they want to be when they grow up, there are some fairly common answers that might reach your ears. Some might want to be a doctor or maybe an engineer or a BCS officer, while others might just want to go abroad. The latter answer is more of a survival strategy than a professional goal. It also leads us to one of the most urgent questions facing our nation: how can we build a country where our brightest people would want to stay and work towards improving the nation?

World Creativity and Innovation Day (WCID)—observed on April 21—aims to raise awareness of the role of creativity and innovation in all aspects of human development. The day often invites policy announcements, innovation summits, or budget discussions across the globe. However, in Bangladesh, the day doesn’t seem to inspire such discussions. This needs to change. Especially as we are close to graduating out of LDC status, a milestone that could strip away trade preferences covering roughly 70 percent of our global exports. Upgrading our status shouldn’t feel like falling off a cliff but without a plan to replace current trade benefits, that’s where we might be heading regardless of whether we granted with the grace period we’ve asked for.

The WCID started its journey when a Canadian creativity advocate, Marci Segal, launched the first observance in 2002 to address a growing innovation gap in her country. Fifteen years later, it

became a global mandate through UN Resolution 71/284. April 21 was strategically chosen just before Earth Day on April 22 for a reason: we can’t build a sustainable world without a creative one. Creativity and innovation are also crucial to global economy as cultural and creative industries generate annual revenues of almost \$2.3 trillion globally, contributing 3.1 percent of the global GDP, according to a UN estimate.

Shashi Tharoor recently argued that India could become the world’s innovation capital. He was not referring to a vision but a policy decision already in place. India has 1,800-plus Global Capability Centers (GCCs). GCCs are dedicated offshore hubs where multinational companies set up their own teams to handle everything from software engineering and data analytics to product development and AI research. This was possible because India built, deliberately and over decades, the conditions necessary: regulatory certainty, deep talent pipelines, and relevant infrastructure.

Our engineers are also world-class. According to experts, there are some 10 lakh freelancers in the country and around 650,000 of them are in the IT field who bring in about a billion dollars annually. Many of those living abroad remain emotionally invested in Bangladesh too and with the right policy framework, their knowledge, networks, and capital can add to our country’s economy. A diaspora engagement strategy—offering equity pathways,

co-founding incentives, tax benefits, or the opportunity to remotely contribute—may convert brain drain into “brain gain.”

Furthermore, in the Global Innovation Index 2025, Bangladesh ranked 106th among 139 economies. Our score of 21 points, up from 19.1 in 2024 reflects a persistent paradox: we consistently outperform on outputs relative to inputs. bKash didn’t have a world-class research and development lab but became hugely successful with seven crore users. The credit could be owed to the smart people identifying and filling a structural gap. Pathao, iFarmer, 10 Minute School, among others are proof that Bangladeshi ingenuity consistently outpaces institutional support. But instinct isn’t always enough. Bangladesh’s total research and development investment stood at just 0.03 percent of GDP in 2022-23 against Vietnam’s 0.54 percent, India’s 0.70 percent, and China’s 2.55 percent. Our budget allocation for science and technology is also minuscule and we must have the courage to follow the roadmap to fix it.

First, we must prioritise research and development spending. Both public allocation and tax frameworks should be channelled for research funding. The regulatory sandbox piloted by Bangladesh Bank or a2i for fintech could be a template for agri-tech, health-tech, and energy-tech.

Second, the government must reconstruct the education sector from the ground up. When a considerable number of tertiary degree holders remain unemployed, it shows a gross mismatch between classroom output and market demand. Syllabuses must include more technical programmes such as AI, data science, systems thinking, and applied problem-solving. Universities must learn to build genuine bridges to industry, not merely produce graduates and call it a pipeline.

Third, we must make sure innovation transcends geographic

restrictions. Bangladesh’s startup ecosystem remains overwhelmingly concentrated in Dhaka. Regional hubs in Chattogram, Sylhet, Rajshahi, and Khulna with infrastructure guarantees and targeted incentives would distribute both risk and opportunity. The next “bKash” should be as likely to emerge from somewhere in Sylhet as from Dhaka’s Gulshan area.

Fourth, we must attract GCC investments. India built its GCC advantage over two decades. Bangladesh has a window of cost base, young workforce, expanding digital infrastructure to position ourselves as South Asia’s next GCC hub.

Fifth, we should make staying home

competitive. Freelancers working for foreign clients and diaspora professionals in global tech hubs are responding to better opportunities. To close the gap, we need equity culture in startups, stock option frameworks, competitive compensation, and IP protection strong enough that building something here feels worth the risk.

As a country on the path to LDC graduation, we can’t afford to be without an innovation strategy. The trade preferences that cushioned our growth for decades are expiring, automation is arriving in factories millions depend on, and our most capable minds are making the

calculation as to where their best future lies. So, we must ensure innovation is something we are taking seriously. The most innovative economies did not get there because their people were born more creative. It is because their governments, educators, and businesses worked together to build ecosystems where creativity compounds. Bangladesh has talent, but it lacks effective institutions to treat imagination as investment and failure as data. So, on this World Creativity and Innovation Day, the question is not how we observe this day but whether we are willing to honour what it demands before running out of time.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Inspector General
Bangladesh Police
Police Headquarters, Dhaka.

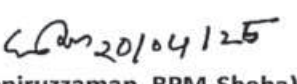
Corrigendum of International Tender Notice

Memo No-44.01.0000.058.07.019.25/379

Date: 20/04/2026.

Invitation for International Tender Notice Published in different national dailies as per Invitation tender ref No-44.01.0000.058.07.019.25/07(2025-2026) Date: 15/03/2026 for procurement of Crew Served Machine Gun in FY 2025-2026 is hereby amended as follows:

Particular Information	Published	Revised
Tender last selling date	27 April 2026	04 May 2026
Tender closing date and time	28 April 2026 at 12.00 hrs	05 May 2026 at 13.00 hrs
Tender opening date and time (Technical offer only)	28 April 2026 at 12.30 hrs	05 May 2026 at 13.30 hrs



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GD-864

Soma Surovi Jannat: The Bangladeshi artist showcased at Britain’s oldest museum



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF SOMA SUROVI JANNAT

Surovi has spoken about how the vulnerability of disaster victims has deeply affected her, motivating her to raise awareness among more sheltered and privileged communities—regardless of whether they have the power to create change. Still, she believes there is hope, even in small actions.

AISHWARYA RAIHAN

Soma Surovi Jannat makes history as the first Bangladeshi artist to showcase her work in a solo exhibition titled *Climate, Culture, Care* at the Ashmolean Museum—the oldest museum in Britain and the world’s first university museum. Situated in Oxford, the museum offers residencies to South Asian artists, and for the first time, a Bangladeshi artist was given the opportunity to spend time there expanding her horizons.

Curated by Mallica Kumbura Landrus, Keeper of Eastern Art at the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Oxford, the exhibition *Ashmolean NOW: Soma Surovi Jannat – Climate, Culture, Care* runs from March 28, 2026 to November 1, 2026.

Soma Surovi Jannat completed her BEA at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka, and her MFA at Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, India. She was awarded the Samdani Art Award at the 2020 Dhaka Art Summit, which included a residency at the Delfina Foundation in London, among many other recognitions. However, one of her most prestigious opportunities came as the Frere Hall Artist-in-Residence at the Ashmolean Museum.

Before, during, and after her residency, she worked on themes of climate change driven by politics and corruption, resulting in migration. She has also highlighted how the lives of coastal communities are affected by deforestation. The exhibition features 22 of her artworks, predominantly pen on paper, alongside approximately 18 objects from the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology

that inspired her work.

Resensitising the Brown Narrative reflects her creative journey during her Oxford residency in 2023. The work is inspired by clay sculptures from British India depicting South Asian people, which were originally created to introduce Indians to British audiences. However, these collections present professions without capturing the multilayered, multidimensional nature of their lives. The uniformity in skin tone, clothing, and occupation encouraged Surovi to challenge and reinterpret the subcontinental narrative.

questions the forces responsible for climate damage and forced migration.

