



"We're victims of geopolitics and we're victims of this war that started several months ago."
EMMANUEL MACRON
French President

The Daily Star

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

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No measles let-up before mid-May

Experts say it'll take 2-3 weeks for jabs to start kicking in; 11 more die of suspected cases

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Measles cases and deaths continue to rise with the situation unlikely to improve much until the second week of May despite the ongoing vaccination campaign, experts say.

They explained that the vaccination drive began on April 5 in 30 upazilas of 18 districts with high measles cases, but it takes two to three weeks for immunity to develop.

It may take time for cases to decline in other areas, as vaccination started there later, the experts said.

Even after cases begin to fall, deaths may continue for another month, they said.

The warning came as 11 more patients with suspected measles died in the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

Not all cases, despite symptoms indicating measles, can be confirmed currently due to a lack of testing kits.

The latest fatalities took the number of deaths from suspected measles to 209, mostly child patients, since March 15.

The 11 deaths also marked the highest

single-day toll since April 5, when a total of 12 deaths – two confirmed and 10 suspected – were recorded by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

As of yesterday, over 3,000 patients with suspected measles were still being treated at hospitals.

No death was recorded among the patients who tested positive for measles in the last 24 hours, leaving the number of deaths from confirmed measles unchanged at 42.

Authorities classify these as confirmed measles deaths based on laboratory tests. However, a government expert panel has reportedly suggested counting both suspected and confirmed deaths as measles deaths.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

The Daily Star yesterday concluded its two-day 35th anniversary celebrations in the presence of distinguished guests -- including freedom fighters, members of parliament, civil society leaders and media personalities -- at its office on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital.

Brothers in arms, bound for life

Fellow freedom fighters honour Star editor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the occasion of The Daily Star's 35th anniversary celebrations, members of the Bangladesh War Courses Foundation visited the newspaper's Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam and presented him with a token of appreciation and pride for his role in the 1971 Liberation War.

The token also acknowledged his subsequent service to the country through a highly respected and trusted newspaper like The Daily Star, and his contribution to promoting independent journalism.

Among those present, including retired army officers, were M Abdul Majed; Maj M Abul Hossain (Dr); Col M Aminul Islam; Maj M Atiqur Rahman; Maj Gen Jamil D Ahsan, Bir Protik; Lt Col M Zainul Abedin; Maj Gen Jiban Kanai Das, and Brig Gen Miran Hamidur Rahman.

Speaking on behalf of the group at the event, Maj Gen (retd) Jamil, Bir Protik, described how the "comrades in arms" came to be.

"As the war was prolonged, the then government felt they needed more military leadership... So, they decided to select some people from among the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

A celebration of resilience

The Daily Star wraps up its two-day 35th anniversary programmes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star yesterday marked the final day of its 35th anniversary celebrations, with the scars of the December 18, 2025 arson attack still on full display.

Guests were greeted not by a traditional gala but by exposed brick and soot-blackened pillars, where the acrid, lingering scent of charred debris clung to the air.

After visiting the exhibition, Law Minister Asaduzzaman said the scene was not something that could leave anyone with a pleasant feeling.

"Freedom of the press is deeply linked with democracy. An attack of this nature on a newspaper, regardless of difference of opinion, is, I believe, an attack on the heart of democracy.

"We want this situation to end, and we want Bangladesh to move forward on the path of press freedom. These [memories] are like a nightmare. ... Let the nightmare end," he said.

Also at the event, Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman said the space The Daily Star has created

UNBOWED

The Daily Star
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35

YEARS of
**JOURNALISM WITHOUT
FEAR OR FAVOUR**

for itself in Bangladesh's journalism landscape is unparalleled. "I sincerely hope the daily continues this journey and sets new examples in journalism."

State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Yasser Khan Choudhury said, "What I saw today -- the destruction -- is deeply saddening and unfortunate. I hope no one stands as an obstacle to freedom of speech, whether it is The Daily Star, other newspapers, media outlets, or television channels."

Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said

that seeing the exhibition was both painful and inspiring. "The attack on The Daily Star was an attack on an institution that symbolises independent and free media in Bangladesh. In other words, it was an attack on the country's media, and on the expectation and aspiration for a free press."

Commenting on the way the attack was carried out, he questioned the role of the then

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 8

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Iranian FM arrives in Muscat, leaving Islamabad

Iran defence ministry says US seeks 'face-saving' way out of war

6 killed in Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon amid ceasefire

Commercial flights resume from Tehran

military chief Asim Munir, a key figure in the mediation effort, as well as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar.

The White House had previously said Trump emissaries Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner were headed to the Pakistani capital for an "in-person conversation" with the Iranians that would "hopefully move the ball forward towards a deal".

But Trump told Fox News that he had nixed the trip.

officials. He is also expected to travel on to Russia to discuss efforts to end the war, which the United States and Israel began against Iran on February 28.

Araghchi described his Pakistan trip as "very fruitful" in a post on X, adding he had shared Iran's position on a "workable framework to permanently end the war".

"Have yet to see if the US is truly serious about diplomacy," he said.

Even before Trump's announcement,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Fuel queues start to ease after supply boost

ASIFUR RAHMAN

After nearly two months of what felt like never-ending queues at filling stations in Dhaka, pressure at petrol pumps has finally started to ease.

Motorists are now getting fuel with less waiting and hassle, a trend also visible in Chattogram, Sylhet, Khulna, Rangpur and Mymensingh, where correspondents reported shorter lines, quicker service and reduced crowding.

Pump owners attributed the change to higher supply following the latest fuel price hike, alongside falling demand in some areas.

A visit to 14 pumps in Tejgaon, Mohakhali, Bijoy Sarani, Matsya Bhaban and Paribagh yesterday found motorcyclists waiting 30 minutes to two hours, while cars generally needed two to four hours.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Rehena Akter holds her one-year-old son Farhan Ibne Faruk, who was admitted to the Infectious Diseases Hospital, Mohakhali, with measles on Wednesday. According to DGHS, 11 more patients died with measles-like symptoms in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the number of suspected measles deaths to 209. As of yesterday, 42 patients have died from confirmed measles cases.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Dreams of PhDs end in Florida

Bangladeshi student killed, another feared to be dead; roommate arrested, charged

STAR REPORT

Two Bangladeshi PhD students, who got enrolled at the University of South Florida in the United States

with dreams of a brighter future, are now tragically at the centre of a grim murder investigation.

Limon has been confirmed dead, while Bristy is believed to have been killed as well, according to investigators in Florida.

Limon's roommate, Hisham Saleh Abugharbieh, a 26-year-old US citizen and former USF student who was arrested on Friday, has been charged with two counts of first-degree premeditated murder.

"Evidence was presented to the State Attorney's Office, resulting in further charges against Abugharbieh. At this time, the search for Bristy continues," the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office said.

Bangladesh's embassy in Washington confirmed the developments, with Press Minister Golam Mortoza describing the case as "extremely heartbreaking" in a Facebook post.

Limon's body was recovered on Friday from the Howard Frankland Bridge after he had been missing for eight days. While Bristy remains unaccounted for, authorities have told her family they believe she is dead. Efforts continue

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

Mali junta battles ‘terrorist groups’

AFP, Bamako

The army in junta-ruled Mali yesterday battled what it called “terrorist groups” that launched surprise attacks around the capital Bamako and other parts of the west African nation.

Helicopters buzzed over Bamako and around the international airport and fighting was reported at a nearby military base in what is one of the most complex attacks the military has faced since seizing power.

Witnesses reported intense fighting in a town near the capital where junta leader General Assimi Goita lives and other key cities in the nation, which has been stricken by more than a decade of jihadist conflict.

Tuareg rebels in the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) coalition said they had seized the northern city of Kidal. AFP was not immediately able to verify the claim.

The Malian junta, which seized power in coups in 2020 and 2021, has labelled the FLA a “terrorist” group.

A Malian army statement said: “Terrorist groups, not yet identified, early this morning targeted certain points and barracks in the capital and the interior” of the country.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday drove around in a go-kart on the Tejgaon Prime Minister's Office premises. The kart was built by a young innovator named Rizwan Rashid. The PM assured Rizwan of support in developing more advanced versions.

No measles let-up before mid-May

FROM PAGE 1

In the last 24 hours, a total of 229 confirmed cases were recorded, the highest since April 2, when DGHS began publishing measles data. Total recorded confirmed cases so far are 4,460.

The DGHS also reported 1,058 suspected cases in the latest daily count, taking the total since March 15 to 30,607. The number of suspected cases in the 24-hour counts has remained above 1,000 since April 18.

As of yesterday, over 3,000 patients with suspected measles were still being treated at hospitals.

HOW LONG MAY THE SITUATION LAST?

An emergency vaccination campaign launched at 30 upazilas on April 5 was supposed to continue until yesterday. After the 30 upazilas, the government launched a month-long special vaccination drive in Dhaka South, Dhaka North, Mymensingh, and Sylhet city corporations on April 12.

Nationwide vaccination started on April 20 and is scheduled to continue in city corporation areas until May 20, and other parts until May 12, a DGHS official said.

Epidemiologist Prof Mahmudur Rahman said that after vaccination is completed in a given area, it takes about two to three weeks to have immunity.

So, a decline may be expected in the high-burden 30 upazilas from the second or third week of May, he said.

“If the vaccination drive runs for a month and you then add another two to three weeks, you might expect to see results.

“But in reality, it will not be uniform,

since the campaign is ongoing across the country at different phases,” added Prof Mahmudur, also chairman of the National Verification Committee for Measles and Rubella Elimination.

Prof Mushtuq Husain, a public health expert, also said measles cases are likely to start declining in high-burden areas from the second week of May.

However, the situation in other areas may not change at that time as vaccination there started later, he said, adding that it would have been better if the campaign had been launched simultaneously.

He also said the number of deaths will not start to decline immediately with the fall in cases, as many patients may already have been infected and their condition may deteriorate later.

“It may take another month for deaths to decline, and in that case, a reduction in deaths may be seen in June,” he told this correspondent yesterday.

Prof Mahmudur said that apart from vaccination, the government should conduct a major drive to raise awareness about measles.

He said families should be aware that a child should be placed in isolation whenever he or she catches a fever.

Because measles is highly infectious and can spread four days before and after rashes appear on the body, he explained.

The government has targeted to vaccinate 1.8 crore children from six months to under five years during this campaign. Around 62.7 lakh children were jabbed until April 23, according to the DGHS.

The coverage was 98 percent of the

targets till that day, it added.

TESTS, CONFIRMED CASES RISE

Suspected measles samples from across the country are sent to the Institute of Public Health in the capital, but it has been facing a shortage of testing kits.

As the number of tests was low, it was difficult to understand the real measles situation in the country.

Mominur Rahman, director of the institute, said they used to conduct around 250 to 300 tests daily due to the shortage of kits.

The institute increased the number of tests after receiving 60 kits from the World Health Organization recently, he told this correspondent yesterday.

Ninety tests can be carried out with one kit, according to him.

He said the number of confirmed cases has increased as testing has expanded.

He added that a total of 476 samples were tested on Thursday, of which 229 were positive, results that were reported yesterday.

He also said they would receive 100 more kits within two weeks and they would start testing around 700 samples daily from today.

WHO in a report on Thursday said it has assessed the national risk of the ongoing measles outbreak as high, citing continued transmission, a large pool of susceptible children, immunity gaps, and suspected measles-related deaths.

It added that continued spread of the disease is likely unless urgent measures are taken to strengthen surveillance, rapidly detect and respond to cases, and close immunity gaps through an integrated vaccination campaign.

Fuel queues start to ease after supply boost

FROM PAGE 1

Compared to last week, queue lengths in many places fell by about two-thirds. Most stations capped sales at Tk 500 to Tk 800 for motorcyclists not registered on the Fuel Pass app and Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,400 for users of the app.

Just days earlier, queues resembled the early 2000s “Snake” game, spilling onto roads and alleys, sometimes looping back to their starting points.

Motorcyclists at that time had to wait four to eight hours, while cars queued for 10 to 14 hours.

Yesterday, queues stayed on main roads without stretching into alleys at most filling stations.

At 4:00pm, motorists at Eureka station near Mohakhali level crossing waited only half an hour, while Clean Fuel Filling Station still required two to four hours.

Stations such as Shikder, Satata and City in Tejgaon also saw less pressure, though Gulshan Service Station continued to face long queues until fresh supply arrived in the evening, serving only Fuel Pass customers.

Three Mohakhali pumps remained shut, as they had during the peak of the crisis.

At Trust Filling Station near Bijoy Sarani, motorcyclists reported two-and-a-half-hour waits, with sales restricted to app-registered customers.

Car queues remained longer overall, causing traffic congestion in several areas. Cars were now refuelling Tk 3,000–4,000 worth of fuel, up from Tk 1,500–2,000 earlier.

Mohammad Nazmul Haque, president of Bangladesh Petroleum Dealers, Distributors, Agents and Petrol Pump Owners Association, told The Daily Star that the situation

had started to improve after the government raised fuel supply.

He said ample oil supply from depots on Thursday allowed many pumps to meet demand ahead of Friday’s closure, easing Saturday’s rush.

“This trend is a positive sign and suggests that if the government continues to maintain or further increase the supply, the long lines at petrol pumps will eventually disappear entirely,” he added.

NO CROWDS OUTSIDE DHAKA

In Chattogram, filling stations saw no crowds yesterday, unlike last week when sales were capped at Tk 300–500 for motorcycles and up to Tk 1,000 for cars, with waits of one to four hours.

Motorcyclist Rubel Das said he had waited three and a half hours last week for Tk 500 worth of fuel. Yesterday, he said, “I’ve got my required amount in just 15 minutes!”

MA Masud, general manager of QC Trading Limited, said demand had declined in recent days, with motorists now getting fuel within minutes.

In Sylhet, supplies of petrol and octane improved over the last couple of days, with motorists reporting a near-normal situation.

Trader Debkalyan Dhar said, “I refuelled my motorcycle with five litres of octane in minutes.”

Rent-a-car owner Ittekkhar Irad added that earlier, many stations were out of petrol for days, forcing his vehicles to remain idle and long trips to be suspended. “Now, everything feels normal and we resumed our long-distance operation,” he said.

In Khulna, queues that once stretched for over a kilometre were largely absent yesterday, with motorists getting fuel within 10 to 15 minutes.

At the Metropolitan Filling Station opposite New Market on the Khulna-Jashore highway, only a small number of motorcycles and cars were seen waiting.

In Rangpur and Lalmonirhat, pump operators said crowds of motorcyclists had fallen by 30–35 percent since Thursday, partly due to the Fuel Pass system and because many motorcycles had already refuelled earlier in the week.

Biker Zahir Ali said, “Before Thursday, we had to stand in line for almost five to six hours. Since then, we haven’t had to wait more than two hours.”

In Mymensingh, officials said the demand for diesel had eased as Boro paddy cultivation neared completion, though shortages of petrol and octane persisted.

As of Thursday, the country had a stock of 132,271 tonnes of diesel, 42,300 tonnes of octane and 18,440 tonnes of petrol, as per the latest data of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

On April 20, BPC increased the daily diesel supply by 10 percent to 13,048 tonnes; petrol by 10 percent to 1,511 tonnes; and octane by 20 percent to 1,422 tonnes, compared to last year’s supply.

However, compared to the first 17 days of April, the current daily supply of diesel has increased by 17.5 percent, petrol by 20.6 percent, and octane by 25.9 percent.

Between April 1–17 this year, amid uncertainties over import and increased global prices, the average daily supply of diesel was cut to 11,107 tonnes, octane 1,129 tonnes and petrol 1,253 tonnes, deepening the crisis at fuel pumps.

[Our correspondents in respective districts contributed to the report.]

A celebration of resilience

FROM PAGE 1

government and added that identifying the attackers and bringing them to accountability is not “rocket science”.

“It is only a matter of goodwill on the part of the relevant state institutions.”

Researcher and political analyst Altaf Parvez said this year’s celebration was different because The Daily Star had gone through a “firestorm”.

“The fires at The Daily Star and Prothom Alo were not isolated incidents. They were planned acts by a specific political group, which is still powerful in society.”

