YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

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Over 90% of July uprising cases still under probe

Nearly 2 years on, victims' families wait for closure, while those falsely implicated continue to suffer

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Nearly two years after the July mass uprising, police have not been able to complete investigations into more than 90 percent of the 1,855 cases filed over killings and violence during the uprising, deepening concern and frustration among victims' families and those falsely accused in many of the cases.

Of the cases filed across the country, 799 were lodged over murders and the rest 1,056 on other charges, including attempted murder, according to the Police Headquarters (PHQ).

Police officials said probes have been completed in 176 cases (about 9.5 percent), with charge sheets submitted in 156 cases (8.4 percent).

In Dhaka alone, 905 cases, including 555 on murder charges have been filed with various police stations, and investigations have been completed in 43 cases (4.75 percent), according to court documents and police.

Case documents show that of the 43 cases, 24 saw submission of charge sheets, while police have submitted final reports in 19 cases, including 13 over murders, clearing all the accused of criminal charges.

Court documents show that at least 24 cases have so far been filed with various police stations in Dhaka city against 77 journalists on different charges, including murder, attempted murder, and unlawful assembly linked to the uprising.

When asked, several officials at the PHQ said it is taking considerable time to complete probes as a huge number of people were named as accused in these cases.

Legal experts said the slow progress in investigations reflects both the complexity of the cases and weaknesses in the country's criminal justice system.

"Filing of a large number of cases immediately after a mass uprising is not unusual, but investigations must be conducted with due diligence and completed within a reasonable timeframe," said Ishrat Hasan, a lawyer at the Supreme Court.

"If probes remain stalled for years, both the victims and those falsely accused suffer, ultimately undermining public confidence in the justice system," she noted.

Ishrat also pointed out that many of the cases were filed accusing a large number of unnamed people, which made investigations more complex and time-consuming.

"Ensuring accountability for the killings and safeguarding those wrongly accused are equally important for upholding the rule of law... If the authorities fail to ensure transparent, impartial, and timely investigations, the justice process will become ineffective."

She further said the authorities should prioritise scrutinising the cases, separating weak or politically motivated complaints from genuine allegations.

Meanwhile, thousands of people, including dozens of journalists, have been waiting for the disposal of the cases, with many claiming that they were not involved in the killings or acts of violence during the uprising.

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Farmers in the haor regions of Kishoreganj are racing against time to finish their harvesting activities amid fears of inclement weather in the coming days. On the fields, harvested paddy is threshed, washed, boiled, dried in the sun, broken into rice, and the straw piled to dry in one place. The photo was taken in the Majlishpur area of Nikli upazila. PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ

'I just want to see her face one last time'

Bristy's father pleads

STAR REPORT

Nahida Sultana Bristy, a Bangladeshi student at the University of South Florida, was still missing yesterday as her family demanded the swift return of her body after investigators informed them early Friday that she is feared dead.

Two Bangladeshi PhD students, Zamil Limon and Nahida Bristy, both aged 27, had been reported missing on April 17. Limon's body was recovered on Friday from the Howard Frankland Bridge.

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Coal overtakes gas in power generation

Declining gas output shifts Bangladesh's energy balance for the first time

ASIFUR RAHMAN

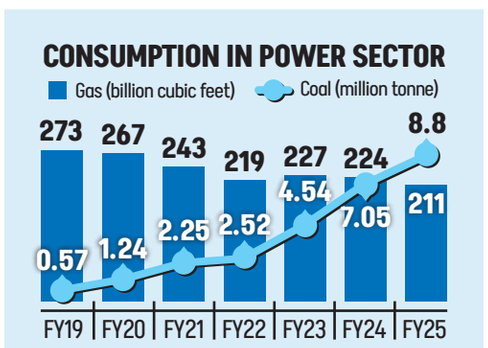
Bangladesh's coal-fired power plants have, for the first time, outpaced gas-based generation, marking a major shift in the country's power mix amid declining domestic gas supply and stagnant LNG imports.

Natural gas has historically been the largest primary fuel source for electricity. But falling output from local fields, limited imports of liquified natural gas (LNG), and rising use of imported coal have changed the picture.

According to Power Development Board (PDB) data, coal-fired plants supplied the highest share of electricity after yesterday's daytime peak at 12:00pm, reaching 5,185MW by 3:00pm.

Gas-based plants produced 4,915MW at that time. Total generation stood at 13,109MW before dropping during evening peak hours due to lower demand amid rain.

Bangladesh's installed power generation capacity currently stands at 28,494MW, of which 12,194MW (43%) is from gas and 7,629MW (27%) from coal. However, shortages in gas, coal, and furnace oil mean many plants remain underutilised.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

WASHINGTON PRESS GALA SHOOTING

Gunman planned to target Trump officials

Says US attorney general; 'lone wolf' shooter arrested

AFP, *Washington*

Investigators yesterday said the gunman who tried to storm a gala dinner attended by US President Donald Trump planned to target top government officials, as scrutiny grew over the event's security.

Trump, who was rushed out of the hotel ballroom in Washington by Secret Service agents, posted surveillance camera footage of the gunman attempting to sprint past a security checkpoint as guards drew their weapons.

After an exchange of gunfire, the suspect was detained at the scene and was being questioned Sunday before he is due to appear in court on Monday.

"He's not actively cooperating. I expect that he will be formally charged tomorrow morning in federal court in Washington," acting US Attorney General Todd Blanche told CBS's "Face The Nation."

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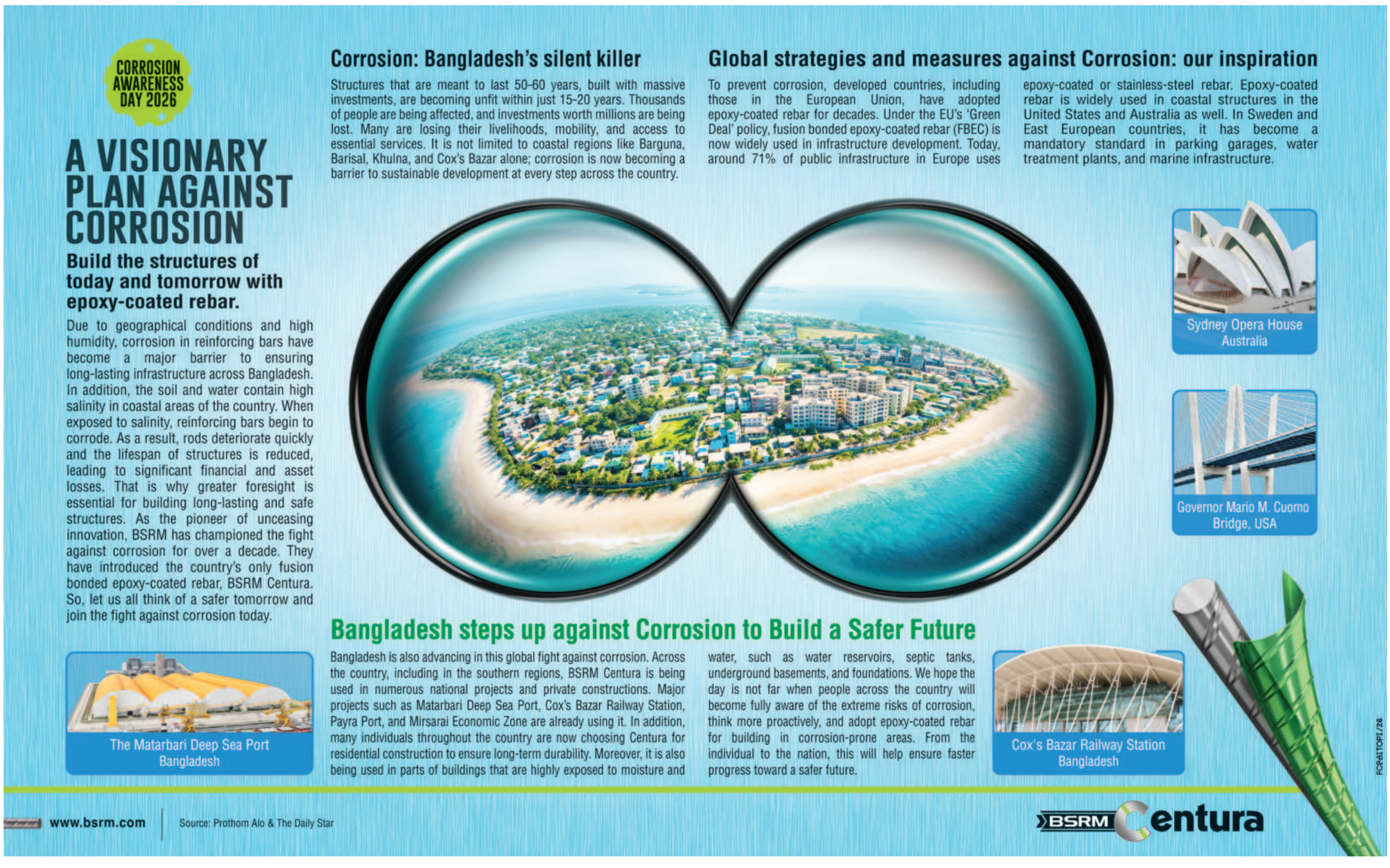

MY DHAKA

DHAKA'S HEATWAVE
Between Lilies and Migraines

RBR

Like the song "Summer Nights" from the '80s blockbuster "Grease", I keep humming my own parody these days: Summer lovin', had me a headache. Summer headaches happened so fast. I popped a pill, hoping for relief. But the pain stayed, beyond belief. Summer days, drifting away... to uh-oh, those summer migraines!

A pat on my back for rhyming -- or maybe thanks to these AI times for tweaking it. But let's not linger there. Instead, let me take you back to the current oppressive heatwave -- the headaches, the waves of humidity, and the embarrassing sweat -- that make daily life in Dhaka feel unbearable.

Before diving into the intensity of the day's temperature, I pause to reflect on the intoxicating scents of summer flowers. Kamini, or Orange Jasmine, with its heavily scented, white, star-shaped blooms and glossy foliage, fills the air with a heady fragrance. Then there are lilies -- showy, exotic, dramatic -- gracing gardens from early to late summer. Their bright colours and delicate shapes are nature's gift, offering a sense of calm despite the scorching heat.

Summer in Bangladesh, from late April to mid-June, brings a vibrant display of heat-resistant flowers: Krishnochura with its fiery red canopy, Sonalu with golden cascades, and Jarul with purple blossoms. These blooms thrive in oppressive humidity, painting Dhaka's streets in colour.

Many summer flowers are nocturnal, their white petals glowing in moonlight, their hypnotic fragrance attracting birds and bees. These ethereal blooms are why I confess my love for tropical summers in Dhaka, urging you [to also see the charm of sunny days and breezy nights.

PHOTOS: FIROZ AHMED

Even though the weather forecast says rain is expected over the next week, the heatwave is a devastating dampener to this euphoria.

I love summer, but not the heatwave. Much of this unforgiving heat is our own doing: rapid urbanisation has created a localised heat trap. Dhaka's dense concrete, asphalt roads, and glass buildings absorb heat during the day and release it slowly at night, preventing the city from cooling down. Add to that our near-constant use of air conditioners, which vent waste heat into the streets, raising outdoor temperatures even further.

The loss of green spaces -- once the city's natural cooling agents -- only worsens the problem. Combined with seasonal weather patterns, the result is this torrid spell. A short Kalboishakhi storm may sweep through, but the suffocating humidity that follows often feels worse. Sometimes I wonder if heatwaves are a preview of what hell might feel like.

Beyond frangipani and romantic visions of summer, the reality is harsh: heatwaves and extreme humidity are suffocating, making city life nearly unbearable. Right now, Dhaka is caught in a mild-to-moderate spell, but the impact feels far heavier.

During these stifling days, caring for ourselves, animals, and birds is crucial. People must drink plenty of fluids -- coconut water, lemon water, oral saline -- and wear light cotton clothes while avoiding direct sun during peak hours. Meals should be light, with fruits and vegetables instead of oily or spicy food, and sunscreen or hats are essential against UV rays. Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable, so they should remain indoors in shaded, cool areas.

Pets and street animals need shade and fresh water too. Never leave them in parked vehicles or force them to walk on hot pavements that burn their paws. Birds also suffer, so bowls of clean water and food in shaded balconies or rooftops can help them survive, while cages should never be left in direct sunlight.

Heatstroke is a serious risk for all living beings, with symptoms like dizziness, vomiting, headache, and fainting. Immediate cooling and medical attention are vital. In short, staying hydrated, seeking shade, eating light, and protecting against the sun are essential steps to safeguard humans, animals, and birds during this severe heatwave.

FROM PRESS GALLERY

JS scraps duty-free car benefit for MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed the Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Allowances) (Amendment) Bill, 2026, scrapping the duty-free car benefit for MPs to reduce state expenditure, increase transparency and accountability, and ensure equality at par with citizens.

Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman moved the bill in parliament, and it was passed by voice vote. The cabinet had approved the draft on Thursday.