Where Every Leaf Holds a Tale is a series exploring Bangladesh’s southern islands, including the mangrove forest of the Sundarbans and surrounding saline lands. Due to deforestation and lack of protection, all living beings—including humans—are at risk. One artwork, inspired by a second-century BCE terracotta Yakshi figure, depicts *Dimer Char* (Egg Island) as Mother Nature, marked with a ‘kalo tika’ for protection. She cradles a dead bird on her mangrove-covered chest, with a mangrove root sprouting from her navel and a tiger roaring between her legs. The piece reflects both the resilience of nature and the hope to preserve it despite ongoing destruction.

In summary, the exhibition reflects Surovi’s dedication, compassion, and relentless creative and physical labour. She has expressed deep gratitude to her curator, the Ashmolean Museum team, her



In a Timeless Sweet Land, created before her residency, reflects her childhood memories in Lalmonirhat, a northern district of Bangladesh. Through this work, she contemplates climate migrants and the fundamental human right of every child to experience a childhood free from trauma.

Surovi has spoken about how the vulnerability of disaster victims has deeply affected her, motivating her to raise awareness among more sheltered and privileged communities—regardless of whether they have the power to create change. Still, she believes there is hope, even in small actions.

Between the Sea and the Sky, Who Holds the Ground? a work over 30 feet long,

family, and those who supported her in even the smallest ways—including someone who went through 400 Ora flowers to find one with seven petals. She also acknowledges the support of the British Council Bangladesh, Samdani Art Foundation (Seher & Taimur Hasan), Neha & Sumedh Jaiswal via Goldman Sachs Gives, the Charles Wallace Bangladesh Trust, Gallery Espace, and especially the Samdani Art Foundation for their role in her journey.

Surovi, apart from being a source of inspiration for upcoming Bangladeshi artists, is also an exemplary individual bearing the flag of the underrepresented South Asian art and culture.



Late Baul singer Kanai Das’ final song to feature in ‘Roid’

Baul Kanai Das (82), passed away on April 18, and just two days after his passing, it was announced that his song will feature in the film *Roid*, directed by Mejbaur Rahman Sumon.

It is his final recorded song, marking his first and only playback contribution to cinema.

Kanai Das Baul, a visually impaired folk artiste from West Bengal, was known for his spiritually rooted music and humanist philosophy. He spent his life travelling across villages, fairs and *akhras* with his *ektara*, performing songs that reflected devotion and the essence of humanity.

Among his widely recognised songs are *Manush Bhojle Sonar Manush Hobir* and *Ke Bole Manush More, Ami Bujhlam Na Byapar*, which helped cement his place within the Baul tradition.

‘Ali’ bags Diversity Award in Germany

Adnan AlRajeev’s acclaimed short film *Ali* received the Diversity Award at Filmfest Bremen, in Germany, powered by Brema and SWB.

The director shared the news on social media, writing, “Thank you so much Filmfest Bremen for listening to our voice.” Last year, *Ali* earned a Special Mention from the jury in the Short Film section at the 78th Cannes Film Festival. It also received a Special Mention at the Kyiv International Short Film Festival (KISFF) in 2025. It was selected for the official short film programme at the 70th Valladolid International Film Week (Seminci) in Spain.

Al Amin plays the titular role. Principal photography took place in Sylhet in November 2024.



NEWS

‘I thought I would die there’

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when a loud explosion jolted workers around dawn.

“After dinner on February 28, we went to bed as usual. At around 5:00am, a loud explosion shook the entire building. “We ran out of our rooms. At first, I thought it was a drill. Then from the window I saw missiles flying. I thought I would die,” he said.

By morning, rumours of conflict had spread, but access to information was limited due to internet shutdowns, disrupting communication with families.

“A school near our area was hit. Children were killed,” he said, adding that a bomb also landed close to their factory.

“We did not get any instructions from authorities.”

As the days passed, fear became routine. Banks were closed, and the cost of essentials surged.

“I had no money. Sometimes, I didn’t even have enough to eat,” Babul said. Despite the risks, workers continued their jobs.

Back home, his family followed the situation on television, growing increasingly anxious.

His 12-year-old daughter, Taslima Akter Maysa, said they were terrified as news of the conflict unfolded.

“I used to feel very scared watching the war on TV. At the same time, my father didn’t call us,” she said. “Seeing all this, my mother would cry all the time.

When I stayed with her, she would just wipe her tears. Seeing her like that made me want to cry too.”

She said they were relieved when he finally managed to contact them.

“One day, suddenly, my father called and said he was safe. He also said he would come home during Eid. Hearing this, I was overwhelmed with joy,” she added.

Hope emerged when he learned the Bangladesh embassy had temporarily relocated from Tehran to Saveh and was arranging evacuation for nationals, including undocumented workers.

“I applied immediately,” Babul said.

On March 5, when internet services briefly resumed, he managed to contact his family.

“They cried and asked me to come back. They didn’t know I had no money even for food,” he said.

Violence intensified in mid March. On March 18, a missile strike destroyed a nearby police outpost.

“By morning, it was nothing but dust and smoke. I cried the whole night,” he said.

The same day, he received a travel pass from the Bangladesh mission.

Within hours, he and other Bangladeshis travelled to Saveh before boarding a convoy of nine buses to the Astara border in Azerbaijan. They reached around 2:00am in cold conditions on March 19.

“There were no blankets. Some stayed

in a rest room, others outside. No one slept,” he said.

After completing border formalities, they were received by Bangladeshi officials and taken to Azerbaijan’s Baku airport. A special flight brought them home later that day.

“When I finally stepped on Bangladeshi soil, I felt like I got my life back,” Babul said.

Babul said he is the sole earning member of his six-member family and has exhausted his savings during the crisis.

“I had some savings, but almost all of it was used up during the war. The remaining money is also gone,” he said.

He is now working in agriculture to support his family.

He also said officials collected his contact details and documents upon his return, assuring assistance.

“They said they would provide support, but I haven’t received any response so far. It would be a great help if I received assistance,” he added.

He claimed that around 186 Bangladeshi nationals travelled with him during the evacuation.

While Babul described repeated missile strikes and civilian casualties, independent verification of specific incidents was not immediately available. Authorities have also not detailed the scale of Bangladeshi nationals affected in the area or the total number evacuated.

BNP walks back on its tobacco control promises

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promote, endorse, market, distribute, buy, sell or transport their components or parts (such as e-cigarettes, vapes, vaping devices, vaporisers, e-liquids, etc.), heated tobacco products, or emerging tobacco products, whatever name they may be called, nor shall they cause or allow anyone else to do so.

An offender may face imprisonment for up to three months or a fine of up to Tk 2 lakh or both.

If a person commits the same type of offence a second time or repeatedly, the penalty shall be imposed at double the rate progressively.

Any person may face a fine of up to Tk 5,000 for using any of these products.

An e-cigarette (electronic cigarette) is a battery-operated device that heats a liquid – usually containing nicotine and other chemicals – to produce a vapour that can be inhaled by a user, an act known as ‘vaping’.

However, following recommendations from a parliamentary special committee formed to review 133 ordinances issued during the interim government, the health ministry dropped the entire provision from the ordinance before placing it before the parliament.

After the move became public, various anti-tobacco organisations urged the government to reconsider the decision.

As many as 41 countries, including India, have banned e-cigarettes for their adverse health impact.

Representatives of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNICEF in Bangladesh jointly wrote to the health ministry on April 9 expressing deep concern over reports that the ban on the import, production, distribution and use of e-cigarettes might be withdrawn and called for maintaining the ban.

They said that e-cigarettes are aggressively marketed to young people through flavoured products and targeted promotion, raising concerns about creating a new generation dependent on nicotine.

Nicotine is highly addictive and particularly harmful to children and adolescents, affecting brain development and increasing the risk of long-term cognitive and mental health consequences.

WHO does not recommend e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation tool, they said.

Bangladesh already faces a significant tobacco burden, with more than 1,30,000 deaths a year related to tobacco use, and substantial economic and social costs.

“Introducing or expanding access to new nicotine products risks compounding this burden,” reads the letter.

The parliament, however, passed the act lifting the ban and a gazette was issued on April 10.

Separately, in January, the interim government enacted the Land Use Control and Agricultural Land Protection Ordinance to regulate land use and safeguard agricultural land.

