



Villages sweat amid lengthy power cuts

Fuel shortage leaves plants struggling to meet even off-peak demand

AVERAGE HOURLY LOADSHEDDING in April (in MW)

SOURCE: PDB

1067

358

First week

343

Second week

Third week

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Power cuts across the country, especially in rural areas, have worsened with the mercury rising, as the government struggles to meet even off-peak demand due to shortages of gas, coal, and furnace oil to generate enough electricity.

Peak-hour shortages have exceeded 1,500 megawatts (MW) daily this week, similar to last week. With this shortfall, some areas are experiencing on average two to three hours of outages, though distribution companies say rural areas are suffering far longer power cuts.

Consumers under the Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (REB) are reporting five to six hours of power cuts daily.

Yesterday, daytime peak demand reached 15,500MW at noon, against a generation of 14,069MW, leaving a shortfall of 1,462MW.

The shortage exceeded 1,000MW almost every hour yesterday, peaking at 1,840MW at 9:00pm. The Power Development Board forecast a shortfall of 2,932MW at midnight yesterday, showing that demand is going unmet even at night.

The average shortfall this week stood at 1,067MW, sharply up from 343MW last week and 358MW in the first week of April.

Data shows rural areas in Khulna, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Cumilla have faced the most severe cuts, with shortfalls exceeding

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WITH MAA'S GUIDANCE ... Clutching her notes, an SSC examinee does last-minute revisions as her mother leans in, guiding her under a shared umbrella on a parked rickshaw just outside Motijheel Government Girls' High School exam centre in Dhaka yesterday -- a fleeting moment of care and hope before a major academic milestone.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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PM assures press freedom at first meet with NOAB

AGENCIES

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday reiterated his government's firm stance on press freedom.

He made the remark at a meeting with members of the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) at the Public Administration meeting room of the Cabinet Division at the Bangladesh Secretariat, said the prime minister's additional press secretary, Atikur Rahman Ruman, according to a BSS report.

Tarique, also chairman of the ruling BNP, said he regularly reads newspapers and watches television,

War to resume if talks fail

Says Trump as he rules out extending ceasefire; Iran yet to confirm participation in negotiations

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump yesterday said that he did not want to extend a rapidly expiring ceasefire in the US-Israeli war on Iran and that the US military was "raring to go" if negotiations were not successful.

He spoke shortly after the US military announced it had boarded a huge Iranian oil tanker at sea in international

waters, the first such move against Iran's crude exports. That could make it more difficult to revive peace talks with Iran, which has said it will not negotiate under the "shadow of threats" and while Washington enforces a blockade of its ports.

Washington has expressed confidence that last-ditch talks with Iran will go ahead in Pakistan, and a senior

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Iran says truce ends at midnight GMT; US president says it expires a day later

JD Vance delays departure for Pakistan

Iran foreign minister says US blockade 'an act of war'

Family of four brutally murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A couple and their two children were brutally murdered in their home, sending a shockwave through Bahadurpur village in Naogaon's Niamatpur upazila yesterday.

The victims were first bludgeoned and then their throats were slit.

They were Habibur Rahman, 35; his wife Popy Sultana, 27; their nine-year-old son Parvez, and three-year-old daughter Sadia.

Police and family members said the killings likely took place between 11:00pm on Monday and 5:00am yesterday.

Neighbours were shaken by the sight as they discovered the bodies after Fajr prayers. They went into the house, finding the door open, which seemed unusual.

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setting standards



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Prime Minister Tarique Rahman poses for a photo with members of the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh after a meeting at the Secretariat yesterday. This was the first meeting between the PM and NOAB.

PHOTO: PTD

War to resume if talks fail

FROM PAGE 1
Iranian official said Tehran was considering joining. But with the final hours of a two-week truce ticking by, there was little time left.

However, there was confusion regarding when the two-week ceasefire, which came into effect on April 8, would end.

Iranian state TV said it would expire at 3:30 am Wednesday, Tehran time (0000 GMT Tuesday).

The timing is consistent with when the 14-day truce went into effect, though US President Donald Trump recently said it would end a day later, on Wednesday evening Washington time.

Mediator Pakistan had said earlier in the day that the ceasefire would expire at 2350 GMT on Tuesday.

Asked about the possibility of extending the truce, Trump told CNBC: "I don't want to do that. We don't have that much time."

"I expect to be bombing because I think that's a better attitude to go in with," he added. "But we're ready to go. I mean, the military is raring to go."

Iranian government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said: "We do not want to be attacked again, but if such attacks occur, we will definitely respond more firmly than before," according to the state news agency IRNA.

Late yesterday, Pakistani Minister of Information Attaullah Tarar said Iran's formal response on whether it will attend the next round of talks with the US in Islamabad is "still awaited".

Earlier yesterday, Pakistan urged both the US and Iran to extend their ceasefire.

Though Trump yesterday upped his threat through a series of TV interviews and social media posts, there was no statement issued from the Iranian leadership.

Early today, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi reacted, saying "blockading Iranian ports is an act of war and thus a violation of the ceasefire" in a reference to the ongoing US naval blockade around the Strait of Hormuz.

"Striking a commercial vessel and taking its crew hostage is an even greater violation. Iran knows how to neutralise restrictions, how to defend its interests, and how to resist

bullying," he wrote on X.

Earlier, the US military said it had boarded the Tifani tanker linked to Iran "without incident". The vessel last reported its position yesterday morning as near Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean, according to MarineTraffic tracking data. It was close to fully loaded with 2 million barrels of crude and had signalled Singapore as its destination.

"As we have made clear, we will pursue global maritime enforcement efforts to disrupt illicit networks and interdict sanctioned vessels providing material support to Iran -- anywhere they operate," US Central Command said.

The US president told CNBC that US forces on Monday intercepted a ship carrying a "gift" to Iran from China as Tehran tries to restock its military during a ceasefire period.

The ship had "a gift from China" which "wasn't very nice," Trump told CNBC. "I was a little surprised," he added, saying he thought he had an "understanding" with China's President Xi Jinping.

A week ago, Trump announced that Xi had assured him there would be no Chinese weapons deliveries to Iran, a close partner with Beijing for years.

On social media, Trump also said Iran had carried out numerous violations of the ceasefire, without giving further details. He told CNBC that the blockade had been a success and the US was in a strong position to end up with a "great deal".

Iran has largely blocked off the Strait of Hormuz since the conflict began on February 28. It had announced last week that it would reopen the strait, but reversed that decision on Saturday after Trump refused to lift his blockade of Iranian ports.

That has left the strait closed and the world deprived of the 20 million barrels of oil that typically crossed it each day.

Meanwhile, International Energy Agency (IEA) head Fatih Birol yesterday said the ongoing conflict has triggered the world's worst-ever energy crisis.

"The crisis is already huge, if you combine the effects of the petrol crisis and the gas crisis with Russia," Birol told France Inter radio. "This is indeed the biggest crisis in history."

Pakistani officials said that if the delegations do attend talks, they will not arrive until today.

US Vice President JD Vance, who was expected to start for Pakistan on Tuesday morning for talks, was still in Washington midday to participate in meetings, the White House said.

"Additional policy meetings are taking place at the White House in which the vice president will participate," an official said in a brief statement sent to AFP shortly after 1700 GMT.

A first session of talks 10 days ago produced no agreement, and Tehran had been ruling out a second round after the US refused to end its blockade. Trump has threatened to attack Iran's civilian infrastructure if no deal is made.

Still, a Pakistani source involved in the discussions told Reuters there was momentum for talks to resume.

An Iranian official said on Monday that Tehran was "positively reviewing" its participation, but stressed that it was waiting to see if its conditions would be met, including recognition of its right to enrich uranium.

Oil prices climbed about 5 percent yesterday after Trump said he did not want to extend the ceasefire. Brent futures LCOc1 rose \$4.30, or 4.5 percent, to \$99.78 a barrel at 1:13pm EDT (1713 GMT), while US West Texas Intermediate CLc1 crude rose \$4.75, or 5.3 percent, to \$94.36.

Trump wants an agreement that would prevent further oil price rises and stock market shocks, but has insisted Iran cannot have the means to develop a nuclear weapon. He wants Iran to give up its stockpile of highly enriched uranium, which can, if further enriched, be used for a nuclear warhead.

Tehran hopes to exploit its control of the strait to strike a deal that averts a restart of the war and lifts sanctions, while retaining more of its nuclear programme, which it says is for peaceful purposes.

A Pakistani source involved in mediating between the warring parties said that the expected second round of talks could result in the signing of a memorandum of understanding to extend the ceasefire. It would then be followed by a comprehensive deal within 60 days.

carefully. We also told him that he is a man of this industry, as you know he was associated with a newspaper [Dainik Dinkal] for a long time. So, he understands the challenges. He listened to us and spoke to us with sincerity."

Matiur added that Tarique agreed in principle to many of their demands, although some steps may take time to implement.

According to BSS, those at the meeting included NOAB Vice President and Chairman of the New Age editorial board ASM Shahidullah Khan; Treasurer and Publisher of daily Sangbad Altamash Kabir; and Executive Members, AK Azad, publisher of Samakal; Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of Prothom Alo; Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star; AMM Bahauddin, editor of Inqilab; Dewan Hanif Mahmud, editor of Bonik Barta; Mozammel Haque, editor of Karatoa; Dr Ramiz Uddin Chowdhury, editor of Purbokone; and Nasim Manzur, publisher of Financial Express.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon, State Minister Yeaser Khan Choudhury, and the prime minister's adviser on information and broadcasting Dr Zahed Ur Rahman were also present.

STRAIT OF HORMUZ Iran to help safe passage of Bangladeshi vessels

UNB, Dhaka

The Iranian embassy in Dhaka yesterday said it will continue its efforts to facilitate the safe passage of Bangladeshi vessels through the Strait of Hormuz and has also facilitated the safe evacuation of 186 Bangladeshi nationals from Iran via Azerbaijan.

The embassy, in a press statement, called upon all concerned to refrain from any actions or statements that may create misperceptions and to uphold the spirit of mutual respect that governs the enduring ties between the two brotherly nations.

Iran reiterates its firm commitment to strengthening the close and amicable relations between the two nations.

The embassy expressed its dissatisfaction with the selective dissemination of excerpts from recent media interviews concerning developments in the Middle East, which have been republished by certain media outlets and social media platforms.

"Such actions are deemed inconsistent with the friendly and brotherly relations between the two countries," said the embassy, noting that these inaccurate and selective representations are regrettable and contrary to the principles of responsible media conduct.

The Islamic Republic of Iran and the People's Republic of Bangladesh enjoy longstanding, friendly, and brotherly relations founded upon mutual respect and shared values.

Villages sweat amid lengthy power cuts

FROM PAGE 1

200MW in these regions.

Fuel constraints have led at least 71 of the country's 143 power plants to either remain idle or produce well below their capacities, said power sector officials. They said 45 of them run on furnace oil, 23 gas, and three are coal-fired plants.

An internal analysis by the Power Development Board states that it needs at least 1,200 Million cubic feet per day (MMcf/d) of gas to run power plants during the summer peak, with a projected demand of 18,500MW. The PDB's gas need is subject to coal-fired and furnace oil plants generating expected electricity.

In the first week of April, The Daily Star reported that gas supply to the power sector stands at 900 MMcf/d, allowing PDB to produce up to 5,200MW. The supply was expected to drop further as the government decided to restart at least two fertiliser factories.

RURAL HARDSHIP DEEPENS

Persistent outages are severely disrupting daily life in rural Khulna, where residents report three to five hours of cuts daily, with conditions worse in Batiaghata, Dacope, Dumuria, and Koyra.

SSC examinees are among the worst affected.

"For the past week, power cuts have been occurring almost every evening from dusk until around 8:30pm. It is seriously hampering my studies," said Trina Bairagi, an SSC candidate from Chaksholmari village in Batighata.

Her mother Tripti Bairagi added that their shrimp farm is at risk. "If we cannot run aeration machines due to power cuts, the shrimp will be damaged. In this heat, prolonged outages could wipe out the entire stock," she said.

However, official data from the West Zone Power Distribution Company Limited shows only marginal shortfalls of around six to seven MW in recent days.

In Rajshahi, where temperatures

reached 39.5 degrees Celsius, residents reported multiple outages daily, often lasting one to two hours, disrupting sleep, work and irrigation during the crucial Boro season.

Officials said supply is falling short by up to 30-40 percent in some rural zones.

In Mymensingh, supply was 750MW against a demand for around 1,075MW, leaving a deficit of up to 325MW. This has resulted in four to five hours of daily outages, nearly double in rural areas.

In Rangpur, rural consumers say the crisis has become unbearable.

Mahibur Rahman of Milonpur village in Mithapukur upazila said the heat has become intolerable without electricity, noting that supply often lasts only a few hours a day.

His son, SSC examinee Shariful Islam, added that studying at night has become nearly impossible due to outages and the stifling heat.

Sirajul Islam of Mahipur village in Gangachara upazila said his sleep has been disrupted for a week, as electricity is available for only five to six hours in total over 24 hours.

Monirul Islam, a schoolteacher from Lalmonirhat town, said outages have worsened since Sunday. While daytime cuts can be endured, he described the repeated night-time blackouts as unbearable.

In Rangpur city, electricity is unavailable for hours at a stretch, forcing shops, markets and small businesses to rely on generators.

Businessman Solaiman Ali of Payra Chattar said the added costs are hurting livelihoods, while the noise of generators has weighed heavily on the city's roads.

Khurshid Alam, General Manager of Rangpur Rural Electricity Association, acknowledged the hardship. "This suffering is not only in Rangpur; there is an electricity crisis across the country. People are calling and telling us about their suffering. There is no electricity at my house either."

Ashraful Islam, chief engineer of

Rangpur NESCO, said that on Monday night, demand in Rangpur city and surrounding areas was around 75MW, while supply averaged only 45MW.

Prof M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser to Consumers' Association of Bangladesh, said rural consumers are bearing a disproportionate share of the cuts.

"Loadshedding is distributed in a way that protects high-demand urban and commercial areas, while rural feeders are switched off for longer. Even a moderate national shortfall can translate into prolonged outages in villages due to how distribution is managed," he said.

He added that a more balanced load management policy could ease hardship without increasing overall generation.

"A shortfall of around 1,500MW in a system of this size should not, by itself, lead to such extensive disruptions. The way load-shedding is distributed is a key factor behind the suffering people are facing," he said.

DATA MISMATCH

Discrepancies in official data have added confusion.

REB recorded over 2,800MW of shortage at 7:00pm Monday, far higher than 1,840MW, the national figure reported for the same period.

Officials said such variations arise because demand is estimated, not directly measured.

"The national data is based on how much electricity can be generated in a given hour, not on actual demand," said Prof Shamsul.

He explained that generation is regulated by fuel availability rather than demand, with load-shedding used to manage fuel consumption and costs.

Md Zahurul Islam, member (generation) of the PDB, said the ministry has formed a committee headed by PDB Chairman Md Rezaul Karim to examine the discrepancies. "REB's claim does not seem logical," he said.

[Our correspondents in Khulna, Rajshahi and Mymensingh contributed to this report]

PM assures press freedom at first meet

FROM PAGE 1
takes updates on issues reflected in the media, and gives necessary instructions accordingly.

Ruman said the premier listened to NOAB members patiently and said that such view-exchange meetings between the government and newspaper owners would be arranged regularly at three-month intervals.

The meeting began at 2:20pm and lasted an hour and 10 minutes, after which the prime minister joined a luncheon with NOAB members.

He then took part in a photo session with them.

This was his first formal meeting with the association since the formation of the BNP government.

At the onset of the meeting, the additional press secretary said, the association's president and Manab Zamin editor Matiur Rahman Chowdhury spoke about the existing problems in the newspaper industry and sought the prime minister's support in resolving them.

Meanwhile, NOAB members congratulated Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on forming the government with a landslide victory in the 13th National Parliament elections.