Explaining the obstacles to free media, he said Bangladesh remains politically backward. “.... We do not have democracy, though our electoral system sometimes succeeds and sometimes regresses.”

Eminent media personality, theatre activist and actor Tariq Anam Khan said that he is “traumatised”.

“We are artists, and perhaps it is our failure as artists that we have not been able to nurture or instil that sense of humanity. Day by day, we seem to be becoming more like animals; in many ways, animals are better than us. There may be protests, but there is a proper way to express them. One may disagree, but one cannot seek to silence or erase others.”

Notable playwright, television drama and stage play director Masum Reza said, “It [the attack] was carried out in an organised manner. Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, and then Chhayanaut – all were targeted. We have seen many of those involved; some of them are known to us. If their punishment is not ensured, this wound will never heal.”

Veteran actor, director and scriptwriter Mamunur Rashid said a newspaper that is determined to tell the truth does not belong to any particular group. “The way The Daily Star and Prothom Alo were attacked reflects the fact that these newspapers take a strong stand against extremism. This role must be protected at any cost. Those responsible [for the attack] must not be given any form of support or encouragement.”

Anisul Hoque, author and managing editor of Prothom Alo, said an attack on a media institution is not only an attempt to kill journalists or destroy an institution but also a conspiracy to reduce democracy to dust.

The programme began with the national anthem, followed by a one-

minute silence observed in memory of the martyrs of the 1971 Liberation War, the 1990 anti-autocracy movement, and the 2024 July uprising, and also the victims of the Rana Plaza tragedy.

It also featured a musical performance by Khayam Sanu Sandhi and his team, and concluded with a melodious presentation of “Gems of Nazrul” by Sadya Afreen Mallik and her group.

Members of the Bangladesh War Courses Foundation, including Maj Gen (ret’d) Jamil D Ahsan Bir Protik, who trained in India’s West Bengal alongside Mahfuz Anam, attended the programme and presented a crest to the editor of The Daily Star as a mark of profound honour and respect.

Speaking on the concluding day of the celebrations, The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said, “When independent newspapers are set on fire, it is democracy that burns, and it happened in our country.”

Calling the parliament a “dawn of the new”, he expressed hope that it would become the centre of all national debates.

“We have a new parliament borne out of proper elections. May they never forget that they were given power by the people. They may have been nominated by the party, but they were placed in the parliament by the people. It is more important that that is where their loyalty, commitment and devotion lie.”

Anam said, “As an English newspaper, we have limitations when it comes to reaching the people in the grassroots. We are trying to ensure any and every way possible to reach them and tell their stories...”

He then urged his colleagues in the media to be inclusive and to speak for the classes who are underrepresented – those in rural areas, those from the lower economic classes, women and the “farmers and the general masses”.

He also reminded journalists not to forget their duty.

The eminent personalities gracing the event included Zahed Ur Rahman, adviser to the prime minister on information and broadcasting; Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE); Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of SHUJAN; Dr Ainun Nishat, professor emeritus at BRAC University; Mohammad Azam, director general of Bangla Academy; Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; and Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies.

Customs officer found dead beside highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Police recovered the body of a customs officer from the Kotbari Bishwa Road area of Cumilla’s Sadar South upazila yesterday, around six hours after he went missing while returning from Chattogram.

The victim, Bullet Bairagi, 35, of Gopalganj’s Tungipara, served as an assistant revenue officer at the Customs, Excise, and VAT Commissionerate in Cumilla’s Bibir Bazar Land Port, police said.

He had been living in a rented house in Cumilla city’s Rajganj Panpotti area.

Touhidul Anwar, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said the customs officer went missing early yesterday while returning to Cumilla after completing training in Chattogram.

He last spoke to his family around 2:25am and said he had reached the Tomchom bridge area of the city. His mobile phone was found switched off afterwards, said the OC, quoting family members.

His father filed a complaint with Kotwali Model Police Station in the morning.

Locals spotted Bullet’s body beside the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in the Kotbari Bishwa Road area around 9:00am and informed police.

Law enforcers then recovered the body and sent it to Cumilla Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said the police official.

“The face was bloodied when the body was recovered,” the OC said, adding that police have launched an investigation.

According to family members, Bullet joined the Dhaka Customs Office as a 41st BCS non-cadre officer. He had most recently been posted at Bibir Bazar Land Port. He travelled to Chattogram for training on April 11.

Writer and educationist Prof Niaz Zaman; Dr Manzoor Ahmed, professor emeritus at BRAC University; economist Prof Abu Ahmed; Mahrukh Mohiuddin, managing director of University Press Limited; Firoz Ahmed, member of the Constitution Reform Commission; Asif Saleh, executive director of BRAC; Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, editor of the daily Manabzamin and president of NOAB; Prof M Tamim, vice chancellor of Independent University, Bangladesh; Sajjad Sharif, executive editor of Prothom Alo; and Prof Shamsad Mortuza, vice chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), attended the event.

Also present were Dr Wakil Ahmed, professor of the Bangla department at the University of Dhaka; media personality Abdun Noor Tushar; Ijaz Hossain, leading energy expert and professor at BUET; Gawher Nayeem Wahra, founder member of the Disaster Forum; Dr Kudrat-E-Huda, essayist and researcher; Aftab Hossain, chairman of the journalism department at Daffodil International University; Ehteshamul Eiten, the university’s chairman of the English department at Daffodil International University; Ilira Dewan, former member of the National Human Rights Commission; Shahidullah Farazi, renowned lyricist; Amirul Momenin Manik, artist and writer; Sadat Hossain, fiction writer; Sakhawat Tipu, director of the National Book Centre; Kallol Mustafa, writer and columnist; and Jharna Rahman, fiction writer.

Awkward debut for Trump at correspondents’ dinner

AFP, Washington

Things could get awkward Saturday night when US President Donald Trump takes his seat at the White House Correspondents’ Dinner, his first time attending the gala while in office.

The White House Correspondents’ Association (WHCA), which organizes the annual meeting of the political press, opted not to go with a comedian host this year, as is tradition, but instead invited a mentalist and magician, Oz Pearlman.

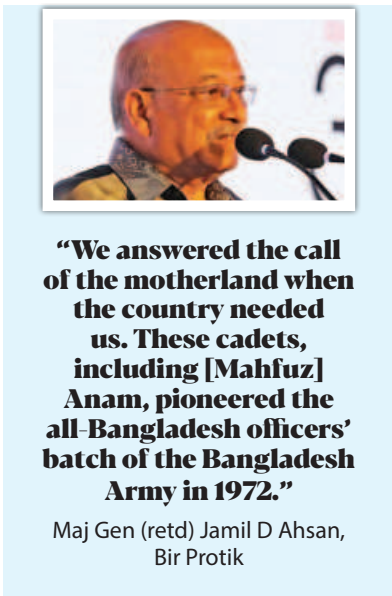
February 1972, the guerrillas were repatriated.

“These cadets pioneered the all-Bangladesh officers’ batch of the Bangladesh Army in 1972,” said Maj Gen (ret’d) Jamil. “Several, like Anam, went on to continue their studies and lead civilian lives... He [Anam] studied economics in Dhaka University and made his mark in the country as a journalist.”

The editor’s training mates then handed over a memento of appreciation to him.

Upon receiving the honour, Mahfuz Anam thanked his comrades and said their bond of friendship created during the war has lasted for over the last 55 years and will endure till death parts them.

“When friendships are born at war, those friendships are absolutely immaculate and irreplaceable.”



“We answered the call of the motherland when the country needed us. These cadets, including [Mahfuz] Anam, pioneered the all-Bangladesh officers’ batch of the Bangladesh Army in 1972.”

Maj Gen (ret’d) Jamil D Ahsan, Bir Protik

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IN SOLIDARITY,
IN REFLECTION

Freedom fighters, lawmakers, writers, media personalities and members of civil society graced the final day of The Daily Star's two-day 35th anniversary celebrations yesterday. They visited an exhibition showcasing the scars left behind by the attack on the institution on the night of December 18, 2025, before attending the main programme on the eighth floor. The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam received a crest from his fellow freedom fighters in honour of his contributions during the Liberation War. Presenting the honour were (from left) M Abdul Majed, Maj M Abul Hossain (Dr), Col M Aminul Islam, Maj M Atiqur Rahman, Maj Gen Jamil D Ahsan, BP, Lt Col M Zainul Abedin, Maj Gen Jiban Kanai Das, and Brig Gen Miran Hamidur Rahman. The closing programme brought together voices from across generations and institutions, marking the occasion with tributes and reflections.



PHOTOS: STAR



1 killed, 5 hurt in Khulna BNP factional clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

At least one person was killed and five others were injured in a clash between two factions of BNP in Terokhada upazila of Khulna yesterday morning.

The incident took place in Madhupur Uttarpara Beel area under Madhupur union in the upazila around 7:45am when followers of Shahidul, former joint convener of Terokhada upazila BNP unit, clashed with followers of Saiful Morol, convener of a committee under Madhupur upazila BNP unit, following an altercation over harvesting paddy from the swamp.

The deceased was identified as Nur Alam, 56, a local resident and follower of Saiful Morol.

The injured – Hijmullah Sohel Rana, Nur Sheikh, Musa Sheikh, Mofizur Rahman, and Ali Husain – were undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Contacted, Chowdhury Fakhrul Islam, member secretary of the upazila BNP unit, said the clash ensued over harvesting paddy and was not connected to any political feud.

Confirming the incident, Mohammad Tajul Islam, superintendent of police in Khulna, said additional law enforcers were deployed in the area while drives were on to detain those involved.

PRAYER
TIMING

APRIL 26

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:20	12:45	4:45	6:29	8:00
JAMAAT 4:55	1:15	5:00	6:34	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



The latest erosion has intensified in Char Shoulmari union, particularly in Char Gendar Alga, Sonapur, West Khedaimari, Sukhurbati, Ghughumari, and Namazer Char. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

ROUMARI UPAZILA IN KURIGRAM

Erosion devours 120 hectares of cropland

S DILIP ROY

Fresh erosion by the Brahmaputra has swallowed at least 120 hectares of cropland in over the past two weeks, leaving more than a hundred homesteads, educational institutions, and rural infrastructure newly at risk and deepening anxiety among riverbank communities.

Residents said erosion recurs annually before and after the monsoon, but the absence of effective, long-term protection forces families to lose land and homes repeatedly. They urged swift implementation of a sustainable river management project.

The latest erosion has intensified in Char Shoulmari union, particularly in Char Gendar Alga, Sonapur, West Khedaimari, Sukhurbati, Ghughumari, and Namazer Char, where strong currents are eating away riverbanks daily.

Farmers report heavy losses of boro paddy, maize, jute, vegetables, and other seasonal crops, dealing a severe financial blow to already vulnerable households.

The area is still reeling from a major erosion episode around 10 months ago that affected at least 720 families in the same union,

destroying homes and cropland. Many of those families continue to live on roadsides, on others' land, or in makeshift shelters without rehabilitation.

With erosion resuming, panic has returned. Fearing sudden displacement, many families are staying awake at night to guard their homes.

Char Shoulmari Union Parishad member Samsher Ali said, "Lists of the affected 720 families have been submitted to the chairman. But no

Lists of the affected 720 families have been submitted to the chairman. But no effective steps have been taken so far.

SAMSHER ALI, Union Parishad member

effective steps have been taken so far. Meanwhile, erosion has started again." He said, "According to our measurement, 120 hectares of cropland in Roumari upazila have been lost to erosion."

Residents described a cycle of repeated loss. "At this age, my house has been destroyed seven times. Now I have no home of my own," said Akbar Hossain, 55, of Sonapur, who

currently lives under a bamboo grove. Others echoed similar hardship, with some reporting their homes had been washed away eight to eleven times.

Meherbanu Begum, 50, said, "My house has been destroyed four times. My husband is sick, there is no income... Where will I go with small children?"

Local schoolteacher Atiar Rahman warned that continued erosion could threaten Char Gendar Alga Government Primary School, roads, mosques, and markets, disrupting education and communication.

River activist Mahmuddin Mohir said, "Every time, assurances are given, but no effective steps are taken. Temporary measures like dumping geo-bags are not enough. A permanent river management project must be undertaken here."

Kurigram Water Development Board Executive Engineer Rakibul Hasan said the situation has been reported to higher authorities. "Action will be taken if allocation is received. However, there is currently no allocation for emergency work," he said, adding that a proposal for a permanent erosion control project is under consideration.

3-month fishing ban in Kaptai Lake begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A ban on fishing for three months in Kaptai Lake started yesterday to ensure proper reproduction and growth of fish in the lake.

The district administration took the decision at a meeting held in Rangamati Deputy Commissioner's office on April 20.

During the ban, all types of fish harvesting, preservation, and marketing from the lake, as well as operation of local ice factories, will remain halted.

According to the Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation in Rangamati, with the water level in Kaptai Lake decreasing, the ban has been imposed ahead of the approaching fish breeding season.

The government will provide food assistance to fisher families dependent on the lake through VGF cards during the ban period.

Md Masud Alam, deputy manager of Kaptai Lake Fisheries Development and Marketing Centre, said, "All types of fishing in the lake and operation of local ice factories will remain suspended for three months from April 25. Patrols will be conducted by BFDC and police to stop illegal fishing during this time."

Traditionally, the fishing ban in Kaptai Lake runs from May 1 to July 31 every year, but this year the restriction will come into effect six days earlier.

DUJA demands

FROM PAGE 5
police failed to ensure their safety."

Former DUJA president Mahbub Rony said, "The attack on journalists by Chhatra Dal activists has still not been formally recorded. We demand and urge the police administration to immediately accept the case, investigate it, and take action against those responsible. Those involved in the attack went to Shahbagh Police Station under the banner of Chhatra Dal. As an organisation, Chhatra Dal cannot evade responsibility for this attack."

Former DUJA general secretary Sirajul Islam Rubel said, "The president and general secretary of DUJA went to Shahbagh Police Station on Friday seeking justice for the attack. They waited there for four hours, but the OC could not be found during that time."

Former DUJA general

secretary Motahar Hossain said, "Chhatra Dal has said it will take organisational action against those involved, and the university administration will also act against them. But instead of taking action, various propaganda campaigns are being carried out against the journalists."

DUJA former joint secretary Mahadi Hasan said, "Both the university administration and law enforcement agencies are trying in various ways to delay justice over the attack on journalists. If our demands are not met swiftly, we will be compelled to announce tougher programmes."

DUJA President Manjur Hossain Mahi said, "Some leaders and activists of Chhatra Dal obstructed us from performing our professional duties at Shahbagh Police Station. When we protested, they attacked us."

Fakhrul rejects

FROM PAGE 5
"So, we again reject the statement of the Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer. We not only reject it but also condemn it and express our anger," he said.

He further alleged that a group was trying to create confusion and division by spreading misinformation about the party's activities.

Referring to the period after August 5, 2024, Fakhrul said efforts to institutionalise democracy were being undermined. He also alleged that attempts had been made to destabilise the political environment, including through misinformation and propaganda on

social media ahead of the election.

"Such efforts to distance the BNP from the people have failed," he said, adding that recent attempts -- including the use of cartoons to provoke reactions -- were part of a broader effort to create instability.

He also criticised attempts to create unrest in student politics, saying such efforts should be resisted.

Fakhrul expressed hope that those involved in these activities would refrain from them, adding that the country's conscious and independent-minded citizens had always rejected such politics and would continue to do so.



PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Following good yields this season, farmers harvest eggplants in the Tarapur village of Puthia upazila, Rajshahi. These farmers supply it to Dhaka and other districts around the year, though prices remain moderate at around Tk 2,600 per maund, leaving them to struggle to irrigate due to fuel shortages. The photo was taken yesterday.

Focus on both studies and sports

FROM PAGE 5

a festive atmosphere at the school, as students were seen rushing forward to greet him. Many shook hands with him, while others sought autographs.

Tarique appeared delighted, spending lively moments with the students.

Entering a classroom, he asked, "How are you? How are your studies going?" – instantly drawing cheerful responses from the children.

As he spoke about the importance of sports, several students responded enthusiastically, agreeing with his remarks.

The prime minister, in turn, affectionately patted some of them on the head, lifting their spirits.

In a classroom of second-graders, Tarique Rahman spoke with children and teachers, while the students showed him their drawings and shared their aspirations for the future.