The bill abolishes Section 3C of the Members of Parliament (Remuneration and Allowances) Order, 1973, which outlines the pay and perks of Bangladesh's MPs.

Section 3C had stated that an MP is entitled to import one car, microbus or SUV free of customs

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Fuel rationing for emergency vehicles lifted: Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman told parliament yesterday that fuel rationing imposed on emergency response agencies and service providers has been withdrawn.

"Fuel restrictions on police, law-enforcing agencies, ambulances, the fire service and others engaged in emergency services have been lifted. We made this decision two days ago. I hope there will be no further problems," the prime minister said in response to a point of order raised by Monirul Haque Chowdhury, MP for Cumilla-6, in parliament.

Earlier, during the point of order, MP Monirul Haque Chowdhury referred to the killing of customs officer Bullet Bairagi in Cumilla.

He said, "On his way home, he [Bullet Bairagi] was murdered and left abandoned. I called the police, but they said they were facing a fuel crisis, so their duty hours had been reduced and they could not stay that late."

Demanding the immediate withdrawal of police fuel rationing, he warned, "Otherwise, a law and order crisis may emerge, obstructing people's ability to move freely and safely."

Over 90% of July uprising cases

FROM PAGE 1

Court documents show that at least 24 cases have so far been filed with various police stations in Dhaka city against 77 journalists on different charges, including murder, attempted murder, and unlawful assembly linked to the uprising.

Of the journalists, Shyamal Dutta, former editor of Bhorer Kagoj; Mozammel Haque Babu, former managing director and editor-in-chief of Ekattor TV; Farzana Rupa, ex-principal correspondent at the TV channel; and Shakil Ahmed, former head of news at the same TV station, are now behind bars in connection with murder cases.

Seeking anonymity, a journalist, named in a murder case with Jatrabari Police Station, said the accusation of his involvement in killings during a protest on August 5, 2024, came as a shock to him.

"I knew nothing about the incident. I learnt about it from social media... This false case has taken a heavy toll on me over the last one and a half years," the journalist, who works for a national daily, told The Daily Star.

Expressing frustration over the lack of progress in the probe, he said the prolonged legal battle not only affected his professional life but also left him in a state of uncertainty.

Another journalist, Kazi Nazrul Islam from Shariatpur, has been living in fear since he was implicated in an attempted murder case filed with the New Market Police Station in September 2024.

His fears grew after he observed that bail was rarely granted in cases linked to the uprising.

"I underwent stomach surgery at a Dhaka hospital on July 2, 2024. Following the doctor's advice, I had been on bed rest at my Shariatpur home since then. Yet, I was made an accused in a case filed overan uprising-relatedincident on August 1, 2024, in the capital," said Nazrul, a correspondent of Bangla daily "Jaijaidin" in Shariatpur.

"This case has severely affected me both mentally and financially. I don't know when I will be cleared of it as the investigation drags on," he added.

Lawyer Tariqul Islam, who has been defending a number of the accused in Dhaka courts, said many individuals with no political affiliation were arbitrarily arrested.

"They were listed as unidentified suspects under vague or fabricated charges and forced to remain in jail for months without trial... Such practices obstruct the course of justice and constitute a grave violation of fundamental human rights," he noted.

- **1,855** cases filed with police stations across the country
- **799** of them lodged over murders, rest on other charges
- Investigation completed in **176** cases
- Charge sheet submitted in **156** cases

VICTIMS' FAMILIES FRUSTRATED

For Fatema Akter, a college student, the wait for justice has compounded her grief.

She is the eldest daughter of Mohammad Habib, 45, who was killed in Jatrabari while taking part in a protest on July 20, 2024.

More than a year and a half passed since a murder case was filed with Jatrabari Police Station over her father's killing, but there has been no visible progress in the investigation.

"We are still waiting for justice," said Fatema, venting her frustration.

"My father was the sole breadwinner of our six-member family... We are facing severe financial hardship. Now my brother is the only earning member, but his income is not enough to support the family," she said.

Like her, Nurul Amin Mollah from Patuakhali has been waiting to see justice served.

His 23-year-old son, Jihad Hossain, a master's student at Kabi Nazrul Government College, was shot dead in Shonir Akhra area during a protest on July 19, 2024.

Nearly two months later, Nurul filed a murder case with Jatrabari Police Station against 84 people, but police have yet to submit a probe report, according to court records.

"I don't know what has happened to the case. We only sought justice... All we can do now is wait," Nurul told The Daily Star.

When contacted, AHM Sahadat Hossaine, assistant inspector general (media and public relations) at the PHQ, said the July uprising-related cases are highly sensitive, and that investigations are taking more time than usual due to large numbers of accused in the cases.

"The priority is to verify evidence -- such as video footage, digital data, witness testimonies -- and submit charge sheets that will hold up during trial," he said, adding that police are working to complete investigations as quickly as possible.

In reply to a query, he said, "Allegations of harassment of innocent individuals, including journalists, are being taken seriously. Police are verifying cases involving erroneous or insufficiently supported accusations. Legal measures are being taken to provide relief where appropriate."

Coal overtakes gas in power generation

FROM PAGE 1

PDB's summer plan projects up to 5,130MW from gas and 5,700MW from coal during peak hours.

Three coal plants under maintenance or facing shortages are expected to raise output by early May. This is likely to make coal's dominance regular.

Badrul Imam, honorary professor at Dhaka University's Department of Geology, said the country's increasing dependence on imported LNG and coal is the cumulative result of years of weak focus on domestic gas exploration, development, and production.

"The country historically relied on its own indigenous gas resources, which had long supported power generation at relatively low cost, but insufficient investment and policy attention gradually pushed the energy sector toward imported fuels," he told The Daily Star.

"Imported LNG is expensive, while coal carries environmental costs despite being relatively cheaper than LNG in some cases," he said.

"The current situation, where coal-based generation has overtaken gas-fired power generation, should be seen as the consequence of failing to adequately explore and develop local gas reserves over many years.

Imam also said Bangladesh still has significant hydrocarbon potential, but exploration requires sustained policy commitment, investment, and technical effort.

CHEAPER FUEL

In FY 2024-25, gas-fired electricity cost Tk 7.09 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), coal Tk 13.20 kWh, and liquid fuel Tk 27.39 kWh, PDB data shows.

Experts said gas costs are calculated using domestic prices, while LNG imports now meet much of the demand.

So, when LNG import costs are factored in, the price of power from gas should be much higher than what PDB data showed, they said.

Data from the country's lone state-owned gas supplier Petrobangla shows it supplied 2,614 million cubic feet of gas (MMcf) yesterday, including 935 MMcf from imported LNG. The power sector received 942MMcf.

Prof M Tamim, vice chancellor of Independent University, Bangladesh, said maximising power production from coal is a strategic necessity for Bangladesh in the short term.

The primary driver for this is cost, as coal remains significantly cheaper than LNG and liquid fuels, he said.

"Despite often being criticised as a dirty fuel, coal must remain the backbone of the country's baseload supply until renewable energy or alternative fuels can be deployed at scale," he added.

Baseload electricity is the minimum amount of electric power that must be supplied to a grid 24/7 to meet constant demand.

Several large coal-fired plants in the country, including Payra, Rampal, and SS Power, along with supplier Adani in India, are now crucial for Bangladesh's baseload electricity generation.

The change in fuel mix in the country's power sector comes at a time when globally, except in Asia, countries are depending more on renewables than coal for electricity generation.

According to London-based think tank Ember, renewables accounted for around 34 percent of global electricity generation in 2025, surpassing coal's share for the first time in modern history.

Power production from coal fell by 63 Terawatt-hour globally to 33 percent of global electricity generation last year, marking its first decline since 2020, Ember said in its Global Electricity Review 2026.

Gunman planned to target Trump officials

FROM PAGE 1

"We do believe, based upon just a very preliminary start to understanding what happened, that he was targeting members of the administration."

Blanche added no further motive was known for the attack, confirming the suspect -- who was armed with a shotgun, handgun and knives -- was staying at the Washington Hilton hotel where the black-tie dinner was held on Saturday evening.

"We believe that he traveled by train from Los Angeles to Chicago, and then from Chicago to Washington," Blanche said. "It appears he purchased these firearms in the past couple years."

Attendees dove under tables in chaotic scenes as Secret Service agents swarmed into the glitzy White House Correspondents' Association dinner, held annually in the US capital.

Crowded into the ballroom were Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, Vice President JD Vance, several cabinet members and top lawmakers, and hundreds of guests in black tie.

Trump said at a hastily arranged late-night news conference at the White House that he first thought the noise was a tray being dropped, before realizing it was gunfire. He said he hoped the media gala would be rescheduled within a month.

"They seem to think he was a lone wolf, and I feel that too," the president said. One officer was shot at close range in his safety vest and appeared to be not seriously harmed.

Trump added that the venue was "not a particularly secure" facility, as questions swirled about the president's safety.

An AFP photographer saw FBI tactical agents on Sunday evening entering a two-story, brown house in Torrance, California associated with the suspect.

Multiple US news outlets identified him as 31-year-old Cole Tomas Allen from the southwestern Los Angeles suburb.

'I just want to see her face one last time'

FROM PAGE 1

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. Despite being a non-student, Hisham lived with Limon in an apartment on Avalon Heights -- a student housing complex north of USF's Tampa campus.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Bristy's father, Jahir Uddin Akon, recalled his last conversation with her on April 16.

"Father, I am attending classes at the university. I am busy with lab work. Around 5:00pm, we will go shopping. I will go with a friend," said Akon, an insurance company employee.

"There was so much joy in her voice. She was supposed to return home in July. She used to buy things for herself and for us whenever she found time," he said over the phone.

Now, he says, that voice is gone.

"No one will call me 'father' anymore. I used to call my daughter 'Ma'. I will not be able to call anyone 'Ma' again," he said, his voice breaking.

"I have only one demand now: find my daughter's body and bring it back. I just want to see her face one last time."

According to Akon, Bristy went missing shortly after receiving a phone call from a man identified as Hisham Saleh Abugharbieh. She went downstairs to speak with him and did not return.

"I had many dreams for my daughter," he said. "She was very good in her studies. She went to the United States to fulfil her dreams. With her, I have lost my dreams as well."

Bristy graduated in chemistry and chemical engineering from Noakhali Science and Technology University and later enrolled in postgraduate studies at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet). She secured a full scholarship to pursue a doctoral degree in chemical engineering at the University of South Florida and left Dhaka on August 12 last year.

Her family, originally from Madaripur, has lived in Mirpur-11 in Dhaka for over two decades.

"We want justice. We cannot accept this death. We demand punishment for those responsible and the return of her body," said Bristy's cousin, Tuli Akon.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed Islam yesterday said Bangladesh wants the US to ensure those responsible are brought to justice.

"We demand a prompt and thorough investigation into the matter so that those involved are identified and brought to justice," she said, describing the double murder as deeply unfortunate.

Shama Obaed said she personally spoke on Saturday with Bristy's brother and Limon's father.

"We are in contact with all the relevant agencies, including the Bangladesh Mission in Washington, the US Department of State, and the FBI. We have spoken to both families and will provide all possible cooperation from our side," she told reporters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

USF authorities have stated that both students had health insurance through their student status that includes repatriation coverage.

In a joint statement, the families of Limon and Bristy urged USF and relevant authorities to ensure Islamic funeral rites for the two victims; pursue swift justice with the highest punishment for the accused; and investigate alleged security lapses at Avalon Heights -- including roommate screening, inadequate CCTV coverage, weak security measures, and the handling of prior complaints.

They also demanded the return of all personal belongings, settlement of pending financial dues, support for the bereaved families, and the establishment of a permanent memorial at the university in honour of the two victims.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Consulate in Miami is actively working with local funeral authorities and all concerned parties to repatriate Limon's body to Bangladesh as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, the embassy is maintaining regular contact with relevant US authorities to obtain more information regarding Nahida Bristy.

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Number of July martyrs debated in parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader Shafiqur Rahman and State Minister for Shipping Razib Ahsan locked horns at the parliament yesterday over the number of July martyrs.

Speaking on the motion to thank the president for his speech, Razib said at least three MPs mentioned the number of July martyrs. "One claimed that 844 people were martyred, another said the number was over 1,000, and yet another mentioned 1,400 martyrs."

He said the health ministry had initially reported -- based on hospital sources -- that more than 1,400 were martyred, and even UN agencies echoed that figure.

Later, however, the liberation war ministry issued a gazette that cancelled previous gazettes and published a final list of 844 martyrs.

He said the leader of the opposition, Shafiqur Rahman, at a programme on April 14, 2026, said he had visited homes of 1,200 martyrs out of 1,400.