They mentioned that during the BNP government in 2001,

newspapers were declared an industry, but said it has now turned into "a sick industry".

Noting that huge government advertisement bills accumulated during previous governments remain unpaid, association leaders sought the PM's support in clearing the dues, the BSS report said.

NOAB members also drew the prime minister's attention to withdrawing cases filed against journalists during the previous interim regime and sought his support regarding bail of arrested journalists.

According to a UNB report, NOAB President Matiur said the prime minister made it clear that he does not want to make any journalist or media outlet hostile.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, he said, "We talked about press freedom.... He [Tarique] said he does not want to make anyone hostile. This is a very good thing as no head of state or head of government has said this before."

The veteran editor said the media industry is under serious pressure, particularly due to economic strain, raising concerns about its sustainability.

"We shared our concerns with the prime minister. He listened to us



Relatives devastated after four members of a family were killed in Niamatpur, Naogaon.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

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53 submit nominations for women's reserved seats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 53 aspirants have submitted nomination papers to the Election Commission (EC) over the past 14 days to contest the 50 women's reserved seats in the 13th National Parliament.

The deadline for submission ended yesterday. EC officials said the BNP-led alliance submitted 36 nomination papers, the Jamaat-e-Islami alliance 13, and one came from an independent alliance.

"We received 36 nominations from BNP and its allies, 13 from Jamaat's alliance, and one from an independent candidate, Sultana Jesmin. Their candidacies will be scrutinised during verification," said EC Joint Secretary and Returning Officer Md Moin Uddin Khan.

He added that three nominees — Shamma Akter, Mst Mehrunnisa, SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Speakers at a roundtable, titled 'Disability-Inclusive Budget 2026-27: Addressing Inflation and Economic Challenges', jointly organised by The Daily Star, Access Bangladesh Foundation, and Women with Disabilities Development Foundation at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

Transport fares to be adjusted reasonably

Says PM's info adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister's Adviser on Information and Broadcasting Dr Zahed Ur Rahman yesterday said transport fares will be "rationally" adjusted in line with the recent increase in fuel prices, with a decision expected soon.

Speaking at a press briefing at the Secretariat, he said discussions were ongoing to fix fares at a reasonable level.

To simplify the structure, fares for air-conditioned buses may be set in two or three tiers, likely before the upcoming Eid, he added.

The adviser emphasised that freight charges, particularly for trucks, have a greater impact on the cost of living than passenger fares. "The government's responsibility is not only to protect consumers... Those who drive buses and trucks are also citizens... it would not be appropriate to impose measures that would make their businesses unviable," he said.

He added that the government aims to strike a balance to minimise hardship for all. "In this SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

'Persons with disabilities seek dignity, not charity'

Speakers urge shift from allowances to disability-inclusive budgeting for FY 2026-27 at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights advocates and experts yesterday urged the government to move beyond allowance-based support and adopt a disability-inclusive budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year, noting that rising living costs, limited access to services, and disability-related expenses are worsening hardship for persons with disabilities.

They made the remarks at a roundtable titled "Disability-Inclusive Budget 2026-27: Addressing Inflation and Economic Challenges" held at The Daily Star Centre. The Daily Star, Access Bangladesh Foundation, and Women with Disabilities Development Foundation jointly organised the programme.

At the discussion, Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said persons with disabilities do not want charity but opportunities to work and live independently with dignity.

However, the challenges they face are structural, institutional, and social, and cannot be addressed by law alone unless public attitudes change, she said.

Shaheen Anam called on rights groups to place clear proposals before policymakers

on infrastructure, transport, and accessibility.

She stressed that the diverse needs of persons with disabilities must be reflected in budget measures.

Presenting the keynote, Albert Mollah, executive director of Access Bangladesh Foundation, said the government currently runs 95 social security programmes under 24 ministries and divisions,

Tk 900, compared to about Tk 3,400 for persons with profound disability in Nepal and around Tk 3,950 in Sri Lanka."

Citing a World Bank study supported by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, he said families with a person with disability face an additional 13 percent in costs, while the poverty rate among such households rises by 23-34 percent.



The disability sector accounts for 3.49% of the social safety net budget and only 0.52% of the national budget. The monthly allowance remains at just Tk 900, compared to about Tk 3,400 in Nepal and around Tk 3,950 in Sri Lanka.

ALBERT MOLLAH
Executive director, Access Bangladesh Foundation

of which only seven are dedicated to persons with disabilities. Of these, only two directly support individuals through allowance and stipend schemes.

Noting that the disability sector accounts for 3.49 percent of the social safety net budget and only 0.52 percent of the national budget, he said, "Currently, the monthly allowance remains at just

Ashrafun Nahar Misti, executive director of Women with Disabilities Development Foundation, stressed the need for inclusive budgeting across ministries and departments to ensure that persons with disabilities are not deprived of education, healthcare, employment, transport, rehabilitation, services, and access to justice.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Now ensure cars for MPs

Hasnat Abdullah demands at JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After the government arranged offices for MPs in their constituencies in response



to an earlier demand, NCP lawmaker, Hasnat Abdullah, has now called for car facilities to help them better connect with the people.

On March 31, NCP MP Atiqur Rahman Mujahid demanded offices for MPs in their constituencies.

Raising the issue on a point of order yesterday, State Minister for LGRD Mir Shahe Alam said a few days ago, an MP had complained that there was no designated place for lawmakers to sit when visiting upazila parishads.

He said that in response, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman instructed him to take necessary measures.

"We have issued a government order to prepare a room in every upazila parishad — with furniture and attached bathrooms — for MPs and ministers to sit," he said.

He added that these rooms will be available soon. The rooms will be SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

JCD, Shibir clash at Ctg City College over graffiti

Chhatra Dal holds anti-Shibir protests at DU, JU



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two rounds of clashes broke out between Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir on the Chattogram Government City College campus yesterday, injuring several people.

The clashes broke out on the college campus along New Market-Ice Factory Road. A master's examination was underway on the campus at that time.

Later in the afternoon, JCD activists brought out a protest march in the New Market-College Road and Nalapara areas, demanding justice and calling for a "Shibir-free campus".

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More than 25,000 absent on the first day of SSC exams

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six examinees and one invigilator were expelled, while 25,408 candidates were absent on the first day of the SSC and equivalent examinations held across the country yesterday.

The examinations, however, passed off smoothly, with no major incidents of cheating, irregularities, or question leak rumours, Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon said at a briefing at the International Mother Language Institute in the capital.

He said authorities maintained strict monitoring, including surveillance of digital platforms, to prevent cyber-enabled misconduct.

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July net shutdown ordered in phases

Official testifies at ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A senior state-run telecom official yesterday told International Crimes Tribunal-1 that a nationwide internet shutdown on July 18, 2024, was ordered and executed in phases — from international gateways to submarine cables — under directives from regulators and the then ICT state minister.

Mirza Kamal Ahmed, then acting managing director of Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Limited, said the order was conveyed through BTRC-run WhatsApp groups.

Kamal, the incumbent BTCL deputy managing director, testified as a prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case involving Sajeeb Wazed Joy

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

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Barrister Aminul Hoque's death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today marks the 7th death anniversary of Barrister Aminul Hoque, former posts and telecommunications minister and former vice chairman of BNP.



Born in Rajshahi, Barrister Hoque began his public life as a young activist in the movement against the military rule of Field Marshal Ayub Khan. His prominent role in the anti-Ayub agitation led Pakistani police to issue a warrant for his arrest, compelling him to leave what was then East Pakistan.

During the 1971 Liberation War, he played an active role in London, organising the Bangladeshi diaspora in support of the cause of independence.

After returning to Bangladesh with a Bar-at-Law degree, he apprenticed under the distinguished barrister Rafiqul Huq.

He was involved in drafting the charters of several prominent banks and stock exchanges in the country.

Prior to entering politics, he also served as a lecturer at the Faculty of Law of Dhaka University.

Following the fall of the Ershad regime in 1990, Barrister Hoque was among the pioneering political leaders who helped restore parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh.

He was elected MP from the Rajshahi-1 constituency three times -- in 1991, 1996, and 2001.

He passed away on April 21, 2019.

He left behind his wife, daughter, son, daughter-in-law, two granddaughters, and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.



A worker threshes paddy using a traditional winnowing fan (kula in Bangla), separating chaff, dust, and straw. Despite the availability of modern machinery, women farmers in the haor region still rely on this method. The photo was taken in Majlishpur union of Kishoreganj recently.

PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ

PROTESTING 'HARASSMENT' RMCH interns enforce work stoppage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Intern doctors at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital began a 24-hour work stoppage at 9:00am yesterday, protesting what they called "continuous harassment" and a growing "mob culture" in the hospital. The absence of around 230 interns has disrupted services, with patients reporting delays and a lack of treatment, while authorities struggle to fill the gap.

"I admitted my wife on Monday night, but her treatment has yet to begin," said Bakkar Ali from Bagha upazila. "I heard the doctors are protesting, but if this continues, it will create serious problems for us."

Intern representative Tanvir Ahmed Toukir said three colleagues were harassed by patients' relatives over two days.

"On Sunday night, two male interns were harassed in ward 13, and on Monday, a female intern was surrounded and humiliated in ward 36," he said. "In the absence of proper investigation and justice, we were compelled to announce the work stoppage."

"We work an average of 14 hours daily, yet workplace safety is neglected," he added, warning of stricter action if demands are not met within 24 hours.

As part of their programme, the interns staged a sit-in yesterday and announced a one-hour human chain and press briefing at 9:00am today.



RMCH spokesperson Dr Shankar K Biswas said the hospital is trying to maintain services with senior doctors.

"We are facing challenges due to the interns' absence," he said, adding that discussions are ongoing to resolve the situation.

Appeal for help

CITY DESK

Md Firoz Akon, 45, from Bauphal in Patuakhali, has been admitted to Patuakhali Medical College Hospital for the past six months with blood cancer and gallbladder stones, said a press release.

The family of Firoz, a house painter by profession, has already spent more than Tk 1 lakh on his treatment.

Doctors at the hospital have suggested that he needs surgery to remove the gallbladder stones. He will require around Tk 5 lakh for the procedure, the doctors said.

However, the family is unable to bear the expense alone. They have appealed to well-off members of society to extend a helping hand to save his life. Aid can be sent to Rubel Akon (the patient's younger brother), A/C No: 3051580153021, Dutch-Bangla Bank PLC, Dholaikhal Branch, Dhaka; bKash and Nagad No: 01725514190.





Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology
141-142, Love Road, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka-1208
Phone: 02 8870422 (Ext.-201) Web: www.aust.edu
Ref. No. AUST/UE Office/OTM/Tender-13/2025-26

TENDER INVITATION

Sealed Tender both for Technical and Financial (two envelope system) are hereby invited from the Manufacturer or their local agent for:

- Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning and Operation & Maintenance of Foolproof Attendance System at AUST**
- Installation & implementation of the fire protection & fire detection system at AUST**

The tender documents will be available for purchase (non-refundable) from the Procurement Office, AUST during office hour 10 AM to 4 PM at a cost of Tk. 5,000/- each (Five thousand) only in Pay Order from any schedule bank of Bangladesh in favour of "AHSANULLAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY".

The tender must be accompanied by a Bank Draft/Pay Order of Tk. 2,50,000/- (Two lac and fifty thousand) (for SL-1) and Tk. 5,00,000/- (Five lac) (for SL-2) from any schedule bank of Bangladesh in favour of "AHSANULLAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY" along with Technical Offer as bid security money without which the tender shall be outright rejected.

The tenders will be received in the same office and will be opened the outer envelope containing technical and financial offer and the technical part only on the last date of submission of Tender in presence of the Bidders or their representative (if any). The AUST authority reserves the right to accept any or reject all tenders without assigning the reason what-so-ever and is not bound to award the work to the lowest bidder.

Last date of selling Tender Documents: May 14, 2026 (Thursday) up to 3-30 PM
Prebid Meeting: May 17, 2026 (Sunday) at 2-00 PM at AUST VC Seminar Room (Lift-3, Blk-D)
Dead Line of Submission Tender: May 20, 2026 (Wednesday) at 2-30 PM and Tenders will be opened at 03-00 PM on the same day (May 20, 2026).

INNOVATION:: CREATION:: LEADERSHIP

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Public Administration
Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka
www.mopa.gov.bd

No: 05.00.0000.113.07.002.25-526 Date : 21-04-2026

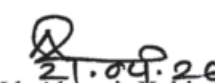
e-Tender Notice No. 10/2025-26

Ministry of Public Administration of Bangladesh invites the Flowing tender in the National e-GP Portal:

Si	Tender Id	Name of Supply	Publishing Date and Time	Closing Date and Time
1	1261434	Liveries	22 April 2026 & 10.00	07 May 2026 & 12.00

This is an online Tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-tender, registration in the National e-Gp portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender document from the National e-GP System Portal should be deposited on-line through any registered Bank.

Further Information and Guidelines are Available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP Helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).



Md. Alamgir Kabir
Deputy Secretary
Ministry of Public Administration
Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka.
Phone: 02-55100540
admins@mopa.gov.bd

GD-875

NICRH deputy director attacked over hospital tender dispute: Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The attack on the deputy director of the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH) was triggered by a dispute over a hospital tender between two groups, Rab said yesterday.

According to Rab, the clash involved two rival groups -- one led by Rubel and the other by the Monayem Group -- over the tender.

"Acting on instructions from Rubel,

who is currently in Malaysia, two to three hired attackers carried out the assault on Ahmad Hossain to intimidate the hospital authorities," said MZM Intekhab Chowdhury, director of Rab's legal and media wing, at a press briefing at the Rab Media Centre in Dhaka's Karwan Bazar.

The attackers were hired for Tk 20,000, said the Rab official, quoting five suspects, who were arrested from different parts of Dhaka.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 8



World Food Programme
বিশ্ব খাদ্য কর্মসূচী

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

INVITATION FOR Expression of Interest (EOI)
FROM INTERESTED COMPANIES FOR PROVISION OF INLAND WATERWAY
TRANSPORTATION OF WFP'S DIFFERENT FOOD AND NON-FOOD ITEMS FROM DISTRICT
TO UPAZILA LEVEL COVERING VARIOUS CLUSTER INCLUDING CHATTOGRAM, CHT
AREAS (RAGNAMATI, BANDARBAN, KHAGRACHARI) SYLHET, DHAKA, MYMENSINGH,
KHULNA, BARISAL, RAJSHAHI AND RANGPUR AS PART OF BANGLADESH

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is inviting applications from interested transport companies for enlistment as vendors to provide waterway transportation service from District to Upazila level covering various clusters including Chattogram, CHT-Rangamati, Bandar, Khagrachari, Dhaka, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi and Rangpur

Scope of Work:
The types of food and non-food items (NFIs) to be transported from district to upazila level will cover multiple clusters, including Chattogram, CHT-Rangamati, Bandarban, Khagrachari, Dhaka, Sylhet, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi, and Rangpur. Food commodities include rice, high-energy biscuits (HEBs), dates, super cereal, wheat, vegetable oil, and lentils. Non-food items comprise warehouse equipment, generators, electrical supplies, and IT equipment. The average yearly quantities will vary depending on operational needs"

Application Requirements:
If your company is interested, the application process typically requires the submission of the following documents:

- Company profile, including Certificate of Incorporation, VAT Registration and Compliance Certificate.
- Necessary certifications or licenses for operating boats and provide requested services, including Trade/Business License; TIN No; Bank Solvency Certificate with Account No.
- A demonstration of logistical capability to handle both food and non-food items by boat.
- Proof of capacity to deliver boats service in disaster-prone areas with 24 hrs notice.
- Relevant experience in transporting food and non-food cargo for last 3 year.
- Registration with DoS, if available.
- Updated Survey Certificate from DoS, if available.
- Engine Fitness Certificate, if available.
- Valid License/ Certificate of Boat Operator/duly renewed, if available.
- Route Permit (if applicable).
- Completed Boat Transport and Logistics service questionnaire. Available in the link below: <https://cutt.ly/ltGEsFcm>

Conditions for entry into the process are given below:

Conditions For enlistment:

- Valid trade license for the core business of the company such as transportation of goods by waterway from the Government/competent authorities.
- Minimum 3 years' experience in running the business
- Experience in working with Government, International NGO and National NGO with reliable reputation would be considered as an advantage.
- Application from business houses with different names but having the same address, telephone and fax number will not be accepted.
- Company must have operational email address/es
- Company should mention about the sister concerns/subsidiary agency if any, with appropriate proof.