The prime minister listened attentively as the children spoke about what they wanted to become when they grew up.

The students became excited during the interaction, expressing their joy upon seeing the premier up close.

After spending some time, Tarique waved goodbye, and the students stood up, waving back as he departed.

Officials said the prime

minister remained at the school for around 15 minutes after entering at approximately 11:05am.

Earlier, the prime minister inaugurated the new Training cum-Dormitory Building of BIAM Foundation in Eskaton and later addressed officials at its auditorium.

Founded on December 29, 1991, BIAM was later transformed into the BIAM Foundation in November 2002.

Rehabilitate, resettle evicted hawkers

FROM PAGE 5

They also discussed introducing a registration system to issue identity cards to hawkers to ensure better regulation of their activities at the meeting.

Meanwhile, three weeks after eviction drives cleared major footpaths in the capital, hawkers have already begun returning to their former spots.

In this context, DNCC Administrator Shafikul Islam Khan yesterday said there are plans to build temporary markets in six open fields to rehabilitate street vendors currently

occupying Dhaka's footpaths.

Street vendors will be allowed to operate in these designated areas through a registration system, while maintenance of the sites will be managed through a fixed fee, he said while speaking as chief guest at an urban dialogue, titled "Is Dhaka Becoming a Dead City? What Needs to Be Done?", at a hotel in Gulshan.

The event was organised by the Urban Development Journalists Forum Bangladesh and chaired by its president Matin Abdullah. The keynote paper was

presented by urban rights activist and Gulshan Society President Barrister Omar Sadat, while special guest remarks were delivered by Rajuk Chairman Engineer Md Riazul Islam.

Shafikul also said the number of hawkers on sidewalks had surged from around 200 to nearly 2,000.

"Even ambulance movement in front of hospitals is being obstructed. Because of two percent of people, 98 percent are suffering. We do not want the entire city to suffer for a few hawkers," he said.

He added that hawkers must operate only in designated places and remove their stalls after a fixed time. "The stalls must be mobile -- no permanent or temporary structures will be allowed," he said.

Shafikul noted that most urban management efforts are temporary and emphasised the need for long-term planning to ensure sustainable solutions. He also underscored the importance of bringing Wasa, gas, and electricity services under a single coordinating authority.

Nine held over attack on Jamaat MP's vehicle

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A case has been filed over an alleged attack, obstruction and vandalism involving the vehicle of Jamaat-e-Islami-nominated MP Masum Mostafa of Netrakona-5.

Abu Taher Talukdar, Purbadhala upazila BNP convener and his electoral rival, was named the prime accused among 60 named people and 50-60 unidentified persons.

The case was filed yesterday by Md Al Amin, personal assistant to the MP.

Police arrested nine people, including named accused Md Khairul Islam, said Netrakona Superintendent of Police Md Tarikul Islam.

According to the case, the attack took place on Friday evening at a filling station.

Abu Taher denied involvement, saying he was in Dhaka and the case was politically motivated.

Former army

FROM PAGE 5

there were no updates regarding further arrests in the case. Earlier, on Wednesday, a Cumilla court granted a three day remand for Hafizur, who is one of the three suspects in the case.

At the court premises, Tonu's father, Yaar Hossain, alleged that the IO Tarikul was not sharing any information regarding the remand of the accused.

Responding to the allegation, Tarikul said Tonu's father could not come to the court on time and later also failed to show up at the prison. He added that he would arrange time to speak with Tonu's father later.

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Dhaka

No. PG/Admission/October2025/8190

Date: 25-04-2026

Admission into Postgraduate Programs

Semester: October 2025

Applications are invited for admission into the following postgraduate programs for **October 2025 Semester**. An applicant must complete the online Application Form and upload the supporting documents (as described below) using the postgraduate admission section of the BUET website (<http://pgadmission.buet.ac.bd>) within the period from **25.04.2026 (3 P.M.) to 02.05.2026 (Until 11:59 P.M.)**. **Last date of application fee submission is 03.05.2026.**

A) Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Degree Offered by the Departments/ Institutes:
Ph.D. in Architecture, Chemical Engineering, Chemistry, Civil Engineering, Computer Science and Engineering, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Industrial and Production Engineering, Mathematics, Mechanical Engineering, Materials and Metallurgical Engineering, Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering, Petroleum and Mineral Resources Engineering, Physics, Urban and Regional Planning, Water Resources Engineering, Nanomaterials and Ceramic Engineering, Biomedical Engineering, Institute of Water and Flood Management, Institute of Information and Communication Technology.

B) Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) Degree offered by the Departments:
M.Phil. in Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics.

C) Master's Degree Offered by the Departments/ Institutes:
i. M Arch, MS Arch in Architecture.
ii. M.Sc. in Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Disaster Risk Reduction Engineering, Disaster Risk Reduction Science, Management of Technology (MoT).
iii. M. Engg. in Disaster Risk Reduction Engineering
iv. Master in Transportation Safety Engineering [M. Engg.(TS)]

D) Post Graduate Diploma Offered by Institute:
(i) Postgraduate Diploma in Business IT

Important Information

- During the submission of the online application through the postgraduate admission section of the website of BUET, the following supporting documents must be uploaded within the period **25.04.2026 (3 P.M.) to 02.05.2026 (Until 11:59 P.M.)** and **last date of application fee submission is 03.05.2026**.
 - Attach copies of certificates of all public examinations.
 - Attach copies of transcripts/ grade-sheets/ mark-sheets of all public examinations.
 - Attach copies of testimonial/ character certificate from the institution last attended.
 - No Objection Certificate (NOC)/Letter of consent, in prescribed form, from the employer for applicants in employment.
- After submission of application, Pay 500/- (Five Hundred only) Taka online as Application Fee. The applicant has to bear the online charges to pay the application fee (Tk. 500/-). Applicants must ensure that the application is formally submitted after completing the payment.
- Prospectus containing detailed qualification requirements for admission into different programs and information regarding the submission of application is available at the postgraduate admission section of BUET website.
- Applicants in employment whether part-time or full-time must apply through their employers for both part-time and full-time enrollments.
- Selection of candidates for admission into a postgraduate program is performed by the respective department/ institute. The selection procedure may vary from one department to another. Candidates are advised to contact the respective department/ institute for information regarding the selection procedure.
- A limited number of Teaching Assistantships/Fellowships may be awarded to eligible full-time students.
- Degrees obtained from institutions other than BUET will be subjected to equivalence by appropriate authority of BUET before a candidate is finally selected for admission to a degree/diploma program.
- The schedule regarding postgraduate admission may change due to any situation. Updated information will be available on the postgraduate admission section of BUET website.

General Instruction for International Applicants:

- International applicants are advised, as a first step, to communicate directly with the concerned departments to inquire about the availability of seats and admission procedures.

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Focus on both studies and sports

PM urges children

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday encouraged children to focus on both studies and physical activities, saying sports play a vital role in developing intelligence.

"Alongside studies, you must engage more in sports. Playing helps increase intelligence," he told students during a surprise visit to BIAM Laboratory School in the capital.

The prime minister's unannounced visit created

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



The project to modernise Sofia Kamal National Public Library, originally scheduled for completion in December 2024, saw significant delays stemming from design-related complications. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Fakhrul rejects Jamaat chief's 'engineering' allegation

STAR REPORT

BNP

Secretary

General

Mirza

Fakhrul

Islam

Alamgir

yesterday

strongly

condemned

remarks

made by

Jamaat-e-Islami

Ameer Shafiqur Rahman,

rejecting the claim that

BNP came to power

through "engineering."

"I saw a news report

today [yesterday] that

deeply hurt me. The

Jamaat-e-Islami

ameer said the BNP came to power

through engineering," said

Fakhrul.

"I strongly condemn

this. It once again proves

that he and his party do not

think in a healthy way," he

said at a press conference

at the party's Nayapaltan

office yesterday afternoon.

"That is why the whole

nation has rejected them

very consciously, and in

the future, we must work

in such a way that they can

be completely eliminated

politically," the BNP leader

added.

Fakhrul said the BNP

assumed office through

a "neutral" election

held under an interim

government, in which the

party secured 213 seats. He

claimed that international

observers and media

outlets had recognised the

polls as free and fair.

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SUFIA KAMAL NATIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

Modernisation project lies incomplete 3 years on

HELEMUL ALAM

The modernisation project of the Sofia Kamal National Public Library at Dhaka's Shahbagh lies incomplete even after more than three years since the work began in 2022.

As such, the library, once a vibrant space for readers, has largely been devoid of activity for a prolonged period.

The foundation of the Sofia Kamal National Public Library was laid in 1954 at the present site of Dhaka University Central Library. It was later relocated to its current location in Shahbagh in 1978.

The modernisation project was originally scheduled for completion in December 2024. However, it could not be finished on time, as physical work began only in September 2022.

According to the officials of Department of Public Libraries, so far 65 percent of the work has been completed.

"There have been delays in removing old structures and felling trees, design completion and vetting process through the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), and appointment of a consultant. As such, it was not possible to begin physical construction within the scheduled timeframe, resulting in the need for additional time to complete the project," said Khalid Mohammad Saifullah, senior librarian and deputy project director of the department.

The project's cost, initially estimated at Tk 524 crore, has

also risen to Tk 561 crore due to addition of new components and an increase in the US Dollar exchange rate.

A revised proposal has been made to extend the project timeline by two more years till December 2027, and to increase the total cost further to around Tk 620 crore, incorporating additional features such as aesthetic artworks. The proposal is now waiting to be placed in the ECNEC meeting shortly, said Saifullah.

expenses, he also said.

He noted that design-related challenges further contributed to the delay. A connecting bridge between two high-rise buildings, along with library facilities, was initially planned at a height of 60 metres. It has now been proposed to reduce the height to 40 metres, as constructing a 60-metre steel structure is highly challenging given Bangladesh's environmental and structural constraints.



A design of the national library.

The project cost has increased due to revised estimates by the PWD, inclusion of a Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP), reallocation in civil works, additional electro-mechanical requirements (including HVAC, sound, lighting, and lifts), introduction of a cultural artwork package, adjustments in furniture costs, and the extended project duration leading to higher operational and consultancy

According to the design, the library complex will be divided into two separate nine-storey buildings. One will face south, on the site where the old library building once stood. A glass plaza will be constructed on the northern side, adjacent to the museum complex, which will function as a digital library, Saifullah said.

There will also be a plaza

between the two buildings, with a cafeteria at the western end, and three auditoriums underground -- including the Shawkat Osman Auditorium which will be reconstructed -- to host public events, he also said.

The existing pyramid-shaped stairs in front of the National Library will be replaced with long, parallel stairs similar to those of the original structure. The main complex will also include a 10-storey residential building for library staff, said another official of the department.

Around 3,00,000 books have been relocated to the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) building, where limited library services are currently being provided.

"In the new building, around 1,500 people will be able to use the library at a time, while the total capacity will be about 5,000," Saifullah said.

Meanwhile, urban planners criticised the decision to demolish the old structure.

"Although the modernisation will increase the library's capacity, we will lose its historical significance. These buildings needed to be protected for sustainability and preservation of our history and heritage," said Adil Mohammed Khan, executive director of the Institute for Planning and Development.

The authorities could acquire new land and construct new public libraries instead of demolishing the old ones, he added.

Rehabilitate, resettle evicted hawkers

PM urges authorities to take immediate measures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday directed the authorities concerned to ensure the swift rehabilitation of street hawkers who were recently evicted from various areas of the capital and called for coordinated efforts to identify suitable alternative locations for their resettlement.

He gave the instruction during a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in Tejgaon, according to UNB.

Senior officials from the Local Government Division, Dhaka North and South City Corporations, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) attended the meeting, according to a press release from the PMO.

The Prime Minister instructed the relevant ministries and agencies to work in coordination to quickly identify vending zones where the evicted hawkers can continue their businesses in a dignified and orderly manner.

He said the relocated vendors must be provided with spaces where they can operate comfortably.

Recently, several hundred makeshift shops were evicted from key areas of Dhaka North City Corporation including Mirpur-1, as well as from Dhaka South City Corporation areas such as Motijheel, Baitul Mukarram, Paltan and Gulistan.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

TONU MURDER

Former army man Hafizur sent to jail after remand

DNA cross-matching ongoing

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

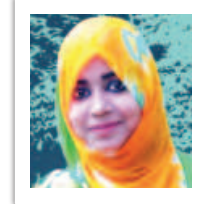
Cumilla

A Cumilla court yesterday sent retired army personnel Hafizur Rahman, an accused in the Tonu murder case, to jail after completion of his three-day remand.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Abdullah Aman passed the order after Investigation Officer Tarikul Islam produced the accused before the court.

Tarikul also said the process of cross-matching the DNA of the accused was ongoing, adding that

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



DUJA demands justice over attack on journos

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Journalists' Association (DUJA) formed a human chain on the university campus yesterday to protest the attack on journalists inside Shahbagh Police Station on Thursday night.

The programme was held at 11:30am near Aparajeyo Bangla on the DU campus.

Speakers demanded the immediate identification of those involved in the attack, formal registration of a case, legal action against the perpetrators, and disciplinary measures by the university administration.

DUJA President Shahidul Islam said, "Those who indiscriminately attacked and assaulted DUJA members must immediately be brought under the law and punished. Journalists were there to perform their professional duties, but

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Power outages stretch to 10 hours in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Load shedding in Gazipur has intensified amid a widening gap between electricity demand and supply, disrupting public life and commercial activity across the industrial district.

Residents said areas that previously experienced around seven hours of daily outages are now facing 8-10 hours of load shedding. The prolonged power cuts have triggered acute water shortages, interrupting routine household tasks such as bathing and cooking.

The strain is equally apparent across Gazipur's industrial zones. Factory output has declined as frequent outages halt machinery. While some units have turned to diesel-powered generators, high fuel costs and limited availability have made regular operation difficult.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday afternoon, Md Yusuf Ali, general manager of Gazipur Palli Bidyut Samity-1, said that demand in his area stands at 554 megawatts against a supply of 313 megawatts. He said the situation may improve by May 2.

Md Khalid Hossain, managing director of Euro Washing Limited, said outages that once lasted five to six hours a day have now stretched to as long as 10 hours, making regular production extremely difficult. In many cases, factories are

being forced to shut down. Production, which previously continued beyond 5:00pm, is no longer feasible under current conditions.

He added that global instability is exacerbating the crisis. "Ongoing conflicts have dampened foreign buyers' interest in visiting Bangladesh, while efforts to secure orders abroad are yielding weaker-than-expected responses. The uncertainty has cast a shadow over the future of the readymade garments sector," he said.

Recent nor'wester storms have further aggravated the situation in Sreepur and Mawna areas under Mymensingh Palli Bidyut Samity-2, where fallen trees damaged power lines, causing outages in multiple locations.

Shantanu Roy, deputy general manager of the Mawna zonal office, said seven transformers were damaged during the storm, resulting in nearly 24 hours of power cuts. Despite limited manpower, repair work was carried out swiftly, and supply has now been restored in most areas.

Meanwhile, long queues for water have been reported in areas including Dokkhin Dhanua New Market and in front of DBL Garments in Gazipur union.

Residents in Mawna said reliance on tube wells remains limited, and power cuts suspend water pumps, leading to severe shortages.



Volunteers distribute cold juice and refreshing watermelon to people working under the scorching sun -- including rickshaw-pullers, pedestrians, and day-labourers -- to help them stay cool and hydrated. A police officer seen helping them. The photo was taken at Shibbari intersection in Khulna city yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

For how long will traffickers go free?

Take action to discourage people from seeking irregular migration

A criminal justice system that drives victims to choose compromise over justice, allowing perpetrators to walk free repeatedly, cannot be the norm in a society that strives for fairness. Sadly, this pattern has become increasingly common in human trafficking cases in recent years, according to a report published in *The Daily Star*. Last year, anti-human trafficking prevention tribunals across the country disposed of 245 cases, of which 236 ended in acquittal. In 2024, the acquittal rate in disposed human trafficking cases was 94 percent; in 2023, it was 95 percent, and in 2022, all disposed cases ended in acquittal.