Section 7(5) of the ordinance says tobacco cultivation that undermines food security will not be allowed on triple-crop or higher-yield agricultural land, and it must also be gradually restricted on single- and double-crop farmland.

However, this provision was dropped when the amended act was approved earlier this month.

In its election manifesto, the BNP outlined 22 health related commitments, including controlling tobacco-related non-communicable diseases.

Emphasis will be placed on controlling non-communicable diseases caused by tobacco use (such as cancer, stroke, heart disease, lung disorders, etc.) to protect public health, and necessary legal measures and other initiatives will be undertaken to regulate tobacco use, read the BNP manifesto.

“This is a step backwards. What signal does this send? It suggests the emergence of an unethical, backdoor influence in policymaking,” said Hossain Zillur Rahman, also the executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre, which does tobacco control advocacy.

None is calling for the elimination of the tobacco industry overnight or for tobacco cultivation to stop immediately.

But tobacco has a significant negative impact on public health, particularly on the younger generation.

“In this context, we need to take steps through both legal measures and taxation to control tobacco use.”

These changes can still be reversed, and the government should do so, he added.

“I think the restriction [on e-cigarette] for research has been

lifted – it is not for mass marketing of e-cigarette,” Hyder said.

When the correspondent said the entire section has been dropped, he said that if someone wants to conduct research to see how harmful it is, they should be able to do so.

“If it is banned, then no form of research or knowledge generation is possible. That is why the ban has been withdrawn. It does not mean that the door has been opened for e-cigarette marketing.”

Asked about the apprehension that tobacco cultivation will increase after the dropping of the ban on tobacco cultivation on triple-crop land, he said: “This is not about encouraging tobacco cultivation.”

“Our country is overly regulated. Why is so much regulation needed? Leave it to the farmers. If they can make a profit, what is your problem? If it reduces soil fertility or decreases income, the farmers themselves will stop producing tobacco. Then why is regulation needed?”

Tobacco will enter the market anyway and it is not possible to control it through law alone unless people’s behaviour changes.

What is needed is massive campaigns promoting healthy lifestyles and the negative effects of tobacco, Hyder said, adding that they would do that.

Home boss’s

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mob attacks” over the past year and a half, and again in the last two months.

She cited examples such as the removal of the Bangladesh Bank governor through “mob pressure”; attacks on the head of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha; mob incidents in Barishal court premises and the Supreme Court lawyers’ room; arson attacks on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo offices; and the killing of a suspected thief in Chattogram through mob beating accompanied by singing and dancing. She also mentioned the recent killing of a pir in Kustia.

Drawing the home minister’s attention, Rumeen said even the prime minister had spoken in similar terms. “The prime minister argued that when people are denied justice, such cultures grow and spread. Frustration, anger, deep inequality, and above all the absence of exemplary punishment fuel this trend,” she added.

New radar system at HSIA covers entire

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began in 2019 and was completed in December 2025 with costs of Tk 942 crore, said sources at the CAAB.

Air Commodore Noor-e-Alam, member (ATM) of CAAB, said ATMC works 24/7 to ensure the safe landing and takeoff of all flights every moment and to ensure the safe and reliable movement in the airspace.

Talking to The Daily Star, he said that the previous air traffic control system was about 40 years old and the radar was also about 35 years old.

He highlighted the significance of the new system, which can detect planes up to 350NM (650km) from Dhaka. “Our Chattagram radar is now integrated with the system. And we can communicate with flights in the Bay of Bengal up to a distance of 450NM [833km].”

“This has opened up an opportunity for us to establish control over deep sea and generate more revenues for the

country in future,” said Noor-e-Alam, adding, “Complications in managing traffic has gone with the new system. As it is a complete digital solution with lots of interfaces, we can now work faster, smoother, and safer.”

The ATMC will not only benefit the country but also play a positive role in regional and global aviation, said the top CAAB official.

For decades, the aviation sector had been reliant on antiquated technology. The previous radar system lacked the capability to cover the country’s entire airspace, particularly over the Bay.

This technological gap resulted in significant financial losses, as Bangladesh was unable to effectively track all flights and consequently failed to collect mandatory “flying over charges” from international airlines traversing the region.

Speaking at the inaugural event, Civil Aviation Minister Afroza Khanam

expressed pride in the new automated system, stating that it elevates the nation’s airspace capacity to global benchmarks.

She reaffirmed the government’s commitment to transforming HSIA into a global aviation hub.

State Minister Millat described the installation as the beginning of a technology-driven era for the country’s airspace management.

CAAB chief Mostafa said the modernised ATM-CNS system successfully overcomes long-standing technical limitations, thereby ensuring that Bangladesh’s aviation sector maintains a stronger position at regional and global levels.

French Ambassador Jean-Marc Séré Charlet, who attended the event alongside Thales Vice-President Nicolas Bouverot, described the collaboration as a shining example of mutual trust and friendship between the two nations.

Vaccination for every

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The drive was later expanded to Dhaka South, Dhaka North, Mymensingh and Barishal city corporations from April 12.

A total of 21.8 lakh children from these 30 upazilas and the four city corporations and 1.58 lakh more children from the rest of the country are expected to be vaccinated, according to the health ministry.

The campaign launched on April 5 will continue till April 25, while the one that began on April 12 will end on May 12, said Hasanul Mahmud, assistant director of the Expanded Programme on Immunization.

The nationwide campaign will run till May 20 in city corporation areas and till May 12 across the rest of the country, Mahmud added.

Meanwhile, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) recorded one more confirmed measles death in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the confirmed measles death toll to 37.

The death was reported from the Dhaka division.

Besides, the directorate recorded two more suspected deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of suspected deaths to 183. The two deaths were

reported in Dhaka and Chattogram divisions.

Also, a total of 174 confirmed measles cases were recorded during this time, taking the total confirmed cases to 3,617. Some 1,170 suspected cases were also recorded during the same time, taking the total suspected cases to 24,776.

In a statement, Rana Flowers, UNICEF Representative in Bangladesh, said the nationwide measles-rubella campaign comes at a critical moment for Bangladesh.

"Since the emergency campaign began on April 5, we have seen strong momentum. As of April 19, close to 1.6 million children, 73 percent of the target group, have already been vaccinated. This is a remarkable effort, and UNICEF applauds the health workers and communities working around the clock," she said.

Stressing that the situation remains concerning, she said, "With every preventative vaccine delivered, the country inches closer to stabilising the current outbreak. The goal is clear: reach more than 17.8 million children, achieve at least 95 percent coverage, and ensure no child is left behind."



PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

A farmer struggles to irrigate semi-ripe paddy due to diesel shortage and power outages, affecting many across Rajshahi and leaving their fields dry at a critical stage. With the Boro harvest season just weeks away, concerns over crop losses are growing. The photo was taken at a Beel near the Shiv river in Mohanpur upazila yesterday.

Khalilur requests

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would visit Tehran at a mutually convenient time.

"The two leaders will continue to maintain communication on the matter," the ministry statement said.

Earlier, Iranian Ambassador to Bangladesh Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi thanked Bangladesh for adopting a condolence motion on the opening day of the 13th Parliament session following the assassination of the late Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

He further thanked the government for deputing Secretary (Bilateral) to the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nazrul Islam, to sign the condolence book at the Embassy of Iran on its behalf.

Banglar Joyatra, which was anchored in Sharjah Port of the UAE, was denied passage through the Strait of Hormuz after it attempted it on Friday night following Iran's announcement of reopening the strategic shipping route.

As Banglar Joyatra reached the strait, the Iranian Navy via radio ordered all vessels to turn back and wait for permission. The ship then returned to a safe anchorage in the Persian Gulf.

HC defers hearing

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counsel Mohammad Shishir Manir told reporters after the proceedings.

He said the attorney general acknowledged the court's observation and told the bench he would convey it to the authorities.

Earlier on the day, Attorney General Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal told the court the state would move the Appellate Division against the HC judgment, arguing it would not be appropriate for the HC to proceed with the writ at this stage.

Before the hearing began around 2:40pm, an official concerned of the bench asked journalists to leave the courtroom, citing instructions from the SC administration.