"But the government gazette lists 844. How could you have visited 1,200 homes out of 1,400? I cannot understand this.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

A delegation from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday visited The Daily Star office to see the devastation following the arson attack on the office on December 18, 2025. The delegation included Benoit GUIDEE, director for Asia and Oceania (Indo-pacific) at the ministry; David PENEAU, director Asia Desk; Frédéric INZA, Chargé d'Affaires a.i., French Embassy Dhaka; and Christian Bec, political counselor at the embassy. Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, briefed the delegation during the visit.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

FUEL CRISIS

BNP considering campaigns to counter opposition

Urges govt to curb hoarding and ensure steady supply

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Anticipating protests from opposition parties over the ongoing fuel crisis across the country, ruling BNP leaders are considering launching counter political campaigns while urging the administration to step up vigilance against fuel oil hoarding.

With people already under pressure because of the high cost of essentials and fuel, the government must keep fuel supply as normal as possible, take steps to prevent panic, and explain the real situation clearly, they also said.

They warned that if the situation is allowed to slide, public anger may pave the way for the opposition to grab political space.

Although the government says the country has fuel stock for May and while a reserve for June and July is being secured, BNP leaders said the steps taken so far have not cleared the confusion regarding the fuel situation.

Senior BNP leaders discussed the issue last week, as the party assessed the political fallout of the situation.

According to sources at the Prime Minister's Office, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman was dissatisfied with

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

'Don't allow fascists to rear their heads'

State minister for info warns opposition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Yasser Khan Choudhury yesterday cautioned the opposition not to invite danger through their actions in a way that may allow fascists to raise their heads in Bangladesh once again.

He made these remarks yesterday during a discussion on the thanksgiving motion regarding the President's speech in the Jatiya Sangsad.

Yasser Khan Choudhury emphasised that a fate similar to that of the Awami League government should not befall the current administration. At this point, members of the opposition signalled their support by thumping their desks.

Addressing the opposition, the state minister then said, "You must also be mindful. You must ensure that your fate does not end up the same way."

Yasser Khan Choudhury

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WOMEN IN POLITICS

Move beyond tokenism, ensure real empowerment

Speakers urge parties at roundtable by Star, UNDP Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday urged political parties to move beyond "numerical inclusion" and ensure meaningful political empowerment for women by reforming internal nomination processes and dismantling structural barriers.

They said the upcoming local government elections would be a critical litmus test for Bangladesh's democratic journey, offering an entry point for grassroots female leadership following a sharp decline in directly elected women in the 13th national parliamentary election.

The discussion, titled "Closing the Gaps: Strengthening Women's Voice in National and Local Elections", was organised by The Daily Star and UNDP Bangladesh at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

Sharmin Islam, gender team leader at UNDP Bangladesh, presented an overview of the current landscape, noting that the recent national election marked a historic low in women's direct representation.

Despite high voter turnout, she said the number of directly elected women dropped to a record low

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

compared to the previous five elections.

"Even after decades of female leadership at the top, nearly 99 percent of people in Bangladesh hold some form of gender bias," she said, citing the UNDP Gender Social Norms Index. "About 70 percent still believe men make better political leaders than women."

Andrés Del Castillo, chief technical adviser to the UN Ballot Project, stressed international concern over the shrinking space for women in politics.

"The low level of participation is a red signal. It is time to act," he said.

Dr Selim Jahan, professorial fellow at BIGD, highlighted the lack of women in the candidate pool.

"In a country of 180 million people where 51 parties participated, 41 parties could not find a single qualified female candidate," he said.

He described a "tripartite barrier" that marginalises women as candidates, activists, and voters,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Ecnec orders a study on relocation of Secretariat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has asked the housing and public works ministry to conduct a study on relocation of the Secretariat to Sher-e-Bangla Nagar instead of building a new 21-storey high-rise at its current site.

The directive came at yesterday's Ecnec meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) was asked to assist in carrying out the study within four weeks, said sources at the planning ministry.

A proposal to demolish the old Cabinet building and build a Tk 649 crore 21-storey tower was placed at the meeting but not approved, as concerns were raised it would worsen traffic congestion in the area.

Relocating the Secretariat to Sher-e-Bangla Nagar -- the former trade fair ground near parliament -- was discussed as an alternative. Officials noted that such a move would ease ministers' travel and allow the current Secretariat compound to be repurposed for district

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

The woman found dead on riverbank was strangled

Say doctors who conducted autopsy; no signs of rape found

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Doctors who conducted an autopsy on the bodies of an unidentified woman and a newborn recovered from the Louhajang River bank in Tangail's Mirzapur said the woman had been strangled to death.

Six days after the bodies were recovered, police have yet to identify them.

Alamgir Hossain, residential medical officer of Tangail General Hospital, told The Daily Star yesterday that the autopsy found evidence of strangulation but no signs of rape.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

HC gives taskforce six more months to complete probe

STAR REPORT

The High Court yesterday granted the government-formed taskforce six more months to submit its full report on the killings of journalist couple Sagar Sarwar and Meherun Runi.

The bench of Justice Fatema Najib and Justice AFM Saiful Karim passed the order while hearing a writ petition filed in 2012 by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, seeking a fair probe and justice.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

RESERVED SEAT

Appeal filed with EC against BNP nominee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An appeal has been filed with the Election Commission (EC) challenging the nomination of BNP candidate Madhabi Marma for a reserved women's parliamentary seat.

Chandra Chakma, central joint secretary of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, alleged that Madhabi is still serving as a member of the Bandarban Hill District Council, which she says disqualifies her from contesting.

Appeals over nomination papers were submitted at the EC office in Agargaon from 9:00am to 4:00pm yesterday.

After filing the appeal, Chandra said Madhabi submitted her nomination on April 21 without resigning from an "office of profit" or completing the required legal procedures. "This makes her nomination invalid. I have requested the Chief Election Commissioner to cancel it," she said.

Chandra also noted that she had sought BNP's nomination for the same reserved seat.

Denying the allegation, Madhabi said she resigned from the council on April 20. "I have submitted copies of my resignation to the relevant authorities," she told The Daily Star.

On whether the resignation was mentioned in her EC affidavit, she said the form had no requirement for such information.

Bandarban Hill District Council officials said Madhabi submitted her resignation on April 20, but it was formally accepted yesterday.

Executive Officer Md Abul Monsur said he received the resignation copy yesterday afternoon but could not confirm when it took effect.

The EC has set April 21 as the deadline for nomination submissions.

Safety risks at Gazipur BRT station raise concern

Missing lifts, unsafe stairs leave passengers exposed at Chandana Chowrasta

PHOTO: STAR

MONJURUL HAQUE, *Gazipur*

At Chandana Chowrasta in Gazipur, one of the country's busiest intersections, a newly built Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station is raising serious safety concerns due to the absence of lifts and inadequate safe access.

Despite being designed to ease congestion and improve commuter experience, the multi-tier station remains partially unusable, with key safety features yet to be installed, according to on-site observations.

The two passenger lifts are still not in place, leaving upper levels largely inaccessible. Commuters -- particularly the elderly, women and children -- are forced to use staircases that lack proper railings.

Parts of the elevated structure also have inadequate barriers, increasing the risk of falls.

Locals said buses frequently stop at unauthorised points near the station, disrupting movement and adding to safety risks.

In some cases, people are seen gathering on elevated sections of the station to view the surroundings due to inadequate monitoring, raising further concerns.

Emarat Hossain, a garment worker from Bason, said he narrowly avoided an accident while travelling with his children.

"The lift shafts are still empty, and the stairs are unsafe. Installing lifts and proper railings is urgently needed," he said.

A police officer, requesting anonymity, said he nearly fell while on duty during Eid operations due to the absence of railings.

Shafiul Alam, president of the Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers Federation's Gazipur unit, said workers are facing significant difficulties due to the lack of safe access.

"Women and elderly commuters are suffering the most," he said, calling for immediate installation of lifts and improved passenger management.

Frustration over the delayed BRT project has also triggered protests.

On April 13, hundreds of students and residents staged a human chain and blocked roads at Board Bazar, demanding safer infrastructure and faster progress.

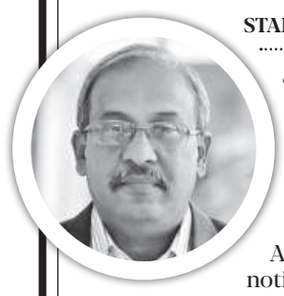
Faruq Hossain Khan, a local political leader, said the slow pace of the project and lack of safe crossings have contributed to frequent accidents in the area.

Gazipur City Corporation Chief Executive Officer Sohel Hasan said the authorities are aware of the problem and will take steps to address safety risks.

"We will inform the Roads and Highways Department and also take measures from our side if needed. Public safety is the priority," he said, adding that officials will inspect the site soon.

Attempts to contact Rezaul Karim, project director in charge of the Gazipur section of the BRT project, by phone were unsuccessful as he did not receive the calls.

Syed Abdal Ahmed principal info officer of PID



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalist leader Syed Abdal Ahmed has been appointed as the principal information officer (PIO) of the Press Information Department (PID) on a contractual basis.

The Ministry of Public Administration issued a notification in this regard yesterday.

According to the notification, Syed Abdal Ahmed has been appointed to the post in Grade-1 (Secretary status) for one year from the date of joining.

The appointment is subject to the condition that he severs all ties with any other profession, business, or any government, semi-government, or private organisation.

Syed Abdal Ahmed is currently the executive editor of the Daily Amar Desh and previously served as the general secretary of the Jatiya Press Club.

He also served as a member of the Media Reform Commission during the past interim government.

SCHOOL FEEDING ROW

Govt orders action as students fall sick

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to take swift and strict action after several primary school students reportedly fell ill after consuming food under the school feeding programme in Chapainawabganj and Madaripur.

The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education said its attention was drawn to a recent media report titled "Irregularities in school feeding project: Children falling sick after eating substandard rotten food".

According to the report, several students in primary schools in Chapainawabganj Sadar and Madaripur Sadar upazilas fell ill after consuming

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HC gives taskforce six more

FROM PAGE 3

Attorney General Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal sought the extension, telling the court the investigation is in its final stage, but investigators have been unable to reach key individuals involved at the time of the killings after August 5, 2024.

"The delay in completing such a murder investigation is very painful," he said.

He also informed the court that a progress report has been submitted through the Supreme Court registrar general's office.

Advocate Mohammad Shishir Manir, representing the case informant, urged the court to allow only three months and to summon taskforce officials to explain the delay.

Writ petitioner's lawyer Manzill Murshid prayed for the progress report to be submitted by affidavit so lawyers can review it.

About one and a half years ago, the High Court directed the interim government to form a taskforce and submit its report within six months.

However, Md Mustafa Kamal, additional inspector general of police and chief of the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), who heads the taskforce, recently said there has been no significant progress.

Earlier probes by the Detective Branch and Rapid Action Battalion also failed to identify the killers or submit a full report.

Sagar, news editor of Maasranga TV, and Runi, senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were murdered in their West Rajabazar flat on February 11, 2012. Runi's brother filed a case the next day without naming any suspects.

Despite a pledge by then home minister Sahara Khatun to arrest the killers within 48 hours, more than 14 years on, the case remains unresolved.

Earlier this month, a Dhaka court deferred submission of the investigation report for the 125th time, setting May 7 as the next date.

The High Court had previously criticised the taskforce for failing to complete the probe, questioning how long it would take to finish an investigation that has drawn nationwide attention.

The court had earlier granted multiple extensions, including a six-month deadline that expired on March 31 last year.

Move beyond

FROM PAGE 3

adding that many women are unable to vote independently due to male household control.

ActionAid Country Director Farah Kabir said although female voter turnout has historically been high, the 2026 electoral cycle reflected a "chilling effect", with right-wing forces restricting women's participation and limiting female candidates.

She called for institutionalised solidarity and a mentorship mandate within parties, along with alumni networks to support aspiring women candidates.

Stressing that political parties must end the excuse of "candidate scarcity", she said, "Political parties have to take responsibility to bring in women so that in five years' time we are not having the same conversation."

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaed said women's participation would remain limited unless political party mindsets change.

She noted that women cannot compete in a "rough" political environment without equal financial backing and suggested parties invest in potential candidates well ahead of elections.

Calling for structural inclusion, she urged ensuring women's representation at all levels, from ward to district committees, proposing at least ten women per committee.

She also said patriarchal norms, political violence and family resistance require sustained institutional pressure for meaningful change.

Samantha Sharmin, senior joint convener of the NCP, criticised the Election Commission, saying it was largely limited to administrative work.

She said the EC lacks both research capacity and the will to enforce the mandatory 33 percent women's representation in party committees.

"Even where women are included in decision-making bodies, key decisions are often taken informally in male-dominated spaces," she said, calling for greater accountability of party leaders.

Taslima Akhter, a Dhaka-12 candidate, said identity-based politics often undermines women's professional merit, reducing them to labels such as wife, daughter, or sister.

She urged the media and society to focus on women's achievements instead.

Mohammad Moin Uddin Khan, joint secretary at the EC Secretariat, said while the Representation of the People Order mandates 33 percent women's representation, there are no penalties for non-compliance.

"We need legal instruments or court orders to enforce these quotas," he said.

Razequzzaman Ratan, joint secretary of BASAD, called for a broader social movement to demand fair representation and proposed a convention of women who have contested elections over the past 35 years.