The report explains the reasons behind such high acquittal and low conviction rates. The arrest of perpetrators is often not the issue. Rather, it is the lack of documentary evidence from abroad, the absence of witnesses, and, most importantly, the long-drawn-out legal process that exhausts the victims and their families. Thus, reaching a compromise with the perpetrators often becomes preferable to waiting for justice, which is physically, mentally, and financially draining as cases sometimes take four to five years just to reach trial.

Moreover, victims and their families, who have already spent huge sums to pay traffickers, either as ransom or as migration fees, often remain desperate to recover that money quickly. For them, enduring years of legal proceedings with no guarantee of compensation is too big a gamble. Many incur substantial debts to raise these funds, and the pressure to repay them pushes them towards settlement with the accused. In fact, such out-of-court settlements appear to be one of the key reasons behind the high acquittal rates.

The consequence of these acquittals is that perpetrators—members of trafficking networks—feel emboldened to repeat their crimes, as they see that the criminal justice system, albeit unintentionally, works in their favour. What we need, therefore, is an overhaul of the system. The government should establish more anti-human trafficking prevention tribunals, as the seven in divisional headquarters are insufficient to handle the large number of pending cases. This would also reduce costs for victims and their families who often have to travel long distances for hearings. Besides, the government must ensure stronger victim protection mechanisms and create a fund to support trafficking survivors and their families during the protracted legal battles. Coordination with foreign countries is also essential not only to obtain evidence but also to bring perpetrators to justice and curb irregular migration and trafficking.

Awareness alone will not deter people from seeking opportunities abroad through irregular and illegal channels. They need decent employment opportunities and the promise of a stable future at home. This calls for policies that equip young people with the right skills and provide access to capital, enabling them to build livelihoods in a supportive environment where they can thrive.

Measles response clearly not enough

Health ministry, DGHS must heed experts' inputs

Despite the ongoing nationwide vaccination campaign, the rise in measles cases appears undeterred. According to a recent report on Bangladesh's measles situation by the World Health Organization (WHO), a total of 19,161 suspected measles cases and 2,973 laboratory-confirmed measles cases were reported between March 15 and April 14 as well as 166 suspected measles-related deaths. At least 91 percent of the cases so far occurred among children aged one to 14 years. Concerningly, the WHO observed that the current outbreak indicates a reversal from Bangladesh's previous progress towards measles elimination and highlights increasing vulnerability to sustained transmission. Unfortunately, while there are measures being taken to address the outbreak, there are also several instances of neglect and a lack of proactivity from the health ministry and the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

For instance, a joint meeting of the National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NTAG) and the National Verification Committee (NVC) was held on April 12, during which specialists put forward several urgent recommendations, including the formation of a multi-stakeholder committee comprising paediatricians, epidemiologists, virologists, laboratory specialists, and other relevant experts. However, the health minister reportedly remains uninformed about these urgent recommendations, according to a *Prothom Alo* report. More disappointingly, the DGHS director-general has been unavailable to provide answers to media queries regarding this crisis, while the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) does not even have a spokesperson.

Another issue that came to light is the distinction between confirmed and "suspected" measles deaths. Apparently, for only those cases where samples from deceased children could be tested, the DGHS reported confirmed deaths. This means that even when children died of measles symptoms, their deaths were often not counted because the DGHS failed to test them because of an acute shortage of measles testing kits. Could this distinction between "confirmed" and "suspected" measles deaths imposed by the directorate indicate an attempt to downplay the severity of the current measles outbreak?

The worst aspect of this outbreak is that it was entirely preventable. Due to the irresponsibility of various stakeholders in the health sector across successive governments, parents are witnessing their children's deaths. Do those who helmed the health ministry and its adjacent institutions feel the burden of the ongoing tragedy? They should. And this burden should urge the current authorities to act before—not after—the consequences of their lax attitude are felt. To this end, the health ministry must go through the recommendations made by expert groups and the WHO, and form a multi-stakeholder committee immediately. Mass vaccination as a response is crucial, but also expected. What we also need is for our health institutions to be held accountable for their many oversights.

Energy crisis: Global problem, local failure



Kallol Mustafa is an engineer and writer who focuses on power, energy, environment, and development economics. He can be reached at kallol_mustafa@yahoo.com.

KALLOL MUSTAFA

More than a month and a half has passed since the Middle East war began to affect Bangladesh's energy sector. During this period, although the BNP government managed to import fuel oil and LNG from various sources, it has failed to ensure discipline in the distribution process across the country.

As a result, on the one hand, the government claims that there is sufficient stock, news reports highlight the arrival of successive fuel shipments, and there are accounts of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) depots overflowing with fuel. On the other hand, consumers' suffering shows no sign of easing. Long queues of motorcycles and private cars can be seen at filling stations. Public transport operations have declined due to diesel shortages. Farmers and fishermen are not getting enough diesel to meet their needs. Consequently, farmers are unable to irrigate their fields on time, and fishermen cannot go to rivers or the sea for fishing.

This means the fuel held by the government is not reaching people at the pumps. The government is failing to manage the fuel supply chain properly. A group is creating artificial scarcity and selling fuel at higher prices elsewhere, while ordinary people are deprived of access.

Meanwhile, electricity generation has also declined due to the energy crisis. Against a demand exceeding 16,000 megawatts, production stands at 13,000 to 14,000 megawatts. As a result, more than 2,000 megawatts of load shedding is being imposed daily, most of which is borne by rural populations. While load shedding is relatively lower in Dhaka and other cities, rural areas are experiencing 7–8 hours of outages.

Although the government had initially pledged not to raise fuel prices following the outbreak of war in the Middle East, it has recently done so for all types of fuel. Diesel prices have increased by 15 percent from Tk 100 to Tk 115, the highest in the country's history. Prices of other fuels have also reached record levels: octane has risen from Tk 120 to Tk 140, petrol from Tk 116 to Tk 135, and kerosene from Tk 112 to Tk 130.

According to economic principles, the demand for essential goods such as food, medicine, or fuel does not

decrease even when prices rise, because they are necessary for survival. For example, life-saving medicines such as insulin have no substitutes; patients are compelled to purchase them regardless of price increases. In economic terms, the price elasticity of demand for essential goods is typically very low—this is known as inelastic demand. Since demand does not fall, hoarding persists even when prices increase. In fact, hoarders may intensify stockpiling



A certain group may be contributing to creating artificial fuel scarcity within the country to maximise profit, resulting in long queues outside of fuel stations around the country.

FILE PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

in anticipation of selling at even higher prices. Therefore, increasing the price of such essential goods does not reduce shortages unless supply is increased; rather, it fuels inflation.

The same phenomenon is evident following the recent fuel price hike. Even before the increase, transport fares for goods carriers had risen due to the fuel crisis. After the price hike on April 18, fares have increased further. While diesel prices rose by 15 percent, field-level data indicate that truck and covered van fares have increased by up to 35 percent. In addition to higher transport costs, there is also a shortage of vehicles. As a result, the cost of transporting agricultural

produce—including grains, vegetables, raw materials, seasonal fruits, and processed foods—has increased. Not only agricultural goods, but also the cost of transporting industrial goods for import and export has risen. Diesel is also used in agricultural machinery, irrigation, electricity generation, and industry. Consequently, the cost of all goods and services, including agriculture and industry, will increase. While BPC may earn an additional Tk 700–800 crore per month due to the fuel price hike, the resulting increase in transport costs, commodity prices, and overall cost of living will amount to several thousand crore taka.

However, BPC is not a loss-making entity. It could have continued operations for several more months without raising prices by utilising the funds accumulated from past profits. Over the past 11 years, BPC has earned approximately Tk 52,000 crore in profit—an annual average of around Tk 4,500 crore. Employees have received substantial bonuses from these profits. This raises the question of whether BPC is behaving like a hoarder. Notably, following the price increase, BPC announced a 10–20 percent increase in supply.

Moreover, the government earns substantial revenue from BPC each year through duties and taxes—over Tk 125,000 crore in the past 11 years. In other words, when global oil prices were low, both BPC and the government benefited, but during times of crisis, the burden is shifted onto the public. The government has cited examples of fuel price increases

sales, preventing individuals from purchasing fuel more than once within a specified period. Records of fuel sales should be maintained at the pump level and audited to find irregularities. In rural areas, especially for farmers and fishermen, fuel distribution should be managed through manual fuel cards. Local government institutions and the Department of Agricultural Extension should be involved in this process.

While the global energy crisis lies beyond the government's control, its failure to manage the domestic distribution of expensive imported fuel is not. Without addressing this failure, price hikes will only deepen public suffering.

Digital cards and the reality of poverty in Bangladesh



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MD RAKIBUL HASAN

According to the World Bank's April 2026 Bangladesh Development Update, the country's poverty rate increased to 21.4 percent in 2025 from 18.7 percent in 2022, adding 14 lakh more poor people in 2025. At present, the government's increasing number of digital welfare programmes—Family Card and Farmers' Card—appear to be well-justified. But the question remains whether technology can meaningfully benefit those in the greatest need.

From an administrative perspective, the family card initiative is indeed a landmark project. It was launched on a trial basis last month in 14 upazilas, offering Tk 2,500 per month to over 40,000 women-headed households over four months. Simultaneously, the government is implementing 95 programmes under its social protection budget of Tk 1.26 lakh crore for the current fiscal year, accounting for 1.87 percent of the GDP.

Nonetheless, a fundamental problem within the economy has yet to be addressed. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS),

inflation has been higher than wage growth for 50 consecutive months till March 2026, despite a gradual rise in pay since February 2022. The BBS also reported a reduction in real wages by 1.9 percent in FY 2024. Given this state of the economy, improving food distribution via digital cards may not be of much use unless the actual volume of assistance keeps pace with rising market prices.

A substantial portion of the 21.4 percent poverty rate comprises the new poor—once self-sufficient middle- and lower-middle-class families whose modest savings have been wiped out by successive shocks. The World Bank says that almost one-third of the population is still at risk of becoming poor because of a simple shock such as a natural calamity or illness.

The government's own family card implementation guidelines acknowledge a structural failure in the existing system: an estimated 22–25 percent of the actual poor are currently excluded from existing social programmes, while fragmentation and

weak inter-ministerial coordination cause persistent duplication among the 95 social protection schemes. A complete digital platform will be helpful for avoiding repetition, but it can result in exclusion in rural areas due to a lack of digital skills within the community, poor internet connectivity, and reliance on OTPs.

For digital welfare reform to make a lasting difference, upgraded systems must be paired with meaningful policy changes in three areas: adequate benefit levels, responsive targeting, and proper funding.

First, benefit amounts must be automatically adjusted in line with inflation, ideally using the Consumer Price Index or a food-specific basket relevant to low-income households. Countries such as Brazil—through its Bolsa Familia programme—and Argentina—through its Universal Child Allowance—have successfully applied such indexing.

Second, Bangladesh must move beyond static beneficiary lists. The family card's pilot design, using a dynamic Proxy Means Test and field surveys of 320,000 families across 14 wards, is a step in the right direction. The World Bank has repeatedly noted that dynamic registries linked to national identification systems significantly improve accuracy and the capacity to respond to economic shocks.

Third, present expenditure on core social safety net programmes is still small. Even with the government's

figure of 1.87 percent of GDP overestimates welfare expenditure because it includes public sector pension schemes and savings certificates. The actual rate is closer to 1.32 percent of GDP. In its family card programme guidelines, the government aims to increase social security spending to three percent of GDP by 2028. Meeting this goal requires more efficient revenue generation and resource allocation through targeted interventions rather than misdirected subsidies. It should be noted that, in 2022, the World Bank found that 35 percent of the wealthiest households received social protection benefits in Bangladesh, while half of the poorest families did not.

Technology can facilitate policymaking, but it cannot replace it. Although the family card system can be applied to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, it is not sufficient to fully address increasing poverty. Unless policymakers take decisive steps towards fiscal reforms, lower inflation rates, increase in real wages, and job creation, technology alone won't do much for the poor in Bangladesh. Policymakers should refrain from falling into the trap of looking for technological fixes for socioeconomic woes. Any improvement in technology will not sustain itself for long due to rising inflation and falling wages, unless there are also good economic growth and strong political will.

How we can give our women migrants a real edge



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MOHIBULLAH AL MARUF

Moksuda Begum left Narayanganj with a dream and a promise. A widow raising her two children, Moksuda had been told she would earn Tk 22,000 a month as a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia. But upon arriving there, she found something very different: waking up at 4am, she worked continuously until midnight while her wages went to an agent in Riyadh instead of into her own pocket. She endured this for months before finally reaching out to the Bangladesh embassy.

Her story, reported by *The Business Standard* in late 2025, is far from an isolated case. BRAC Migration Programme data from 2025 shows that more than 470,000 Bangladeshi migrant workers returned home over the past six years after facing exploitation or abuse. At least 67,199 of those who returned were women who reported physical or sexual violence; many returning, traumatised and stigmatised, to a reintegration system ill-equipped to help them.

In 2024, only about 61,158 women officially migrated for work from Bangladesh, and by the end of 2025, the figure stood at 62,353, according to the Overseas Employment Platform (OEP) under the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET). This marks a 41-percent decline from the 2022 total of 105,466. Bangladesh's gender gap in migration is among the most pronounced in Asia, and it is not a matter of culture alone. It reflects deliberate policy choices and structural failures that have long treated women as a risk category rather than an economic asset.

In 2024, women accounted for just 6.03 percent of Bangladesh's officially deployed migrant workforce. A 2025 report by the Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI),

International Labour Organization (ILO), and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlights that, by contrast, women comprised 68 percent of migrants from Indonesia, 52 percent from the Philippines, and 41 percent from Cambodia. Even Pakistan, with socioeconomic conditions not too dissimilar to that of Bangladesh, recorded a more balanced share across several corridors. This disparity also reflects a broader global pattern: an ILO policy brief notes that some 70.8 crore women were outside the global labour force in 2023 due to care responsibilities, an exclusion that Bangladesh's migration system reflects and reinforces.

For much of its history, Bangladesh managed female migration through fairly restrictive policies. Women seeking to work abroad in domestic service faced age minimums, mandatory spousal consent, and periodic destination bans imposed after high-profile abuse cases. These were consistently framed in terms of protection. In reality, these measures pushed desperate women into irregular channels that offered no safeguards at all.

According to BMET, Saudi Arabia is the single largest destination for Bangladeshi women migrant workers. However, there has been a sharp decline in the figures since 2016. Shifting official policies, changes in destination-country demand, and a self-reinforced negative public narrative around Bangladeshi female domestic workers all played a role.

BRAC Migration Programme and *The Business Standard's* 2025 report identified a critical structural flaw: Bangladeshi women who migrate are overwhelmingly sent as

domestic workers into private households, with about a month's housekeeping training, limited pre-departure orientation, and near-total isolation once abroad. Researchers explained the problem plainly: Bangladesh hardly diversified beyond domestic work for women, while countries like the Philippines now send women into hotels, care facilities, and skilled professional roles. In Bangladesh, women from rural areas, often with limited

recognition of labour rights violations, how to contact an embassy safely, elder care protocols, or financial literacy, whereas the Philippines' nationally accredited Domestic Work NC II Certificate covers practical skills, rights education, and financial planning as minimum requirements.

The Bangladesh Labour Act (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 marked a significant legislative milestone by formally recognising

including their contact numbers, wages, and vulnerabilities. While this gap presents challenges for evidence-based policymaking and effective monitoring, there are emerging signs of progress.

The OEP system of BMET is now systematically preserving trainee data across genders, offering a strong foundation for building an integrated and responsive database in the near future. Strengthening such systems, alongside expanding the capacity of labour inspection, can significantly enhance accountability and ensure that legal recognition translates to meaningful protection for workers.

Ageing populations across the Gulf, East Asia, and Europe are generating sustained demand for skilled care workers. The Philippines has built its female migrant workforce around this opportunity: Filipina care workers earn more, remit more, and carry far less recruitment debt than their Bangladeshi counterparts. But with its large young female population and established bilateral ties with major destination countries, Bangladesh is well placed to compete in the global care economy, if it builds the necessary training infrastructure, credential pathways, bilateral protections, social support systems, etc. None of this requires starting from scratch. It requires adapting what already works in Manila, Colombo, and Kathmandu, and doing so with urgency.