Seven lawyers, including Advocate Mohammad Saddam Hossein, filed the writ as a public interest litigation on Sunday, seeking a directive to retain the SC's independent secretariat.

The other petitioners include SC lawyers Md Mizanul Hoque, Abdullah Sadiq, Mohammad Abdul Wadud and Jaiaid Bin Amjad, and lower court lawyers Sabbir Rahman and Mahmudul Hasan.

They also sought a status quo on the secretariat's functions as initiated on December 11 last year.

The respondents include the cabinet secretary, secretary to parliament, the law secretary and others concerned.

In the petition, the lawyers argued that judicial independence – as guaranteed under Articles 94(4) and 116A of the constitution – is a basic pillar that cannot be curtailed.

They contended that the repeal law undermines the separation of powers and should be declared unconstitutional.

On April 9, parliament repealed three ordinances issued by the interim government, including those on the appointment of SC judges and the establishment of an independent secretariat.

Meanwhile, Badiul Alam Majumdar has filed an appeal with the Appellate Division seeking a stay on provisions of the SC Secretariat (Repeal) Act, 2026 that abolished the secretariat, its functions, including budget allocation and related posts.

Govt decision

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Yesterday, this correspondent visited Gulistan, Mohakhali, Farmgate, Mirpur-10 and several other areas in Dhaka and found that fares on intercity and long-route buses have been increased on various routes by more than 2-3 percent above the usual rate.

Operators, however, denied any fare hike.

Meanwhile, passengers are left to bear the brunt. They alleged that higher fares were being charged amid the diesel and octane crisis and the recent fuel price hike.

Goods transportation costs have also increased at district level following the fuel price hike.

In Rajshahi, traders were prompted to scale back purchases of vegetables from farmers amid hike in transportation costs. As a result, wholesale vegetable prices have dropped.

Truck fare for a Rajshahi-Dhaka round trip has risen to around Tk 27,000-28,000 from Tk 23,000-24,000, said Suzon Ali, owner of Josna Enterprise Transport at Nowhata haat in Paba upazila.

"As such, traders are

buying less, vegetable prices are falling, and farmers are bearing the losses," he added.

Bulbul, a local trader, said the cost of transporting pointed gourds from Rajshahi to Dhaka has increased by Tk 20 per sack. "That is why we are buying less," he added.

"As wholesale traders are buying less, vegetable prices have dropped in the last two days. I sold pointed gourds at Tk 60-65 per kg three days ago, but today [Monday] I sold them at Tk 45 per kg," said Ilias, a local farmer.

Furthermore, goods transportation from Benapole Land Port has also been facing disruption.

Atikuzzaman Soni, president of the Benapole Transport Agency Owners' Association, said the fare for a 15-tonne truck from Benapole to Dhaka has increased to around Tk 30,000-32,000 from Tk 22,000-23,000.

Kamal Uddin Shimul, vice-president of the Benapole C&F Agents Association, said goods transportation is being disrupted as fuel supply has yet to normalise despite the price hike.

The state must protect

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Justice must come through the legal system, not informal compromise or social pressure," said Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF.

MJF urged authorities to ensure the safety of the Subarnachar survivor and her family, arrest the accused and those involved in the attack, and conduct a fast, fair, and transparent investigation.

It also called for action against attempts to settle or obstruct the case informally and for stronger monitoring and accountability in all educational institutions.

The organisation further expressed concern over delays in legal action and efforts to reach local settlements instead of carrying out proper investigations.

"Such practices weaken the justice system and put survivors at further risk, especially in educational institutions like madrasas," the statement said.

"Protecting children must be a top national priority," MJF added.

The organisation said it stood with the survivor and her family and reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring a safe and just environment for all children.

Parliament rejects

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on the matter under Rule 300. "If further discussion is required, it may be pursued through the appropriate procedure," he said.

In response, Shafiqur said, "The statement given by the minister does not match reality. What will be achieved by such statements? Will this solve the problem? On one hand, it is claimed there is no fuel shortage, but in reality, the situation is completely

different. People are visibly frustrated."

Hurged that parliament should hold an open discussion where accurate information is presented so that all members can share responsibility.

He appealed to the Speaker not to dismiss the matter outright. "Even if not today, fix a time tomorrow or the day after, adjourn the session then and allow a full discussion on this issue," he said.

Power outages

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outages, consuming 450-500 litres of diesel and adding Tk 4-5 lakh in costs amid fuel shortages.

Mezbah Uddin Mithu of Royal Hospital (Unit-2) reported 7-8 hours of load shedding, pushing generator costs above Tk 1 lakh a day and raising fears of losses this month.

In Gazipur, prolonged outages have hit industrial production, forcing 2,836 factories to shut operations after 5:00pm.

Gazipur-4 MP Md Salahuddin Aiyubi told parliament that Kapasia is experiencing 10-12 hours of daily load-shedding, underscoring the worsening crisis.

(Our Sylhet, Noakhali, and Gazipur correspondents contributed to this report)



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Regional Director
Directorate of Technical Education
Barisal division
Website: www.rdo.barisaldiv.gov.bd



Memo No: 57.03.0651.105.106.07.0006.21.162

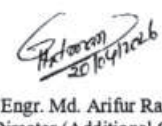
Date: 20.04.2026

e-Tender Notice(Re-Tender-OTM)

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

Tender ID	Tender Package No. and Description	Publication Date	Last selling Date & Time	Closing Date & Time
1254831	57.03.0651.105.109.07.0059.22-146 Supply & Installation of Office Equipment (Code: 4112310)	20 April-2026 17:00:00	03-May-2026 14:00:00	03-May-2026 16:00:00

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.



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GD-863



Dhaka South City Corporation
Office of the Executive Engineer
Mechanical Circle, Dhalpur, Jatrabari, Dhaka
www.dhakasouthcity.org

Memo No. 46.207.007.09.25.005.2026

Date: 16/04/2026

e-Tender Notice

This is to notify for all concern that the following tender has been published in e-GP Portal:

Sl. No.	Package No.	Identification of lot	Tender ID No.	Last selling date & time	Last dropping date & time
1	egpdsc mech.039	Supply of periodic servicing filter elements for officers vehicle, ambulance and Mortuary Van.	1258722	04/05/2026 up to 4:00pm	05/05/2026 up to 12:00pm
2	egpdsc mech.043	Supply work of spare parts for different model Waste management Heavy Equipment	1258754	04/05/2026 up to 4:00pm	05/05/2026 up to 12:00pm
3	egpdsc mech.045	Supply and Installation of Necessary Spare Parts to Keep Dongfeng Dump Trucks (3 Ton) Operational.	1258762	04/05/2026 up to 4:00pm	05/05/2026 up to 12:00pm

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



Md. Shah Alam Bhuiyan
Executive Engineer
Mechanical Circle
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ডিএসসি/পিআরডি/২২২/২০২৫-২৬

GD-869

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
Ministry of Public Administration
Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000
www.mopa.gov.bd