Sonali Dayaratne, deputy resident representative of UNDP Bangladesh, stressed the need to move from identifying problems to implementing solutions, advocating a merit-based system instead of reliance on political dynasties.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam said despite nearly three decades of female leadership at the top, there has been no proportional improvement in women's broader political participation.

"It is clear that simply placing women in positions is not enough; the mindset must also change," he said.

He also pledged the newspaper's full support for the cause through editorials and continued coverage.

Among others, Dhaka University Gender Studies Professor Tania Haque, UN Women programme manager Tapati Saha, Democracy International senior director Lipika Biswas, and Jamuna TV foreign affairs editor Mahfuz Mishu spoke at the event, moderated by Tanjim Ferdous, head of strategic partnership at The Daily Star.

Ecnec orders study

FROM PAGE 3

administration and court offices from Old Dhaka, reducing congestion and improving court operations.

Following the discussions, ECNEC instructed that a comparative study be conducted before reconsidering the high-rise proposal.

Meanwhile, the meeting approved extensions for three projects -- each for the fifth time -- prompting the prime minister to form a committee led by the cabinet secretary to investigate why repeated delays were necessary.

One of the projects, widening a district road between Barisal and Patuakhali, was launched in July 2018 at Tk 302 crore and scheduled for completion in June 2021. Its deadline has now been extended to December 2026, with costs rising by Tk 17 crore.

Another project to upgrade the Barisal-Bhola-Lakshmipur district road, taken up in March 2019 at Tk 302 crore, has seen its cost escalate to Tk 502 crore. Its deadline has been pushed to June 2030.

The Goma Bridge over the Rangamati River in Barisal, initiated in July 2018 at Tk 57 crore, was supposed to be completed by June 2024. The deadline has now been extended to June 2028, with costs rising to Tk 92 crore.

In total, ECNEC approved 14 new and revised projects yesterday involving an expenditure of Tk 13,445 crore.

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NOTICE FOR EXTENSION OF SUBMISSION DEADLINE

Ref. Request for Proposal (RFP) Grounds Development Works at National Cricket Ground (NCG), Purbachal, Dhaka

Bangladesh Cricket Board

Ref: BCB/Grounds/T&P/Grounds Development Works-NCG/2026/366

Date: 27th April, 2026

EXTENSION OF RFP SUBMISSION DEADLINE

This is to inform all prospective bidders that the proposal submission deadline for the tender invitation issued by the Bangladesh Cricket Board in national dailies vide **Tender Reference No. BCB/Grounds/T&P/Ground Development Works-NCG/2026/206 dated 16th March 2026, and BCB/Grounds/T&P/Grounds Development Works-NCG/2026/323 dated 13th April, 2026** regarding the Grounds Development Works at National Cricket Ground (NCG), Purbachal, Dhaka, has been extended.

Upon due consideration, the board has decided to extend the submission deadline for **02 (two) weeks,** which was primarily scheduled for April 12, 2026. Henceforth, the revised submission deadline for the sealed proposal submission is **May 18, 2026, until 12:00 p.m.,** and the last tender schedule selling date is **May 17, 2026, until 04:00 p.m.**

All other terms and conditions as stipulated in the original RFP shall remain unchanged.

Chief Executive Officer
Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB)
Management Office: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka 1216
Tel: +880 2 8031001-4, Fax: 803 1199

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

Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd

স্মারক নং- ২৭.২১.০০০০.৪৫৭.১৪.০০৩.২৬.২০৭ তারিখঃ ২৩/০৪/২০২৬খ্রিঃ

e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের প্রকল্প-১ দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টালে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

ID	Title of Works	Last date & time of document selling	Last date & time of security submission
1261914	Survey Work for Renovation of Sylhet-Chatak 132kV Transmission Line	10 May 2026 at 12.00	11 May 2026 at 11.00

আগ্রহী ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

মোঃ মঞ্জুর মোর্শেদ
প্রকল্প পরিচালক ও তত্ত্বাঃ প্রকৌঃ (অঃদাঃ), প্রকল্প-১

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Improving Computer and Software Engineering Tertiary Education Project (ICSETEP)
Project Management Unit (PMU)
University Grants Commission of Bangladesh
Level-9, Bangladesh Copyright Building,
Agargaon, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka 1207
https://icsetep.ugc.gov.bd

Ref. No.: UGC/ICSETEP/PMU/G-4/2025-1401 Date: 26.04.2026

e-Tender Notice No. 01/2025-26

The tender notice for the procurement of the following package is published on the e-GP portal:

Sl. No	Package No.	Package Name	Tender ID No.	Tender Document Last Selling Date & Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
1	PMU/G-4	Framework Agreement for Procurement of Office Supplies and Consumables	1215020	3:00 pm on 17.05.2026	2:00 pm on 18.05.2026

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the e-GP Portal, and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit an e-Tender, registration on the e-GP system (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is mandatory. For more details, contact the e-GP Help desk.

Prof. Gazi Md. Nazrul Islam
Project Director (Additional Charge)
Email: pd-icsetep@ugc.gov.bd

GD-914

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Civil Surgeon-cum Superintendent
Pirojpur District Hospital, Pirojpur

Ref No. PDH/BARI/TENDER/2025-2026/336 Date: 26.04.2026

e-Tender Notice

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit an e-Tender, please register on the e-GP System Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd). For more details, please contract support desk contract numbers.

e-Tender are invited in the e-GP System Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) by Dr. Md. Matiur Rahaman, Civil Surgeon cum Superintendent, Pirojpur District Hospital, Pirojpur for the procurement of following physical services and Goods;

Tender Id	Name of goods	Tender/ proposal last selling date & time	Tender/ proposal closing/opening date & time
1200856	Supply various type of outsourcing manpower (non consultant physical service) as per outsourcing service receive rule 2025 at Pirojpur District Hospital, Pirojpur.	11/05/2026 16:00	12/05/2026 12:00
1265061	Procurement of MSR Furniture for the F.Y 2025-2026 at Pirojpur District Hospital, Pirojpur.	11/05/2026 16:00	12/05/2026 12:00

Dr. Md. Matiur Rahaman
Civil Surgeon cum Superintendent
Pirojpur District Hospital, Pirojpur

GD-918

WHY THE IRAN-ISRAEL-US WAR will not stop with ceasefires

Demonstrators protest against US military action in Iran near the White House in Washington D.C. on April 7, 2026.
PHOTO: AFP

RAMISA ROB

After US President Trump abruptly announced an extension of the ceasefire between Iran and the US, indirect negotiations through Pakistan seemed to be on the table. Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, and Special Envoy Steve Witkoff — both of whom were part of the group of advisors for Trump to take action against Iran — were said to be heading for Pakistan, then Trump canceled the trip. In a post on Truth Social, Trump wrote about the decision to cancel and stated, "we have all the cards, they have none! If they [Iran] want to talk, all they have to do is call!!!" Shortly after, an active shooting took place at the White House Correspondents dinner. Trump has since told reporters, the shooting is not going to deter him from winning the war in Iran. He also added, "I don't know if that has anything to do with it, I really don't think so, based on what we know," after saying, "you never know," earlier. The domestic political climate in the US is still grappling with shock from the incident, at the time of writing.

Iran has, till now, said that direct talks will not take place. The mediator of indirect talks, Pakistan, does not have formal diplomatic relations with Israel, which is an active party involved in the war. Israel's larger aims seem to have disappeared from news analyses but it is Israel's clash with Iran that caused the conflict in the first place. It would be pre-emptive to view the developments, especially the extension of the ceasefire, as a breakthrough for "peace." The state of the war is bleak.

The US naval blockade continues while Iran maintains its hold on the Strait of Hormuz. Iran has argued that the US naval blockade is a violation of the ceasefire, so the meaning of the word "ceasefire," is fluid in modern warfare, beyond conventional fighting. Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, an Iranian top negotiator, characterised the ceasefire as a "plot to buy time for a surprise strike." And Israel has quite the track record of indifference to ceasefires and diplomatic arrangements.

The speculation of US boots on the ground is still not off the table. Republican Senator Roger Marshall agreed in an interview on April 22, with Newsmax, that the US would have to go into Iran to "finish the job" if a "peace agreement" wasn't reached in the coming weeks. While Trump claims to have achieved "regime change," the Iranian leadership's ability to down a US fighter jet, and wage asymmetric warfare to hit where it hurts, is still intact. The possible collapse of a ceasefire has given rise to speculation about Iran potentially disrupting the undersea internet cables that run along the seabed of the Strait of Hormuz — which is also a chokepoint for international data traffic. Reports from Iran International, an exiled media outlet, suggest that cyber units affiliated with the IRGC may already be preparing for such operations. So, there's a flip side to Ghalibaf's statement of the US "buying time." It can also mean more preparation being taken from the Iranian side. Both parties are coming to the table with seemingly uncompromising stances but for a ceasefire to last, someone or the other has to compromise.

Ceasefires often have a perverse effect and the fact that it can act as a prelude to further disruptions has become a "playbook" of sorts, in wars. The Russia-Ukraine war, Israel's offensive in Gaza, in Lebanon, continue. Wars don't end with ceasefires. In fact, do wars really even end now? When was the last time a ceasefire led two nations to stop fighting for good? Data analysis by the research initiative, Ceasefire Project, showed that ceasefires typically last 65 to 193 days and that humanitarian ceasefires have historically been "the most likely to be followed quickly by renewed violence."

Ceasefires — a liberal "international" approach to peace — now encompass buffer time to strategise during a war, rather than an actionable effort to end military conflicts. It should be viewed through that lens today, for every player with stakes in the Iran-Israel-US war. The war has hit oil, water, economies and diplomacy. An end to such a major conflict won't be achieved from a short-term ceasefire, or an extension of it, when the meaning of "peaceful agreements" has three differing outcomes for the US, Israel and Iran.

Markets move with the news of ceasefires and news of "talks," and activists feel reassured with a cessation of outright violence. But the problem is the collective lack of understanding that the concept of a ceasefire to chart a path for peace, is outdated. When chanting "ceasefire now," peacemakers around the world short-sightedly miss that a temporary, mediated pause in fighting, fails to tackle the root of the conflict itself. In Gaza, ceasefires helped save lives for a period of time, only for lives to be destroyed anyway. Talks were held, and what has been the result? Trump warped the meaning of peace completely, while the Gaza Strip is effectively under Israeli control, further away from Palestinian self-determination.

Ceasefires are conflated in news headlines, with the loaded term, "peace." Sustainable peace processes have historically happened when political grievances were addressed in conflicts. Has that happened recently though? US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, show a global decline of interventionism, diplomacy and peace-building predicated on an international legal system, built on Western ideologies in the first place. Arguably, UN-brokered ceasefires or mediated ceasefires have not fairly concluded Western-provoked wars but rather put a stop-gap for more havoc down the road.

What does durable peace look like for Iran and the US, with Israel and Iran functioning as existential threats to each other in the region? Will Iran just stop enriching Uranium forever and accept Israel as a colonising force that has come to its own borders? These are black-and-white questions but relevant to ask, as they contextualise the magnitude of political grievances at play here and the magnitude of what needs to be done to reach a peaceful ending.

Pakistan may have mediated a ceasefire but it has not changed the position of the three nations involved or addressed the root of political grievances at the heart of the conflict. And how can any third-party nation address that? Iran functions as a resistant force against the expansionist superpower of the US. Israel, under its current leadership, functions as an increasingly charged colonising power which the US uses to retain its expansionist efforts in the Middle East. A ceasefire to really bring about peace has to be capacious enough to address the ideological clash of the nations, Israel's heightening aggressiveness towards its adversaries, and the US' superiority complex.

Iran may have survived this war of attrition so far, but the question remains: how long can they keep going? They lasted eight years against a Western-backed Saddam Hussein regime. Analysts have rightly pointed out that Iran has insofar had the upper hand in the war and the US does not have an off-ramp. US boots on the ground would be complex, as Iran's geographical advantages are plentiful. The Strait of Hormuz can now always be used as a deterrent for Iran against further attacks by Israel even in the scenario that a resolution is reached in this current war. But Iran's domestic factors are yet to emerge. If the US naval blockade on the Strait does cause damage to the people and Iranian economy, it is worth observing whether the newly empowered youth of the IRGC and the rest of the remaining regime will align in the next steps.

In conflicts, ceasefires can only initiate a "process" of peace, if all parties have the incentive to stop. All parties are far from that, at the moment. A resolution in this war from Pakistan's diplomacy would also be temporary till the decades-long animosity and the ideological tussle that caused it are addressed. Though consequences of the war are felt by the world, the materialisation of "peace," is confined to the three nations' willingness to compromise pragmatically. The main compromise lies in the US' ability to contain Israel, and to learn to function within an interconnected world. The Trump administration will not be the one to do that. There has to be a reckoning within the US: a need for a wholly new US administration that recognises that this specific compromise needs to be made, to avoid a costly, "forever war." Till then, ceasefires with Iran or any efforts synonymous to peace will mirror commercial breaks from violent episodes of war.