The BNP-led government's stated commitment to sending one crore workers abroad within five years will fall short of its potential unless women are an equal part of that vision, not as a category to be managed, but as skilled workers to be championed.

Moksuda Begum eventually came home. She lost months of wages, her savings, and a year she cannot reclaim. Her willingness to try, to cross an ocean alone, to endure what no one should, for the chance to feed her children—is precisely the kind of human capital Bangladesh keeps failing to protect. Recognising this, the way forward lies in strengthening pathways for skilled, safe, and lawful migration, ensuring that such courage is met with systems that safeguard dignity, rights, and opportunity.



FILE PHOTO: STAR

'In Bangladesh, women from remote rural areas, often with limited education, are sent abroad without adequate preparation. This often contributes to increased abuse rates.'

education, are sent abroad without adequate preparation. This contributes to increased abuse rates. A negative narrative also sets in and that narrative ends up discouraging both skilled women from migrating and employers from considering Bangladeshi women for higher-level roles.

Bangladesh's mandatory 30-day housekeeping training for domestic workers covers basic household tasks and some cultural orientation. It rarely addresses

domestic workers as workers under law, following Bangladesh's ratification of three key ILO conventions related to occupational safety, health, and freedom from workplace violence. The country also became the first in Asia to ratify all 11 fundamental ILO instruments.

A February 2026 analysis in the *Dhaka Tribune* highlighted that Bangladesh is still in the process of developing a comprehensive national database on domestic workers,

Can playing a historic speech justify repeated bail denials?



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

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

About a month and a half has passed since the arrest and detention of leftist student leader Sheikh Tasnim Afroz Emi. Emi, former vice-president of the Shamsunnahar Hall union at Dhaka University and a central vice-presidential candidate in the 2025 Ducus election, along with two members of the banned Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), was sent to jail on March 7, reportedly for attempting to play Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's March 7, 1971 speech.

It began with Md Asif Ahmed Shoikot, former employment affairs secretary of BCL's Shahidullah Hall unit at Dhaka University, who was arrested by Shahbag police for playing the speech on a loudspeaker on the afternoon of March 7. Later that night, Emi and several others tried to play the same speech in front of the National Museum in protest against Shoikot's arrest, when they were accosted by two DUCSU representatives and handed over to the police. A case was filed

against the three under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 2009.

The filing of this case under such a law raises a question that remains unanswered to this day: how did the public playing of a historic speech become an issue under anti-terror legislation, one of the harshest laws on the books? That question has grown more urgent since Emi and the others were denied bail for the third time on April 8.

If the police's account of how the incident of March 7, 2026 unfolded is accurate, the first public justification offered was not terrorism, extortion, assault, or the revival of a banned organisation. It was the playing of a historic speech. Following Shoikot's detention, the Shahbag station's officer-in-charge reportedly said the speech was prohibited. But since when did the speech, or the act of playing it, become prohibited? If no such prohibition exists, why did the police act and speak as though it did?

Broader allegations and a heavier legal framing appeared later in the FIR of the case, which states that Emi and the other detainees attempted to resume the activities of a banned organisation, obstructed police from performing their duties, and tried to free Shoikot from custody. But this was not what the public heard at first, nor can playing a nationally significant speech be akin to resuming the activities of a banned organisation. Article 39 of the Constitution guarantees freedom of thought and conscience and, subject to reasonable restrictions imposed by law, freedom of speech and expression. Therefore, the state must explain how the law that was invoked was violated based on the facts presented so far. State actors, including the police, cannot impose a prohibition on a speech unless a law is enacted to that effect.

Moreover, the March 7 speech is not the private property of any political party. UNESCO recognised its significance because it is part of the history of Bangladesh's birth. The state cannot treat its public playing as inherently suspicious simply because the politics surrounding it have become inconvenient. If, on the other hand, the alleged offences involve obstruction, unlawful mobilisation, or attempts to revive a banned organisation, the state must prove these claims and prosecute the suspects under appropriate legal provisions.

This is why the use of the Anti-Terrorism

Act in this case seems so difficult to justify. The law was designed to address terrorism, organised violence, and acts that seriously endanger public safety. Once such charges are levelled, they significantly restrict personal liberty and make bail more difficult to obtain. While we have seen some high-profile detainees secure bail under the act in recent months, no such judicial discretion has been exercised in this case, once again raising concerns about the law's potential for abuse as well as its uneven application.

While on the topic of bail, another recent case becomes relevant to this discussion. While not identical in facts or legal framing, it illustrates that bail remains a cornerstone of the criminal justice system, even in cases involving grave allegations. This is the case of Masum Khalasi, one of the accused in the killing of Dipu Chandra Das on December 18 in Bhaluka. On April 13, the Mymensingh jail gate opened for Masum, who was among those accused of chasing Dipu in a mob over allegations of "hurting religious sentiments", forcing him to resign from his job, murdering him, and burning his body.

Police and court records show that Masum was among 12 defendants who gave confessional statements under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), admitting participation in the murder and the disposal of the body. Less than four months after his arrest, he was granted one year's interim bail on a Tk 2,000 bond, prompting

anger as well as creating a stark contrast that underscores how inconsistently the principle of bail is being applied across cases. The point here is not to equate Dipu Das's case with Emi's. They are not comparable. Rather, the point is to underscore that bail exists as an attainable legal option, even in cases involving the gravest of crimes. That reality makes the questionable anti-terror framing in Emi's case even harder to ignore.

Given these realities, it has become critical that the authorities clearly state what law, if any, renders the public playing of the March 7 speech a punishable offence; explain how the acts that were alleged fall within the scope of anti-terror legislation; and allow the detainees the right to seek bail. If a murder suspect can avail of this fundamental aspect of a fair criminal justice system, then, in the public's eyes, three students—particularly one who is not a member of a banned organisation—should not be denied bail.

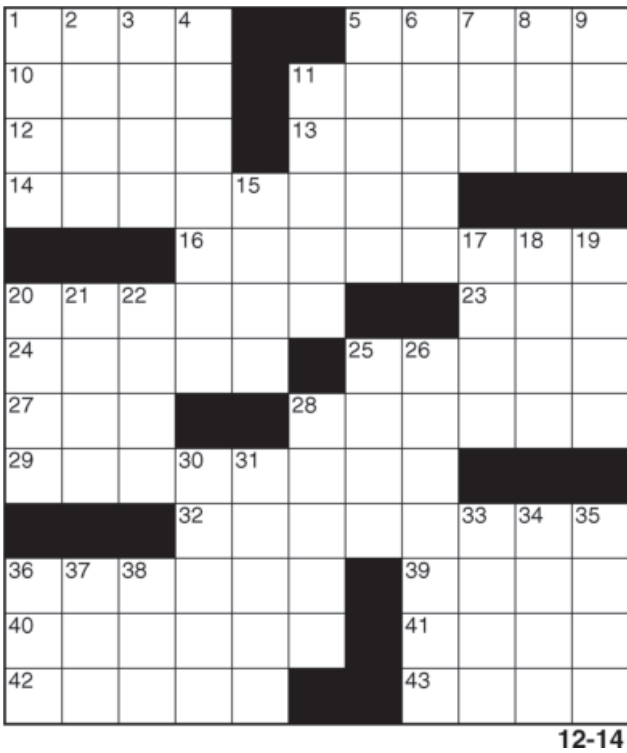
If the state has a case against Emi, it should prove it in court. If there are compelling reasons to keep her in detention, those should be clearly articulated. But the repeated denial of bail—that too over simply playing a speech, and under one of the harshest laws in the country—risks evoking the memories of a time when such draconian laws were frequently used to suppress dissent and freedom of expression. This is not expected in post-uprising Bangladesh.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 Brothers' home
5 Gave a hint
10 Wood strip
11 Somnolent state
12 Love, Latin-style
13 Mandrill relative
14 Forest floor sight
16 Restaurant card
20 Fairy
23 Female rabbit
24 Fragrant flower
25 Quartet member
27 Film's Lupino
28 Flour merchant
29 Billiards

variant
32 Oscilloscope sight
36 Small
39 Magnetic metal
40 Sights
41 Raunchy
42 Rotates
43 Highlands girl
DOWN
1 Commotion
2 Malek of "Bohemian Rhapsody"
3 Heaps
4 Added for free
5 Construction site sight
6 Clothing brand
7 First numero
8 Green prefix
9 Bear lair

11 Steak choice
15 Mayor's domain
17 Fans' favorite
18 Foot feature
19 Rip
20 Go around
21 Toenail treatment, for short
22 Speckled horse
25 Foul
26 Malice
28 Lion features
30 Endorse online
31 Quick snacks
33 Open space
34 Wedding words
35 Halts
36 Trading spot
37 Outback bird
38 Mariner



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PHOTOS: STAR

‘Devastating, moving’: Artistes emotional at The Daily Star’s anniversary programme

“We had hoped that after the July uprising we would be able to build a new Bangladesh, but in our worst nightmares we never imagined that such an attack could take place on organisations like Prothom Alo and The Daily Star -- Ashfaq Nipun

SHARMIN JOYA

The Daily Star celebrated its 35th anniversary at The Daily Star centre yesterday. Stars from all media attended the event, which showcased an exhibition recreating the horrific moments of December 18, when, alongside Daily Star, Prothom Alo and Chhayanaut, they were attacked simultaneously.

The artistes joined the event and saw the exhibition, and most of them were traumatised and were at a loss for words.

Eminent theatre personality and actor Rahmat Ali said, “Any such destructive or heinous acts are undoubtedly harmful. They damage social life, political life, and also hinder the development of intellectual and moral excellence. Any form of mob violence or extreme activity—especially what has taken place at The Daily Star—has sent shockwaves through the entire Bangalee nation and beyond.”

Veteran actress Wahida Mollick Jolly added, after visiting the exhibition, it reminded me of December 18—it still hurts. “What happened was



Sarika Sabah

completely unjustifiable. However, I would like to say this: those who are committed to good work cannot be suppressed. I felt that then, and I say it again today—The Daily Star is one of them. No matter what happens, it will continue to stand tall.” She added, “Congratulations to The Daily Star on its 35th anniversary. May it continue to stand tall for generations to come. As long as Bangladesh exists, we hope that The Daily Star will continue to endure.”

Azmeri Haque Badhan, who has always been vocal against any wrongdoing, said, “First of all,



Rahmat Ali and Wahida Mollick Jolly

congratulations to The Daily Star for successfully carrying forward such a long journey; they truly deserve recognition for this achievement. On the day itself, we witnessed everything across social media; the scale of the rampage was unbearable. It was a horrific attack, and there was extensive damage. However, what affected me most was that around 30 journalists were trapped inside. Given the circumstances, it felt at one point as though their deaths were almost inevitable.

In that moment, I realised just how disturbingly brutal people have

become over time. While people may destroy property out of frustration, anger, or resentment—emotions they may have been unable to manage—it does not justify such actions.”

Mohanagar director Ashfaq Nipun was traumatised after visiting the exhibition and he with utter disappointment said, “We had hoped that after the July uprising we would be able to build a new Bangladesh, but in our worst nightmares we never imagined that such an attack could take place on organisations like Prothom Alo and The Daily Star.

Following the incident at The Daily Star, the headline of their first edition was “Unbowed”, and I would say that they should indeed remain unbowed, continuing their work in the same steadfast manner and always standing up for the people. As such a major publication, their responsibility is even greater. I feel they have nothing left to lose and nothing to fear; they should always remain unbowed.”

Jaya Ahsan believes that The Daily Star has always been by my side since the beginning of my career. “The Daily Star is unique in its own way; it is very significant, and it will always remain

at the top of the list of newspapers we can trust.

The Daily Star has risen, like a phoenix rising once again. It shows that, despite everything it has gone through, it has risen from the ashes and is now even stronger.”

The event was attended by many celebrities and those present included Afzal Hossain, Fahmida Nabi, Jaya Ahsan, Wahida Mollick Jolly, Rahmat Ali, Mamunur Rashid, Tariq Anam Khan, Nima Rahman, Sadya Afreen Mallick, Azmeri Haque Badhan, Zakia Bari Mamo, Shajal Noor, Runa Khan, Minar Rahman, Chayanika Chowdhury, Ashfaq Nipun, Tanim Noor, Shihab Shaheen, Gias Uddin Selim, Asif Iqbal, Vicky Zahed, Sarika Sabah, Anika Kabir Shakh, Aisha Khan, Sarika Subrin, Jahid Nirob, Arefin Zilani, Oyshee Fatima Tuz Zahra, Konal, Shankha Dasgupta, Shohel Mondol, Sadia Ayman, Abid Bin Parvez Pranto, Jannatul Ferdous Oishee, Rizvi Rizu, Saad Salmi Naovi, Masum Reza, Sumaiya Shimu, Tonima Hamid, Sabila Nur, Raba Khan, Arafat Mohsin Nidhi, Zinat Sanu Swagata, Armeen Musa, Animesh Aich, Khayam Sanu Sandhi, and Sabrin Azad.



Team ‘Utshob’ wins Best film Award

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Meril-Prothom Alo Awards full winners list

Meril Prothom Alo Lifetime Achievement Award
Alamgir

Special Honour
James

FILMS

Popular Choice

Best Actor - Afran Nisho - *Daagi*
Best Actress - Tama Mirza - *Daagi*
Best Film - *Utshob*

MUSIC

Popular Choice

Best Male Playback Singer - Imran Mahmudul - *Konna* (from *Jinn 3*)
Best Female Playback Singer - Xeler Rahman - *Lichur Bagane* (from *Taandob*)

TELEVISION

Popular Choice

Best Actress - Keya Payel - *Eta Amaderi Golpo*



Alamgir honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award

Best Actor - Farhan Ahmed Jovan - *Tomader Golpo*

Critics’ Choice

Best Director - Mohammad Mostofa Kamal Raz - *Tomader Golpo*
Best Screenwriter - Siddique Ahmed - *Tomader Golpo*

Best Actress - Tanjim Saiara Totini - *Bhalo Theko*

Best Actor - FS Nayeem - *Khub Kacheri Keu*

WEB SERIES

Critics’ Choice

Best Actor - Nasir Uddin Khan - *Myself Allen Swapan 2*
Best Actress - Jaya Ahsan - *Jimmi*
Best Director - Syed Ahmed Shawki - *Gulmohor*
Best Web Series - *Gulmohor*

FILM

Critics’ Choice

Best Actor - Mahafuz Munna and Shanto Sutradhar - *Uraal*
Best Actress - Mehazabien Chowdhury - *Saba*
Best Director - Piplu R Khan - *Jaya Aar Sharmin*
Best Feature Film - *Saba*

Best Newcomer
Shammi Islam Nila

Spotify unveils most-streamed artistes, songs and albums

Spotify has released its first-ever list of most-streamed artistes, songs and albums to mark its 20th anniversary. The platform published top 20 rankings across music, podcasts and audiobooks.

Among artistes, Taylor Swift ranked first, followed by Bad Bunny and Drake. In songs, *Blinding Lights* by The Weeknd topped the list.



In albums, *Un Verano Sin Ti* ranked first. Beyond music, *The Joe Rogan Experience* was named the most-streamed podcast of all time. In audiobooks, *A Court of Thorns and Roses* topped the list.

The announcement offers a broad snapshot of listening trends over the platform’s two-decade history, highlighting the global reach and influence of streaming culture.

‘Bhalobasho Mor Gaan’ honours Nazrul’s legacy

An evening dedicated to the timeless compositions of Kazi Nazrul Islam was held at the Chhayanaut Cultural Centre yesterday, as Bangladesh Nazrul Sangeet Sangstha organised a musical gathering titled *Bhalobasho Mor Gaan*.

The programme took place on April 25 at the Ramesh Chandra Dutta Smriti Milan Kendra of Chhayanaut. The title of the event was drawn from a line in Nazrul’s own lyrics, reflecting the enduring emotional depth and appeal of his music.

The evening began with a welcome address by the organisation’s general secretary, Khairul Anam Shakil, who highlighted the importance of preserving and promoting Nazrul Sangeet among newer generations of listeners and performers.