Those who are interested in registering with WFP are requested to submit the completed/filled-in and signed WFP's Boat Transport and Logistics service questionnaire (original) along with copies of above listed documents through email ban.logistics@wfp.org or in a sealed envelope marked "Expression of Interest for Enlistment as Company for providing Inland Waterway Transportation services" by 22 May 2026 (04:30 pm) to the following address or to ban.logistics@wfp.org

Head of Supply Chain
United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), Bangladesh
UN House – House 1, Level 6-8, Road 86/88, Gulshan-2, Dhaka-1212

For any further information please contact Logistics Unit, World Food Program, Dhaka through the email ban.logistics@wfp.org.

Please note that this is not an Invitation To Tender. Rates/prices are not required at this stage, and this invitation does not bind the World Food Programme to issue any tenders or contracts to the companies expressing their interest.

PRAYER TIMING

APRIL 22

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-25	12-45	4-45	6-27	8-00
JAMAAT	5-00	1-15	5-00	6-31	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



BANGLADESH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
National Museum of Science & Technology Bhavan, Agargaon, Dhaka 1207
Website: www.bas.org.bd

বিএএস-প্রফেসর ইমেরিটাস ডাঃ সুলতান আহমেদ চৌধুরী
সায়েন্টিফিক ট্যালেন্টস নার্চার ফান্ড স্টাইপেন্ড/অনুপ্রেরণামূলক অনুদান

“বাংলাদেশ বিজ্ঞান একাডেমী-প্রফেসর ইমেরিটাস ডাঃ সুলতান আহমেদ চৌধুরী সায়েন্টিফিক ট্যালেন্টস নার্চার ফান্ড ২০২৫” এর আওতায় স্টাইপেন্ডের জন্য নবম, দশম, একাদশ, দ্বাদশ বিজ্ঞান বিভাগে অধ্যয়নরত/সদ্য ভর্তিকৃত মেধাবী ও দরিদ্র ছাত্র/ছাত্রীদের নিকট থেকে আবেদনপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে। নবম, দশম ও দ্বাদশ শ্রেণীর প্রার্থীদেরকে বিগত বার্ষিক পরীক্ষায় এবং একাদশ শ্রেণীর প্রার্থীদেরকে বিগত এস.এস.সি পরীক্ষায় চতুর্থ বিষয় বাদে শতকরা ৮০ নম্বর (অথবা জিপিএ-৫) পেতে হবে। স্টাইপেন্ড প্রতি মাসে নবম ও দশম শ্রেণীর জন্য টাকা ১০০০/- (এক হাজার) এবং একাদশ ও দ্বাদশ শ্রেণীর জন্য টাকা ১২০০/- (এক হাজার দুইশত) হারে এক বৎসরের জন্য প্রদান করা হবে।

শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রধান শিক্ষকের/অধ্যক্ষের মাধ্যমে বাংলাদেশ বিজ্ঞান একাডেমী ওয়েব সাইট (www.bas.org.bd/news/notices) এ প্রদত্ত আবেদনপত্র পূরণ করে আগামী ২০/০৫/২০২৬ তারিখের মধ্যে সচিব, বাংলাদেশ বিজ্ঞান একাডেমী, জাতীয় বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি কমপ্লেক্স (৪র্থ তলা), আগারগাঁও, ঢাকা-১২০৭-এই ঠিকানায় পৌঁছাতে হবে।

সচিব
বাংলাদেশ বিজ্ঞান একাডেমী



বাংলাদেশ ইন্সটিটিউট অব গভর্নেন্স এন্ড ম্যানেজমেন্ট (BIGM)
(ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় অধিভুক্ত)

ক্লিস্ ফর ইভাস্টি কম্পিটিটিভনেস এন্ড ইনোভেশন প্রোগ্রাম (SICIP)
অর্থ বিভাগ, অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়, গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার।

'পলিসি এনালাইসিস' শীর্ষক প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্স - ৫ম (সামগ্রিকভাবে ২৪তম) ব্যাচ

অর্থ মন্ত্রণালয়ের অর্থ বিভাগের অর্থীয়েনে SICIP প্রকল্পের আওতায় BIGM উচ্চ ও মধ্যম পর্যায়ের সরকারি ও বেসরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের দীর্ঘ-বিশ্লেষণী জ্ঞান ও দক্ষতা বৃদ্ধির লক্ষ্যে ১০ সপ্তাহ মেয়াদি “পলিসি এনালাইসিস” শীর্ষক প্রশিক্ষণের আয়োজন করেছে। SEIP/SICIP-এর আওতায় বিভিন্ন Industry Association (IAs)-এর অধীনে একটি শর্ট কোর্স অথবা SEIP/SICIP-এর আওতায় BIGM-এ অনুষ্ঠিত কেবলমাত্র একটি কোর্সে অংশগ্রহণকারী প্রশিক্ষণার্থীরা আবেদন করতে পারবেন। তবে SEIP/SICIP-এর আওতায় EDC-এর অধীন কোন কোর্সে অংশগ্রহণকারী প্রশিক্ষণার্থীর আবেদন করার প্রয়োজন নাই।

সরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের অন্তর্ভুক্তি মন্ত্রণালয়ের (www.mopa.gov.bd) ওয়েবসাইটে “সর্বশেষ খবর” শিরোনামের অধীন গত ১২ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ তারিখে প্রকাশিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি অনুসরণক্রমে আবেদন করতে হবে। বেসরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের আবেদনের নির্দেশনা নিম্নরূপঃ

কোর্সের বৈশিষ্ট্য	আবেদনকারীর যোগ্যতা
- মোট ৩০ টি আসন - বেসরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের জন্য ৩০ শতাংশ আসন - নারী প্রশিক্ষণার্থীদের আধিক্যের প্রদান - প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্সে সর্বোচ্চ ফলাফল অর্জনকারী ৬-৮ জন প্রশিক্ষণার্থীর (৪ অনুপাত ১ হারে) জন্য বিদেশে উচ্চতর প্রশিক্ষণের ব্যবস্থা - প্রথম ৬ সপ্তাহে শনিবার হতে বুধবার পর্যন্ত সেশন পরিচালনা (সকাল ৯:০০ টা হতে বিকাল ০৫:০০ টা পর্যন্ত) - পরবর্তী ৪ সপ্তাহে পলিসি পোপার প্রকল্প ও মূল্যায়ন কার্যক্রম - যাতায়াত ভাড়া বাবদ প্রতিদিন ৬০০ টাকা ব্যয়। দুপুরের খাবার ও সকাল-বিকাল চা-চত্কের ব্যবস্থা। এছাড়া, Policy বিষয়ক প্রতিবেদন প্রকল্প করার জন্য প্রত্যেক প্রশিক্ষণার্থীকে ৫,০০০ টাকা প্রদান - প্রশিক্ষণার্থীকে বা তাঁর প্রতিষ্ঠানকে কোন কোর্স ফি দিতে হবে না - কোর্স শুরু তারিখ: ১৩ জুন ২০২৬	- উচ্চ বা মধ্যম পর্যায়ের চাকরিতে কমপক্ষে ৫ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা - মূলতঃ স্নাতকোত্তর। অন্তত ২য় শ্রেণীতে উত্তীর্ণ - বয়সসীমা ৩০ থেকে ৫২ বছর পর্যন্ত
আবেদনের নিয়ম	- প্রশিক্ষণার্থীকে তাঁর নিম্নলিখিত কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমতি গ্রহণক্রমে আবেদন করতে হবে এবং প্রশিক্ষণে যোগদানের পূর্বে এ সংক্রান্ত অনুমতি পর দাখিল করতে হবে ২ কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজ ছবি, স্নাতকোত্তর সনদ ও জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের অনুলিপি দাখিল করতে হবে - BIGM এর ওয়েবসাইট-এ News Update অপশনে গিয়ে Policy Analysis - এর আবেদন ফর্ম Download করে পূরণ করতে হবে। পূর্ণকৃত ফর্ম উল্লিখিত সংযুক্তিসহ scan করে bigm.sicip@bigm.edu.bd -এই ই-মেইলে পাঠিয়ে দিতে হবে - BIGM -এ ব্যক্তিগতভাবে উপস্থিত হয়েও আবেদন করা যাবে - আবেদনের শেষ তারিখ: ১৯ মে ২০২৬

ই-৩৩, সৈয়দ মাহবুব মোর্শেদ সরণী, আগারগাঁও, শের-ই-বাংলা নগর, ঢাকা- ১২০৭. www.bigm.edu.bd
ফোন : +৮৮-০২-২২৩৩৭৪০৪-৪৪ এক্সটেনশন : ১২৭, ১৩০, ১৪১, ১৫৯; মোবাইল : ০১৯৩২ ৫৯৮৪৭২, ০১৭৩২ ২৯১৭৫২

AFP, London

The leaders of the United States, Israel and Russia are seeking to impose a new “predatory” world order while most countries are too cowardly to stop them, rights group Amnesty International said yesterday.

Launching the global group's annual report in London, Secretary General Agnes Callamard condemned US President Donald Trump, Russia's Vladimir Putin and Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu as "predators".

Such leaders have rejected the multilateral system developed since World War II in favour of a “vision without moral compass”, where “war, not diplomacy, rules”, the report into global protection of human rights said.

The report comes at a “challenging moment” that could “destroy all that was built up over the last 80 years”, Callamard warned in the preface.

“Throughout 2025, Trump, Putin and Netanyahu, among others, pursued economic and political domination through international destruction, suppression and violence on a massive scale,” she said in her opening speech.



A musician plays a hang drum on a street in Tehran yesterday. Iranians are trying to make the most of a ceasefire that may have just hours left to run.

PHOTO: AFP

REUTERS, London

A former top foreign ministry official yesterday said he had faced "constant pressure" from Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office to speed up the appointment of his pick as the ambassador to the US, deepening a row that threatens the British leader.

A war of words over who should ultimately take the blame for appointing Labour veteran Peter Mandelson to Britain's highest diplomatic post despite his history and known ties to the late US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein has piled pressure on Starmer, prompting calls for his resignation.

Starmer has said he was "wrong" to appoint Mandelson to the role and has expressed regret, but on Monday put the blame firmly

on foreign ministry officials for failing to tell him a security vetting body had advised against the appointment.

Yesterday, it was the turn of Olly Robbins, the foreign ministry's former top official who was sacked late on Thursday after Starmer and foreign minister Yvette Cooper said they had lost confidence in him, to mount his defence.

While much of what he said backed up Starmer's account of being told Mandelson had been granted clearance for the role, Robbins spoke of the pressure to speed things up and that the appointment had been treated as virtually a done deal.

"I walked into a situation in which there was already a very, very strong expectation ... that he

needed to be in post and in America as quickly as humanly possible," and sometimes visibly upset Robbins told a parliamentary committee.

"I think throughout January (2025), honestly, my office, the foreign secretary's office, were under constant pressure," Robbins said, describing himself at one point as a "scapegoat". "There was an atmosphere of constant chasing," he said, describing "frequent phone calls" from Starmer's private office.

Starmer's spokesperson rejected Robbins' allegations.

Robbins' account is likely to increase the pressure on Starmer, who, after winning the largest majority in modern history for Labour at a national election in 2024, is facing new calls to step down over a scandal which has run for months.

AFP, Tokyo

Japan will ease decades-old arms export curbs, the government said yesterday, in a major policy shift that paves the way for the sale of lethal weapons overseas as Tokyo ramps up its defence ambitions.

The new rules end Japan's self-imposed curb on sales of lethal arms as Tokyo seeks to enter the international arms market, hoping to bolster national defence as well as boost economic growth.

The move provoked an angry reaction from China, which vowed to resist provocations.

“Given that the security environment is becoming increasingly challenging, I believe that no country can now safeguard its own peace and security on its own,” Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told reporters.

"In this context, I believe it is important to have partners who support one another in the area of defence equipment," she said.

Still, she stressed that Japan's "core principles" and "history" as a pacifist nation remain unchanged.

Exports had previously been limited to equipment classified under five categories: search and rescue, transportation, warning, surveillance and minesweeping.

AFP, Ramallah

The Palestinian Red Crescent said Israeli settler gunfire killed two people, including a 13-year-old child, in an attack on Tuesday in a village in the central occupied West Bank.

"Two people were killed -- one aged 13 and the other 32 -- and four others were injured by live gunfire during a settler attack

on the village of Al-Mughayyir near Ramallah," the Red Crescent said in a statement, adding the wounded had been taken to hospital.

Violence in the West Bank has risen sharply since the October 7, 2023 Hamas attack on Israel that triggered the Gaza war.

According to an AFP tally, Israeli troops or settlers have killed at least 1,061 Palestinians -- many of them militants, but also scores of civilians -- in the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war.

AFP, Geneva

Around 7,900 people died or disappeared on migration routes in 2025, taking the total dead and missing since 2014 beyond 80,000, the United Nations' migration agency said yesterday.

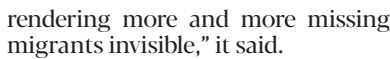
The UN's International Organization for Migration said people were being forced into dangerous, irregular journeys when safe pathways were out of reach, and urged countries to find the political will to save more lives on the routes.

The deaths or disappearance of around “7,900 people were documented on global migration routes worldwide in 2025”, the IOM said. The IOM’s Missing Migrants Project “has documented more than 80,000 deaths and disappearances during migration since 2014,” the agency said.

“While these figures represent only the lowest boundary of the true number of affected people, they nonetheless underscore the need for

urgent action to end migrant deaths and address the complex needs of families left behind," said the IOM.

The 7,904 deaths and disappearances documented in 2025 was lower than the 9,200 figure given for 2024 -- the highest annual total on record.



In the Americas, northbound movements along the Central American route fell sharply compared to 2024.

In Europe, overall arrivals declined, but the profile of movements changed, with Bangladeshi nationals becoming the largest group arriving while Syrian arrivals fell following political and policy shifts, the IOM said.

Some 3,400 deaths and disappearances were recorded on sea routes to Europe, of which 1,330 were on the central Mediterranean Sea route, with more than 1,200 on the Western Africa/Atlantic route to Spain's Canary Islands.

The IOM said nearly 900 deaths and disappearances were recorded during sea crossings in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea in 2025 – a route used almost exclusively by Rohingya refugees – “making it the deadliest year on record for this route”.