Ramisa Rob *is Geopolitical Insights editor at The Daily Star.*

The Islamabad paradox

What middle powers can learn from Pakistan

The Islamabad process is not just a story about Pakistan. It is an indication that the middle-power agency in the current international system has migrated toward states that Western theories of international relations consistently wrote off as too fragile, too messy, or too compromised to matter.

AISHWARYA SANJUKTA ROY PROMA

When analysing the commentary around the US-Iran-Israel war, what has mostly been ignored is: why is it Pakistan that has emerged as the key mediator in the most consequential war that's impacted the world? And what does the answer tell us about how diplomacy actually works now? At the time of writing, Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei has said that the Foreign Minister will travel to Pakistan, while an Iranian state media report that Islamabad can act as a "bridge" to "convey Iran's consideration for ending the conflict."

Classical realism holds that mediators draw their leverage from material power: economic weight, military credibility, or the authority of an institution that both sides respect. Liberal institutionalism adds a legitimacy condition: the mediator should be embedded in the rules-based framework. Pakistan fails both tests. It has no economic leverage over Washington or Tehran. It is not neutral in any meaningful sense. Its Shia population watched their government host the negotiations that followed the assassination of a globally significant Shia leader, and protests turned violent in Karachi and Gilgit-Baltistan as a result. Pakistan had to deploy its army to suppress demonstrators while simultaneously brokering a ceasefire.

Tehran would only do talks in Pakistan and nowhere else, because they trust Pakistan. That sentence deserves more attention than it has received. It is a statement about Pakistan's position in a web of relationships that no genuinely neutral state could occupy. Pakistan's value is not neutrality. It is the fact that it is compromised in all directions simultaneously, which turns out to be exactly what both Iran and the US needed. Islamabad holds Iran's interests' section in Washington, a residual arrangement from 1979 that has never been replaced. Army Chief Asim Munir has cultivated a working relationship with Trump. He was the first non-head-of-state military leader invited for a White House lunch by a sitting US president. Pakistan shares a long border with Iran. It is bound to Saudi Arabia through a mutual defence agreement and tied to China through CPEC. It is pulled simultaneously by actors who are pulling in opposite directions. What reads as weakness in conventional power terms reads as credibility when both sides need someone the other cannot veto.

Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci's argument about hegemony was not simply that powerful states impose their will, but that they get other actors to internalise the rules of the game as natural and inevitable. US conflict management for three decades ran on this logic. Washington led negotiations directly, or worked through institutions it largely shaped. The unstated assumption was that legitimate mediation happened in Western capitals or Western-designed multilateral spaces. The Islamabad talks broke that assumption. The first direct, high-level engagement between the United States and post-revolutionary Iran happened not in Geneva or New York but in a city that was triggered by the same war. It is a sign of how the old Gramscian geography of diplomacy has shifted.

American political scientist Alexander Wendt's constructivism helps explain the Iranian side of this calculation. For Wendt, the structure of international relations is partly constituted by shared identities and meanings, not just material facts. Iran's insistence on Pakistan as the venue is partly an identity claim. It refuses to negotiate where Washington can frame as its own. Pakistan sits outside the Western security architecture without

US President Donald Trump poses with Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Muinr at the Oval Office of the White House in Washington on Sep 25, 2025.
PHOTO: VIA X

being anti-Western. It is Muslim-majority without being Arab. For Iran, talking in Islamabad is a way of making the talks themselves look different from a surrender. For the US, it is a way of talking to Iran at all. Pakistan is the grammar that makes the sentence possible.

The Islamabad process is not just a story about Pakistan. It is an indication that the middle-power agency in the current international system has migrated toward states that Western theories of international relations consistently wrote off as too fragile, too messy, or too compromised to matter. Bangladesh navigates its own version of structural overdetermination: between India and China, between the requirements of the garment sector's Western buyers and the infrastructure financing on offer from Beijing, between Islamic solidarity as a political idiom and secular developmentalism as a governing project. The lesson from Islamabad is not that Pakistan has found some diplomatic secret. It is that the old assumption, that strategic clarity means picking a side and sticking to it, is increasingly obsolete.

As the war is on temporary ceasefire, Brent crude is trading at record high prices. The Strait of Hormuz has been intermittently shut. Bangladesh's fuel import costs and the remittance flows from its workers in the Gulf are both directly exposed to how this ends. NATO allies refused to join the military campaign. China and Russia declined. Japan, South Korea and Australia stayed out despite their security dependence on Washington. The Global South watched a US-Israeli strike begin in the middle of active negotiations and drew conclusions about what diplomatic assurances are worth. As Ali Vaez, director of the Iran Project at the International Crisis Group put it, in trying to prevent Iran from building a weapon of mass destruction, the US handed it a weapon of mass disruption, which turned out to be the Strait of Hormuz.

The Pakistani foreign ministry has started calling this the "Islamabad process," which is diplomatic branding. It's an attempt to turn a crisis intervention into a standing track. The fact of the matter is that decisions of enormous consequence have been made in last-minute phone calls between Islamabad and Tehran. That is the texture of the current world. The diplomatic currency of this moment is not alignment but structured ambiguity: the capacity to be trusted by adversaries simultaneously. Pakistan, for all its dysfunctions, has that capacity right now. Whether it can translate a single mediation into durable institutional weight is a different question.

For Bangladesh, the immediate concern is economic. But the strategic question is worth sitting with. In a world where the old institutional grammar of conflict management has broken down, where the UN Security Council is deadlocked and Western-led frameworks are losing legitimacy across the Global South, which states will matter? The answer now is that it is not necessarily the most powerful or the most stable states that matter. The ones that will matter are those that have managed to remain legible to multiple competing actors at once. That is a harder thing to build than GDP or military capability. But it is increasingly what counts.

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FOUNDER EDITOR: **LATE S. M. ALI**

Rid Geneva Camp of drug trade

Arrest ringleaders, make the area safe for its residents

That illegal drug trade continues largely unabated at Geneva Camp in Dhaka's Mohammadpur area despite repeated law enforcement crackdowns is deeply concerning. While it was largely confined to the camp's narrow alleys before, now it has spilled onto the surrounding streets, becoming more organised and visible. Reportedly, around 500 people inside the camp are directly involved in the illicit business, and narcotics are now openly sold near the camp's rear gate. In addition, clashes between rival groups over control of lucrative trading spots have intensified, leaving at least 10 people dead over the past 19 months. This expansion of the trade raises serious questions about the effectiveness of the ongoing law enforcement efforts to stop it.

Geneva Camp's association with illegal drug dealing is not new. It has survived successive governments and countless special drives. About a decade ago, two kingpins reportedly dominated the trade. After they died, smaller groups took over; they now operate under two major rival gangs. After the Awami League government's fall in 2024, violent clashes among these armed groups have become frequent as they continue to fight for dominance. The widespread use of firearms has further alarmed the residents within the camp as well as in neighbouring areas. Although police have recently conducted several raids and arrested dozens of suspects, there has been no visible change.

Illegal substances worth more than Tk 1.5 crore are reportedly sold at the camp daily. Many of those involved in the trade are themselves trapped in the cycle of addiction, debt, and crime, becoming easy recruits for a system that offers quick money with little fear of consequences. While law enforcers appear to be targeting the carriers, street-level sellers, and users, the ringleaders remain beyond reach. As long as they operate with impunity, the network will continue to function as usual.

This state of affairs is unacceptable. Clearly, sporadic drives and arrests are not enough to dismantle these criminal networks. What is needed is a properly planned, intelligence-led operation focused on identifying and apprehending the masterminds who control the flow of drugs and finances in the camp. This must be backed by stronger internal oversight and better coordination among relevant agencies to close the existing gaps. The stories of addiction and exploitation emerging from the camp, on the other hand, highlight the urgent need for rehabilitation, social support, and viable economic alternatives for vulnerable residents. Lastly, people living in and around the Geneva Camp deserve security and relief from the grip of organised crimes. Without urgent action against those at the top, the cycle of raids, arrests, and resurgence will continue, at the cost of public safety.

A denial of space for knowledge, civic life

Expedite the national public library project, open it urgently

It is unacceptable that the Sufia Kamal National Public Library in Dhaka's Shahbagh has been inaccessible to the public for nearly four years. Under a modernisation project, the library building was demolished in 2022 and the new building was set to be completed in December 2024. However, the work is reportedly only 65 percent complete. During this time, the project cost, initially estimated at Tk 524 crore, has gone up to Tk 561 crore due to the addition of new components and an increase in the US dollar exchange rate. Now, a revised proposal to extend the project timeline till December 2027 and to increase the total cost to a staggering Tk 620 crore is waiting to be placed in the next Executive Committee of the National Economic Council.

While piling costs and ever-extending timelines of public projects have become quite common, what is concerning about this library project is how such an essential public place has been closed off from people for so long. The library, when operational, was one of the few places in the capital where an average citizen could access a wide collection of books, magazines, and news publications. The library premises served as a vibrant space for civic engagement through various cultural events and seminars. For young people, spaces such as libraries offer a social environment separate from the home and the workplace or classroom where they can gather to build knowledge, exercise their creativity, socialise, and expand their community. With both physical and digital spaces for free thought and speech shrinking, building more of these institutions is essential so that people can freely engage with culture and practise open-mindedness in their societal view.

Unfortunately, the opposite is happening in Bangladesh. While privately-built food courts, shopping malls, and pricey entertainment venues mushroom, the renovation of necessary public spaces such as parks and libraries remains shrouded in bureaucratic stupor for years on end. Instead of being held accountable, those responsible for the delays are granted endless free passes, deadline extensions, and increased budgets. Meanwhile, children and young people experience unrestrained exposure to digital spaces filled with unverified information and distorted sociopolitical narratives.

We urge the Public Works Department and other relevant authorities to expedite the reconstruction of the Sufia Kamal National Public Library and make it fully accessible to the public. It should serve as a space for not just traditional learning, but also for cultural activities. To build a well-informed nation that can think critically, it is crucial to make knowledge accessible to people. Without this, we may soon find ourselves in a dark age where opinions are only formed based on dominant social media discourse and conspiracies.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Beethoven writes Für Elise

On this day in 1810, Ludwig van Beethoven shared his feelings in a beautiful piano piece called Für Elise. But it wasn't known to the world until 1867, decades after he died, when a scholar found it. And we still don't know who, exactly, the Elise in Beethoven's dedication was—or whether there actually was an Elise.

Bangladesh's food insecurity warning cannot be ignored

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SELIM RAIHAN

The 2026 Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) carries an uncomfortable message for Bangladesh. The country is not facing famine, nor is it experiencing a catastrophic food crisis *per se*. Yet it appears on a list no country would wish to be on: the top 10 countries and territories with the largest number of people who faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 2025. According to the report, around 1.6 crore people in Bangladesh faced crisis-level food insecurity or worse during the 2025 peak, including about 1.56 crore in "Crisis" and four lakh in "Emergency" categories. These represented 17 percent of the analysed population, although the report also notes that the analysed population covered 59 percent of the total population, not the whole country.

Food inflation in Bangladesh in recent years has not been a temporary inconvenience for the poor. It has changed household behaviour. Families have reduced protein intake, shifted to cheaper staples, postponed health spending, borrowed from informal sources, and cut back on children's needs.

The report also says that Bangladesh saw an improvement compared with 2024, with 76 lakh fewer people facing high levels of acute food insecurity. The improvement was linked to the absence of major disasters in early 2025, a decline in food inflation, and increased remittance inflow. But that is exactly why the finding is so troubling. Even in a relatively better year, with fewer major disaster shocks and some relief from food inflation, Bangladesh still had one of the world's largest absolute numbers of people in acute food insecurity.

The real test is not whether Bangladesh can produce enough food in a normal year. It is whether every household can eat adequately, nutritiously, and consistently. PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

This indicates that Bangladesh's food insecurity problem is not only about floods, cyclones, droughts, or sudden price spikes. These shocks matter, of course, as they can push vulnerable households into immediate distress. But the persistence of food insecurity points to a more structural problem: low and unstable incomes, weak purchasing power, regional deprivation, climate exposure, inadequate nutrition outcomes, and gaps in social protection. For many households, the crisis is not that food is unavailable in the market, but that food is unaffordable, diets are poor, and coping mechanisms are already exhausted.

Food inflation in Bangladesh in recent years has not been a temporary inconvenience for the poor. It has changed household behaviour. Families have reduced protein intake, shifted to cheaper staples, postponed health spending, borrowed from informal sources, and cut back on children's needs. When rice, edible oil, lentils, eggs, fish, and vegetables remain expensive for long periods, the damage happens on a nutritional level. Children suffer silently. Women often eat last and eat less. Elderly people in poor households become more dependent on irregular support.

Remittances helped in 2025. That is encouraging, but it should not become a reason for complacency. Remittance inflows are unevenly distributed across regions and households. They support many families, but they cannot substitute for a national food security strategy. A household without a migrant worker, a landless labourer facing seasonal joblessness, an urban informal worker paying high rent, or a woman-headed household with limited income does not automatically benefit from the remittance cushion. The food security challenge is, therefore, also a question of inequality.