The opening performance featured a classical presentation based on Raag Nand by Afroja Rupa, setting a contemplative tone for the programme. In total, 12 performances were staged throughout the evening, bringing together both established and emerging artistes.

Nazrul Sangeet performances

were presented by Mandira Aich, Afia Tasnim, Jebunnesa Sarker Nijhum, Joyeta Orpa, Soma Das, Kumar Shyam, Sanjoy Halder, Garggi Ghosh, Chandra Saha Smriti and Shohidul Islam Sojib. Each artiste offered their interpretation of Nazrul’s compositions, highlighting the diversity in style and expression within the genre.

The programme also included a classical performance based on Raag Kedar by Rifat Ahmed Emon, adding a different musical dimension to the event and complementing the Nazrul Sangeet presentations.

The event concluded with remarks from the organisation’s vice-president, Karim Hasan Khan, who reflected on the significance of such gatherings in sustaining interest in Nazrul’s musical legacy.

Bringing together a range of performers and audiences, the evening underscored the continued relevance of Nazrul Sangeet in Bangladesh’s cultural landscape, where the poet’s works remain a source of artistic inspiration and emotional resonance.



PHOTO: ABRAR FAIYAZ NILOY

Macron views EU joint defence clause as ‘stronger’ than Nato

AFP, ATHENS
French President Emmanuel Macron said Saturday he considered the EU's common defence clause "stronger" than the one binding Nato together. The declaration, made during a visit to Greece, comes as US President

Donald Trump is questioning the North Atlantic military alliance, repeatedly calling it a "paper tiger" for not helping out in his war against Iran. The mutual defence clause enshrined in Article 42.7 of the Treaty of the European Union, which

requires other EU countries to come to the defence of any member under attack, is "steadfast", Macron said. It is unambiguous and, "in substance, stronger than Article 5" in NATO's founding treaty, he said in a news conference alongside Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

Bangladesh to overtake India

FROM PAGE 12
The IMF expects India to regain the lead in 2027 and to remain ahead at least until 2031. To understand why this measure is so volatile, consider the arithmetic. GDP per capita in current dollars is calculated by converting each country's output into US dollars at the prevailing exchange rate. When a currency depreciates -- as both the

taka and the rupee have done in recent years, though at different speeds -- it compresses the dollar value of output regardless of how productive the underlying economy has become. The crossing of the two lines in 2026, seen on any given screen, tells us something real: that exchange-rate dynamics now place the two economies' dollar incomes within touching distance

of each other. It does not, on its own, tell us which population is better off. The second measure complicates the picture considerably. The IMF also publishes GDP per capita adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP), which strips out exchange-rate movements and instead converts output into a common "international dollar" based on what each currency can actually buy

domestically. On this basis, India leads Bangladesh by a wide margin, and always has in the modern era. In 2025, India's PPP-adjusted GDP per capita stands at \$11,789, some 15 percent above Bangladesh's \$10,271. By 2031, the IMF projects the gap will widen to nearly 24 percent, with India reaching \$18,485 against Bangladesh's \$14,857.

Trump calls off US envoys' trip to Pakistan

FROM PAGE 1
the prospect of new talks had been uncertain, with Iranian state television saying Araghchi had no plans to meet with the Americans, and that Islamabad would serve as a bridge to "convey" Iranian proposals. The urgency of striking a deal to permanently end the war has mounted as the Strait of Hormuz, a vital conduit for the world's oil and gas supplies, has remained closed. But Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards yesterday said that they had no intention of ending their effective blockade of the waterway, which has thrown energy markets into turmoil. "Controlling the Strait of Hormuz and maintaining the shadow of its deterrent effects over America and the White House's supporters in the region is the definitive strategy of Islamic Iran," the Guards

said on their official Telegram channel. Meanwhile, Iran's defence ministry yesterday said the US was seeking a "face-saving" way to exit the war. "Our military power today is a dominant force, and the enemy is looking for a face-saving way to escape the war quagmire it has become trapped in," media outlet ISNA quoted a ministry spokesperson as saying. The US has imposed a blockade of its own on Iranian ports in retaliation. In a defiant statement carried by state media, the Iranian military's central command said that if "the invading US military continues blockading, banditry, and piracy in the region, they should be certain that they will face a response". Since the first and only round of US-Iran talks, also hosted by Pakistan, efforts to bring the two sides back

to the table have hit an impasse, with Iran refusing to participate as long as the US naval blockade remains in place. Iran, meanwhile, has allowed only a trickle of ships to pass through the Strait of Hormuz. European Council President Antonio Costa said the waterway "must immediately reopen without restrictions and without tolling". "This is vital for the entire world," Costa said. On the war's Lebanese front, Trump announced a three-week ceasefire extension on Thursday and spoke in glowing terms of peace prospects after meeting with Israeli and Lebanese envoys. But Mohammed Raad, the head of the parliamentary bloc for Hezbollah, urged the Lebanese government to withdraw from direct talks with Israel and warned that a lasting peace deal of the

kind sought by Trump "will in no way enjoy Lebanese national consensus". Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has vowed to destroy the Iran-backed armed group, said "it's clear to us that Hezbollah is trying to sabotage" the peace process. Despite the ceasefire, Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli strikes yesterday in the Nabatieh and Bint Jbeil districts in the south of the country had killed six people. In the coastal city of Sidon, Ahmad Shumar and his family were preparing to head back to their hometown in the south this week, after giving up on a previous attempt due to fears of Israeli attacks. "We are going home now, not knowing whether there will be war or peace -- we will see," the 74-year-old said, surrounded by bags and mattresses.

6 killed as Russia strikes Ukraine

FROM PAGE 12
and 27 wounded in one overnight strike on an apartment block in Dnipro, Oleksandr Ganzha, head of Drinpropetrovsk's regional military administration said on Telegram. A later strike on another apartment building in the city, killed one person and wounded seven, he said. "The Russians hit the same residential neighbourhood as the one targeted overnight," Ganzha said. Dnipro's deputy mayor was "nearly killed" in one of the strikes, said the mayor, Borys Filatov. In the southern region of Zaporizhzhia, one person was killed and four wounded by a Russian drone strike on a civilian minibus, the head of the region's administration, Ivan Fedorov, said on Telegram. The Russian defence ministry said it had

"launched a massive strike" on Ukrainian military targets over the past 24 hours. Moscow denies targeting civilians throughout the four-year war. Following the barrage, a drone crashed in Romania, a Nato and EU country that borders Ukraine, local authorities said, adding that they had to evacuate over 200 people. Zelensky said the incessant Russian strikes on civilian targets required a strong response from Ukraine's allies, especially in Europe. "Every such strike should serve as a reminder to our partners that the situation requires immediate and firm action, and the rapid strengthening of our air defence," he said. He urged the European Union to impose even more sanctions on Russia. The plea came two days after EU leaders approved a long-stalled 20th sanctions

round against Russia that target the banking sector and add new restrictions on exports of Russian oil. That package had been blocked for months by Hungary's Prime Minister, Viktor Orban, who was voted from power two weeks ago. The EU also approved a 90-billion-euro (\$105 billion) loan to Ukraine intended to strengthen its defences and cover state expenditures for the 2026-2027 period. In recent months, Kyiv has stepped up its own retaliatory attacks on Russia, hitting civilians and energy infrastructure among other targets. Ukrainian drone attacks over the past 24 hours injured one person in Russia's Kursk region, which borders Ukraine, governor Alexander Khinshtein announced Saturday on Russia's state-sponsored messenger app Max.

The governor for Russia's neighbouring Belgorod region, Vyacheslav Gladkov, said a woman was killed and a man seriously wounded in a drone attack on a car, and a man driving a tractor was wounded in another strike. A rare Ukrainian drone strike hit an apartment high-rise in Yekaterinburg, a large industrial city in Russia's heartland more than a thousand miles away from Ukraine, said local governor Denis Pasler. No one was seriously injured in the attack, he added. On the front line in Ukraine, the Russian army claimed to capture the village of Bochkove in the Kharkiv region. Diplomatic efforts to end Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II are at a standstill with US mediation efforts diverted by the outbreak of the Middle East war in February.

Be ‘servants and friends of the people’

FROM PAGE 12
resources, he said, while emphasising the importance of training. "Modern administrative competence is not just about knowing rules -- it also requires the use of technology, data analysis, quick decision-making and a creative approach to public service." Highlighting the need to modernise governance, he said the world has already entered the era of artificial intelligence and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, making it essential for public administration officials to keep pace with technological changes. "The use of AI, automation and digital technologies can make our administration more efficient, transparent and accountable," Tarique said, adding that the government aims to deliver public services at citizens' doorsteps through information technology. He also assured continued support to strengthen the BIAM Foundation to build a skilled and future-ready civil service.

Focusing on economic competitiveness, Tarique emphasised the importance of simplifying business processes through initiatives such as single-window clearance, one-stop services and fully digital workflows. "Our development vision must be inclusive, sustainable and humane. We want to build a Bangladesh where the benefits of development gradually reach every level of society, inequality declines and eventually disappears." Tarique underscored the role of women and youth as key drivers of growth and said environmental protection and climate resilience must be integral to all policies. Referring to the government's electoral pledges, he said those commitments are not merely political promises but a contract with the people. "The government is determined to implement every commitment of its manifesto and the July Charter in letter and spirit," he said, urging officials to contribute with their merit and professionalism. The current government reflects the aspirations of ordinary people

who have long yearned for an accountable, just and welfare-oriented system of governance. The July uprising once again made it clear that the people are the true owners of this state, Tarique said. "So, as public servants, your foremost responsibility is to protect the interests and ensure the welfare of people, who are the rightful owners of the state. Your decisions can affect a family, a region or even the entire nation. That is why your responsibilities are not only administrative but also deeply moral and constitutional." The government has already taken steps to fill vacant posts swiftly, strengthen the Public Service Commission and implement key administrative reforms. Tarique expressed hope that BIAM's curriculum and training environment would further enhance officials' professional skills, problem-solving abilities and innovative thinking. Founded on December 29, 1991, BIAM was later transformed into the BIAM Foundation in November 2002.

Dreams of PhDs end in Florida

FROM PAGE 1
to locate her body. Both were last seen on April 16 near the USF campus in Tampa. A family friend reported them missing the following day, triggering a search that expanded into a criminal probe involving multiple agencies. Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Marine and Dive teams were seen searching the water near the Howard Frankland Bridge for Bristy on Friday. A medical examiner is still determining Limon's cause of death and may share autopsy results soon, Chief Deputy Joseph Maurer with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office said. "This is a deeply disturbing case that has shaken our community and impacted many who were hoping for a safe resolution," Sheriff Chad Chronister said in a statement on Friday. Abugharbieh was arrested Friday morning after law enforcement was called to his home for a reported domestic violence incident, according to Maurer. In addition to the murder charges, Abugharbieh is facing charges of unlawfully moving a dead body, failure to report a death with intent to conceal, tampering with physical evidence, false imprisonment, and battery. The sheriff's office had said.

'NO LONGER WITH US'
For their families back home, the unfolding details have been devastating. Although police have yet to recover Bristy's body, authorities informed her family she is believed dead. Her brother Jahid Hassan Pranto told The Daily Star that police contacted him early Friday, saying forensic evidence indicated two victims. "Police informed us that the amount of blood they found at the suspect's apartment was from two bodies," he said. Pranto added that authorities have not yet issued an official confirmation of her death but told family members they are awaiting forensic reports and may make an announcement soon. In a Facebook post, Pranto yesterday wrote, "My sister is no longer with us. Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi rajiun." 'PANTA-ILISH'
Limon's mother, Lutfun Haque, recalled her son's last call on Pabeha Baishakh, April 14, when he simply asked whether she had eaten panta-ilish. "My last conversation with my son was on Pabeha Baishakh. He was always under pressure from his studies, so we did not talk much. That day he called and just asked whether I had eaten panta-ilish. I have no strength left to say anything more," she said through tears.

She added that the shock of his death has left her physically unwell. The family requested their location not be disclosed for security reasons. Limon's father, Zahurul Haque, is also seriously ill. Limon grew up in Mawa, Dhaka, with his ancestral home in Madarganj, Jamalpur. His friend Jasim Uddin remembered him as bright and soft-spoken. His sudden death has cast a pall of grief over the family and relatives. 'TALK OF MARRIAGE'
Limon had spoken highly of Bristy to his family in Bangladesh, telling them the pair had discussed the possibility of marriage, his brother Zubaer Ahmed told CNN. "He shared that she is a good girl, and she has a lot of talent, like she can sing and cook well," Ahmed, the brother, said. Limon had been hard at work on his thesis for the past two years, studying how to use generative AI to monitor shrinking wetland in South Florida, his brother said. "My brother is very decent and a very simple person," Ahmed said. "He always put a smile on his face." After completing his PhD, Limon wanted to return to Bangladesh and get a job as a university professor, Ahmed said. THE SUSPECT
Hisham Abugharbieh has emerged as the central

figure in the investigation. Investigators brought the suspect under early scrutiny due to his proximity to the case and inconsistencies during questioning. While initially cooperative during two interviews, Abugharbieh stopped engaging with law enforcement on Thursday. By Friday, authorities said they were able to "link the suspect to this case and to (Limon's) body," reports CNN. University officials told Newsweek that Abugharbieh, who pursued a management degree between the spring 2021 and spring 2023 semesters, was not enrolled at the time of his arrest. Hillsborough County court records show his criminal history includes several 2023 battery charges and a burglary case. Court documents further reveal a pattern of domestic unrest. In filings, his brother alleged Abugharbieh attacked both him and their mother during an argument. A judge previously granted a domestic violence injunction against him, though it later expired. The arrest took place at the family home following a domestic violence call. After barricading himself inside, the suspect surrendered peacefully to a SWAT team and crisis negotiators, authorities said.

BNP ‘deceiving the nation’

FROM PAGE 12
He termed it "shameful" to reject the referendum verdict in which 70 percent voters supported reforms. "The day this verdict is implemented, fascism will truly end in this country." Addressing the BNP, he added, "Without the sacrifices of mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters in the July uprising, you would not be enjoying power today." "We all took part in the movement, but we could not reach the shore. The heroes of July brought the boat ashore and showed the nation the path to liberation. Learn to respect them; do not belittle them."

Referring to recent incidents, the Jamaat chief condemned attacks on Ducsu members inside a police station and on Jamaat MP Masum Mostafa in Netrokona. "What kind of Bangladesh is this?" he asked. He also warned against violence at educational institutions. "We want to see notebooks and pens, not machetes or axes. The culture of domination must stop. If not, remember that July is not confined to 2024; it will return." At the event, Rokeya Begum, mother of martyr Jabir Ibrahim and Jamaat candidate for a parliamentary seat

reserved for women, spoke on behalf of the families. Injured July activist Atikul Islam demanded the immediate implementation of the "70 percent people's verdict", warning that attempts to suppress it would force those in power to step down. Tasmiya Pradhan, chairperson of Jagpa and another I-Party Alliance candidate for the reserved seats, alleged that the government is "insulting July martyrs in parliament" by not implementing the July charter. Nahid Islam, opposition chief whip and NCP convener, said ministers are claiming in parliament

that there is no fuel crisis. They are "denying real problems, the economic crisis, and the gradual deterioration of law and order in the country." "We are fully prepared to cooperate with this government in the interest of the country and its people. But the government is closing all doors to such cooperation." LDP Chairman Col (retired) Oli Ahmad, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Porvar, Senior Naye-e-Ameer ATM Azharul Islam, assistant secretaries general Rafique Islam Khan and Hamidur Rahman Azad, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Beware of political traps, provocations

FROM PAGE 12
A leader present at the meeting said Tarique expressed dissatisfaction with some recent JCD activities and asked the organisation to focus more on student-oriented politics. "He made it clear that Chhatra Dal must not do anything that could malign the organisation, the BNP or the government," the leader said, requesting anonymity. Tarique also asked JCD President Rakibul Islam Rakib and General Secretary Nasir Uddin Nasir about recent developments on campuses and the organisation's response to

opposition activities. According to meeting sources, he advised JCD to avoid shows of strength and instead prioritise student issues -- academic environment, housing, safety, transport, classroom facilities and democratic space. He also instructed the central leadership to engage directly with students on campuses and ensure activists follow party directives. Several leaders said the party leadership believes opposition student organisations may try to provoke Chhatra Dal into clashes to create controversy

and put pressure on the government. They said Tarique warned JCD not to fall into such traps. A senior BNP leader summed up the directive: "Chhatra Dal should remain active, but not aggressive. Campus politics must continue, but it has to be peaceful and student-oriented." The meeting also discussed what leaders described as false and misleading social media campaigns against the BNP, Chhatra Dal and senior figures. Tarique instructed JCD not to respond emotionally but to counter

misinformation with facts, discipline and constructive campus work. He further called for strengthening organisational activities nationwide and better coordination between the central committee and university units. Warning that the public closely watches student politics, he said all activities must remain within the law and advised legal action against violators. BNP leaders said the party would closely monitor campus developments and take organisational action against any unit that breaches the instructions.