No: 05.00.0000.113.09.014.2025- 507

Date: 20-04-2026

Invitation for Re-Tender

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Public Administration								
2	Agency	N/A								
3	Procuring Entity Name	Ministry of Public Administration								
4	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka								
5	Invitation for	Books								
6	Invitation Ref No	05.00.0000.113.09.014.2025-506								
7	Date	20 April 2026								
KEY INFORMATION										
8	Procurement Method	OTM								
FUNDING INFORMATION										
9	Budget and Source of Funds	Revenue/GOB								
PARTICULAR INFORMATION										
10	Tender Package No.	9(2025-2026)								
11	Tender Package Name	Procurement of Books.								
12	Tender Publication Date	21-04-2026								
13	Tender Last Selling Date and Time	30-04-2026; 03:00 pm								
14	Tender Closing Date and Time	03-05-2026; 12:00 pm								
15	Tender Opening Date and Time	03-05-2026; 14:00 pm								
16	Name & Address of the office(s)	Address Selling Tender Document Deputy Secretary, Administration Section-4, New 01 no Building, Flour-19, Room-1905, Ministry of Public Administration, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000. Receiving Tender Document Deputy Secretary, Administration Section-4, New 01 no Building, Flour-19, Room-1905, Ministry of Public Administration, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000. Opening Tender Document Joint Secretary, Admin Branch, New 01 no Building, Flour-19, Room-1905, Ministry of Public Administration, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000.								
17	Place / Date / Time of Pre-Tender Meeting (Optional)	<table><thead><tr><th>Date</th><th>Time</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>23 April 2026</td><td>10.00 am - 11.00 am</td></tr></tbody></table>	Date	Time	23 April 2026	10.00 am - 11.00 am				
Date	Time									
23 April 2026	10.00 am - 11.00 am									
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER										
18	Brief Eligibility and Qualification of Tenderer	The tenderer should be well experienced with (1) Valid Trade License of 2025-26; (2) Income Tax Certificate (3) Bank Solvency Certificate Collected on or after 22 April 2026; (4) VAT Registration Certificate (5) Bank Statement (02 May 2025- 22 April 2026); (6) Undertaking of not being blacklisted or debarred by any government/autonomous body; (7) Other qualifications as stated in the STD.								
19	Brief Description of Goods or Works	Lot-1: Books								
20	Brief Description of Related Services	Not Applicable								
21	Price of Tender Document (Tk)	Lot-1: Tk.1000.00								
22	Let	<table><thead><tr><th>Identification of Lot</th><th>Location</th><th>Tender Security Amount (Tk)</th><th>Completion Time in Weeks</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1 Books</td><td>Ministry of Public Administration Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.</td><td>21,000.00</td><td>02 (Two)</td></tr></tbody></table>	Identification of Lot	Location	Tender Security Amount (Tk)	Completion Time in Weeks	1 Books	Ministry of Public Administration Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.	21,000.00	02 (Two)
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1 Books	Ministry of Public Administration Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.	21,000.00	02 (Two)							
23	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Md. Alamgir Kabir								
24	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Deputy Secretary								
25	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Administration Section-4, New 01 no Building, Flour-19, Room-1905, Ministry of Public Administration, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka-1000.								
26	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	02-226641156 Fax: 02-55101056 admnics@mopa.gov.bd								
27	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject all or any of the tenders.									

20.04.26

Md. Alamgir Kabir
Deputy Secretary
Admin Section-4
Ph: 02-226641156

GD-865

Women entrepreneurs could power Bangladesh’s renewable energy transition

ANWARUL ALAM CHANDAN

Women in Bangladesh’s climate-vulnerable districts are showing growing interest in renewable energy-based livelihoods. From solar-powered irrigation and small energy enterprises to clean cooking technologies, many see renewable energy not only as a source of income, but also as a pathway to climate resilience.

Yet this promise remains constrained by three persistent barriers: financial exclusion, institutional inertia and deeply rooted social norms. For many women entrepreneurs, the choice between inaccessible low-interest bank loans and accessible but expensive microfinance is no choice at all. It is a structural trap.

Unlocking women’s potential in this sector will require more than isolated projects. Bangladesh needs a coordinated approach that improves access to finance, strengthens technical, and business skills, reinforces supportive policies, and addresses the climate risks shaping daily life in vulnerable regions. A mix of financial innovation, targeted outreach, community engagement, and risk-sharing will be essential if more women are to participate in renewable energy enterprises.

A supportive policy framework, but limited access

Bangladesh has made progress in building policy frameworks for sustainable and gender-responsive finance. Bangladesh Bank has introduced several initiatives to encourage green finance and lending for renewable energy and climate-resilient livelihoods. These measures reflect the country’s wider commitment to sustainable development and financial inclusion.

But an enabling policy environment has not translated into broad access on the ground. Many women, especially in rural and climate-vulnerable areas, remain excluded from formal finance. Structural barriers, institutional practices, and social norms continue to limit their ability to secure affordable loans and take part in emerging green economic opportunities.

Bridging this gap will require simpler lending procedures, targeted financial intermediation, and stronger partnerships with trusted local organisations that can reach women at the grassroots. Aligning Bangladesh Bank’s strategic goals with the realities facing rural women, particularly through women-focused CMSME financing models, could unlock transformative opportunities for women entrepreneurs in vulnerable districts. This is not only a question of gender equality. It is also an investment in climate resilience, inclusive growth, and Bangladesh’s transition to more sustainable energy systems.

Bangladesh’s renewable energy potential remains underused. Despite strong solar resources and ambitious climate commitments, renewable energy still accounts for only a small share of the national energy mix. Expanding the sector will require greater investment, stronger

implementation, and broader participation from local entrepreneurs, including women. Women in climate-vulnerable districts could play a significant role in this transition if they are given the right support, training, and access to finance.

The access-affordability paradox

In December 2025, a study by the Centre for Entrepreneurship Development at BRAC University collected qualitative and quantitative data from more than 300 respondents, including women entrepreneurs, government officials, representatives of public and private banks, and NGO practitioners. The findings revealed a complex mix of financial, institutional, social, and informational barriers preventing women from entering renewable energy-based livelihoods at scale.

One of the clearest findings was what may be called an access-affordability paradox. NGOs and microfinance institutions such as BRAC, Grameen Bank,

exposure. Widowed and divorced women often face added challenges where male guarantors are informally expected.

These financial barriers are reinforced by social norms. In many households, men remain the main decision-makers on loans and investments. Even when loans are taken in women’s names, the money is often controlled by husbands or other male relatives.

Mobility restrictions also matter. In remote or conservative areas, women may find it difficult to travel alone to banks or government offices. As a result, many capable entrepreneurs give up before even applying for formal finance.

Another major challenge is lack of awareness. Many women entrepreneurs have limited knowledge of loan eligibility, application procedures or green finance schemes. Financial institutions and development practitioners also note that many women lack experience in business planning, proposal writing, and financial

focused green loans with little or no collateral, using group guarantees or energy equipment as partial security where possible. Lower interest rates, flexible loan sizes, longer grace periods, and repayment schedules linked to cash flow would also make a significant difference.

Second, banking procedures must be simplified. Streamlined KYC requirements for small renewable energy loans, along with digital or mobile-based applications, could reduce paperwork, travel costs, and dependence on intermediaries. Financial institutions should also invest in gender-sensitive service delivery, including trained frontline staff and dedicated service desks for women entrepreneurs.

Third, the government can play a catalytic role. A national green credit guarantee mechanism could help share lending risks and encourage banks to lend to women without demanding traditional collateral. Financing information and government programmes should also be communicated more effectively through local administrative channels such as Union Digital Centers and upazila offices.

Fourth, development organisations and research institutions should strengthen women’s capabilities through practical training in business planning, financial management, marketing, and renewable energy technology. Women’s cooperatives and self-help groups may also offer a useful way to pool resources, negotiate better terms, and reduce individual risk.

Finally, social barriers must be addressed directly. Outreach involving partners, family members, community leaders, and religious figures can help shift attitudes towards women’s entrepreneurship. Trusted grassroots organisations can also play a vital role in spreading information, organising mobile banking services, and demonstrating renewable energy technologies within communities.

A strategic opportunity

Expanding women’s participation in renewable energy entrepreneurship is not simply a matter of social inclusion. It is a strategic opportunity for Bangladesh to strengthen climate resilience, accelerate clean energy adoption, and support inclusive economic growth.

If financial systems become more responsive to the realities facing rural women entrepreneurs, Bangladesh could unlock a new generation of women-led enterprises that support both sustainable energy and rural development. Empowering women in climate-vulnerable districts is therefore not only the right thing to do. It is also a practical investment in Bangladesh’s future.

Anwarul Alam Chandan is a development practitioner and researcher working on climate resilience, livelihoods, and inclusive market systems. Reach him at atmanwar@hotmail.com.

Views expressed in this article are of the author’s own and may not reflect the editorial stance of The Daily Star.



ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ

and ASA offer relatively accessible credit. Their local presence, simpler procedures and lack of collateral requirements make them attractive to rural women. But these loans often carry higher interest rates and require frequent repayments, putting pressure on small businesses.

By contrast, government and private banks offer loans at lower interest rates, but these are often beyond the reach of women entrepreneurs because of complex documentation, collateral demands, and perceptions of slow or unresponsive institutions. For many rural women, the choice is between easy access at high cost and low cost with no access at all.