The Rohingya crisis adds another dimension. The GRFC notes that acute food insecurity worsened among forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals in two Bangladeshi districts amid the recent influx of Rohingya refugees, floods, and reduced humanitarian assistance. This is not only a humanitarian issue. It is also a local development issue for Cox's Bazar and surrounding host communities. When aid declines, pressure rises on already fragile local labour markets, forests, public services, water resources, and community relations. Bangladesh has carried this burden for years. The international community must not treat it as a forgotten crisis.

The first policy implication is clear: food security policy must go beyond food availability. Bangladesh has done reasonably well in increasing rice production and maintaining staple supplies. But food security is also about access, nutrition, stability, and dignity. The policy lens must shift from "Is there enough rice?" to "Can poor households afford a nutritious diet throughout the year?" This requires regular monitoring of food baskets, not only headline inflation.

Second, social protection must be made more responsive to shocks. Bangladesh has several programmes, but too many are fragmented, poorly targeted, and administratively slow. Food-insecure households need timely cash or food support when prices rise, floods hit, or seasonal employment collapses. Digital databases can help, but only if they are updated, inclusive, and protected from political capture. Urban food insecurity also needs more attention, since low-income urban households have to buy almost everything they consume.

Third, market governance has to improve. Price volatility is often worsened by weak competition, information gaps, stock mismanagement, and sudden import decisions. A smarter food market policy would combine better public stock management, timely imports when needed, transparent market intelligence, and stronger action against collusive behaviour. Farmers must receive fair prices, but consumers cannot be left hostage to avoidable market manipulation.

Fourth, nutrition must sit at the centre of food policy. The aim should not be calorie sufficiency alone. School feeding, maternal nutrition, child nutrition services, fortified foods, safe water, sanitation, and primary healthcare all matter. Food insecurity and malnutrition are linked, but they are not identical. A family may eat every day and still be nutritionally deprived.

Finally, climate resilience has to be treated as a food security policy. Flood control, salinity management, climate-resilient crops, crop insurance, storage facilities, rural roads, and early warning systems are not separate development projects. They are part of the architecture of national food security.

The GRFC 2026 should, therefore, be read as a warning, not as a verdict of failure. Bangladesh has made progress, and 2025 showed some improvement. But 1.6 crore people facing high levels of acute food insecurity is far too large a number for a country aspiring to graduate from LDC status and move towards upper-middle-income ambitions. The real test is not whether Bangladesh can produce enough food in a normal year. It is whether every household can eat adequately, nutritiously, and consistently, even when prices rise, floods come, jobs disappear, or aid declines. For that test, the country still has much work to do.

Will we learn any lesson from the measles deaths?

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SYED ABDUL HAMID

Every report of a child dying from the ongoing measles outbreak has left us not only saddened, but ashamed. Measles is not an unknown disease; medical science has long discovered how it spreads, the risks it carries, and how it can be prevented. So when children still die from measles, it is not simply because of the disease but also a clear sign of an inadequate public health system, failure in policymaking, and a lack of national priority. These deaths were not unavoidable. With timely vaccination, proper surveillance, early detection, and effective public awareness, many of them might have been prevented.

This is where the lessons of the Covid pandemic should return with renewed force. Covid taught us that health is not an isolated sector—it is the foundation on which all other sectors depend. When a public health system falters, the economy slows, schools close, jobs become uncertain, social stability weakens, and even national security comes under pressure. Many countries recognised this quickly and acted accordingly. They understood a simple truth: the end of a pandemic does not mean the end of risk. It means the work of preparing for the next crisis must begin immediately.

Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, we did not absorb that lesson with the seriousness it deserved. The recent measles deaths represent a stark reminder that we still remain largely reactive in handling public health crises. We hold meetings after disease spreads, issue statements after lives are lost, and become active only when the issue gains public attention. But we have not made timely and consistent immunisation, early risk detection, stronger field-level capacity, better data systems, and active emergency preparedness a regular part of health governance.

For this reason, measles deaths should not be viewed as an isolated crisis. They warn us of a much larger reality: our public health system remains fragile, preparedness is incomplete, coordination is weak, and long-term thinking is inadequate. Unless we build a comprehensive biosecurity system, including domestic vaccine production, we may face more loss of life in the future, whether from another pandemic, worsening endemic diseases, or sudden outbreaks.

In fact, treating health crises as temporary events remains to be a persistent error in judgement on our part. We tend to believe that once one wave passes, the danger has passed with it. But public health does not work that way. Threats are layered and continuous. Sometimes, they come as a new virus, sometimes as the return of an old infection, a climate-related disease spread, antimicrobial resistance, or a rapid transmission driven by urban crowding and poverty. That is why a health system must be prepared not only to treat patients, but also to anticipate risks, respond quickly, make evidence-based decisions, and maintain public trust.

The case of vaccine production makes the weakness in our public health system even more visible. The state-run Essential Drugs Company Ltd's (EDCL) vaccine production project remains stuck in the land acquisition stage. After the government approved the project in 2023, land was initially acquired in Gopalganj. But in 2025, under the interim government, it was decided that the project would instead be implemented in Munshiganj's Sirajdikhan. Meanwhile, there is still no meaningful effort to build the skilled workforce needed for such a highly technical project. At this point, it is urgent to create an appropriate organogram, recruit the necessary personnel, and place them under proper training both at home and abroad. At the same time, technology transfer must be secured through agreements with experienced vaccine manufacturers around the world. This issue deserves the urgent attention of the highest levels of government.

Treating health crises as temporary events remains to be a persistent error in judgement on our part. We tend to believe that once one wave passes, the danger has passed with it. But public health does not work that way. Threats are layered and continuous.

Public health is a political commitment. If primary healthcare, immunisation, disease prevention, surveillance, laboratory capacity, emergency preparedness, local health workers, supply systems, and data-driven decision-making are not prioritised, then no crisis is truly unexpected. The ongoing measles situation reflects exactly that condition of unpreparedness. Post-Covid health reform was needed not only on paper, but in practice, and it is still needed now. This is not just about one disease, but the entire system.

The measure of a civilised society is not found just in development statistics. It is also found in the protection it offers to its most vulnerable people. If we cannot protect the lives of children, then our story of development remains incomplete. And if even a warning as serious as measles does not awaken us, the price we pay in the next major health crisis may be even greater. Covid taught us one essential truth: health must come first, everything else follows. The measles outbreak is now teaching us another: if we don't want to lose our children to preventable deaths, ensuring vaccination for every child must be our first priority. And for that, we must build a comprehensive biosecurity system, including vaccine production.

The question now is whether we will turn these lessons into policy, institutions, and action, or continue to nurture a culture of inaction and prepare, once again, only for mourning the next public health crisis.

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The moral calculus of footpath evictions in Dhaka

THE GRUDGING URBANIST

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ADNAN ZILLUR MORSHED

The footpaths of Dhaka have again become a political flashpoint of late. Amid an eviction drive that started earlier this month and subsequent re-occupation attempts by aggrieved hawkers, we have seen calls for a proletarian revolution: *shara Banglar hawker ek hao, lorai koro ... bhat de, kaj de, noile hawker boshte de* ("Hawkers of the country, unite—fight on... give us food, give us work, or at least let us sit on the footpath and sell"). Marx would have agreed with them.

How should we respond to this crisis?

The reality is that there is simply no just solution to the so-called "illegal occupation" of footpaths by vendors. Of course, footpaths are for pedestrians. However, this assumption is reasonable so long as we are content to take a sanitised view of the street—namely, that it should be neatly divided into paths for vehicles and paths for pedestrians. This is the standardised position of the planner and the urban administrator, one that ignores the complex urban ecology of what we experience as a "street" in the developing world. Streets, in our socioeconomic context, are battlegrounds of daily life, featuring myriad urban activities: moving, walking, selling, shopping, eating from street vendors, socialising, protesting authorities, demanding rights, begging, and, most importantly, claiming space for livelihoods.

In our prevailing pattern of urbanisation, wherever the lower-income population finds even a square inch of street space, they will create opportunities for livelihood there. This fluid arrangement cannot be undone by force. A week or a month after eviction, footpath vendors invariably return. For better or worse, this is how the informal, grassroots economy functions in the cities of the developing world. Eviction here is not just bad optics; this elitist project is antithetical to the humanity of the city and to citizenship. Any attempt to cleanse the streets must therefore begin with an understanding of how they function in our urban context.

This is not to say that vendors have a natural right to occupy footpaths, nor can streets be simply reduced to a vehicle-pedestrian binary. Consider the issue from another angle for a moment. When law enforcement officials justify their eviction drive on legal grounds, what exactly is the law regarding footpaths? What law are the authorities enforcing? There is none. There is no codified footpath policy. What the authorities are enforcing is a bureaucratically agreed-upon arrangement of urban street use. But that is not law. I would argue that the footpath eviction drive constitutes a misuse of power, one rooted in a bourgeois view of urban life that seeks to render invisible a pervasive grassroots economy because it is perceived as an aberration in the smooth functioning of the city in favour of the elite.

The crucial question before us is: how do we do justice to pedestrians while remaining empathetic to footpath hawkers? Is it possible to dispense justice to competing stakeholders simultaneously?

To solve the problem of footpaths, we must think beyond immediate eviction and address broader structural issues: how to educate the urban population about land-use regulations so that hawkers are incentivised to relocate to designated marketplaces; how to redesign footpaths as multifunctional urban ecosystems; how to ratify a national footpath policy; and how to decentralise cities so that the grassroots economy does not need to occupy every square inch of street space.

Let us now zoom in on the footpath problem from the perspective of moral economy. If we accept British historian E. P. Thompson's conception of moral economy as grounded in obligations of care and fairness, we may find that the footpath problem requires a broader philosophical deliberation on justice.

A few months ago, I was passing through Manik Mia Avenue in Dhaka. The silent commercialisation of the footpaths along this beautiful road has unfolded right before our eyes. In this city of excessive noise pollution, traffic congestion, and crowds, there is a severe lack of open, peaceful spaces. That is why people gather there in the afternoons to stroll and enjoy the open footpaths in front of the parliament. A park-like environment spontaneously emerges there in the evenings. For small-scale vendors such as fuchka sellers, this becomes an ideal market—a simple matter of supply and demand.

Not only fuchka sellers but also sketch artists, toy sellers, balloon sellers, tea vendors, clothing sellers, and jewellery sellers arrive with their small businesses. This is grassroots survival. It is difficult to eliminate such practices. If removed forcibly, such action may be perceived—within our social context—as an aggressive cleansing of poverty by the elite, ruling classes. The roots of this informal economy run deep in our moral soil, generating a quiet public sympathy for these "street warriors."

However, there is also a counterargument. Should grassroots markets—or any market—be allowed uncontrolled access to every corner of the urban body? The parliament building is the constitutional centre of the state. Ideally, as laws are made there, should the surrounding area not maintain a certain market-free sanctity? Even if people hold negative attitudes toward politics, is there any reason not to regard the parliament area as nationally significant? Why should it be subjected to market "pollution"?

So, the question becomes: should grassroots markets be allowed to remain on Manik Mia Avenue, or should the area be kept market-free so that citizens can enjoy it peacefully? Is this binary framing of rights even fair? Can justice be ensured for competing parties at the same time? Clearly, there are no simple answers. We are thus confronted with a philosophical dilemma: the concept of justice is relative and largely dependent on our moral, political, and social viewpoints. Justice is never an unquestionable ideal. One group's justice may be another's injustice.

Since ancient times, justice has been a subject of debate. Plato and Aristotle associated justice with human virtue and moral responsibility within the Greek polis. The Latin term *justitia* implies treating everyone equally. In democratic systems, the rule of law forms the institutional core of justice. However, in recent times, discussions of justice have expanded beyond legal frameworks and judicial boundaries. As Amartya Sen argues, justice is an ongoing process with no revolutionary endpoint; it must extend beyond legal definitions into everyday moral imagination. Its primary goal, he suggests, should be to empower the broader population in decision-making. Until the concepts of justice and injustice are deeply embedded in people's daily lives and moral imagination, social instability and self-serving behaviour will persist, and the greater good will remain secondary.

Let me offer an example. Suppose students block a highway demanding that their college be upgraded to a university. The public is stranded in traffic all day. Patients cannot reach hospitals. Students cannot reach their school. Small traders lose their capital. But do the protesting students ever consider the damage they have caused? In pursuing their own demands, are they not being unjust to others?

Consider another example: in developing countries, the informal economy plays a major role. Research shows that in Bangladesh, the informal economy contributes 40-43 percent of GDP and accounts for 85 percent of employment. Yet mainstream economists in the country rarely address it; their policy reports focus almost exclusively on the formal economy. According to the United Nations' 2025 World Population Report, Dhaka is currently the world's second-largest city by population, with approximately 37 million residents, behind Jakarta at 42 million. More than 80 percent of Dhaka's population is engaged in the grassroots economy. Is it not unjust to exclude them from macroeconomic policymaking?