Palestinians

FROM PAGE 12
according to the territory's health ministry, whose figures are considered reliable by the UN. Public infrastructure, sanitation services and the health sector are all struggling to function. Gaza, under Hamas control since 2007, is seeing its first vote since legislative elections in 2006 that the Islamist movement won. The voting came after Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes across the Palestinian territory on Friday killed at least 13 people, including five in an attack that targeted a police vehicle. Despite an October ceasefire, violence has persisted, with at least 792 Palestinians killed since the truce began, according to Gaza's health ministry.

No need to panic

FROM PAGE 12
The alert warned that the group could target "important state installations", including the Sangsad Bhaban, Shahbagh intersection, places of worship, and even police and army establishments. Although the PHQ message did not name any specific organisation, it referred the potential attack being linked to the recent arrest of a suspected extremist, Istiak Ahmed Sami alias Abu Bakkar alias Abu Mohammad. The directive said intelligence reports showed that the arrestee was in regular contact with two dismissed army personnel to plan attacks.

and present on the ground, a simple request. And that is to reduce their own electricity and energy consumption," the president said on state TV. "We do not need people to sacrifice for the time being, but we do need to control consumption. Instead of 10 lights, two lights should be turned on in the house -- what is wrong with that?" he added.

Manipur ethnic violence

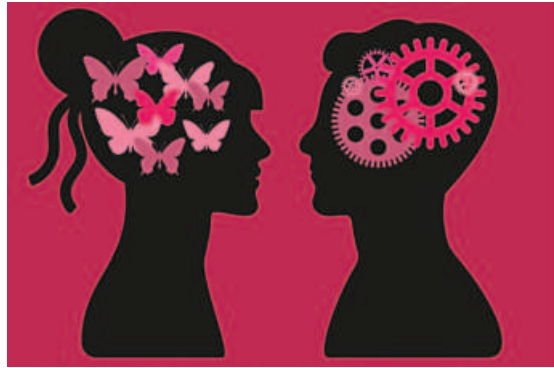
FROM PAGE 12
community who claim descent from one of the "lost tribes" of Israel -- arrived in Tel Aviv. They were the first group to arrive since the Israeli government decided in November to fund the immigration of around 6,000 members of the community. Their oral history tells of a centuries-long exodus through Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet and China, all the while adhering to certain Jewish religious practices, such as circumcision. In India, they were converted to Christianity by 19th-century missionaries.

Love, stress, and cortisol: the biological cost of narcissistic relationships

DR SUMAIYA KHALED

Love is often described as healing, yet not all relationships offer comfort. Emerging research suggests that being involved with individuals who display strong narcissistic traits can have measurable biological consequences, extending beyond emotional strain.

At the centre of this response is cortisol, commonly known as the body's primary stress hormone. In healthy relationships, emotional support helps regulate stress, keeping cortisol levels stable. However, relationships marked by manipulation, unpredictability, or emotional neglect can trigger chronic activation of the stress response system. Over time, this leads to persistently



elevated cortisol levels.

This prolonged stress can disrupt sleep, weaken immunity, and increase the risk of conditions such as anxiety and Depression. Individuals often report fatigue, irritability, and difficulty concentrating, even when they are unaware of the underlying cause. The body, in effect, begins to internalise relational stress.

What makes this dynamic particularly complex is its subtlety. Narcissistic relationships may not always appear overtly harmful. Moments of validation can be interspersed with criticism or withdrawal, creating a cycle that keeps individuals emotionally engaged while physiologically strained.

Understanding these effects reframes relationship health as a public health concern. Emotional environments are not just psychological spaces but biological ones, shaping how the body responds, adapts, and ultimately copes with stress over time.

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NOT JUST TREATMENT, BUT TIMING: The real battle against cancer

DR ARMAN REZA CHOWDHURY

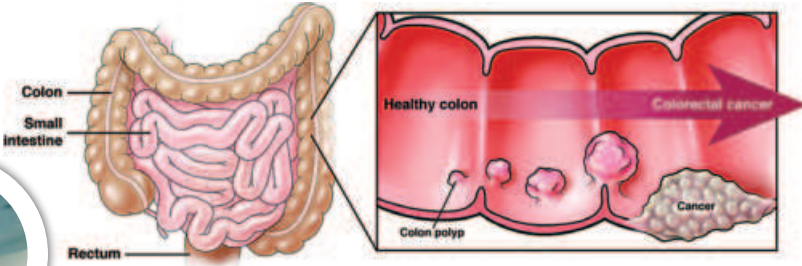
Colorectal cancer is quietly becoming a growing concern in Bangladesh. From busy city hospitals to smaller district centres, more people are being diagnosed every year. But rising numbers tell only part of the story. The deeper issue lies in whether people are receiving the right care at the right time, and whether that care is within reach for all.

Treatment today is no longer limited to surgery alone. Many patients require medicine that work throughout the body. These are used before surgery to shrink the disease, after surgery to prevent its return, or when it has already spread. This form of care is not a last resort but a central part of modern treatment.

Encouragingly, Bangladesh has made visible progress. In major hospitals, patients can now receive treatments similar to those offered internationally. Newer medicine have also entered practice in selected cases. Compared to the past, options have expanded, and doctors are more informed about global standards.

Yet, this progress is uneven. Advanced care is mostly concentrated in a few specialised centres, particularly in the capital. Patients living outside these areas often face limited choices. For them, where they live can determine the quality of care they receive. This gap creates a silent divide in outcomes.

Another pressing challenge is the lack of personalised care. Modern treatment increasingly depends on understanding the unique nature of each patient's illness. Certain tests help guide which medicine is likely to work best. However, in reality, many patients cannot access these tests. Some find them too expensive,



others face long delays, and in some areas they are simply unavailable. As a result, treatment decisions are often based on availability rather than suitability.

Cost remains one of the heaviest burdens. Most patients in Bangladesh pay for treatment from their own pockets. Even basic care can strain a family's finances. When newer or more advanced medicines are needed, the cost rises sharply. Many patients are forced to stop midway, delay starting, or choose less effective options. This financial pressure affects not just health, but the stability of entire families.

Good care also depends on teamwork. Ideally, patients should be guided by a group of specialists working together, ensuring a clear and coordinated plan. While some hospitals have begun to follow this approach, it is not yet standard across the country. Many patients still move from one place to another, facing

confusion and delays.

Despite these challenges, there is reason for hope. The medical field in Bangladesh is evolving. Younger doctors are more aware, discussions are more informed, and step by step, the system is improving. Facilities for better diagnosis are slowly expanding, laying the groundwork for more precise care in the future.

Bangladesh now stands at a turning point. The journey from basic treatment to more tailored care has begun, but it is not yet complete. The goal ahead is clear: to ensure that every patient, regardless of location or income, receives timely, appropriate, and effective treatment. Because in the end, the true measure of progress is not what is available, but what is accessible.

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PUBLIC HEALTH The invisible epidemic of liver damage

A large European study has revealed that hidden liver damage is quietly present in the general population, often without any warning signs.

Researchers screened over 30,000 adults aged 40 and above across multiple countries and found that a notable portion had signs of hidden liver problems despite feeling well. About 7 in 100 people showed concerning results, while nearly 2 in 100 were confirmed to have ongoing liver damage.

The strongest links were not surprising but deeply concerning. Excess body weight, diabetes, and regular alcohol intake were the key drivers behind this hidden condition. Most cases were tied to fat build-up in the liver, a problem increasingly common with modern lifestyles.

What makes this issue alarming is its quiet nature. Many people remain unaware until the condition worsens. Early checks and lifestyle changes, however, could stop it from progressing into serious illness, offering a crucial window to protect long-term health.



From playground to paycheque: how early weight shapes adult life

A child's early years often shape more than just memories. A new research suggests they may also shape futures from classrooms to careers and even financial stability later in life.

Presented at the European Congress on Obesity 2026, the study followed over 130,000 individuals across several decades. It found a striking pattern: children who lived with excess weight were more likely to face challenges in education, employment and earnings as adults.

The findings paint a quiet but powerful picture. Children with higher body weight were found to complete fewer months of schooling compared to their peers. While the difference may seem small at first glance, it reflects a broader ripple effect; one that continues into adulthood.

By midlife, these early differences appear to widen. Women who had excess weight in childhood were significantly more likely to be outside the workforce by the age of 50. Interestingly, this pattern did not appear in men.

However, when it came to income, the story shifted. Men who had lived with excess weight as children faced a sharper drop in earnings compared to women. In simple terms, while women were

more likely to step away from work, men who stayed employed often earned less.

Another layer adds depth to these findings. The impact was strongest among those from more educated families. This suggests that social expectations and pressures may play a hidden role. In environments where achievement is highly valued, children who stand out physically may also face subtle barriers that affect confidence, opportunities and long-term outcomes.

The research does not point to a single cause. Instead, it highlights a complex mix of social attitudes, opportunities and life experiences that unfold over time. What begins as a childhood condition may quietly influence how individuals move through school, enter the workforce and navigate adulthood.

At its heart, the message is clear yet understated. Childhood health is not just about the present moment. It carries echoes into the future, shaping paths in ways that are not always visible but deeply felt.

As conversations around child health continue to grow, this study adds a compelling reminder. Supporting children today may mean opening doors for them tomorrow; not just in health, but in education, work and life itself.

Global meningitis death toll remains alarming despite progress

More than 250,000 people died from meningitis worldwide in 2023, with children under five accounting for over one-third of the deaths, according to a major global study published in The Lancet Neurology. The research estimates 2.5 million infections that year, highlighting a persistent public health challenge despite decades of progress.

Although mortality and infection rates have declined since 1990, experts warn progress



remains too slow to meet World Health Organisation targets of sharply reducing cases and deaths by 2030. Meningitis continues to be the leading infectious cause of neurological disability globally.

Low birthweight, premature birth and air pollution were identified as key risk factors. The burden is highest in low-income countries, particularly within Africa's meningitis belt, where nations such as Nigeria, Chad and Niger report the greatest impact.

Researchers stress that expanding vaccination programmes, improving access to care, strengthening diagnostics and ensuring responsible antibiotic use are critical to reducing deaths and preventing long-term complications from this life-threatening disease.

WORLD IMMUNISATION WEEK 2026

Protection for all: Why vaccines must reach everyone, everywhere

STAR HEALTH DESK

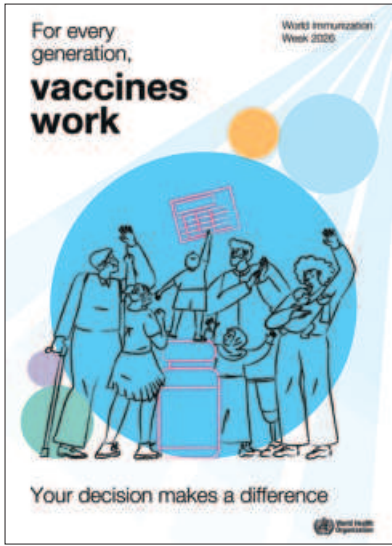
Every year, as April draws to a close, the world pauses to recognise the quiet power of protection. From 24 to 30 April, World Immunisation Week shines a spotlight on one of humanity's simplest yet most powerful shields: vaccines.

Led by the World Health Organisation (WHO), this global observance is more than a campaign. It is a reminder that protection is not a privilege but a shared responsibility. Vaccines, often taken for granted, have transformed lives across generations, saving millions from illnesses that once claimed countless lives.

Yet, the message this year is clear and urgent: *protection must reach everyone, everywhere.*

Across the globe, communities continue to face gaps in access. While some children grow up shielded from preventable diseases, others remain vulnerable due to lack of awareness, access, or trust. World Immunisation Week calls for collective action to bridge these gaps, ensuring no one is left behind.

Vaccines are not just about individual safety. They protect families, strengthen communities, and safeguard entire nations.



When more people are vaccinated, the spread of disease slows down, creating a ripple effect of protection that benefits even the most vulnerable.

The World Health Organisation works closely with countries to support these efforts. From raising awareness to guiding governments and helping improve vaccination programmes, its role is central in making sure protection reaches those who need it most. But success does

not depend on global bodies alone. It depends on local action, community trust, and informed choices.

In many parts of the world, simple steps such as timely vaccination can mean the difference between life and loss. Parents, caregivers, and communities play a crucial role in ensuring children receive the protection they deserve. At the same time, adults are reminded that vaccines are not just for childhood. Protection is a lifelong journey.

This week is also a moment to celebrate progress. Diseases that once spread fear have been reduced or even eliminated in many regions, thanks to sustained vaccination efforts. These achievements stand as proof of what is possible when science, policy, and people come together.

Still, the journey is far from over. The World Immunisation Week urges everyone to act, to learn, and to support. Because in a world where health risks can cross borders in moments, protection must be shared, not selective. The goal is simple yet powerful: a future where more people, and their communities, live healthier, safer lives, protected from preventable harm.

Source: World Health Organisation





With his arms wrapped around his opponent, two-time defending champion (L) Bagha Sharif attempts to choke Rashed Boli during the final of the 117th edition of the historic Abdul Jabbar-Bolikhela at Laldighi Maidan in Chattogram yesterday. Sharif, hailing from Homna in Cumilla, defeated Rashed after a gruelling 40-minute battle to secure his third consecutive title. A total of 101 wrestlers (bolis) from across the country participated in this year's competition.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh women's cricket remains trapped in a cycle of stagnation, with a fragile talent pipeline failing to produce adequate replacements. This lack of depth, resulting in the selectors rotating a core group of only 20–22 players, has hampered international performance.

The recall of Sarmin Sultana exemplifies this issue. After a six-and-a-half-year hiatus, she scored just 42 runs in the just-concluded three-match WODI series against Sri Lanka.

However, the 32-year-old was retained for the T20 squad – replacing out-of-form opener Farzana Haque Pinky – despite having gone through a lean patch, including modest returns in the Asia Cup Rising Stars tournament (93 runs in five matches), the Emerging team's series against South Africa (40 in three), and the National Cricket League (126 runs in seven innings for Rajshahi).

Chief selector Sazzad Ahmed Shipon admitted that, currently, only Sharmin Akter Supta, Nigar Sultana Joty, and Sobhana Mostary are producing mentionable international performances. He explained that Sarmin was picked for her "better strike rate".

"We are trying to change the style of play and bring in new players. That's why Sarmin was included in ODIs... We expected more from her, but that hasn't happened yet. Let's see if things improve in T20s," Shipon told The Daily Star after



PHOTO: BCB

Bangladesh's seven-wicket defeat to Sri Lanka in yesterday's series-deciding third WODI in Rajshahi, admitting that finalising the squad for June-July's T20 World Cup in England and Wales remains a challenging task.

"The stress is about making the right selection at the right moment. The squad has to be submitted early, which makes things complicated," he said.

The pace-bowling department is another area of concern, with limited options beyond Marufa Akter and Fariha Islam Trisna. "It would be wrong to say it's not bothering us," Shipon added.

"We are currently playing one pacer.

We still have to decide how many pacers to take and how many to play in England conditions."

Batting coach Nasiruddin Faruque attributes this stagnation to structural failures. With the Women's Dhaka Premier Division Cricket League delayed – due to the disputes between the previous board and clubs – and the



"To be honest, in the current national team, nobody except [Sharmin Akter] Supta, [Nigar Sultana] Joty and Sobhana [Mostary] have performances worth mentioning in international cricket"

Chief selector
Sazzad Ahmed Shipon

"Overall, there is progress, but it is slow. Other teams are moving forward faster because of their structure."