Structural and social barriers

Lack of collateral remains one of the biggest obstacles. Across much of Bangladesh, land titles and productive assets are still typically registered in the names of male family members. This excludes many women from meeting formal banking requirements.

Loan procedures create further barriers. Lengthy applications, guarantor conditions, and multiple documentation requirements make formal banking difficult to navigate, especially for women with limited education or institutional

management.

These gaps are especially important in renewable energy enterprises, where women may need both technical knowledge, and market skills to run businesses involving solar irrigation, energy services or clean cooking products.

Climate vulnerability adds another layer of difficulty. Women operating in flood- and cyclone-prone areas face constant risk that extreme weather will damage equipment or disrupt operations. Solar panels, clean cooking devices, and other energy assets can be damaged or destroyed, undermining income, and loan repayment capacity. Even so, many women still see renewable energy as a practical route to climate adaptation and economic opportunity, if the right support is available.

What needs to change

A stronger response will require action from financial institutions, government agencies, development organisations, and communities.

First, lenders need products that reflect the realities of women-led renewable energy businesses. Banks and microfinance institutions should introduce women-

Microsoft to shut down Outlook Lite on May 26

NEXT STEP DESK

Microsoft will shut down its Outlook Lite app on May 26, ending support for the lightweight email service launched in 2022 for Android devices with limited storage and slower internet connections. Outlook Lite had already been marked for retirement after Microsoft announced last year that it would be removed from the Google Play Store in October 2025. The latest move means the app will also stop working for existing users next month.

In a support page for Outlook Lite, Microsoft said users should move to its standard mobile app. “To continue enjoying a secure and feature-rich email experience, we recommend switching to Outlook Mobile,” the company said. Microsoft said Outlook Lite users will still be able to access their existing emails, calendar items, and attachments by signing in to Outlook Mobile.



IMAGE: REUTERS

Meta’s new wave of layoffs begins May 20: report

NEXT STEP DESK

Meta plans to conduct an initial round of widespread layoffs on May 20, cutting about 10% of its global workforce, or close to 8,000 employees, according to a report by Reuters, which cites three sources familiar with Meta’s plans. Further job reductions are expected in the second half of the year, the sources said, though details, including dates and scope, have not been finalised. Executives may adjust those plans as they monitor developments in artificial intelligence capabilities, the sources added.

Reuters reported last month that the Facebook and Instagram owner was planning to cut 20% or more of its global workforce. Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg is directing hundreds of billions of dollars into AI as he works to restructure the company around the technology. Meta’s current layoffs will be its most significant since the restructuring of late 2022 and early 2023, which the company called the “year of efficiency” and which eliminated approximately 21,000 positions.

The company is in a stronger financial position now, generating more than \$200 billion in revenue last year and a \$60 billion profit despite heavy AI spending. As of December 31, Meta employed nearly 79,000 people globally.

OpenAI acquires personal finance startup Hiro

NEXT STEP DESK

OpenAI has acquired personal finance startup Hiro Finance, the company’s founder, Ethan Bloch, announced last week. Terms of the deal were not disclosed. Hiro, which launched its AI-powered financial planning tool about five months ago, will stop accepting new signups immediately. Bloch wrote in

a public message to users that joining OpenAI would allow the team to pursue its mission of improving financial well-being “at a much larger scale for a much broader audience.”

According to a report by the transaction, according to



TechCrunch, the startup was backed by leading venture capital firms Ribbit, General Catalyst, and Restive. It never publicly disclosed its total funding. Hiro employees will join OpenAI as part of

Bloch, though exact numbers were not provided. LinkedIn lists roughly ten individuals associated with the company.

Hiro allowed users to input financial details such as salary, debts, and monthly expenses to model different scenarios and aid decision-making. The app was specifically trained to handle accurate financial calculations, as per the company.

DeepSeek in talks to raise \$300 mln at \$10 bln valuation: report

NEXT STEP DESK

Chinese AI startup DeepSeek is discussing a funding round that would raise at least \$300 million and value the company at \$10 billion, according to a report by The Information, which cited two people familiar with the matter.

The company, whose low-cost AI models disrupted the industry and contributed to stock market

turbulence last year, has previously turned down multiple funding offers from leading Chinese venture capital firms and technology giants, according to the report. The potential fundraising highlights the significant capital required to develop and operate advanced AI models, particularly as the sector shifts toward sophisticated reasoning systems and agentic applications.



IMAGE: PEXELS

Snap to close more than 300 roles, cutting about 1000 jobs

NEXT STEP DESK



IMAGE: UNSPLASH

Snap Inc. said last week that it will lay off about 1,000 employees and close more than 300 unfilled positions as part of a cost-cutting effort. In an email to staff that the company included in its official statement, chief executive Evan Spiegel said the measures are expected to lower Snap’s annualised cost base by more than \$500m by the second half of 2026. “After these changes, we expect to reduce our annualized cost base by more than \$500 million by the second half of 2026, helping to establish a clearer path to net-income profitability,” Spiegel said. Spiegel also said the company is increasing its use of artificial intelligence across its operations. He said the tools had already helped teams cut repetitive tasks, work more quickly and better support users, partners and advertisers.

JOBS SPOTLIGHT

SAJIDA Foundation

Coordinator, Operations, Neuroscience and Psychiatry Hub Ltd.



Deadline: April 22

Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor’s degree in Hospital Management, Public Health, Business Administration, or a related field.

Minimum experience: 2-4 years

Save the Children



Save the Children

Officer, MEAL

Deadline: April 25

Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor’s degree, preferably in Statistics, Social Sciences, Anthropology, Development Studies, Geography, Urban Planning, Computer Science, or a related field.

Minimum experience: 2 years

World Food Programme



World Food Programme

Programme

Associate, KIM &

Data Analysis, SC6

Deadline: April 26

Eligibility:

🔗 Bachelor’s degree or equivalent. Education in Computer Science, Statistics, Data Science, or in any other relevant field is preferable.

Minimum experience: 6 years

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)



ICRC

Senior Political & Security

Advisor

Deadline: May 15

Eligibility:

🔗 University degree, with professional experience in similar fields or other organisations or governmental structures.

Minimum experience: 4-6 years

FOR MORE DETAILS AND THE APPLICATION LINKS, SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW.



“Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships.”

MICHAEL JORDAN



Supta ‘brilliant’ in Rajshahi debut

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh survived a dramatic late collapse to register a three-wicket win against Sri Lanka in the first of three Women's One-Day Internationals at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium yesterday, registering their first-ever victory over the islanders in the format.

Sharmin Akhter Supta's 86 runs off 127 deliveries, featuring 13 boundaries, anchored the chase of 206 runs, supported by 50-plus partnerships with Sobhana Mostary (41) and Shorna Akter (35).

At 199 for three in the 45th over, victory seemed assured



before a sudden collapse, starting with Supta's dismissal, saw four wickets fall for one run in just 10 deliveries. Nahida Akter and Sultana Khatun eventually steadied the nerves, guiding the side home in 48.3 overs.

Prior to this match, Bangladesh had faced Sri Lanka five times in WODIs, losing three while the remaining two matches produced no result. This win also offered a measure of redemption following their narrow seven-run defeat to the same opponents in the ICC Women's World Cup 2025 in Navi Mumbai.

Speaking after the match, Shorna admitted, "It would have been better if me, Supta apu, had finished the game," noting that their dismissals "put the chase under pressure". "We always want our middle order to finish the job, but these things are part of the game," Shorna added.

She praised Supta, who scored her 11th WODI fifty, as having "played brilliantly," and also expressed satisfaction with the Rajshahi venue, which hosted its first international match.

"This was Rajshahi's debut as an international venue. The wicket and ground are really good. If a few more facilities are improved, it will become even better," she said. The series continues at the same venue on Wednesday.

RANA times it right to rattle NZ

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

"There are no warm-up balls -- he's always on the money from ball one." That was how New Zealand's standout batter on the day, Nick Kelly, summed up Nahid Rana's performance in Mirpur yesterday.

Kelly's words captured the essence of what the visitors were up against, as Rana repeatedly struck almost immediately after being introduced, powering Bangladesh to a series-levelling six-wicket victory.

"He probably just didn't get the reward. He was able to attack the stumps or bash the wicket with his extra pace and bounce," Kelly added, highlighting the constant pressure and intimidation the young pacer created.