American political philosopher Judith Shklar offers a useful framework for understanding such situations. She argues that while we often theorise justice as an ideal condition—for example, upgrading a college to a university or including informal economy into macroeconomic policies—we rarely consider how injustice operates in everyday life, such as through the harm caused by road blockades or the exclusion of large populations from policy frameworks. Ideal justice is rare, but injustice is abundant all around us. Until we develop the habit of viewing society through the eyes of those who suffer injustice, the dream of a good society will remain unattainable.

In the end, evicting footpath vendors is a gross simplification of a complex social problem—one that demands a long view of how injustice is enacted under official mandate and, paradoxically, in the name of law.

Temporary shops recently removed from the footpaths in Gulistan by Dhaka South City Corporation returned to their previous locations after a few days. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

To solve the problem of footpaths, we must think beyond immediate eviction and address broader structural issues: how to educate the urban population about land-use regulations so that hawkers are incentivised to relocate to designated marketplaces; how to redesign footpaths as multifunctional urban ecosystems; how to ratify a national footpath policy; and how to decentralise cities so that the grassroots economy does not need to occupy every square inch of street space.

Before scaling up renewables, we must first make the grid flexible

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SHAHRIAR AHMED CHOWDHURY

Bangladesh is on the brink of a major transformation in its power sector. The country has ambitious plans to increase its renewable energy capacity, particularly solar photovoltaic (PV) and wind energy, in line with global climate commitments and its own national development goals. Yet, the promise of renewable energy comes with the challenge of variability. Because, unlike traditional thermal power, solar and wind energy cannot be dispatched on demand. Their output depends on the sun shining and the wind blowing, which varies by the hour, day, and season. Without a flexible and resilient grid, large-scale adoption of these variable renewable energy (VRE) technologies can create instability, inefficiency, and even risk of grid failure.

A flexible grid, capable of accommodating fluctuations in supply while maintaining a stable power flow, is the backbone of any renewable-driven energy system. A modern grid does more than simply transmit electricity from a power plant to a consumer—it balances supply and demand, adjusts to sudden changes in generation, and ensures that voltage and frequency remain within safe operating limits. In Bangladesh, several factors can limit this flexibility.

For example, many of the country's substations are operating near maximum capacity. Adding more renewable energy without upgrading these nodes could overload the grid. Thermal power plants, particularly those fuelled by natural gas and imported fuels, often face shortages or technical failures, limiting their ability to provide backup power when renewable output drops. Thermal plants also have minimum operating levels and technical constraints that prevent them from adjusting output rapidly enough to match renewable variability. Additionally, solar and wind plants clustered in certain regions can exacerbate local grid stress if not balanced by transmission or storage solutions.

Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of Bangladesh's electricity system must include supply and demand patterns, transmission and distribution constraints, storage potential, and market mechanisms. Only then can policymakers determine how much VRE can be integrated safely and what upgrades are required to support a renewable-dominant grid. Preliminary simulations of Bangladesh's power system are encouraging. Studies indicate that, under idealised conditions, the grid can accommodate higher shares of solar and wind without immediate investments in storage or major transmission upgrades. The least-cost scenarios typically involve maximising renewable penetration, suggesting that technically, Bangladesh has room to scale up VRE.

However, these simulations come with important caveats. They assume that thermal plants can reliably operate on standby, ready to ramp up when renewable generation falls. In reality, fuel shortages, made worse by international market volatility following the Ukraine and Gulf wars, have disrupted predictable operation of gas and liquid fuel plants. High global LNG prices and limited domestic gas reserves mean that even if the installed thermal capacity is sufficient, its operational reliability may not match the assumptions of the models. Further, many coal plants and older gas plants have technical constraints that limit ramping speed or minimum operating load. This is particularly critical in areas like Chattogram, Feni, Sirajganj, Jamalpur, and Rangpur where rapid growth in VRE is expected. Without flexible backup, periods of low solar or wind generation could lead to instability, forcing curtailment of renewables or risking load shedding. To navigate these challenges, Bangladesh can begin with several practical, short-term measures.

FILE VISUAL: SHAIKH SULTANA JAHAN BADHON

First, time-of-use electricity pricing can incentivise consumers to shift energy-intensive activities to periods of high renewable output, smoothing demand and reducing grid stress. Second, implementing solar and wind generation forecasting can help thermal plants anticipate dips in renewable output and adjust their operations accordingly. Third, introducing Free Governor Mode Operation (FGMO) in power plants could allow automatic adjustment of generator output in response to grid frequency changes, improving frequency stability and reducing the risk of blackouts.

However, as renewable penetration grows, further interventions will be necessary. First, coal and gas plants may need modifications to reduce minimum operating levels and increase ramping speed, allowing them to complement variable renewables more effectively. Second, battery or other grid storage systems can provide ramping flexibility in regions with limited gas plant availability. Third, smart appliances and building energy management systems can prioritise electricity consumption when supply is limited, contributing to grid stability.

Looking ahead, Bangladesh must adopt structural and policy solutions to create a truly flexible and renewable-friendly grid. For instance, developing local natural gas reserves can reduce dependency on imports and stabilise thermal generation availability. Second, investments in grid-scale storage are essential to absorb excess renewable generation so that it can be released during low-output periods. Electric Vehicles (EV) can act as distributed storage, charging during periods of surplus solar generation and feeding electricity back to the grid when needed. Connecting Bangladesh's grid with neighbouring countries can provide additional flexibility, allowing power imports or exports to balance supply-demand fluctuations. Modernising the grid with digital controls, automated distribution, and spot-market electricity pricing ensures efficient operation, reduces losses, and improves reliability. Additionally, promoting devices that align with renewable generation patterns can reduce overall demand pressure on the system.

For these solutions to succeed, grid flexibility must become a central consideration in national energy planning. Thermal power plants must be designed and contracted with flexibility in mind, ensuring they can operate at lower loads without financial penalties. Renewable capacity expansion plans should consider geographical diversity to mitigate local variability. Substation upgrades, transmission expansion, and storage deployment must be integrated into long-term planning. Finally, policymakers must create market incentives and regulatory frameworks that encourage innovation, demand response, and private investment in grid-enhancing technologies.

Bangladesh has the opportunity to transition towards a cleaner, more sustainable energy system driven by solar and wind. But without a flexible grid, these ambitions risk inefficiency, curtailment, or worse, grid failure. By combining short-term operational improvements, medium-term retrofits and storage deployment, and long-term structural and policy interventions, Bangladesh can build a resilient, efficient, and renewable-friendly grid. This will not only enable the integration of variable renewables but also reduce dependence on fossil fuel imports, enhance energy security, and position Bangladesh as a leader in sustainable energy transition in South Asia.

CHANCHAL CHOWDHURY'S 'SHEKOR' AND 'AZADI' SET FOR INDIA RELEASE

SHAH ALAM SAZU

Chanchal Chowdhury is one of Bangladesh's most celebrated actors. Every film he has appeared in has drawn widespread attention and praise.

Beyond Bangladesh, he has also made a mark in Indian Bengali cinema. Continuing that journey, he has now completed shooting two Kolkata productions, both of which are awaiting release.

The first film is ***Shekor***, directed by Bratya Basu. The second is ***Azadi***, directed by Suman Mukhopadhyay. ***Shekor*** is a literature-based drama, while ***Azadi*** tells a story rooted in the Partition of India.

"***Shekor*** will release this year. ***Azadi*** will come out next year. That film will travel to major festivals," said Chanchal. Describing his role in ***Shekor***, he said, "The film revolves around their two families. It is a deeply personal, domestic story." On ***Azadi***, he said, "I play a police officer. It is an emotional story — a story of Partition. It will touch everyone who watches it."

Meanwhile, ***Bonolota Express*** continues its theatrical run and is still drawing enthusiastic crowds. ***Domm*** is also currently screening.

Runa Laila, Bappa together in ghazal duet

Legendary singer Runa Laila and renowned musician Bappa Mazumder have teamed up for the first-ever Bangla ghazal duet.

The song, titled ***Anayashe***, is written by Syed Galib Hasan. Runa Laila recently announced the project through a video message shared on her verified Facebook page.

She praised Bappa as a highly talented composer, singer and music director, adding that collaborating with him enhanced the overall quality of the song.

Runa Laila also noted that this type of Bengali ghazal experiment has not been attempted before, making the collaboration unique across generations of musicians.

The duet is set to be officially released on May 16, with both artistes seeking blessings and support from listeners.

'Eta Amaderi Golpo' to wrap up with 90-minute mega finale

The popular television drama ***Eta Amaderi Golpo***, directed by Mohammad Mostafa Kamal Raz, is nearing its conclusion, leaving audiences deeply emotional. The series will wrap up after a total of 52 episodes, with 48 already aired.

Director Raz has confirmed that the final instalment will be a special mega episode. The concluding episode will run for over an hour and a half, offering an extended and complete resolution to the story.

The drama began airing on Channel i on November 5 last year, broadcast every Tuesday and Wednesday at 9:30 pm. In addition to television, each episode has also been released on Cinemawala's YouTube channel, gaining widespread popularity across both platforms.

Sanjay Dutt confirms sequel to 1993 hit 'Khalnayak'

More than three decades after ***Khalnayak*** became one of Bollywood's most memorable films, Sanjay Dutt is revisiting its legacy with a sequel titled ***Khalnayak Returns***.

The 1993 original, directed by Subhash Ghai and co-starring Jackie

Shroff and Madhuri Dixit, had cemented Dutt's portrayal of Ballu as one of Hindi cinema's most iconic anti-heroes.

The actor unveiled the first teaser of the new film on April 25, offering a darker, more rugged glimpse of Ballu. While details about the cast, director, and storyline remain undisclosed, the announcement has already sparked interest among fans of the original.

Priyanka Chopra, Jet Li and Simu Liu to be honoured at Gold Gala

Priyanka Chopra will receive a major honour at the 2026 Gold Gala, joining fellow honourees Jet Li and Simu Liu. The announcement came from Gold House, which organises the annual event celebrating Asian Pacific and multicultural leaders.

The fifth edition of the Gold Gala will take place on May 9, where Chopra will be presented with the Global Vanguard honour. Li and Liu will receive the Gold Legend and Gold Mogul honours, respectively. Others being recognised include Charles Melton, Eileen Gu, and Revathi Advaithi.

In its official announcement, Gold House described the gala as a global platform that has grown into a major cultural gathering. This year's theme, "A New Gold World", highlights the idea of collective progress and unity amid global divisions.

More than 650 leaders are expected to attend, with speakers including EJAE, Theresia Gouw, HUMAN MADE, Tejasvi Manoj, Jen Lee, and Brett Bolton.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

'Kind of Purple'

International Jazz Day unfolds in the city with ***Kind of Purple***, where improvisation leads and structure dissolves into exchange. Joy Goswami, Mohaimin Karim, Arjo Shrestho, Rahin Haider and Jishnu Haider come together for a set shaped by improvisation and ensemble play, moving between standards, open textures and spontaneous exchanges.

Date: Thursday | April 30, 2026
Time: 7:30 pm – 9 pm
Venue: Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhanmondi

NEWS

At least 12 killed in lightning strikes

FROM PAGE 12

Department (BMD).

Scattered showers were reported in Dhaka, Rangpur, Mymensingh, and Sylhet divisions yesterday afternoon.

The heatwave had spread to 24 districts last week, with temperatures fluctuating between 35°C and 40°C. Dhaka's highest temperature during this period was 36.5°C, which dropped sharply once clouds and rain arrived.

Public life had become miserable due to the heat and load-shedding, making it difficult for farmers to work in fields.

"Relief has returned with the rain, but we are suffering losses due to hailstorms," said farmer Nabin Chandra Das of Rangpur's Mahiganj, adding that ripe paddy was damaged Saturday night.

The Met office forecast heavy rainfall in Rangpur, Sylhet and Mymensingh divisions, with moderate rain elsewhere, and nor'westers in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Dhaka within 48 hours.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) issued a flash flood warning for Sylhet's haor areas. The Department of Agriculture advised farmers to harvest Boro paddy quickly.

Our Sylhet correspondent reported farmers racing against time to harvest amid thunderstorms since Saturday evening.

On April 24, the Water Development Board in Sunamganj urged farmers to harvest as much paddy as possible before April 28, citing BMD forecasts of heavy rainfall.

The FFWC also warned that water levels in the Surma, Kushiyara, Bhugai, Kangsha, Dhanu and Baulai rivers may rise within three days and flow near danger levels.

12 KILLED

In Gaibandha, three people died in Dakshin Dhopadanga village, Sundarganj upazila, during a nor'wester. They were identified as Fuad Chowdhury, 33, Rafi Chowdhury, 12, and Mizanur Rahman, 20.

Gaibandha General Hospital RMO Asif-Ur-Rahman confirmed the deaths. Two others were also injured.

UP Chairman Md Mokhlesur Rahman Mondal said a cow nearby also died when the victims were struck while on a road near their house.

Another person, Manik Pramanik, 19, died at Phulchari upazila in the district while transporting corn in his horse cart. Manik's horse also died in the incident, said Phulchari Police Station OC Durul Huda.