রূপান্তরিত প্রাকৃতিক গ্যাস কোম্পানী লিমিটেড

(পেট্রোবাংলার একটি কোম্পানি)

আরপিজিসিএল ডবন, নিউ এয়ারপোর্ট রোড, প্লট # ২৭, নিকুঞ্জ-২, খিলক্ষেত, ঢাকা-১২২৯।

www.rpgcl.org.bd

ছাপানি নিয়ন্ত্রণা নিশ্চিতকরণে আরপিজিসিএল অঙ্গীকারবদ্ধ

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

স্মারক নম্বর: ২৮.১৯.০০০০.০০০.৩০৩.১১.০০০২.২৬.২২১ তারিখ: ২২ এপ্রিল ২০২৬

রূপান্তরিত প্রাকৃতিক গ্যাস কোম্পানী লিমিটেড (আরপিজিসিএল)-এর প্রধান কার্যালয়ে সম্পূর্ণ সাময়িক ও অস্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে মেডিক্যাল অফিসার (রিটেইনার) নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে প্রয়োজনীয় যোগ্যতাসম্পন্ন প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকগণের নিকট থেকে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা হলো:

ক্রমিক	পদের নাম	সন্মান ও সময়	পদের সংখ্যা	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা, অভিজ্ঞতা ও বয়স
০১।	মেডিক্যাল অফিসার (রিটেইনার)	সর্বসাকুলো মাসিক সন্মানি ৳ ৬০,০০০/- (ষাট হাজার) সময়: সকাল ৯.০০ টা থেকে বেলা ২.০০ টা (অফিস সময়ের পরে ও ছুটির দিনে on call-এ)	০১ (এক) টি	■ সরকার অনুমোদিত মেডিক্যাল কলেজ থেকে এমবিবিএস ডিগ্রি। বিএমডিসি'র হালনাগাদ রেজিস্ট্রেশনপ্রাপ্ত। ■ সরকারি/আধাসরকারি/স্বায়ত্তশাসিত/বেসরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠানে মেডিক্যাল অফিসার পদে কমপক্ষে ০২ (দুই) বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা। ■ বয়সসীমা: সর্বোচ্চ ৬২ বছর।

শর্তাবলি:

- আগ্রহী প্রার্থীদের সাদা কাগজে বাংলায় (ক) নাম (বাংলা ও ইংরেজিতে) (খ) পিতার নাম (গ) মাতার নাম (ঘ) জন্ম তারিখ ও বয়স (ঙ) জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র নম্বর (চ) স্থায়ী ও বর্তমান ঠিকানা (ছ) যোগাযোগ (মোবাইল ফোন ও ই-মেইল) (জ) জাতীয়তা (ঝ) ধর্ম (ঞ) শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা (পরীক্ষার নাম, বিভাগ/শ্রেণি/গ্রেড, শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান, পাসের সন, বোর্ড/বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়) (ট) অভিজ্ঞতা উল্লেখপূর্বক আবেদন করতে হবে।
- আবেদনপত্রের সঙ্গে নিম্নবর্ণিত ডকুমেন্ট দাখিল করতে হবে:
 - সকল শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার সনদ ও মার্কশিটের সত্যায়িত কপি।
 - অভিজ্ঞতা সনদের সত্যায়িত কপি।
 - বিএমডিসি'র হালনাগাদ রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদের সত্যায়িত কপি।
 - সদা তোলা ও (তিন) কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজের রঙিন ছবি।
 - ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের চেয়ারম্যান, পৌরসভা/সিটি করপোরেশনের মেয়র/ওয়ার্ড কাউন্সিলর কর্তৃক প্রার্থীর নিজ জেলা উল্লেখপূর্বক প্রদত্ত নাগরিকত্ব সনদের সত্যায়িত কপি।
 - জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি।
- আবেদনপত্র মহাব্যবস্থাপক (প্রশাসন), রূপান্তরিত প্রাকৃতিক গ্যাস কোম্পানী লিমিটেড, আরপিজিসিএল ডবন (৫ম তলা), নিউ এয়ারপোর্ট রোড, প্লট-২৭, নিকুঞ্জ-২, খিলক্ষেত, ঢাকা-১২২৯ বরাবর কুরিয়ার/ডাকযোগে আগামী ১১ মে ২০২৬ তারিখের মধ্যে পৌঁছাতে হবে। সরাসরি কোনো আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়। উক্ত তারিখের পর কোনো আবেদনপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।
- প্রার্থীর বয়সসীমা ২২ এপ্রিল ২০২৬ তারিখে সর্বোচ্চ ৬২ বছর হতে হবে।
- কোম্পানির প্রধান কার্যালয়ের (আরপিজিসিএল ডবন, নিউ এয়ারপোর্ট রোড, প্লট # ২৭, নিকুঞ্জ-২, খিলক্ষেত, ঢাকা) মেডিক্যাল রুমে প্রতি কার্যদিবসে সকাল ৯.০০ টা থেকে বেলা ২.০০ টা (অফিস সময়ের পরে ও ছুটির দিনে on call-এ) চিকিৎসা সেবা প্রদান করতে হবে।
- সরকারি/আধা-সরকারি/স্বায়ত্তশাসিত সংস্থা চাকরিত প্রার্থীদেরকে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে। এ ক্ষেত্রে আবেদনপত্রের অন্তর্গত কপি গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।
- প্রার্থীদের আবেদনপত্র বাছাইয়ের পর কেবলমাত্র সঠিক/গ্রহণযোগ্য বিবেচিত প্রার্থীদের সাক্ষাৎকার গ্রহণ করা হবে। সাক্ষাৎকার গ্রহণের সময় আবেদন ফরমে বর্ণিত সকল তথ্যের স্বপক্ষে দলিলাদি/মূল সনদপত্র উপস্থাপন করতে হবে। সাক্ষাৎকারে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য কোনো প্রকার টিএ/ডিএ প্রদান করা হবে না।
- সর্বসাকুলো মাসিক সন্মানি ব্যতীত অন্য কোনো সুবিধা প্রদেয় হবে না।
- প্রাথমিকভাবে নির্বাচনের লক্ষ্যে সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রার্থীদেরকে নির্বাচনী পরীক্ষার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান যথাসময়ে অবহিত করা হবে।
- খামের উপর প্রার্থী পদের নাম স্পষ্টাক্ষরে উল্লেখ করতে হবে।
- অতিরিক্ত শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতাকে কোনো ধরনের অতিরিক্ত যোগ্যতা হিসেবে বিবেচনা করা হবে না।
- কোনো প্রার্থী নিয়োগ লাভের পর তার প্রদত্ত কোনো তথ্য মিথ্যা প্রমাণিত হলে নিয়োগ বাতিলসহ তার বিরুদ্ধে আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।
- এ নিয়োগ সম্পূর্ণ সাময়িক ও অস্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে এবং খন্ডকালীন হবে।
- নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কোনো কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে এ নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি আংশিক/সম্পূর্ণ পরিবর্তন/বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে। এ নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্ত চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।
- নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত তথ্য আরপিজিসিএল-এর ওয়েবসাইটে (www.rpgcl.org.bd) পাওয়া যাবে।

আরপিজিসিএল/পিআর- ২৭৯

-মহাব্যবস্থাপক (প্রশাসন)

The rising cost of a distant war

Iran-US war is worsening our day-to-day economic situation

The prolonged war of choice initiated by the US and Israel against Iran has inflicted severe hardship on millions of already strained working people in Bangladesh and across the world. The situation is approaching a breaking point. Although there was a fragile two-week pause in hostilities, the mutual blockade and counter-blockade imposed by Iran and the US on commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz effectively disrupted a vital economic lifeline for countries across the Asia-Pacific that depend heavily on supplies from Gulf nations.

The conflict has not only disrupted global supply chains but also sharply increased shipping costs due to the lack of insurance coverage and the sudden surge in premium rates. Disruptions in oil and gas supplies have led to shortages, rising prices, and long queues at fuel stations in Bangladesh, resulting in lost work hours. The ripple effects are widespread: power generation has been curtailed, factories are either idle or operating at reduced capacity, and the agricultural sector faces mounting difficulties. Farmers are struggling to operate irrigation pumps due to diesel shortages, cannot secure essential fertiliser, and are sometimes being forced to let crops rot in the fields as transportation costs become prohibitive.

This war has come at an especially difficult time for Bangladesh, where ordinary people have already been grappling with repeated inflationary shocks. The lingering effects of Covid pandemic, coupled with domestic political instability, have deepened these challenges. Years of economic mismanagement and corruption under the previous administration, followed by a turbulent political transition and prolonged uncertainty, have further strained the economy. During this period, people have endured currency depreciation and stagnant wages. The finance minister recently said the ongoing conflict has already cost us an estimated \$2 billion.

At the recent World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings in Washington, up to \$150 billion in new financing was pledged to support developing countries most affected by the global energy price shock. Yet, financial leaders expressed concern at being drawn into yet another crisis triggered by geopolitical conflict. Reflecting the seriousness of the situation, the IMF has revised global growth projections downward to 2.5 percent, warning that a prolonged war could push the world economy into recession. The meeting underscored both the limited capacity of global financial institutions to offset such shocks and the urgent need for a resolution to the conflict.

In light of these unusually harsh conditions, a pragmatic policy response is essential. Our government must take all possible steps to ease the burden on low- and middle-income households. Recent increases in cooking gas prices have raised concerns that further price hikes may follow, which would inevitably drive up the cost of essential goods. Policymakers should therefore avoid making overly optimistic or unrealistic claims about inflationary pressures. For example, the commerce minister's statement in parliament on Monday that fuel price hike is unlikely to stoke inflation is not supported by any evidence. A transparent acknowledgment of external factors driving the crisis would likely foster greater public understanding and trust, rather than creating false expectations.

Can we ever seek justice?

Protect sexual assault survivors, their families from intimidation

Yet another recent incident highlights the lack of security that haunts women and children in Bangladesh. We share the sentiments in Manusher Jonno Foundation's (MJF) statement condemning 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 for attempting to rape her. On Saturday afternoon, a five-minute video of the incident went viral on social media, showing a large group of people attacking a house, with many of them carrying sticks. The victim's family members were seen crying, and the attackers were asking them to withdraw the case. How deep does the rot in our systems go that such groups feel emboldened enough to attack and demand the withdrawal of an attempted rape case?

According to the case statement, when the grandmother of the teenage girl went to visit her in the residential madrasa, the superintendent told the guardian that the girl had been "attacked by an evil power." Then he took the girl to his room under the pretext of performing an exorcism and tried to rape her. When the survivor's family members informed their union parishad's acting chairman, he pursued social arbitration instead of helping the family take legal action. Following the filing of the case around two months after the incident, around 100 people assaulted family members.

Given that such heinous incidents are disturbingly common and frequent across the country—only a month ago, a teenage rape survivor in Narsingdi was abducted and killed for seeking justice—how is it that rape survivors are still not receiving the protection they need? Even more worrying is that, according to the Subarnachar survivor's father, his daughter is not the sole victim of the accused. But others have not come forward due to the fear of social stigma. Of course, mob attacks such as the one this family had to endure will only silence survivors further, especially since police protection after filing a case is next to nil.

All three arms of the state must realise just how systematically unsafe women and children are in Bangladesh. There must be a strict protocol for the police to follow when a rape case is filed, so that survivors do not feel threatened for their lives for seeking justice. Government representatives in union parishads must also be trained to direct survivors to seek legal help, rather than trying to "resolve" through social arbitration.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Hitler admits defeat
On this day in 1945, Adolf Hitler admitted in his Berlin bunker that World War II was lost after failed defences against Soviet forces, concluding that suicide was his only remaining option.

How poor governance broke our immunisation model



Zahida Fizza Kabir
is a social entrepreneur and CEO
at SAJIDA Foundation.

ZAHIDA FIZZA KABIR

Bangladesh's Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) has long been one of the country's most celebrated public health successes. Built on sustained government commitment, strong development partnerships, and a vast network of frontline health workers, it delivered consistently high coverage and sharply reduced the incidence of vaccine-preventable diseases. For years, it positioned the country as a model for the developing world.

That model is now being undone. The ongoing measles vaccine crisis is not merely an isolated disruption but points to institutional weakening. National vaccination coverage reportedly fell to around 60 percent in 2025, the lowest in nearly a decade, down from 85-92 percent between 2010 and 2022.

Such steep declines do not occur suddenly or without warning. It is not merely due to a logistical problem. It is a failure of governance. Immunisation systems depend on predictable structures: coordinated procurement, stable financing, functioning leadership, and a reliable workforce. When these are disrupted—especially simultaneously—the system breaks down.

For years, vaccine procurement operated under the Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP), which provided a clear and functional administrative pathway. Its effective dismantling in 2025, without a credible transition mechanism, represents a critical policy failure. There is little evidence that this decision was guided by broad technical consultation or risk assessment, an omission that is difficult to justify given the stakes.

The consequences were foreseeable: delayed approvals, leadership gaps, and uncertainty in funding flows. These are direct outcomes of institutional disruption and cannot be written off as technical glitches. At the same time, the system failed to confront a growing and highly visible threat: misinformation. Vaccine hesitancy did not emerge overnight either. It intensified during the Covid pandemic and continued to spread, largely unchecked. What was needed was sustained public communication and active counter-engagement. What followed instead was a deafening silence.



The ongoing measles vaccine crisis is not merely an isolated disruption but points to institutional weakening.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

The impact became evident during the 2025 Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine campaign, where misinformation drove refusal rates high enough to push coverage below herd immunity thresholds in several urban areas. Misinformation does not need active advocates so much as it thrives in the absence of challengers or counterarguments. Equally concerning is the lack of urgency around emerging scientific questions. Why are infants under six months increasingly vulnerable? Are maternal antibodies weakening? Is the virus evolving? These are not just academic concerns; they are central to programme strategy. Yet, they remain insufficiently investigated, reflecting a deeper neglect of research and evidence-based planning.

The system's structural weaknesses are equally stark. Nearly 45 percent of EPI field-level positions in 37 districts remain vacant. These workers operate across roughly 150,000 vaccination centres, which are the backbone of the immunisation programme. Without them, coverage declines are inevitable.

analysis by Unicef, WHO, and Gavi suggests that hundreds of thousands of children remain under-immunised, particularly in urban areas. The gap is not just in delivery but also in visibility. Fragmented data systems that exclude private and informal providers create blind spots, preventing timely intervention.

This pattern is not confined to immunisation. A parallel regression is underway in family planning—another sector once considered a global success. Bangladesh reduced its total fertility rate from 6.3 in 1975 to 2.3 by 2022. That progress is now reversing, with the rate rising to 2.4. As per a recent report citing data from the Directorate General of Family Planning (DGFP), more than one-third of the 487 upazilas in the country have run out of all types of government-supplied contraceptives. Condoms are out of stock in 397 upazilas, while at least 220 upazilas have run out of oral pills. Meanwhile, implants, intrauterine devices (IUDs), and injectables are out of stock in all upazilas.

The causes are familiar: workforce

protect essential public health systems from administrative disruption. Dismantling functioning systems without tested alternatives is far from reform. Such steps only scale up the risk to a national level. And we are now paying that price.

The priority now must be to restore institutional stability, re-establish clear procurement pathways, urgently fill workforce gaps, invest in research and surveillance, and rebuild public trust through sustained communication. Just as importantly, critical health systems must be insulated from abrupt policy shifts and administrative discontinuity. If addressed now, the broader system stress remains manageable. If not, they will escalate into crises that are far more costly, both financially and in human terms.

The narrative of success that once defined Bangladesh's health sector was built over decades. It is now at risk of being undone in a matter of years. Unless there is a course correction, this will not be remembered as a temporary setback, but as a preventable reversal.

Nutritional literacy can reduce healthcare costs



Mohammad Saharin Hossain
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MOHAMMAD SAHARIN HOSSAIN

The proverb "Health is wealth" is widely quoted but remains overlooked in practice in our society. While our national curriculum and social discourse place immense weight on academic excellence and professional degrees, we have systematically ignored a vital component of human development: food education. As we strive to become a developed nation, it is imperative to recognise that nutritional literacy is a fundamental necessity that should be integrated into every household and classroom.

From a legal standpoint, the right to health and food is intrinsically linked to the right to life guaranteed under Article 32 of the Constitution of Bangladesh. However, the right to food should not merely mean the right to a full stomach; it must encompass the right to "safe and nutritious food."