Apparently, more than his pace, which comes naturally to him, it was his ability to adjust to the wicket and find the means to surprise batters that helped Bangladesh ease to the win after having the Black Caps bundled out for 198.

Rana finished with five for 32 from his 10 overs -- his second five-wicket haul in ODIs. His first came against Pakistan last month, and the 23-year-old became just the third Bangladesh pacer to claim multiple ODI fivers after Mustafizur Rahman (5) and Taskin Ahmed (2).

In a do-or-die game, first-ball breakthroughs are priceless -- and Rana delivered exactly that, three times across his spells.

His first victim was Henry Nicholls, undone by a fuller delivery that nipped back in late and trapped him leg-before as he played across the line.

"Two slips," called skipper Mehidy Hasan Miraz, sensing early dominance. Rana followed it up with an outswinger in the channel, maintaining relentless pace -- touching 147 kmph twice in that over -- and giving batters barely

any time to react.

The pattern continued in his next over. This time, a sharp 146.8 km/h bouncer on the very first ball surprised Will Young, who could only glove it to Najmul Hossain Shanto at point. Two overs, two wickets -- both off the first delivery.

Rana's opening burst set the tone: two wickets for just 10 runs in five overs, using fuller deliveries sparingly to keep batters guessing.

Although Kelly, who top-scored for his side with a 102-ball 83, showed authority at the crease, stitching together a 56-run stand with Muhammad Abbas and another 37-run partnership with Dean Foxcroft, Rana returned to break both.

SCORES IN BRIEF

New Zealand:

198 all out in 48. 4 overs (Kelly 83, Abbas 19; Nahid 5-32, Shorif 2-32)

Bangladesh:

199 for 4 in 35.3 overs (Tanzid 76, Shanto 50 retired hurt, Hridoy 30 not out; Lennox 2-36)

Result:

Bangladesh won by six wickets

Player of the match:

Nahid Rana

In the first over of his second spell, a short delivery accounted for Abbas. Then, in his third spell, Foxcroft fell to another short ball -- again on the very first delivery.

Rana capped off his performance with a yorker to dismiss Jayden Lennox in a single-over spell, leaving New Zealand 30 to 40 runs short of a competitive total.

That shortfall ultimately proved decisive. But beyond the numbers, it was Rana's ability to read situations and strike at the perfect moment -- whether with pace, bounce, or precision -- that defined the contest.

Asked if Rana had a knack for picking his moments, Kelly's response summed it up best: "Exactly right."

On a day when timing meant everything, Rana's was simply impeccable.

51 DAYS TO GO



Three giants share a stat

At the FIFA World Cup, Argentina, Italy and France each have a goal difference of 51. Defending champions Argentina have scored 152 goals and conceded 101, four-time champions Italy have 128 goals for and 77 against, while two-time winners France have scored 136 and conceded 85.

****Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: Beyond the beautiful game: The bizarre beliefs that rule the World Cup**



Accompanied by his son, former Bangladesh pacer Rubel Hossain received a special commemorative memento from Bangladesh Cricket Board members, including ad hoc committee president Tamim Iqbal, at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium yesterday. The ceremony, held just before the second ODI between Bangladesh and New Zealand, honoured Rubel, who announced his retirement from international cricket last week. A visibly emotional Rubel shared a few parting words with the Mirpur crowd before heading to the pitch with his son. In a poignant final gesture of respect, he crouched down to touch the surface of the home of cricket, marking the end of a career on the soil where he made his name.

PHOTO: STAR

Premier League title race wide open

Manchester City reignited the Premier League title race as Erling Haaland ended his scoring drought with the decisive goal in a breathless 2-1 victory over leaders Arsenal on Sunday, cutting the gap at the top to three points with a game in hand. The victory moved chasers City to 67 points from 32 matches, three behind Arsenal, who remain top on 70 from 33 games, but Pep Guardiola's side can climb above them with a win over relegation-threatened Burnley on Wednesday with five games of the season remaining.



Team	P	W	D	L	G/F	G/A	G/D	Pts
Arsenal	33	21	7	5	63	26	+37	70
Man City	32	20	7	5	65	29	+36	67
Man United	33	16	10	7	58	45	+13	58
Aston Villa	33	17	7	9	47	41	+6	58
Liverpool	33	16	7	10	54	43	+11	55

Arsenal's remaining fixtures

Vs Newcastle (H): April 25

Vs Fulham (H): May 2

Vs West Ham (A): May 10

Vs Burnley (H): May 17

Vs Crystal Palace (A): May 24

Man City's remaining fixtures

Vs Burnley (A): April 23

Vs Everton (A): May 5

Vs Brentford (H): May 9

Vs Bournemouth (A): May 17

Vs Crystal Palace (H): May 22

Vs Aston Villa (H): May 24

Teaching students how to think in an age of endless information

Inside the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme, where inquiry, concepts and reflection turn information into understanding.

By Dr Fernando Ramirez

A student pauses over a graph on a laptop screen and asks, "Where did this information come from?" In another classroom, a group of students debate whether change always leads to progress. The teacher does not rush to provide the answer. Instead, the question is held in the room and taken seriously. This scene captures something important about the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP): learning does not begin with certainty, but with disciplined curiosity.

Designed for students aged 11 to 16, the MYP offers a different experience from the one many parents remember from their own school years. The programme is not built around memorising large amounts of information and repeating it in tests. Its aim is to help young people understand ideas, test claims, make connections and apply what they know in meaningful situations. In a world saturated with information, this shift matters.

A fundamental element of the MYP is inquiry. Inquiry is sometimes misunderstood as simply asking questions in class or sending students away to do research. In fact, it is a structured process of learning in which questions drive thinking, evidence is examined carefully, and assumptions are tested and understanding is built over time.

Students are not rewarded for producing quick answers; they are taught to investigate, interpret and refine their thinking. That is what makes learning both personal and meaningful. Students begin to see that their questions matter and they come to



understand that knowledge is something they can actively construct rather than passively receive.

Inquiry, however, does not stand alone. Students also need structure, so that learning remains coherent and intellectually rigorous. This is where concept-based learning becomes essential. In the MYP, teaching is organised not only around content, but also around powerful concepts such as systems, change, relationships, identity and perspective. Facts still matter, but they are used as a means to develop students' thinking skills and to build their ability to analyse, synthesise and evaluate, rather than as the final destination. Concepts can help students see patterns, ask better questions and transfer understanding from familiar to unfamiliar situations.

This transfer is one of the clearest signs of real learning. A student who has explored the concept of systems in science may later use the same conceptual lens to analyse the economy in integrated humanities or to interpret how parts of a text work together in English language and literature. This is far more powerful than recalling isolated facts because it prepares students to recognise meaning across contexts instead of treating each subject as a separate box.



The MYP also places deliberate emphasis on approaches to learning, or ATL, skills. These include research, communication, collaboration, critical thinking and self-management. They are not an optional extra. They are the habits that allow students to manage complexity, organise their learning, evaluate information and work productively with others.

For students, these capacities are especially important. The middle years of schooling is another phase of schooling and life when they are developing their identities, independence and responsibility. Learning how to plan, reflect, communicate clearly and respond to feedback is therefore not just academically useful; it is part of becoming capable and self-aware.

Teachers play a crucial role in helping students develop these skills. Independence is not created by withdrawing support. It is developed through careful scaffolding: structured guidance, clear expectations, checkpoints, feedback and opportunities for reflection. Over time, students learn to take greater ownership of their learning, but they do so with support that is thoughtful rather than controlling. The goal is not to leave young people alone with difficult tasks. It is to help them become increasingly confident in managing challenges for themselves.

Ultimately, the value of the MYP lies in the kind of learner it tries to shape. It is not only preparing students to complete assignments or succeed in examinations. It is helping them become thoughtful, articulate and purposeful young people who can navigate complexity with confidence and integrity. In an age of limitless information and increasing misinformation, education must do more than transmit content. It must equip students to question critically, interpret wisely and act with discernment. That may be one of the most valuable educational gifts any school can offer.

Dr Fernando Ramirez is the IB MYP Coordinator at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka.