Batting coach
Nasiruddin Faruque

Women's Bangladesh Premier League postponed until July, players lack the sustained competitive exposure needed to develop. The last domestic competition – the Women's National Cricket League T20 – was held in November last year.

"In the Premier League, out of nine teams, only three or four are competitive. When bowlers are spread across teams, each side ends up with only one or two quality bowlers, which reduces overall standards," Faruque said.

He emphasised that batting development requires sustained exposure to competitive matches and quality wickets. "Producing a batter is a lengthy process. Players need to play many matches and develop the habit of scoring runs.

"If someone comes in 50–60 percent ready, you can develop them further. But if they come in at 10 percent, progress becomes very difficult," he explained.

Faruque noted that while the Tigresses are experiencing "slow progress", they continue to lag behind rivals like India and Sri Lanka, who benefit from stronger domestic and school-level structures.

For now, Bangladesh women's cricket remains caught between limited resources and growing expectations. Ultimately, sustainable success cannot be manufactured through temporary fixes. Unless the domestic structure is prioritised and revitalised, Bangladesh may find themselves perpetually playing catch-up.

Tigers using NZ T20Is to fix ODI puzzle

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

Bangladesh will take on visiting New Zealand in a three-match T20I series starting Monday in Chattogram, following their 2-1 ODI series victory. However, the team management's focus appears to extend beyond just the shortest format.

Spin-bowling coach Mushtaq Ahmed hinted that Bangladesh are still searching for answers in key positions ahead of the 2027 ODI World Cup. That long-term planning influenced the inclusion of new faces Ripon Mondol and Abdul Gaffar Saqlain in the T20I squad, as part of efforts to build bench strength.

"T20 is a great format for development. Bringing in players like Saqlain and Ripon is important, but you want to win matches, so it's about finding right balance," Mushtaq said at a press conference yesterday.

Although Bangladesh missed out on the 2026 T20 World Cup, they have already qualified for the 2028 edition. Still, Mushtaq suggested that "with no T20 World Cup coming up soon, it's a good time to develop players for the 50-over format".

"Bangladesh cricket is moving in right direction... Performances in T20s can build confidence and help players transition into ODIs. It's a useful



PHOTO: BCB

platform to strengthen the bench."

New recruit Saqlain impressed during practice, troubling left-handed opener Tanzid Tamim with movement away from the bat. He also showcased his hitting ability in the Emerging Asia Cup. With Bangladesh lacking a pace-bowling all-rounder in ODIs, the team management is keen to assess Saqlain's potential.

Ripon, meanwhile, has shown promise with his death-over bowling, an area the team is eager to develop further.

There were also discussions around including Mosaddek Hossain in ODIs, but those plans appear to have been

shelved.

Bangladesh fielded five top-order batters in the last two ODIs, exposing a lack of depth in the middle order. Mahidul Islam Ankon is yet to get a chance despite being a middle-order option, while Shamim Hossain remains on the sidelines.

Addressing these gaps will be a priority, and the upcoming series may serve as a testing ground to improve balance in the ODI squad.

However, it prompts a broader question about Bangladesh's long-term plan for the next T20 World Cup, especially as the challenges in this shortest format appear to run deeper.

SAFF WOMEN'S C'SHIP

Thailand tune-ups with three-peat target

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's football team will undergo a two-week training camp and then head to Thailand for two tune-up matches, aiming to secure a third successive title at the upcoming SAFF Women's Championship, scheduled for May 25 to June 6 in Goa, India.

"We do not want to miss out on a hat-trick of titles, which is a rare opportunity," BFF women's wing chairman Mahfuza Akter Kiron said yesterday.

The women in red and green have been in training since the conclusion of the AFC Women's Asian Cup and the AFC Women's U-20 Asian Cup. On Friday, the squad travelled to Chattogram for intensive sessions at the Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ), where they began training yesterday.

May 28: Bangladesh vs Maldives

May 31: Bangladesh vs India

June 3: Semifinals

June 6: Final

Kiron confirmed that Peter Butler's 29-member squad will return to the capital in early May before departing for Thailand. There, they are scheduled to play two closed-door practice matches against a Women's Premier League side and a second-tier club, followed by their flight to Goa, tentatively on May 21.



Aminul urges Abahani to reclaim lost pride

SPORTS REPORTER

State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque visited Abahani in Dhanmondi yesterday, reaffirming his commitment to keeping the country's sports arena free from political influence and urging the club's officials to reclaim their lost pride with proper management.

The visit was the first by a government high-up since the club was vandalised and trophies looted on August 5, 2024, following the ouster of the Awami League-led government.

Abahani have since struggled to continue sporting activities, especially football, due to the absence of key directors who previously provided financial support.

"The current government wants to ensure an environment where clubs can operate with complete independence," Aminul said after meeting Abahani directors, including Tanveer Mazharul Islam Tanna, Anjan Chowdhury Pintu, Sheikh Bashir Ahmed and Fahim Sinha. Mohammedan director-in-charge Lokman Hossain Bhuiyan and Tamim Iqbal, president of the BCB ad hoc committee, were also present.

Aminul also urged organisers and players to maintain cordial relations off the field and called on Abahani officials to revamp management. Officials requested protection from political labelling of sponsors, while the minister was later honoured with a jersey.

‘Strong bonds, competition driving NZ cricket’

Will Young was among the more experienced players in an otherwise inexperienced New Zealand ODI squad that suffered a 2-1 defeat in the recently concluded three-match series against hosts Bangladesh. Arriving in the country after a successful tour of India, Young and his side encountered tougher batting conditions and a hostile pace attack. The New Zealand number three spoke about the conditions, Bangladesh's bowling threats, and more in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star's Abdullah Al Mehdi. The excerpts are as follows:

The Daily Star (DS): How good was Nahid Rana in the ODI series?
Will Young (WY): He's got the tools to be a great bowler – consistently around 150kph, even in this heat. He moves the ball in the air as well and gets good bounce. So, he's got plenty of attributes there that suggest that he's going to be a really good bowler for many years.

DS: Are Bangladesh more threatening in these conditions or in pace-friendly wickets?
WY: It's tough to say because we haven't faced this attack in New Zealand. But they're clearly building towards the 2027 ODI World Cup. South African conditions might be closer to New Zealand's, and their balance looks good. With some pace in the wickets, they could be a real threat – and they certainly are in

this [white-ball] series.

DS: You played when Bangladesh recorded their most famous Test win at Mount Maunganui. What was that like?

WY: I got fifties in both innings [laughs]. Ebadot [Hossain] took six in the second innings. The conditions weren't what we expected – it was very hot. We had four seamers and Rachin [Ravindra] was our only spinner. It was disappointing, but it serves as a reminder to better assess conditions

and pick a balanced side that can adapt to different conditions.

DS: Winning the World Test Championship – how significant was it?

WY: It meant a lot. It was early in my career, but I was in the squad in Southampton. I suppose the

likes of Tim [Southee], Trent [Boult] and Wags [Neil Wagner] in that bowling attack, along with batters like Kane [Williamson] and Rosco [Ross Taylor]... they've played so much cricket together, and it culminated in winning that World Test Championship. It was thoroughly deserved.

DS: Ricky Ponting spoke about New Zealand's close-knit cricket community. Your thoughts?

WY: I hadn't heard that, but we have six domestic teams, only 16 contracted cricketers per team in the domestic circuit, and 20 contracted national players. So, there are about 120 professional cricketers in New Zealand. There's a lot of information sharing, healthy competition, and strong relationships. Players also bring experience back from franchise cricket, which helps the whole system grow.

****Read full interview on The Daily Star's website**



Mexico lead CONCACAF charge

Teams from the CONCACAF region (North and Central America and the Caribbean) have collectively made 46 World Cup appearances so far. Mexico lead the way with 17 appearances. The United States sit second with 11, while Costa Rica, in third, have featured six times on the world stage.

****Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Confetti rain, Kempes, and the dream of a captive nation'**



Striker Dorielton Gomes once again proved decisive as his early goal helped Bashundhara Kings secure a 1-0 victory over Brothers Union in their Bangladesh Football League fixture at the Bashundhara Kings Arena yesterday. The Brazilian, who took his tally to 14 goals, helped the five-time champions to three-point lead at the top.

PHOTO: BFF



BNP ‘deceiving the nation’

Jamaat ameer says ruling party opposing even its own reform proposals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday accused the BNP of “clearly deceiving the nation” by opposing key state reforms.

“The BNP is opposing every necessary reform required to establish good governance and ensure true independence for the people,” he said, adding that the ruling party is “going against even its own reform proposals and manifesto”.

Shafiqur, who is also the leader of the opposition in parliament, made the comments while presiding over a rally at the capital’s Suhrawardy Udyan, attended by the families of July uprising martyrs and injured activists.

Alleging a shift in BNP’s political stance, Shafiqur said, “They [BNP] have begun to follow the path of so-called fugitive fascists. No matter how hard they try, they cannot become the Awami League; at best, they are a weaker version that once mocked the nation and the opposition.”

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People throng Laldighi Maidan in Chattogram city to watch “Jabbar er Boli Khela” yesterday. A Baishakhi Mela was held on the occasion of this traditional wrestling competition.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Be ‘servants and friends of the people’

PM tells officials

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday urged public administration officials to move beyond a bureaucratic mindset and serve as “servants and friends of people”, saying their integrity, efficiency and accountability are key to the government’s success.

“You are the link between making policies and putting them into action. Your honesty, competence and accountability form one of the key foundations of the government’s success.”

Tarique’s comment came at the inauguration of the new training dormitory building of the Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM) Foundation at its auditorium in Dhaka.

Civil servants play a key role in ensuring the effectiveness, continuity and stability of the state machinery, he said, adding that a strong and accountable administration is essential to building a modern Bangladesh.

The current government is committed to developing merit-based, confident, creative and responsible human



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Beware of political traps, provocations

Tarique warns JCD leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairman and Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday instructed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal to avoid conflict with opposition student groups and not to fall for provocations on campuses.

Amid rising concern within the BNP over campus tensions, Tarique asked JCD central leaders to convey and enforce the directive by visiting educational institutions across the country.

The instructions came at a meeting at the BNP chairperson’s Gulshan office last night, where senior party leaders reviewed the political situation and recent campus incidents. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir and several Chhatra Dal leaders were present at the meeting.

The directive follows recent clashes between Chhatra Dal and Shibir across campuses.

Party insiders said Tarique instructed JCD leaders and activists to act with patience, discipline and caution, warning that any misstep could malign not only the organisation but also the BNP and the government. He also stressed maintaining a peaceful academic environment.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

Palestinians vote amid pall of war

13 more killed ahead of local elections

AFP, Ramallah

Palestinians in the West Bank and central Gaza voted yesterday in municipal elections, the first since the war in Gaza erupted, with low early turnout and a limited political field.

Nearly 1.5 million people are registered to vote in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, as well as 70,000 people in Gaza’s Deir el-Balah area, according to the Ramallah-based Central Elections Commission. Deir el-Balah was chosen as it is one of the few areas where the population has not been massively displaced, he said.

Early AFP footage from Al-Bireh in the West Bank and Deir el-Balah showed voters trickling into the polling stations.

An AFP journalist reported near-empty stations across parts of the West Bank, even as foreign diplomats made their rounds to observe the process.

Most electoral lists are aligned with President Mahmud Abbas’s secular-nationalist Fatah movement or are composed of independents.

Hamas, Fatah’s bitter rival and the ruling power in Gaza, is

absent from the race.

In many municipalities, Fatah-backed lists face off against independents supported by smaller factions such as the Marxist-Leninist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

stagnation and declining legitimacy. Western and regional donors have increasingly tied financial and diplomatic support for the PA to visible reform, particularly in local governance.

Polling in the West Bank



Municipal councils oversee water, sanitation, and local infrastructure but do not enact legislation.

Still, with presidential or legislative elections frozen since 2006, councils have become one of the last remaining democratic mechanisms under the Palestinian Authority.

The PA faces widespread criticism over corruption,

ends at 7:00pm. In Deir el-Balah, stations close at 5:00pm to facilitate counting in daylight because of the lack of electricity in the war-devastated strip, the elections commission told AFP.

Two years of war that started in October 2023 have left swathes of Gaza destroyed and more than 72,000 people dead,

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No need to panic over possible attacks

CTTC says after PHQ alert

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Urging people not to panic over a recent Police Headquarters alert regarding possible extremist attacks on key installations, the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit yesterday said its cyber intelligence team is actively working on the matter.

“We have received the information, and our CTTC cyber intelligence team is working on it. There is no reason to panic,” CTTC Joint Commissioner Munshi Shahabuddin told reporters responding to a query at a press briefing at the DMP media centre.

He, however, declined to provide specific details about any particular group or organisation.

The remarks follow an “urgent and confidential” letter issued by the PHQ on April 23, which alerted law enforcers nationwide of potential attacks by supporters of a banned extremist outfit.

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Bangladesh to overtake India in per capita GDP

Says IMF in projection for 2026

STAR REPORT

When the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released its latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) database on April 14, one data point quickly made its way through financial markets and newsrooms.

Bangladesh is projected to record a higher gross domestic product per capita than India in 2026, measured in current US dollars. The forecast puts Bangladesh at \$2,911 per person against India at \$2,812. The difference is small in absolute terms, but its symbolism is significant.

India’s economy, valued at \$3,916 billion in 2025, is roughly eight times the size of Bangladesh’s \$458 billion. It is also one of the most closely watched growth stories in the world. Yet on this narrow measure, the smaller neighbour appears set to edge ahead.

The reaction in India was swift. Kaushik Basu, former chief economist of the World Bank, described the development as “shocking”. Indian commentators debated whether the figure reflected a deeper structural divergence or merely a statistical quirk.

The answer, as is so often the case with economic data, is: both.

Measured in current dollars, Bangladesh led India in per capita income for seven years from 2018.

India moved ahead in 2025 after the Bangladeshi taka weakened sharply. This is not without precedent.

Bangladesh was also ahead of India in per capita GDP between 1989 and 2002.

India then pulled in front for around 15 years before slipping below Bangladesh in 2018.

The rupee’s own depreciation against the dollar in the subsequent period then swung the comparison back.

According to the latest projections, Bangladesh is set to move ahead in 2026 by roughly \$100 per person.

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Manipur ethnic violence kills 3

AFP, New Delhi

Gun battles between rival ethnic groups in India’s troubled northeastern Manipur state killed three men, police said, the latest unrest in the far-flung region.

Manipur has seen periodic clashes for nearly three years between the predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and the mainly Christian Kuki community in which more than 250 people have been killed.

“In a heavy exchange of fire... three individuals sustained fatal bullet injuries,” Manipur police said in a statement late Friday.

The clashes took place at Mullam village in Ukhrul district, and police did not specify which community the men came from.

“Security measures have been enhanced in the area to prevent further escalation of violence,” police said.

“Operations are still underway.”

Longstanding enmity between the Meitei and Kuki communities revolves around competition for land and public jobs.

Rights activists have accused local leaders of exacerbating ethnic divisions for political gain.

Unrest erupted in 2023, when around 60,000 people were forced to flee their homes, according to government figures.

Trouble eased, but earlier this month, four people, including two children, were killed during an attack by a Kuki group, and a Meitei mob later stormed a paramilitary camp.

On Thursday, 249 Indians from the northeastern states of Manipur and Mizoram -- from the Bnei Menashe

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Hawkers’ stalls in front of the emergency gate of Dhaka Medical College Hospital are making it difficult for ambulances and patients to enter the hospital. Parking of ambulances on the other side of the street worsens the situation. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

6 killed as Russia strikes Ukraine

Zelensky urges more sanctions

AFP, Kyiv

Russian strikes across Ukraine killed at least six people, officials said yesterday, most of them in an attack on a residential building in the eastern city of Dnipro.

The strikes extended nearly daily attacks Russia has launched since starting its invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, with many civilians being killed.

“The Russians’ tactics remain unchanged: attack drones, cruise missiles and a significant amount of ballistic missiles,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

“Most of the targets are ordinary infrastructure in cities. Residential buildings, energy facilities and businesses have been damaged,” he said.

Four people were killed,

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