While we have the Safe Food Act, 2013, and the Consumers' Right Protection Act, 2009, these laws primarily focus on the supply side, regulating producers and sellers. We are missing the "demand side" of the equation: educated consumers. Without food education, a citizen

cannot exercise their right to choose what is healthy for their body. The legal framework provides protection, but literacy provides the power to utilise that protection. If a citizen cannot read a nutritional label or identify harmful additives, the laws protecting them remain partially ineffective. For instance, Section 44 of the Consumers' Right Protection Act deals with misleading advertisements, but without food education, how can a consumer distinguish between a genuine health claim and a marketing gimmick?

In Bangladesh, we have made significant strides in increasing the general literacy rate, but that has not translated into better nutritional literacy. Even highly educated families often unknowingly consume excessive amounts of sugar, trans fats, and sodium-rich processed foods simply because they lack basic knowledge of food science. This ignorance leads to a rising tide of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular issues.

According to World Health

Organization, NCDs now account for a staggering 67 percent of total deaths in Bangladesh. This is an alarming figure for a nation like ours. We are suffering from what experts call "hidden hunger," where the stomach is full, but the body is starving for essential micronutrients. This gap can only be bridged through systematic food education that starts from the dinner table and extends to the classroom. Our education system teaches us how to solve complex equations, but fails to teach us the chemistry of what we consume daily.

In this regard, Bangladesh can look towards countries like Japan for inspiration. Japan enacted the Basic Act on Shokuiiku (food and nutrition education) in 2005, making food education a mandatory part of the school curriculum. It teaches children not just what to eat, but the history, culture, and science behind their food. Similarly, in Finland, school meals are used as a pedagogical tool to teach balanced dieting. If these nations can prioritise food education to build a resilient workforce, why shouldn't Bangladesh, a nation with a large young population, do the same? While the country's National Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2020 outlines several strategic goals, the implementation lacks grassroots educational engagement. We need a curriculum that reflects our local dietary needs and addresses the specific challenges of food adulteration prevalent in our markets.

If health is wealth, then a sickly population is a national liability.

When a family spends a large portion of its income on medical bills due to preventable diet-related illnesses, it drains the family's savings and, by extension, the national economy. The burden on our public healthcare system is immense. By making food education mandatory, we can shift our national healthcare focus from "curative" to "preventive." Teaching a child how to identify balanced nutrients or the dangers of food adulteration is just as important as teaching them mathematics or science. Nutritional literacy is, therefore, a long-term investment in our human capital that will reduce the national expenditure on healthcare.

Therefore, the government should consider incorporating a comprehensive food and nutrition module into the primary and secondary school curriculum. This shouldn't just be a theoretical chapter but a practical guide. Furthermore, community-based awareness programmes should be launched through legal aid clinics and local government bodies to reach homemakers, who are primarily responsible for a family's diet.

We need to empower our citizens to demand safe food, not just as a matter of preference, but as a constitutional right. Food education is the first step towards a society where health is truly prioritised as our greatest wealth. It is time to treat food education with the same urgency as our general education system. Health is, after all, the only wealth that allows us to pursue all other forms of prosperity.

When a cartoon becomes a crime, again



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JANNATUL NAYM PICAL

In August 2024, shortly after the fall of Sheikh Hasina's regime, BNP's then Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman made a statement that earned him rare political capital, particularly in progressive and liberal circles. He shared a satirical cartoon of himself by Mehedi Haque on Facebook, saying, "I am deeply gratified that the freedom to draw political cartoons has been restored in Bangladesh." He recalled how, before 2006, cartoonists like Shishir Bhattacharjee had freely caricatured him and his mother. He contrasted this openness with the repression under the Awami League, where artists such as Ahmed Kabir Kishore faced enforced disappearance, torture, and imprisonment for their work. By publicly embracing satire directed at political figures, including himself, Tarique projected a sense of democratic ease: that under a BNP-led dispensation, even sharp political criticism and caricature would be tolerated rather than punished.

But less than two years later, and just over two months into BNP's tenure in government following the 13th parliamentary election, that projection is becoming harder to reconcile with the unfolding events.

On April 18, as the BNP government marked its first 60 days in office and released a list of "60 notable initiatives," it prominently highlighted the assurance of freedom of expression, with senior leaders speaking confidently of an environment of "maximum freedom of speech," where dissenting voices could circulate without fear. However, even before that claim was formally made, reality was already moving in the opposite direction. On the night of April 17, the Detective Branch of police arrested content creator AM Hasan Nasim from his rented home in Dhaka's Agargaon area. His offence? Sharing an AI-generated satirical cartoon that depicted Chief Whip

Nurul Islam Moni serving whales and sharks to three political figures: Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, Opposition Leader Shafiqur Rahman, and NCP lawmaker Nahid Islam. The image was a direct, humorous reference to Moni's own joking remark in parliament on April 10 about serving such items at lunch. The cartoon contained no private information, threats or sexual content. Nevertheless, it was labelled as content used for "blackmail" and "spreading misleading information."

A BNP activist named Nazrul Islam, a self-described supporter of Moni, filed a case with Gulshan police station on April 18, under sections 25 and 27 of the Cyber Security Ordinance, 2025. Section 25 addresses sexual harassment or blackmail, while Section 27 concerns threats to state security or sovereignty. Legal observers noted that the cartoon matched neither description. The complaint also violated Section 40(l) of the ordinance, which restricts filing such cases to the aggrieved person, someone with written authorisation from them, or a law enforcement officer. Nazrul Islam had no such authorisation. Despite this, police detained Nasim before the FIR was fully formalised, and he was sent to jail. Although Section 25 is bailable, he was initially denied bail. It was only yesterday that a Dhaka court granted him bail on a bond of Tk 1,000, while the case itself remains in place.

In parliament, NCP MP Hasnat Abdullah criticised the arrest on Sunday as an attack on free speech, while Chief Whip Moni stated that if the matter was solely about criticising him or the government through a cartoon, the person should be released, though he also called for investigation into other alleged activities.

This pattern is not limited to cartoonists alone. Between March 26 and April 18, at least five ordinary social media users,

including Nasim, have been shown arrested under similar provisions for expressing dissent through satire, criticism, or political commentary, according to a *Manab Zamin* report. This development invites a sober assessment of continuity rather than change.

The trajectory began with the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006, and was dramatically expanded under the Awami League through the Digital Security

and coercion remained largely intact. The power to arrest, search, and detain on broadly defined grounds continued to raise serious concerns about abuse.

The July uprising was, in large part, a collective rejection of that system of fear and arbitrary detention.

Under Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, the interim government had a historic opportunity to break the pattern. It repealed

bypassed. Courts showed limited inclination to intervene quickly.

Overall, the institutional culture, where the sensitivities of those in power take precedence, appears unchanged from previous regimes. In fact, just about two months after the formation of the government, at least two people have been sent to prison over just drawing, publishing, or sharing satirical cartoons on Facebook, according to a BBC report. This reveals a deeper systemic failure that spans governments.

But cartoons are not blackmail or threats to sovereignty; they are a legitimate, often healthy way for citizens to hold power accountable and highlight absurdity. When even a drawing based on a public official's own words leads to arrest and detention, it tells us that the regime is not confident—it is brittle.

Of course, this is still early days. It is not realistic to expect deeply entrenched political habits and power structures to be undone within just 60 days. But if the government is serious about course correction, the first priority must be to avoid complacency and to resist the temptation of treating early public optimism as unconditional endorsement. The public mood may still be hopeful, but it is not uncritical. In Bangladesh's political history, that distinction has never been trivial.

What is required now is restraint rather than triumphalism, and reflection rather than rhetorical confidence. And if Prime Minister Tarique Rahman truly meant what he said about welcoming criticism and satire, that commitment must now be demonstrated through practice, not weakened by the actions of those governing under his party's leadership or by the excesses of their overenthusiastic supporters at the grassroots level.

To that end, releasing Nasim without delay, withdrawing the flawed case, and issuing firm instructions against misuse of the Cyber Security ordinance would be essential first steps towards restoring credibility. Genuine progress will also require more: a substantive overhaul or repeal of the problematic sections of the ordinance to prevent its repeated weaponisation against dissent and humour. Until then, the aspiration for restored freedom of expression remains more declarative than real.



VISUAL: ALIZA RAHMAN

Act, 2018. In practice, it became a sweeping instrument for policing online expression. Journalists, activists, students, and ordinary users were routinely charged for "offensive" or "false" content, often through complaints initiated by political actors aligned with those in power. Arrests frequently preceded investigation, and detention often followed before legal scrutiny could catch up.

The law's vague provisions, particularly around defamation, "hurting religious sentiments," and "misleading information," enabled systematic abuse. The cases of cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore and writer Mushtaq Ahmed became defining symbols of this era; Mushtaq's death in custody further intensified scrutiny of the law itself.

In response to sustained criticism, the statute was later rebranded as the Cyber Security Act, 2023. While some penalties were reduced and certain provisions adjusted, its core architecture of discretion

the Cyber Security Act, but introduced the Cyber Security Ordinance, 2025, which retained many of the same broad and elastic provisions. Sections 25 and 27 kept language flexible enough to encompass satire and criticism. Limited tweaks were made, but there was no deep structural reform—no narrowing of definitions, no removal of criminal penalties for protected speech, and no robust safeguards against misuse. By opting for rebranding over overhaul, the interim period left the repressive tools largely available for future use.

And now those tools are being employed in defence of BNP's own leaders. The party that condemned the Awami League's practices is invoking the unreformed ordinance against a cartoon that echoes the very creative freedom the prime minister once publicly embraced. Police responded to a partisan complaint without proper legal standing. Procedural safeguards were

Saving ourselves through Earth Day



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RAIDA A.K. REZA

Imagine a summer day in Dhaka: the temperature is soaring but running water is scarce. There is infrastructure in place but the groundwater has dropped so far that the system cannot keep up with demand. This is a reality many Dhaka dwellers have to grapple with on a regular basis.

Dhaka's groundwater levels have been steadily depleting for years. In a city where almost 70 percent of the water supply comes from groundwater, that is a terrifying reality. Some 2,000 million litres of water are extracted in Dhaka every day and by 2050, Dhaka's groundwater levels are expected to fall to 100 metres. The situation is equally dire across the country. For example, in Chapainawabganj, water drawn from ultra-deep wells are often too saline for drinking while deep aquifers are contaminated by arsenic. For many households, this means choosing between unsafe or unusable water. Some cannot even rinse their faces with tap water while others walk long distances every day to collect drinking water.

According to a study by the Rivers and Delta Research Centre (RDRC), at least 79 rivers in the country—out of 1,156 rivers—have dried up or are in the process of drying up. All of this points to a system that has been put under immense strain for decades. We often talk about the environment as if it is separate from our daily lives, something that we need to protect, something to care about on days like Earth Day. But in reality, the environment is not "out there." It is the foundation of everything we depend on: things like water, food, and energy. Yet, we often take them for granted.

Scientists have defined a set of planetary boundaries that help keep Earth's systems stable—covering areas like climate, freshwater use, land use, and biodiversity. Today, several of these limits have already been exceeded. Global temperatures have increased considerably compared to pre-industrial levels. Almost half the world's countries now have degraded freshwater systems due to pollution, encroachment,

etc. Meanwhile, human consumption of freshwater has risen dramatically, placing many regions under serious stress. This is not something we can dismiss by taking a "not in our backyard" approach. In fact, we are seeing the same pattern locally. For instance, in Khulna, many of the waterways that once defined the city have been encroached upon to make space for roads, buildings, and commercial areas. This unplanned growth often makes even the lightest rainfall result in waterlogged roads. And during the dry season, half the city faces water shortage. What looks like urban development shows up later as unbearable heat, chronic water scarcity, persistent pollution, and instability.

And every major global conflict reminds us of the same underlying fragility. During the pandemic, supply chains slowed down across the world, affecting everything from food to manufacturing. When the Russia-Ukraine war began, fertiliser and energy markets were thrown into shocks. More recently, the US-Israel war in Iran has disrupted global energy flows and trade routes, sending ripple effects across economies worldwide. Countries like Bangladesh feel these shocks almost immediately—through higher prices, tighter supplies, and growing pressure across sectors. While these are not environmental crises in themselves, they reveal something important: systems that appear stable can unravel quickly when they rely on limited and tightly connected resources. Environmental stress, however, does not arrive as a sudden shock. It shows up in the rising price of rice, in the

cost of electricity, in the irregular transition between seasons, and in the growing unpredictability of everyday life. And here is the twist: it does not affect everyone equally. These shocks hit hardest where resilience is lower, for example, low-income households, people employed in the informal sector, or those who have to rely on the land for their livelihood. What begins as a resource stress eventually turns into an economic and social stress. Saving the environment isn't only about the environment; it's about securing the livelihoods of people who are less resilient to these shocks and this is why the conversation around development needs to shift.

Bangladesh's growth story is real. Over the past decades, the country has achieved steady economic expansion, built a globally competitive apparel industry, and lifted millions out of poverty. But growth built on the extraction of huge amounts of natural resources is not without consequence. The rivers that absorb industrial waste keep absorbing it till they can't. Consider the Sundarbans. It has absorbed every major cyclone in recent history including Sidr, Aila, Amphan, Mocha, by reducing wind speed, weakening storm surges, and by protecting millions of lives inland. Today, the Sundarbans covers over 6,000 square kilometres, having already lost significant area over the past decades. Bangladesh's total forest cover also remains far below what is considered necessary for ecological stability.

To absorb systems shock, there is now an opportunity to govern resources as interconnected systems. That means treating rivers as shared systems, not dumping grounds. It means implementing long-term plans not just on paper, but in practice. It also means pricing resource use and pollution in ways that reflect real costs. It means designing industries to use less water, reuse more, and pollute less. Most importantly, it means paying attention before strains turn into crises.

My father often gets upset when we throw away leftover rice. To him, it is one of the most disrespectful things you can do to the people who grow it and to the resources that go into producing it. My mother saves every plastic bag and cup so that we can reuse them later. Throwing away clothes is not a concept we are familiar with in our household; they always go to someone in need or serve another purpose. The concept of resources being thrown away or wasted is next to impossible to my parents. They come from a generation where resource strain was real on a personal level. The resources we consume are complex, intertwined in ways that we sometimes can't even conceptualise. That is why it is important to understand how to mitigate the shocks before they reach us. And the shock on environmental resources is something that we must reconcile with, and the sooner we do it, the better. However, the question remains whether we will reframe this as something to save the earth, or ourselves.

CROSSWORD

BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 Went fast
- 6 Violinist Stern
- 11 Overhead
- 12 Island south of Sicily
- 13 Thin porridge
- 14 Acts sullen
- 15 Sinks, as a short putt
- 17 Cambridge sch.
- 18 Commotion
- 19 Marching beat
- 22 Sgt.'s superior
- 23 Portugal's place
- 24 Puts on ice
- 25 Stylized Japanese drama
- 27 Driving aid
- 30 Charles III's house
- 31 Maximum amount
- 32 Director Lee
- 33 Manly
- 35 Cold house
- 38 Lubricated
- 39 Lipstick slip
- 40 Taking advantage of
- 41 Lab work
- 42 Reason
- DOWN
- 1 Motley
- 2 Wear roughly
- 3 Clipped item
- 4 December 24 and 31
- 5 Yummy
- 6 Little terror
- 7 --- Paulo
- 8 Reunion group
- 9 New York prison
- 10 Social class
- 16 "Lolita" author
- 20 Walking on air
- 21 Stammering sounds
- 24 Oil ingredient derived from marijuana
- 25 Checkers demand
- 26 Viewpoints
- 27 Like some rebates
- 28 Fred, Steve, and Ethan
- 29 Promise
- 30 Jeans measure
- 34 Ascend
- 36 Stable bit
- 37 Hosp. parts

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SUNDAY'S ANSWERS

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GORE, GRIT, HORROR: Vicky Zahed unpacks the philosophy behind ‘Chokro 2’

SHARMIN JOYA

“How was a family of nine convinced to take their own lives together, in unison, without any of them attempting to escape?” – This haunting question consumed Vicky Zahed after he learned about the real-life tragedy of the Adam family that unfolded in 2007 in Mymensingh.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Drawing from these disturbing events and weaving them with his own imagination, Vicky candidly opens up about his latest release,

Chokro 2, which emerged as one of the standout highlights on OTT platforms this Eid-ul-Fitr.