New radar system at HSIA covers entire Bangladesh sky

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has entered a new era of airspace surveillance with the inauguration of a state-of-the-art radar system at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA).

This modernised Air Traffic Management Centre (ATMC) brings the entire national airspace under comprehensive, real-time surveillance, ensuring that every flight entering the country's airspace is tracked, thereby significantly enhancing flight safety and operational efficiency, said officials.

Civil Aviation Minister Afroza Khanam, State Minister M Rashiduzzaman Millat, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Mostafa Mahmood Siddiq, top officials of the ministry and CAAB yesterday inaugurated the ATMC.

French company Thales manufactured and installed the ATMC.

The planning phase of the project

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Bus operators have illegally set up counters on the Uttara-Abdullahpur flyover in the capital. This is effectively choking the high-speed corridor, as buses stop in the middle of the road to let passengers get on and off. The flyover was built to spare passengers from such congestion. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Bangladesh, EU eyeing FTA after partnership deal

Focus shifts to market access, investment protection

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and the European Union are eyeing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and an Investment Protection Agreement (IPA) after the two sides initialled the Partnership Cooperation Agreement (PCA) in Brussels yesterday.

Bangladesh Foreign Ministry Secretary (East and West) Nazrul Islam and EU Deputy Managing Director (Asia and Pacific) Paola Pampaloni initialled the PCA, while Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman, Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humaiun Kobir, and European Commission High Representative Kaja Kallas were present as witnesses.

In a meeting, the two sides welcomed the new PCA as a platform for a forward-looking partnership.

They also highlighted Bangladesh's post-LDC transition, the importance of preferential market access, and the launch of negotiations on an FTA and an IPA.

According to foreign ministry officials, initialling the PCA means the agreement now has a legal basis, with the draft finalised and agreed upon by both sides in January this year following five rounds of negotiation since 2024.

However, it will take a few months for the PCA to be

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Blue Origin's reusable rocket booster lands successfully

REUTERS

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin said on Sunday that its New Glenn rocket booster had touched down after launch, marking its first landing of a reused booster and intensifying its rivalry with Elon Musk's SpaceX.

The rocket, which had a launch window of 6:45 a.m. to 12:19 p.m. ET on Sunday, lifted off at around 7:25 a.m. ET (1125 GMT) from Cape Canaveral, Florida, and the booster touchdown happened about 10 minutes later.

New Glenn carried AST SpaceMobile's ASTS.O BlueBird 7 satellite to low-Earth orbit in a flight that marks a pivotal step for the company.

The mission was key to demonstrating that New Glenn, a 29-story heavy-lift rocket, has a reliable booster reuse capability and can compete with the SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

The rocket's booster, dubbed "Never Tell Me the Odds," previously flew on the NG-2 mission in November and was recovered, setting up this week's milestone attempt.

The booster's name is a nod to a Han Solo line in the film "Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back."

Following a series of delays earlier this month, the mission comes amid a surge of activity in the space sector, including the successful NASA Artemis II lunar flyby that took humans further from Earth than any had traveled before.

Blue Origin had said in November that it would build a bigger, more powerful variant of its New Glenn rocket, called New Glenn 9x4.



STOPPING MOBS Home boss's pledge rings hollow Rumeen tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brahmanbaria-2 MP Rumeen Farhana yesterday criticised Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed, saying mob attacks continue despite repeated assurances from him that such incidents would no longer be allowed in the country.

Speaking during a discussion in the parliament on a notice issued on section 71 of rules of procedure concerning urgent public importance, Rumeen said, "The home minister is present here. Not once, not twice, but several times he assured us that mob culture would no longer exist in Bangladesh."

"The minister assured all that the culture of impunity would end and people would get justice. Yet we have seen one mob attack after another continue across the country."

Rumeen said that while countries around the world nurture cultural practices such as dance, music, theatre and poetry, Bangladesh has instead witnessed a "culture of

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

BNP walks back on its tobacco control promises

New govt weakens anti-tobacco laws, lifts ban on vape



Bangladesh already faces a significant tobacco burden, with more than 1,30,000 deaths a year related to tobacco use, and substantial economic and social costs, say WHO and Unicef

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The BNP government amended at least two laws in ways that could further promote the production and use of tobacco products despite pledging tobacco control in its election manifesto, said anti-tobacco campaigners.

The ban on the production and use of e-cigarettes was lifted, while the provision that barred tobacco cultivation on triple-crop or other high-yielding agricultural land was lifted.

These legal changes are fully contradictory to the BNP's election manifestos, said Hossain Zillur Rahman, a former adviser to

a caretaker government.

"The party has spoken of protecting the younger generation and strengthening tobacco control. But weakening tobacco control laws will first and foremost harm young people, particularly new smokers," he told The Daily Star on April 19.

Ziauddin Hyder, an adviser to BNP Chairperson Tarique Rahman, however, does not think the steps contradict their manifesto.

"BNP is committed to control or prevent the misuse of tobacco products," said Hyder, a member of a government cell formed to implement the BNP manifesto.

Amid growing demands from anti-tobacco campaigners, the interim government in January last year banned the import of e-cigarettes, or electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), to protect public health.

Later on December 23, an ordinance was approved expanding the definition of tobacco products in the Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act and introducing several new provisions to regulate their use.

Section 6 (Ga) of the ordinance says no person shall produce, import, export, store, advertise,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

NIRCH deputy director stabbed in Mohakhali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals stabbed a deputy director of the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH) in Dhaka's Mohakhali area yesterday afternoon.

The injured was identified as Ahmed Hossain, 50. The incident occurred around 3:30pm near the old campus of BRAC University.

Confirming the matter, Deputy Commissioner of Gulshan Division M Tanvir Ahamed told The Daily Star that police visited the spot after the attack.

Efforts are underway to identify and arrest those involved, he said.

Police said Ahmed was returning home from the hospital when two to three assailants attacked him, stabbing him in his right hand and back before fleeing the scene.

NICRH Director Mostafa Aziz Sumon said Ahmed initially received treatment at the cancer hospital but was later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as he sustained multiple injuries.

The motive behind the attack is still unclear, with

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'I thought I would die there' Habiganj expat recounts 20 days under missile fire in Iran

MINTU DESHWARA

For 20 days, Babul Mia lived under the constant threat of missile strikes near Tehran, cut off from his family in Bangladesh and unsure if he would survive.

The expatriate worker from Paniumda village in Nabiganj upazila of Habiganj said he spent nearly three weeks in fear as explosions shook the area around his workplace in Hasanabad, where he worked at a steel factory.

"Planes flew like flocks of birds. Missiles came time and again," Babul told this correspondent, describing nights without sleep and days marked by uncertainty.

At one point, he decided to leave the factory and make an attempt towards the Bangladesh embassy, despite ongoing missile strikes.

"I thought it was better to try than die waiting," he said.

Babul returned Bangladesh on March 21 via Azerbaijan with the help of the Bangladesh mission.

He left for Oman in July 2019 but later entered Iran without valid documents and found work at a factory near Tehran. Around 80 Bangladeshi workers lived in cramped quarters, with eight to nine men sharing a single room.

He said the situation escalated on February 28 this year



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Bangladesh players celebrate a Sri Lanka dismissal during the first WODI of a three-match series at the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium yesterday. Bowling first, the Tigresses restricted the visitors to 205 for nine in 50 overs, thanks to a three-wicket haul from Ritu Moni. Then Sharmin Akter Supta led the charge with the bat with a 127-ball 86 as the hosts chased down the target with three wickets in hand to register their first victory against the islanders in the format.

PHOTO: BCB

Pope decries exploitation by the rich

REUTERS, Saurimo

Pope Leo lamented during an event in Angola yesterday that many people in the world were being "exploited by authoritarians and defrauded by the rich", the latest example of a forceful new speaking style he has adopted on his four-nation Africa tour.

The first US pope, who has drawn the ire of President Donald Trump with his more outspoken comments, told worshippers at a Mass in Saurimo, near the Democratic Republic of Congo border, that violence and oppression went against the Christian message.

"Every form of oppression, violence, exploitation and dishonesty negates the resurrection of Christ," said the pontiff, referring to the core belief of Christianity that Jesus rose from the dead after being crucified.