How much of the rituals shown in ‘Chokro’ about the mysterious ‘Adam Family’ are based on real events?

Many of the rituals depicted in the ‘Adam Family’ case were based on research from real scriptures and historical references. I prefer to keep the sources anonymous; information on how such practices may have worked was collected and then combined with fictional elements to build the story.

There seems to be a significant shift in tone between Season 1 and Season 2. Was this a conscious creative decision?

It was intentional. Season 1 was designed to be more subtle and scientific, focusing on the ‘Adam’ belief system and exploring ideas like brain manipulation, shared hallucination, and neuroscience.

Season 2, on the other hand, moves in a more commercial and dramatic direction. There was pressure from OTT platforms to deliver a strong hit after a gap in successful content, which influenced the shift in tone to

more commercial, which actually worked!

As a result, Season 2 leans more into fiction and mythology, with a bolder, more ‘loud’ storytelling style. While my personal preference remains the quieter, more restrained approach of Season 1.

‘Chokro’ can be said to be a landmark in the psychological thriller genre in Bangladeshi content. What was your specific vision for achieving this status?

I aimed to create something that this generation would remember as a landmark in psychological thrillers and cult storytelling. I wanted to move away from typical ghost stories and build a more layered, unsettling experience.

Even though it isn’t traditional horror, the fact that audiences still feel genuinely disturbed or afraid shows that the impact has come through as intended.

You seem to have a specific pattern with different OTT platforms when it comes to the genres and stories you explore. How do you decide which platform is the right fit for your craziest ideas?

While there is no formal arrangement with any platform, a clear pattern has emerged in terms of their willingness to take risks. I have found that iScreen and Channel i are the platforms most open to my more unconventional and out-of-the-box ideas. Whenever I present a truly unusual or horror-driven concept—like *Punorjonmo* or *Chokro*—they have backed me, and those projects have consistently found success there. On the other hand, platforms such as Chorki and Hoichoi generally tend to prefer more grounded, realistic narratives.

There are speculations that you’re going to make a silver screen debut with ‘Pulsirat’, featuring Afran Nisho and Mehazabien Chowdhury?

I have signed a contract with Alpha-i, and I will be making the film soon; however, no cast members have been officially signed as of yet! But yes, I do wish to work on my first feature film with this duo. For now, I want to keep all the attention fully focused on the immense success of *Chokro*.



ROZINA returns to direction with ‘Ekhoni Shomoy’

Veteran actor Rozina is set to return to direction with her second film, *Ekhoni Shomoy*, three years after her debut directorial *Phire Dekha* (2023). She is currently working on planning and budgeting, with hopes to begin shooting within the year.

Written by filmmaker Chatku Ahmed, the film will explore contemporary life, focusing on themes of love, relationships, and social realities, while also carrying a strong anti-dowry message. Rozina said the project remains in its early stages, with the cast yet to be finalised.

A prominent figure in Bangladeshi cinema for over four decades, Rozina rose to fame with *Rajmahal* (1978) and later won National Film Awards for films such as *Koshai*, *Jibondhara*, and *Dinkal*.

WHAT’S THE HAPS?



‘All Quiet on the Western Front’

Adapted from *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque, this searing production traces youth undone by war’s brutal machinery. Director Bakar Bakul renders the battlefield with stark immediacy, dismantling romantic illusions and exposing the fragile, human core beneath uniforms and slogans.

Date: Thursday–Friday | April 23–24, 2026
Time: 7 pm onwards
Venue: National Theatre Hall, BSA

A K Rahul shares stage with Memphis May Fire in Thailand



Bangladeshi musician A K Rahul and his band have marked a major milestone by sharing the stage with internationally acclaimed metalcore band Memphis May Fire at a live show in Bangkok, Thailand.

Performing as the opening act for a band he has followed since 2012, Rahul described the experience as “surreal” and a long-held dream fulfilled. He expressed gratitude to fans and supporters who helped make the opportunity possible.

The band also received an enthusiastic response from the Thai audience, which Rahul said was overwhelming.

Calling the performance a significant step in their journey, he hinted at upcoming tour content, including videos and vlogs, to share more moments with fans.

NEWS

A window for fund recovery

FROM PAGE 12
the government’s steps to recover laundered money and projected recovery this fiscal year.

In response, Khosru said the Bank Resolution Act, 2026, has created fresh opportunities for all stakeholders, including shareholders and investors. The changes had “opened a window”, he said, stressing that the objective was not to facilitate the return of any specific individual but to ensure funds were deposited back into the banking system.

Khosru said the most important step in recovering assets illegally transferred abroad is to send a Mutual Legal Assistance Request (MLAR) to the relevant countries under the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, 2012.

A joint investigation team comprising officials from the Anti-Corruption Commission, the Criminal Investigation Department, the Central Intelligence Cell, customs and intelligence has filed cases in Bangladeshi courts over alleged money laundering by the S Alam Group and the Beximco Group.

MLARs have been sent to four countries – British Virgin Islands, Cyprus, Jersey and Singapore – for S Alam Group, and to the UK and the UAE for Beximco Group.

Civil and criminal proceedings are both being pursued, along with asset tracing through four international law firms.

However, recovery is a complex and lengthy legal process, and it is not yet possible to estimate how much money can be recovered within the current or next fiscal year, Khosru said.

In a separate reply, he said the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) had frozen Tk 243.60 crore across 662 bank accounts and Tk 813.56 crore across 227 beneficiary owner’s (BO) accounts linked to individuals associated with S Alam Group.

Later, intelligence reports were sent from the BFIU to the law enforcement agencies for further investigation regarding the transactions of the S Alam Group.

In this context, the government formed a joint investigation team

regarding the money laundering case of the S Alam Group.

A total of 27 cases have been filed against S Alam Group in the courts of Bangladesh by the said investigation team, out of which charge sheets were submitted in three cases.

Based on the information received by the Joint Search and Investigation Team, the court has seized fixed assets (land, flats, houses) worth Tk 4,264 crore of S Alam Group in Bangladesh and shares worth Tk 6,692.34 crore of 2,680 bank accounts and Tk 24,810.88 crore of 171 companies.

In addition, the Bangladesh court has issued a judgement to seize one house, 62 bank accounts and assets of 14 companies and six trust funds worth Tk 3,222.70 crore abroad.

In this manner, the banks affected by the illegal laundering of S Alam Group’s defaulted loan money abroad have signed a non-disclosure agreement and started the process of appointing four international law firms on ‘No Recovery, No Fee’ terms to recover their loan money.

An unsettling reality

FROM PAGE 12
– 70 percent of whom were engaged in agricultural work.

The scale of lightning-related deaths in Bangladesh is staggering compared to other countries, according to a study presented at the American Geophysical Union’s Fall Meeting in December 2024 by researchers Mostofa Kamal, Yanping Li, Fateme Piya, and Joyanal Shishir.

The study found that Bangladesh experiences seven times fewer lightning strikes than the United States, yet its fatalities are 10 times higher.

Between 2010 and 2023, around 4,000 people were killed by lightning, with 75 percent of them in rural areas, the study showed.

SCIENCE OF LIGHTNING

Another study published in Earth Systems and Environment in April 2025 by ATMS Azam, Nasreen Akter, Ashraf Dewan, Mohammad Al-Masum Molla, and M Rafiuddin found a key reason behind increased lightning activity.

According to the study, lightning strikes are most frequent during the pre-monsoon season (April–May) due to an elevated concentration of dust and sulphate particles in the air.

The study calls it “transboundary air pollution”, as these pollutants are transported into Bangladesh from northern and western India via upper-level westerlies. Meanwhile, Dhaka, one of the country’s most polluted cities, has also contributed to the situation.

Meteorologists explain that lightning is caused by the rapid buildup and discharge of electrical energy resulting from collisions between ice crystals and soft hails within a storm cloud. Higher concentrations of dust and sulphate particles increase cloud electrification and charge separation.

GOVT RESPONSES

In 2016, after 80 people were killed in a single day, Bangladesh declared lightning a natural disaster.

Since then, successive governments have implemented projects like palm tree plantations, installation of lightning arresters, and constructing shelters.

However, none of those were successful in reducing lightning-related deaths.

Md Abdus Sobhan, deputy director (planning) at the Department of Disaster Management, said 306 lightning arresters were installed in fiscal 2021-22 under a completed project.

“After that, we formulated another project to build farmer shelters with

lightning arresters in lightning-prone areas. But this project is still under review at the Planning Commission.”

Meanwhile, Netai Chandra Dey Sarker, director of monitoring and information management at the department, said the Disaster Management and Relief Ministry’s 1090 disaster hotline cannot keep pace with lightning.

“After receiving a lightning forecast, the time is so short that this method is not effective. We are now exploring instant voice messages pushed to mobile networks in at-risk areas, but the plan remains at an early stage.”

Meanwhile, Rashim Mollah, general secretary of SSTAF, said the government often provides some financial compensation to the families of the deceased. “But the injured suffer the most, with no support to cover the medical costs.”

A GAP THAT KILLS

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) has for years been able to forecast thunderstorms and possible lightning strikes.

However, the gap between what forecasters produce and what reaches farmers in the field has emerged as a central failure.

BMD Senior Meteorologist Muhammad Abul Kalam Mallik said, “Thunderstorms are short-term phenomena.... They can develop within 30 minutes to 1.5 hours. Currently, we are publishing forecasts only through the department’s official Facebook page, which is not reaching the farmers in the field.”

He said the most dangerous moments are when workers ignore or fail to understand the warning signs overhead.

“Farmers or labourers in the field, or fishermen in the water, usually hear thunder as a signal, which comes after lightning. They don’t look up at the sky,” he said, adding that awareness is the key to saving lives.

“Through several NGOs and Met clubs at schools, we are trying to raise awareness with a single slogan – ‘when thunder roars, go indoors!’”

Mallik explained the 30-30 rule, urging all to follow it. “First, if lightning flashes in the sky and you hear thunder within 30 seconds, then the thunderstorm is coming towards you. You should go home and wait 30 minutes after the last thunder.”

Netai Chandra also said that before anything else, public awareness needs to be raised. “For lightning, we have formulated a standard operating

protocol and, to build awareness, a committee has been formed, which is also working on all possible ways to disseminate forecast messages to the masses.”

However, SSTAF GS Rashim Mollah said awareness alone cannot overcome the economic pressure pushing farmers to stay in the field.

“When farmers see clouds in the sky, they rush to harvest. Besides, in rural farming areas, houses or shelters are too far from the fields, so they often choose to continue working.”

He said shelters are the answer, not technology. “Hundreds of crores of taka were spent on government projects that never really worked.... Since incidents occur more in the Haor region, if a pucca house can be constructed every 100 metres as a shelter, that will be enough. It will help save lives even without the use of arresters.”

Mollah also urged free medical care for survivors and the inclusion of lightning safety in school textbooks.

Citizens decry

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mark Mujibnagar Day. “Even no minister or senior government official was present, which amounts to neglect the history of Liberation War.”

At the briefing, Ruhin Hossain Prince, former general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), said, “From cities to rural areas, Liberation War memorials have been vandalised. Those behind the attacks don’t believe in the spirit of the Liberation War. I think such incidents cannot occur without government patronage. Not a single case has been filed over the incidents during the interim government’s tenure.”

The delegation placed several demands before the government, including immediate reconstruction of damaged Liberation War memorials across the country, identification and prosecution of those responsible for the attacks, proper state observance of Mujibnagar Day, and speedy completion of the under construction Liberation War Museum at Mujibnagar.

Others who spoke at the event included Shamsul Huda, executive director of Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD); Rajekuzzaman Ratan, assistant general secretary of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (Basad); and Zakir Hossain, chief executive of Nagarik Uddyg.

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Sara also pointed out that there was not a single female member in the Consensus Commission, formed during the interim government. Similarly, no female lawyers or judges were included in the Judicial Reform Commission.

She further commented that the public had no clear understanding of the third question in the referendum.

Addressing the participants, she asked, “Raise your hands and tell me how many of you can say what the 30 proposals were? ... I don’t think you even know what you voted for.”

“This is a big question. You are voting, but for what?... Yes or no, we know that. But if I don’t know what I’m voting for, then how much value does that vote really have?”

She also spoke about the Supreme Court Secretariat Ordinance and the Supreme Court Judges Appointment Ordinance, expressing the view that these two laws from the interim period should be reinstated.

“We don’t want to go back to a situation where those in the executive use the judiciary as a tool to suppress their political opponents. This basic change is what we seek, and these two laws were necessary to achieve it so

that those seeking justice, regardless of their political identity, can receive justice.

Sara said, “... These laws are definitely needed again. Any minor improvements that can be made are still possible, and this is something that should be discussed now.”

“As the judiciary does not have full control, especially financial control, it has to go through a long process. They should be freed from that process,” she said, adding, “Having a secretariat is absolutely essential; this has been an aspiration for us for more than 50 years.”

Referring to the forced exile of former chief justice SK Sinha during the Awami League government, Sara said that despite so many years passing, civil society has not raised demands for accountability or resolution. “Let it be resolved. Let us find out who was involved.”

She added that even after the July uprising, Appellate Division judges of the Supreme Court had to resign in the face of student protests. Under pressure from their demands, several judges were abruptly removed, some of whom were quite competent.

She also alleged that former chief justice ABM Khairul Haque, who

delivered the verdict in the fifteenth amendment case regarding the caretaker government system, has been “falsely” implicated in the July killing case.

“So many months have passed, and there is still no charge sheet, yet it is being said that Justice Khairul Haque stood there and fired shots or ordered shootings.

“We are not speaking up about this. Civil society, Shujan, the Bangladesh Bar Council, or bar associations. No one is speaking; we are all silent.”

At the discussion, Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury also criticised the government for repealing two ordinances.

He said, “These are undoubtedly regressive steps. These are ominous signs. These are red flags. This will not bode well for the nation. You know, the law minister has assured the nation that at a subsequent stage they will come up with new drafts of improved laws in this regard. But in our country, it is very risky and unwise to take the words of a politician and face them.”

Among others, lawyers Tanim Hussain Shawon, Imran Abdullah Siddiqi, and Fahim Mashroor, co-coordinator of Nagarik Coalition, spoke on the occasion.

More than 25,000

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"If anything happens, we will be able to immediately locate the source and take action," he said.

On the first day, Bangla First Paper and Sahaj Bangla First Paper were held under the general education boards; Quran Majid and Tajwid and Tajwid and Madrasah Education Board; and Bangla Second Paper under the Technical Education Board.

According to the Bangladesh Inter-Education Board Coordination Committee, 15,09,006 candidates were scheduled to sit for the exams at 3,875 centres under 11 education boards, but 14,83,598 appeared.

Under the nine general education boards, two examinees were expelled – one each under the Dhaka and Dinajpur boards. Under the Madrasah Education Board, four examinees were expelled.

Under the Technical Education Board, no examinee was expelled, though one invigilator was removed.

According to the exam routine, written examinations will continue until May 20, while practical exams are scheduled from June 7 to June 14.

The minister also visited several centres, including Tetulphora High School in Savar, Joymondop High School and Sahrail High School in Singair upazila of Manikganj, Mirpur Mofid-

e-Am School and College in Aminbazar, and the Model Academy centre in Paikpara, Dhaka.

According to a ministry press release, he spoke with teachers and guardians and observed examination halls through CCTV from control rooms set up at the centres.

He said no suspicious activity was detected on platforms usually monitored during public examinations and urged journalists to remain vigilant, noting that media scrutiny could help deter malpractice.

Milon said he kept his inspection routes undisclosed to ensure the effectiveness of surprise visits. "If centres know in advance, the purpose of inspections is defeated."

He also expressed satisfaction with the overall arrangements.

On CCTV monitoring, he said the systems were functioning properly at the centres he visited and that authorities had been instructed to preserve footage in case of complaints. He added that many guardians viewed CCTV coverage as a safeguard against wrongful allegations or expulsion.

Replying to a question, the minister said the government was not considering reinstating the Primary School Certificate and Junior School Certificate examinations. He added that the curriculum review is under direct supervision and will continue.

Now ensure

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called "Inspection Rooms," since there is no provision to allocate rooms in the name of MPs. "MPs will be able to sit there, carry out necessary activities, and meet with the public. If an MP's constituency has two, three, or four upazilas, they will have offices in all of them," he added.

Taking the floor, NCP MP Hasnat lauded the decision.

"Now we have a place to sit... As the most junior member of this parliament, let me say something. The UNO has a car, the upazila chairman has a car, but we MPs have to hire cars. Out of embarrassment, we don't say this publicly," he said. "Now that we have been given offices, if we are also provided cars to reach the people, it would be easier for us to connect with them," he added.

53 submit

FROM PAGE 3

and Mahbuba Rahman – also filed as independents outside any party or alliance.

The EC announced the election schedule on April 8, setting May 12 as the polling date. Nomination paper sales began the same day, with a total of 464 aspirants collecting forms.

Scrutiny will be held on April 22-23. Appeals can be filed on April 26, with hearings on April 27-28. The last date for withdrawal is April 29, and electoral symbols will be allocated on April 30.

JCD, Shibir clash at Ctg City College

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Police and college sources said the clash was triggered after JCD City College unit joint convener Abdullah Al Mamun erased the word "student" from a graffiti on a campus building and replaced it with "gupto" (covert or disguised). A video of the act was later shared on social media from Mamun's personal account.

Following the incident, Shibir announced a press briefing and protest procession in the New Market area at 4:00pm. Processions from both sides faced off around that time, leading to chases, counter-chases, and the hurling of brickbats.

Witnesses said at least 10 people were injured. This correspondent saw two people being taken to a hospital on a rickshaw. A Shibir activist said one of their members was admitted to Parkview Hospital.

Traffic in the area came to a standstill amid panic.

Shibir activists later moved towards Sadarghat Road, while JCD activists from across the port city gathered in the New Market area, took position in front of the college carrying sticks, and staged another procession.

Around 5:00pm, JCD activists assaulted a person suspecting him to be a

Shibir member. Police later rescued him, witnesses said.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (South) of Chattogram Police Mahmudul Hasan said additional police had been deployed to bring the situation under control.

At an emergency press conference in the evening, Shibir's Chattogram City South unit demanded the immediate arrest and punishment of those who "attacked and injured its activists".

In a written statement, unit president Maimunul Islam Mamun claimed that at least 30 Shibir activists were injured in an attack by JCD men, adding that four are currently undergoing treatment at hospitals.

City College JCD Convener Sohel Siddique Rony, however, alleged that Shibir activists initiated the attack following tensions over "gupto politics" graffiti and online exchanges.

"Shibir activists used abusive language on social media, which sparked heated arguments in the comments. The following morning, they approached us and, after a verbal dispute, attacked us with bamboo sticks and wooden objects, leaving several of us injured," he told the media. "We want justice through a

proper investigation."

Meanwhile, regarding the clash, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed in parliament said, "Until the investigation, no political party should be blamed unilaterally."

"I would request that we avoid the culture of blaming each other without investigation. If such incidents occur, cases must be filed and a proper investigation will follow," he said.

He made the remarks in the evening after Jamaat-e-Islami MP from Chattogram-15 Shahjahan Chowdhury raised the issue on a point of order.

Last night, JCD units of Dhaka University and Jahangirnagar University protested the alleged attack on JCD men by Shibir activists on the city college campus.

At DU, JCD warned that leaders and activists of Shibir will not be allowed to move freely on campuses if incidents like this are repeated.

Alleging that Shibir carried out an armed attack on general students, JCD's central committee called an immediate protest march on DU campus around 9:00pm.

Addressing the gathering, JCD General Secretary Nasir Uddin Nasir said, "If you try to repeat such attacks on any

campus in Bangladesh... not a single JCD activist will allow you to move freely on campuses."

He alleged that since August 5, 2024, Shibir activists have attacked JCD leaders and activists multiple times in Chattogram.

JCD Dhaka University unit President Ganesh Chandra Roy Sahos alleged that Shibir is creating a "negative narrative" and instigating unrest on campuses.

Meanwhile, the JU unit of JCD brought out a protest march on campus around 10:00pm from Rabindranath Tagore Hall and marched through key roads of the campus before ending with a brief rally in front of Shaheed Salam Barkat Hall.

JU JCD Convener Jahir Uddin Mohammad Babor, Member Secretary Wasim Ahmed Anik were among others present.

Babor said, "The barbaric attack carried out by Shibir at [Chattogram] City College today is highly condemnable."

He warned that if Shibir did not abandon "secretive and violent politics", JCD would launch a strong movement with general students.

(Our DU and JU correspondents also contributed to this report.)

NICRH deputy

FROM PAGE 4

Intekhab said the attackers used sharp weapons, injuring the doctor in the hand and back.

The official said based on intelligence and evidence, Rab-1 and its intelligence wing arrested the five suspects. They are: Shariful Alam Karim, Aminul Islam Kalu, Salauddin Badi, Sajjad, and Arifuzzaman. Several of them are accused in multiple cases.

Meanwhile, a police team also arrested two more suspects – Yusuf Ali and Nesar Ahmed – in connection with the incident, Faridul Islam, officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station, told The Daily Star.

On Monday, criminals stabbed NICRH Deputy Director Ahmad Hossain, 50, in Mohakhali while he was walking home after the office through a lane beside the old campus of BRAC University.

He was first taken to NICRH and later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he is undergoing treatment.

Following the incident, an administrative officer of the hospital filed a case with Banani Police Station against eight to ten unnamed individuals.


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GD-877


Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
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www.railwaydhaka.gov.bd

Memo No: BR/DCD/FY26/eGP/Advertisement-5 Date: 20 April 2026

e-GP Tender Notice

e-GP Tender is invited in National e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of the goods and related services / works and physical services mentioned below:

SL No.	Tender ID	Package Description	Tender Closing/Opening Date & Time
1	1234562	BR/DCD/FY26/OTM/GR-04 Procurement of 1500 Nos. Cl brake block for MD-52 type bogie for Dhaka carriage depot [FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT]	30-Apr-2026 11:00 hrs
2	1259554	BR/DCD/FY26/OTM/GR-48 Procurement of summer and winter uniforms and liveries for Grade-11 to Grade-20 staff	30-Apr-2026 14:00 hrs

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.

All potential and interested tenderers are requested to register in national e-GP system.

এস/২৬/(২৪০)


 (Rasel Alam)
 Divisional Mechanical Engineer (Carriage)
 Bangladesh Railway, Dhaka.
 Email: dmcenwda@railway.gov.bd

GD-878


Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Sirajganj
 (Nezarat Section)
www.sirajganj.gov.bd

Memo No. 05.43.8800.006.02.062.25.421 Date: 20 April 2026

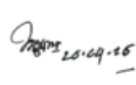
e-GP: Tender Notice No. 06/2025-2026

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

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1.	02.069	1260075	Supply and Installation of Rooftop Solar for Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Sirajganj	21/04/2026 11.00am	03/05/2026 12.00am	03/05/2026 14.00pm	03/05/2026 14.00pm

The interested persons/firm may visit the website www.eprocure.gov.bd to get the details of the tender. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal is required.

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


Md. Aminul Islam
 Deputy Commissioner
 Sirajganj

GD-874

Persons with

FROM PAGE 3

Mohua Pal, chairperson of Access Bangladesh Foundation, called for a multidisciplinary approach involving doctors, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and counsellors.

She also urged increasing allocations for rehabilitation, therapy services, counselling, and accessible support centres to help persons with disabilities live and work independently.

Mohammed Moniruzzaman Khan, director of the Institute of Disaster Management and Vulnerability Studies at Dhaka University, called for budget measures to support women entrepreneurs with disabilities, including low-interest or interest-free loans, training, tax waivers, and market access.

BERDO Executive Director Sadiqul Huq urged allocation for implementing the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act.

Salma Mahbub, executive director of Bangladesh Society for the Change and Advocacy Nexus, called for accessible buses, tax waivers on lifts, and tax exemptions on house rent of up to Tk 50,000 a month.

Litan Barui, movement liaison at Action on Disability and Development, said many children with disabilities are dropping out at the primary level, ramps often remain unusable, and

wash blocks are inaccessible.

He also said Tk 5 crore could provide 20 speech-to-text and text-to-speech devices to each of the country's 51 public universities.

Dewan Mahfuz E. Maula, advocacy and communication manager at CBM Global, Bangladesh, called for VAT and tax relief on the import and local production of assistive devices.

Anika Rahman Lipy, assistant director of Centre for Disability in Development; Nasrin Jahan, executive director of Disabled Child Foundation; and Anamika Panday, facilitator at Community Development Association, also spoke. The event was moderated by Tanjim Ferdous, head of strategic partnerships at The Daily Star.

Transport fares

FROM PAGE 3

crisis, all of us will have to bear some loss. This is happening all over the world," he said, noting that even small price hikes in essentials can strain low-income families.

To support vulnerable groups, the government plans to expand assistance programmes, including widening coverage under the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

Dr Zahed also announced plans to launch eight night markets in Dhaka to relocate street vendors and keep footpaths free for pedestrians.


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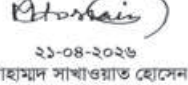
ই-টেন্ডার বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বিষয়: দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি সংবাদপত্র প্রকাশ।

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১২	টেন্ডার গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	তারিখ : ০৬/০৫/২০২৬ সময় : ১২ টা
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১৪	অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা	ঠিকানা সমূহ
১৫	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট বিক্রয়	প্রকৌশল বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন
১৬	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট গ্রহণ	নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী পুরা ও কন্ট্রোলার অব টেন্ডার কার্যালয়, চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন।
১৭	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট বোলা	দরপত্র উন্মুক্তকরণ কমিটি, চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন।

সেলেকশন দাপ্তর তথ্যাবলী :

১৫	দরপত্র দাতার যোগ্যতা	চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশনের ও অন্যান্য সংস্থার বৈধ তালিকাভুক্ত, ট্রেড লাইসেন্স ও সদ্য নবায়নের সনদ, আর্থিক স্বচ্ছতা, আয়কর, ভাট ও অভিজ্ঞতা সনদ দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করিতে হইবে। কোন কাশা তালিকাভুক্ত ঠিকানার ও ব্যাংক হইতে নেওদাওয়া যোগ্যত এখনি দলদাতা অংশগ্রহণ করিতে পারিবে না।
১৬	কাজের বিস্তারিত বিবরণ	সিটিউলে উল্লেখ থাকিবে
১৭	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্টের মূল্য ও ধর	প্রতিসেট ২,০০০/- টাকা, ১০০০/- (পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রামট) বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের পরবর্তী তারিখের হইতে হইবে।
১৮	টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্ট গ্রহণ	উক্ত দর ২০% হারে মের, চটিক অনুমূল্য বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের পরবর্তী তারিখের পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রামট প্রদান পূর্বক সিটিউলের সাথে দাখিল করিতে হইবে। (এম,আই,সি,আর নং বিধীন পে-অর্ডার গ্রহণযোগ্য হইবে না)

কাজের বিবরণ :

১৯	কাজের নাম	কাজের স্থান	প্রতি সেট দরপত্রের মূল্য	নিম্নোক্ত কাজেরদের পরিমাণ (লক্ষ টাকায়)
১৯	কাজের নাম	কাজের স্থান	প্রতি সেট দরপত্রের মূল্য	নিম্নোক্ত কাজেরদের পরিমাণ (লক্ষ টাকায়)
১৯	কাজের নাম	কাজের স্থান	প্রতি সেট দরপত্রের মূল্য	নিম্নোক্ত কাজেরদের পরিমাণ (লক্ষ টাকায়)
১৯	কাজের নাম	কাজের স্থান	প্রতি সেট দরপত্রের মূল্য	নিম্নোক্ত কাজেরদের পরিমাণ (লক্ষ টাকায়)

দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম, ডায়েরী ও ই-মেইল

১৯ কাজের নাম
২০ ডায়েরী
২১ নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী পুরা ও কন্ট্রোলার অব টেন্ডার
২২ চট্টগ্রাম সিটি কর্পোরেশন

২৩ দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম, ডায়েরী ও ই-মেইল
 ২৪ দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম, ডায়েরী ও ই-মেইল
 ২৫ দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম, ডায়েরী ও ই-মেইল
 ২৬ দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম, ডায়েরী ও ই-মেইল
 ২৭ দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম, ডায়েরী ও ই-মেইল
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LAW REVIEW

Reimagining legal aid in Bangladesh

SAYED MOHAMMAD ABU DAUD

Legal access to justice continues to be a problem for many, especially for the marginalised, underprivileged, and those who suffer social exclusion. Although the Legal Aid Services Act 2000 was enacted to provide legal aid to persons unable to afford legal services, it has never worked efficiently due to structural problems, limited outreach, and the time-consuming nature of the legal process itself. Thus, the Legal Aid Services (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 and the Legal Aid Services (Second Amendment) Ordinance 2026 are positive steps toward improving the structure of the legal aid system in Bangladesh.

Amongst other changes, one of the most notable amendments made by the ordinances is the inclusion of pre-case mediation in section 21B. While previously the primary purpose of

the traditional litigation-based system. Therefore, the adoption of mediation mechanisms in conjunction with litigation-based systems can create a more diverse model of delivering justice.

Another very significant institutional change introduced by the ordinances is the replacement of the National Legal Aid Service Organisation with the Bangladesh Legal Aid Department. With this change, the power over legal aid services has been centralised within a single department. The Department has been given the authority to regulate, coordinate all government and nongovernment legal aid programmes, develop standards for mediator training and certification, and therefore, these functions are designed to increase accountability and efficiency in legal aid program delivery.

Additionally, an Advisory Council on Legal Aid has been established under section 6. The Council consists of members from the judicial branch, executive branch, and legal professions. Among other responsibilities, the Council will assist in formulating policies, plan strategically, and monitor performance. In addition to creating an advisory council, there are now increases in the number of functions that are performed by the Department. Specifically, provisions have been added relating to emergency legal support per section 7. Emergency legal support will allow for immediate



assistance when urgent situations arise. The expanded scope of functions reflects a broadened understanding of what constitutes legal aid.

Perhaps one of the most progressive features of the ordinances is the inclusion of legal aid provisions specifically applicable to expatriate Bangladeshis and migrant workers as mentioned in amended section 7. The ordinances provide for expatriate Bangladeshis and migrant workers to receive legal assistance via their respective countries' diplomatic missions. The extension of legal aid services beyond national boundaries acknowledges that many migrant workers experience cross-border legal issues. Additionally, it demonstrates that the State recognises its obligation to protect its citizens regardless of where they reside in the world.

Importantly, in order to strengthen accountability mechanisms, panel lawyers will now face tighter supervision. Any allegations of misconduct against panel lawyers, whether based on unethical behaviour or financial exploitation, can result in disciplinary action, up to and

including removal from the list of approved panel attorneys and referral to the Bar Council under section 8B. This change is critical to maintaining professional integrity and building confidence in the system. Similarly, as part of an effort to establish quality control for mediation services, a formal certification system for mediators has been included.

As stated above, digitalisation is another feature of the changes. Individuals seeking legal aid may submit applications electronically, and there is a means by which applicants whose requests are denied may appeal per amended section 16. The electronic submission mechanism will likely improve accessibility particularly for residents in rural areas as well as increase transparency and efficiency in processing applications.

Ultimately, however, if implemented successfully, the success of these ordinances will depend upon successful implementation. There are several factors that could limit its success, including limited funding, inadequate numbers of trained staff, lack of public awareness regarding available services, as well as, ensuring effective coordination amongst government agencies, NGOs, and legal practitioners. Only time will tell how effective the amendments are.

The writer is Lecturer, Department of Law, European University of Bangladesh (EUB).

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legal aid was to provide legal assistance to clients, the new framework includes mediation mechanisms, which are time and cost-effective alternatives to



COURT CORRIDOR

The writ on banning “MANGAL SHOBHAJATRA”

NISHAT TASNIM HRIDI

Recently, a writ petition with the High Court Division of the Supreme Court has been filed seeking a permanent ban on “Mangal Shobhajatra” held on Pchela Baishakh. The petition claimed it was offensive to Islamic beliefs, infringing the constitutional rights of the Muslim majority, and threatened communal harmony. Before discussing the merit of the petition, it is worth recalling what “Mangal Shobhajatra” actually is, how it began, and what it represents. Notably this year, “Mangal Shobhajatra” is being organised as “Boishakh Shobhajatra”. My piece is not about the changes in name, because what is in a name anyway? I rather discuss its substance because the writ aims for a substantive ban on the procession itself.

Mangal Shobhajatra is an annual procession organised by the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Dhaka on the day of the Bengali New Year. It began as “Anondo Shobhajatra” in 1989 as an act of protest against military rule and, over time, has become a defining part of Pchela Baishakh. The supporters of the demonstration say that the masks, folk motifs and large colourful figures carry a language of resistance and renewal. For them, it is a secular expression of Bengali identity, unrelated to any religious ritual. In 2016, UNESCO recognised the procession as intangible cultural heritage. This recognition placed it in a global frame of cultural significance, and therefore, any demand to suppress it must be lawful, grounded in sound logic, and proportionate to the harm it seeks to protect. In contrast, critics of the procession argue that the word “Mangal” has Hindu associations and some imagery used in the demonstration is drawn from non-Islamic traditions, making the procession incompatible with Islamic norms. However, the objection seems to focus more on the procession’s appearance than on what it actually represents.

Now, coming to the current petition, in my opinion, Bangladesh’s constitutional

framework can be interpreted to justify Mangal Shobhajatra far more clearly than any justification to ban it. Even though the future of secularism remains contested due to the reforms tabled by the July Charter, the existing constitution still enshrines secularism as a fundamental principle. At the same time, article 39 guarantees freedom of thought, conscience, speech and expression while articles 37 and 38 protect peaceful assembly and association. Since Mangal Shobhajatra is

It needs to be remembered that the very mechanism of public interest litigation was designed to expand rights, not to shrink them. When a PIL demands the Court to unreasonably restrict freedom of expression (article 39), restrict peaceful assembly (article 37), and narrowly interpret the equality protections (articles 27 and 28) in favour of a religious or ideological reading, the Court needs to review whose interest is in fact at stake.

widely understood as a secular celebration of heritage, resistance, and community, it is argued that it falls under the constitutionally protected freedoms of expressive and artistic conduct.

Moreover, article 41 protects the citizens’ right to practice their faith, not the right to curate their surroundings so that nothing challenges their personal comfort. Similarly, Article 2A that recognises Islam as a state religion cannot be used to impose a singular religious view on the masses or suppress secular cultural practices. Additionally, section 295A of the Penal Code 1860 may also

seem relevant as with this section, deliberate and malicious intent to outrage religious feelings is required to be proven. Clearly, the mere fact that some of its imagery allegedly resembles Hindu or folk motifs does not, by itself, show malicious intent. In the broader Bengali cultural context, traditions and symbols have long been shared, adapted and overlapped beyond the ambit of organised religions. In any case, a nationwide ban would almost certainly fail the proportionality test, given its far-reaching impact on freedom of expression, assembly and cultural rights.

Similarly, at first glance, it may seem the petition is maintainable. Under the Dr Mohiuddin Farooque v Bangladesh (1996) case, the Supreme Court expanded the scope of locus standi in entertaining public interest litigation. However, it needs to be remembered that the very mechanism of public interest litigation was designed to expand rights, not to shrink them. When a PIL demands the Court to unreasonably restrict freedom of expression (article 39), restrict peaceful assembly (article 37), and narrowly interpret the equality protections (articles 27 and 28) in favour of a religious or ideological reading, the Court needs to review whose interest is in fact at stake.

Clearly, a permanent ban would not just cancel an annual procession. It would redraw the boundaries of constitutional freedom; it would make articles 37 and 38 negotiable. Most dangerously, it would allow the sensitivities of the majority to dictate what survives in the public space, systematically erasing secularism and equality in the process.

In my understanding, the writ is less about faith and more about exercising power. The majority, by definition, already occupies the dominant space. The presence of something outside its preferred worldview feels like an intrusion, even when it is not. And therefore, discomfort is viewed as danger, disagreement as insult, and coexistence as threat.

The writer is law graduate from the University of Dhaka.

LAW LETTER

On mental health rights protection in Bangladesh

The statistics on mental health situation is alarmingly critical in Bangladesh. According to the WHO’s Special Initiative Country Report, 18.7% of adults and 12.6% of children in the country are at risk of mental illness, while approximately 92.3% of adults with mental disorders do not receive necessary treatment. This crisis is not only attributable to lack of accessible treatment but also to the combined effects of a truly rights-based legal approach, weak

access to mental healthcare and psychologically safe workplace conditions constitutes a violation of this right. International experience shows that several countries have protected mental health through human rights-based legislation. The UK’s Mental Health Act 1983 and its 2007 Amendment enunciate legal provisions protecting the rights of individuals with mental disorders. Similarly, Australia’s National Mental Health Workforce Strategy aims to improve patients’ rights and access to healthcare services.

In my opinion, it is high time we located mental healthcare within our existing social barriers and emergent vulnerabilities. Besides the district-level mental health review and monitoring committee (that the 2018 Act provides for), an effective and independent central monitoring



implementation of policies, and patent lack of social sensitivity.

Notably, Bangladesh has adopted several legal and policy frameworks; nonetheless, mental health remains inadequately protected. The Mental Health Act of 2018 replaced the old Lunacy Act (1912). However, the Act by and large operates within a medical/clinical conceptual framework of understanding mental health and ignores the societal and structural barriers that individuals face in accessing required healthcare services. Similarly, the Bangladesh’s National Mental Health Strategy Plan (2020-30) sets out plans for mental health integration, patient confidentiality, and capacity building in primary healthcare. However, the implementation pathway remains unclear and largely discretionary for the relevant authorities.

Social and cultural stigma surrounding mental health is critically strong in our society as well. School and college students, especially adolescents, are barely confident to disclose mental health sufferings. In addition, working men and women are reluctant to seek treatment due to fear of vulnerability in the workplace, drawing criticisms from colleagues and supervisors, and lack of faith in the management or the human resources.

Thus, mental health issues receive patently condescending attention, if at all, from both our policy-legal framework and the society in our country at large. However, mental health is not merely a matter of personal convenience or condescension, it is a fundamental human right. The failure to guarantee

The Mental Health Act of 2018 replaced the old Lunacy Act 1912. However, the Act by and large operates within a medical/clinical conceptual framework of understanding mental health and ignores the societal and structural barriers that individuals face in accessing required healthcare services.

system should be put in place. This may involve patient representatives, health professionals, human rights experts, and civil society actors to oversee implementation of the laws and policies. Moreover, specific allocations and training for mental health services must be made through government budgets. At the same time, trained mental healthcare professionals must be progressively ensured across all districts. Similarly, it is necessary to make mental healthcare mandatory in schools and colleges and to formulate clear laws so that microaggression or discrimination based on mental health issues at the workplace can be adequately prevented and remedied. It is also important to mandate mental health awareness campaigns across workplace and various educational institutions.

Surja Mandal LLB student at the World University of Bangladesh.



BANK RESOLUTION ACT
A window for
fund recovery,
not individuals’
rehabilitation
Finance minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Bank did not issue any directive regarding the reopening or closure of S Alam Group’s commercial operations, which remain suspended due to loan defaults, Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told parliament yesterday.

The comment came after opposition MP Hasnat Abdullah asked how the Chattogram-based business group could be considered for reinstatement without repayment of dues and whether any compromise had been reached.

In a starred question, Cumilla-4 lawmaker Hasnat asked about

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Activists of Dhaka University’s Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal at a procession from VC Chatter to the Raju Bhaskarja last night, protesting an alleged attack by Islami Chhatra Shibir on general students and JCD activists at Chattogram City College earlier yesterday. Story on Page 3.

‘Consensus
commission was
undemocratic’

Sara Hossain says people did
not understand the third
question in referendum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior Supreme Court lawyer Sara Hossain yesterday said the National Consensus Commission “cannot, in any way, be considered a democratic process”.

“This is a selective process. You sat with a few people and made decisions. Where was democracy there? What kind of election was this? who came? Who from outside was able to speak? No one.”

Sara, also a rights activist, made the remarks yesterday at a roundtable discussion organised by Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), a civil society platform for good governance, titled “Judicial Independence and Reform: Constitutional Obligations, Court Directives, and Public Expectations” held at the Jatiya Press Club.

Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar conducted the event while its acting president Justice MA Matin presented the keynote.



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Copy of Homer’s
Iliad found inside
Egyptian mummy

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Archaeologists have found a papyrus copy of Homer’s Iliad in the gut of an ancient Egyptian mummy, the first time ever that a Greek literary text has been found incorporated into the preservation process.

The discovery has big implications for our knowledge of funerary practices and religious life in ancient Egypt.

The papyrus fragment was discovered in the abdomen of a mummy buried in a Roman-era tomb in Oxyrhynchus around 1,600 years ago.

Oxyrhynchus, known in the Pharaonic times as Per-Medjed, was one of the most important cities of Greco-Roman Egypt. Its remains are in the present-day town of Al-Bahnasa, about 190km south of Cairo, next to the branch of the Nile known as Bahr Yussef.

Researchers from the Institute of Ancient Near East Studies at the University of Barcelona found the mummy during a recent excavation campaign carried out between November and December 2025.

Egyptian mummies from this period have previously been found to carry papyri written in Greek, but they have all carried text of magical or ritualistic content.

The discovery of the Iliad papyrus marks the first time that a Greek literary text has been found in the embalming context, researchers note.

The epic poem, divided into 24 books, is attributed to Homer and dates back to 800BC.



Citizens decry
Mujibnagar
vandalism
Call for urgent
restoration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A citizens’ delegation has expressed concern over vandalism at the Mujibnagar Memorial Complex, the site where Bangladesh’s first government took oath during the Liberation War, and demanded immediate steps for its preservation and reconstruction.

The demand was made at a press conference held at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday following their visit to Mujibnagar on April 17.

Senior journalist and writer Abu Sayeed Khan presented the written statement. He said that during the visit, his team found that several sculptures in the complex had been vandalised.

He alleged that following the August 5 mass uprising, miscreants carried out coordinated attacks. However, no effective action was taken by the interim government to restore the site.

He added that no notable government programme was observed this year to

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DEATHS BY LIGHTNING
An unsettling reality

Study shows nearly 4,000 killed from 2010-2023



SOURCE: SAVE THE SOCIETY AND THUNDERSTORM AWARENESS FORUM (SSTAF)

YEAR	NO. OF DEATHS
2026 (Jan-Apr)	32
2025	330
2024	297
2023	245
2022	277
2021	305
2020	230
2019	265

DWOHA CHOWDHURY

As farmers across the country worked in the fields on Saturday to bring in the season’s largest rice harvest, 10 of them were killed by lightning in seven districts.

That very day (April 18), lightning also killed two fishermen.

These deaths once again highlight how Bangladesh’s rural workforce remains dangerously exposed, despite government pledges to mitigate the impact of one of the country’s deadliest weather hazards.

For the family of Abdul Kalam, a farmer who died after being struck by lightning in Tahirpur upazila of Sunamganj on Saturday, the loss is immediate and devastating.

His father, Abu Bakar, said, “My son died

from lightning and left behind twin seven-year-old sons and a toddler daughter. Of my five sons, he was the only one who stayed with us and was the breadwinner of the family. Now, at the age of 70, I don’t know how my family will survive.”

He said local council representatives, administrative officials, and politicians visited his house and assured him of financial aid, while neighbours helped cover the burial costs.

The Save the Society and Thunderstorm Awareness Forum (SSTAF), a non-governmental organisation tracking lightning casualties, reported that 32 people have died from January 1 to April 18 this year.

Last year, 330 people were killed by lightning, the highest in the last seven years

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3 suspected
robbers found
dead in Teknaf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox’s Bazar

Police recovered the bodies of three suspected robbers from a hill in Teknaf, Cox’s Bazar, who are believed to have been killed in a clash between two rival groups.

The bodies were found around 9:00am yesterday on a remote hill in the North Shilkhali area under the Baharchhara union, said Durjoy Biswas, the officer-in-charge of the Baharchhara Police Investigation Centre.

The deceased were identified as Aminul Islam Robi, 19; Mujibur Rahman, 38; and Nur Bashar, 20. They were residents of the same area.

Another suspect, Morshed, was critically injured in the incident and is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital under police custody, according to Durjoy.

Mujibur and Morshed were known offenders with multiple robbery cases against them, while the other two were relatively new to criminal activities linked to robbery and human trafficking. Police are verifying whether they had any prior cases.

The incident may be linked to abduction and human trafficking, said Saiful Islam, the officer-in-charge of Teknaf Model Police Station.

“We are taking the matter seriously and investigating,” he said.

Robi’s father, Ruhul Amin, identified his son at the scene after being informed.

“Morshed called my son last night while he was having dinner and asked him to come out. He had been missing since then. This morning, I found his body in the hills,” Ruhul said.

Russia says it has
taken 1,700 sq km
of Ukraine this year

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian forces have taken 1,700 square km (656 square miles) of territory in Ukraine this year and are advancing on its so-called fortress belt in Donbas, Moscow’s top general said while inspecting his forces.

Russia has since its 2022 invasion been seeking to take the whole of the Donbas area in eastern Ukraine, where Kyiv’s forces have been pushed back towards a line of cities in grinding fighting.

Kyiv has also reported some gains in the deadliest war in Europe since World War Two. Top Ukrainian commander Oleksandr Syrskyi said in mid-April that Kyiv’s forces had regained control of nearly 50 square km of its territory in March.

“Since the beginning of this year, a total of 80 settlements and more than 1,700 square kilometres of territory have come under our control,” Valery Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces, said in footage released by the defence ministry on Tuesday.

Reuters was unable to verify the battlefield accounts, and a spokesperson for Ukraine’s General Staff said he would not comment on the claim. Pro-Ukrainian maps indicate Russia has taken around 600 square km this year.

Gerasimov said Russia’s Southern Grouping of forces was attacking the Donetsk fortress belt comprising the cities of Sloviansk, Kramatorsk and Kostiantynivka, and that Russian forces were about 7 to 12 km (4.3 to 7.5 miles) from Sloviansk and Kramatorsk.



Cars, bikes and heavy vehicles wait in line for fuel outside Talukdar Filling Station at Asad Gate around 9:30pm last night. Pump employees said the queues were slightly shorter yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

UN urges help
for stranded
Hormuz
sailors

AFF, Singapore

The head of the UN maritime agency appealed on Tuesday for help for thousands of seafarers stranded due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, as the Middle East war paralyses the vital shipping route.

Around 20,000 seafarers and 2,000 ships have been stranded after shipping was disrupted in the strategic strait following US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28 that triggered the war, according to the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Around one-fifth of the world’s crude and liquefied natural gas normally passes through the strait.

IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez told a maritime conference in Singapore on Tuesday that stranded sailors were suffering from stress and fatigue.