In Bogura, Suman Mia, 35, died after being struck by lightning while trying to bring his goat back from a field in Muchikhali village, Gabtali upazila, Gabtali Model Police Station OC Rakib Hossain said.

In Natore, farm labourer Md Samrat Mia, 26, of Sirajganj's Nagardala village, died at Natore Sadar Hospital at 5:30pm while undergoing treatment for lightning injuries sustained in a field with over 20 others in the morning, Singra Police Station OC Rakibul Islam said.

In Panchagarh, tea worker Sarowardi, 21, was killed and two others, identied as Mostafa, 45, and Jaherul, 43, were injured in Atwari upazila's Sonapatila village while returning home after plucking tea leaves.

Atwari Police Station OC Motiar Rahman confirmed the incident. Dhamor UP Chairman Abu Taher Md Dulal said Sarowardi had married only eight days ago.

In Thakurgaon, Selina Akhtar Laboni, 35, of Niamatpur village, was killed by lightning near a paddy field in Pirganj upazila in the afternoon, police said.

In Jamalpur, two people, identified as Hasmat Ali Hasu, 45, of Sadar upazila, and Marzina Begum, 22, of Melandah, died in separate incidents.

Hasmat was struck while returning home with cattle, said Sadar UNO Naznin Akhter. Three others -- Anwar Hossain, 34, Shawon, 25, and Sukhi, 14 -- were hospitalised after being injured in the same incident.

Homemaker Marzina was struck while preparing food in her courtyard; another woman, Shefali Begum, 28, was also injured, said Melandah Police Station OC Obaidur Rahman.

In Sirajganj, farmers Hossain Ali Sheikh, 25, of Raiganj upazila, and Abdul Hamid, 50, of Tarash upazila were killed in separate lightning strikes while working in their fields during a storm, police said.

16-yr-old at centre

FROM PAGE 12

Investigators said members of the group communicated through Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, Session, and Telegram. They used pseudonyms to conduct activities aligned with what police described as extremist objectives.

The boy's phone also contained audio, video, images, and chat records that investigators say support Neo-JMB ideology. Screenshots of the materials have been collected and are being examined as part of the ongoing probe, according to the forwarding letter.

Intelligence sources said the boy studied up to class-VIII. His father works in Oman. He lives with his mother and elder brother.

He went missing on September 20 last year, prompting his mother to file a general diary. Police rescued him from Gazipur weeks later, unaware of his alleged militant links.

Officials claim that he was introduced to Neo-JMB online, adopted pseudonyms, and even received bomb-making training from foreign experts. He uploaded a video to a private Facebook group, which drew concern from a foreign embassy in Dhaka.

Intelligence officials said he and others discussed possible attacks on Shia and Ahmadiyya mosques in the northern region and had been in contact with a dismissed army member regarding armouries in Savar.

His mother, however, insists that he is mentally unstable and denies any militant involvement.

"He used to watch Islamic videos, but we all do. He plays with children of all faiths. I never thought he was involved in militancy," she told The Daily Star.

The Police Headquarters alert attached profiles of two alleged planners, Mohammad Rahed Hossain Mahed from Sylhet and Rakib Hasan alias Ubaida Al Usama from Savar, describing them as "extremely risky for the overall security of the country".

They warned that the group may carry out attacks on "important state installations," including the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, Shahbagh intersection, places of worship, police and army establishments, and entertainment centres. It also listed armouries of security forces as potential targets.

Regarding the alert, CTTC Joint Commissioner Munshi Shahabuddin told reporters at a press briefing on Saturday that they received the information and their CTTC cyber intelligence team was working on it. "There is no reason to panic."

This warning stands in stark contrast to earlier assurances during the interim government.

On July 6, 2025, then home adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said, "There is no militancy in Bangladesh at present."

Days earlier, then Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sheikh Md Sazzat Ali dismissed militancy as a problem, saying mugging was the main focus. He even alleged that during the Awami League's tenure, a "militant drama" was staged to justify the killings of young people.

Iran FM back

FROM PAGE 12

Association dinner in Washington, Trump said he did not think the incident was related to Iran but that it would not deter him "from winning the war".

US forces removed security equipment from the Pakistani capital, Pakistani government sources said, signalling that any US delegation was unlikely to return for talks soon.

After the latest diplomatic trip was called off, two US Air Force C-17s carrying security staff, equipment and vehicles used to protect US officials flew out of Pakistan, two Pakistani government sources told Reuters yesterday.

On Truth Social, Trump wrote that there was "tremendous infighting and confusion" within Iran's leadership.

"Nobody knows who is in charge, including them," he posted. "Also, we have all the cards, they have none! If they want to talk, all they have to do is call!!!"

On Saturday, Araghchi met Pakistan's military chief Asim Munir, a key mediator, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, before flying on to Muscat.

He is expected to go to Moscow after the talks in Islamabad.

Araghchi described his initial Pakistan trip as "very fruitful" but signalled scepticism over Washington's intentions. "Have yet to see if the US is truly serious about diplomacy," he said.

Pressure to end the war has intensified as the Strait of Hormuz -- a vital oil and gas route -- remains closed.

Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards said they had no intention of lifting their blockade, which has roiled energy markets.

Liberation War lensman passes away

FROM PAGE 12

having himself been a child of partition when his family was uprooted from their hometown in what is now Pakistan. Rai worked at a furious pace, sending back images after images that the newspaper faithfully carried, making him a household name in India while unfolding the horrors that marked the liberation struggle.

However, his entire body of negatives from that period was lost and remained missing for decades until they were recovered quite by accident. This rediscovery eventually led to the publication of Bangladesh: The Price of Freedom, brought out to mark the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence.

Reflecting on the rediscovery, Rai said he had been deeply involved in documenting the suffering of refugees, driven in part by his own experience. The negatives, he noted, had been stored away in a bundle and "never saw the light of the day" until they were found after nearly 40 years by his assistant while scanning archival material.

He also recalled that many international photographers, including Don McCullin, had documented the refugee crisis at the time, and he had even admired their work, largely forgetting his own. Upon rediscovering his photographs decades later, he realised that his work carried its own intensity and message, prompting him to share it with the public.

The photographs capture the refugee camps, the mass exodus, and the turmoil of the time, offering a powerful visual account of a defining moment in South Asian history. He also documented frontline moments during the war, travelling with advancing forces and later witnessing scenes in Dhaka following the surrender of Pakistani troops on December 16, 1971.

He received the Padma Shri in 1972 for his powerful photography during the Bangladesh Liberation War.

Rai's photography is often described as a "visual record" of modern India. He captured powerful images after the Bhopal tragedy, one of the worst industrial disasters in history, according to NDTV.

He was known for his photography books. Some of his most popular works include Raghu Rai's India: Reflections in Colour and Reflections in Black and White,

In 2019, he won the Académie des Beaux-Arts Photography Award, one of the top international honours in photography.

DU student found dead

FROM PAGE 12

name of the teacher and another student.

Kazi Md Nasirul Amin, officer-in-charge of Badda Police Station, said, "Sudip Chakraborty, an associate professor of the department, was arrested after the student's father, Golam Mostafa, filed a case of abetment of suicide with the station.

Police had earlier picked up the teacher and a classmate of the deceased for questioning.

"The student was released, as the deceased's family had no complaint against her," the OC said.

Meanwhile, Gulshan Division Deputy Commissioner M Tanveer Ahmed said the body was recovered from the residence and sent to the morgue at Dhaka Medical College for an autopsy.

The family suspects that the teacher may have been in a relationship with her, he added.

Quoting family members, police said Munira used to sleep with the door open. After the Fajr prayers that day, family members noticed the door was closed and began knocking. As they received no response, they broke in and found her hanging body.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Kazi Tamanna Haque Sigma, chairperson of the theatre and performance studies, said they were informed of the death yesterday morning, after which teachers from the department visiter her family.

Teachers and students said that Munira left a note mentioning the teacher's name and asked that Tk 50,000 be given to him. She also wished the teacher and the student, who were detained for questioning, to stay well.

JS scraps

FROM PAGE 2

duty, VAT, development surcharge and import permit fees during the tenure.

The law further provided a similar perk five years after the first.

An MP was entitled to import another new car, SUV or microbus after the expiration of a period of five years from the date of last import on the same terms and conditions.

In the statement of objectives and reasons for the amendment, Asaduzzaman said that importing duty-free cars for MPs is inconsistent with BNP's commitment to serve the people and creates visible discrimination in tax obligations.

He added that, in light of current economic realities and the vision of the leader of the house, the duty-free car facility for MPs needed reconsideration.

Put nutrition at the heart of healthcare

Urge experts at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Experts at a roundtable yesterday called for placing nutrition at the core of the health, climate, and development agendas of Bangladesh and for adopting a multi-sectoral approach to address malnutrition.

They said tackling malnutrition is critical to combating infectious diseases and building a resilient, self-reliant nation.

The discussion, titled "Strengthening Health Systems: Nutrition as a Cross-Cutting Solution for Climate, Malaria, TB, and Other Infectious Diseases", was organised by The Institute of Public Health Nutrition (IPHN), Daily Samakal, and Max Foundation in the capital, marking National Nutrition Week 2026.

Speaking as chief guest, Bangladesh National Nutrition Council Director General Dr Md Rizwanur Rahman said despite significant progress in nutrition status, malnutrition remains a pressing issue.

Highlighting ongoing initiatives, he said the government is updating the National Nutrition Policy and working to strengthen multi-sectoral coordination, including efforts to develop a real-time, integrated information system.

IPHN Director Dr Mohammed Eunus Ali emphasised activating nutrition-related committees at the national, district and upazila levels.

The IPHN chief focused on resource constraints in efforts to address nutrition and urged the allocation of a greater amount of funding for better nutrition services.

Delivering the keynote, Dr AFM Iqbal Kabir underscored that nutrition is not a standalone sector but a "system-wide solution" linking health systems, climate resilience, and infectious disease control.

Max Foundation Country Director Dr Tariqul Islam said the private sector needs to be engaged in efforts to address malnutrition because Bangladesh cannot depend only on grants for its nutrition programmes when the donors are transitioning from aid to trade-based strategy.

The roundtable was chaired by Daily Samakal Editor Shahed Mohammad Ali and moderated by Associate Editor Sheikh Rokon.

Farmers harvest mature mung bean grains in the middle of the ongoing Baishakh month from crops sown during Falgun. After threshing, these are sold to traders for Tk 4,000 per maund. The photo was taken at Kamarkhali village in Bakerganj upazila of Barishal yesterday. PHOTO: TITU DAS

'Don't allow

FROM PAGE 3

also said the BNP fulfils its promises and the July Charter signed by the party will be implemented without any "ifs" or "buts".

He warned that any attempt to divert the public's attention will be suicidal. He remarked that just as the AL once considered the 1971 Liberation War its personal property, it will be a grave mistake for anyone to view the July Charter as their own property.

The people of Bangladesh, he said, will not accept it.

Directing his comments toward the opposition, he said, "You talk about working together, but having honey on your lips while harbouring poison in your heart will yield no results. We must take Bangladesh forward."

Stressing the need for collective effort, he added, "I urge the opposition not to oppose simply for the sake of opposition."

Inviting the opposition to engage in parliamentary debate, the state minister cautioned against creating narratives that lead to controversy regarding the July Charter among the BNP or its allied parties.

Regarding the number of martyrs in July, he said, "We do not want any controversy regarding July. We don't want to leave behind any debate about July even 50 or 100 years from now."

The woman

FROM PAGE 3

"The woman was around 30 years old. Her DNA sample was collected, but fingerprints could not be taken. The report will be submitted within a day or two," he said.

Police recovered the decomposed bodies from a sack buried on the riverbank at Gunotia village in Jamurki union on April 20.

Locals alerted police after noticing a foul smell and seeing a dog trying to pull something from the ground, said Russell Ahmed, inspector (investigation) of Mirzapur Police Station.

He said the woman was believed to have been seven to eight months pregnant and may have given birth before death.

The bodies were buried the following day at Mirzapur municipal graveyard as unclaimed after the autopsy.

BNP MPs irked

FROM PAGE 12

and how they were engaging with people at the grassroots.

In response, several MPs complained that local administrations were giving priority to MPs from Jamaat and allies, instead of those from the ruling party.

Speaking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, a meeting attendee said, "Local administration tends to act mainly on the instructions of ministers. When ministers press for an issue, it is implemented effectively. But MPs say their concerns are often not given due attention.

"When we raise problems, they are not treated as a priority, making it increasingly difficult to serve our constituencies."

Tarique then directed the lawmakers to spend more time in their constituencies, engage with people, address their problems, and report to him if any work was not being carried out effectively.

At the meeting, MPs also said it was difficult to carry out development work as they had to depend on central fund allocations.

Two Standing Committee members told this correspondent that the PM himself expressed dissatisfaction over the performance of some ministers.

"There are cabinet members who are inexperienced and lack sufficient knowledge to deal with the situation. That's why their performance has not yet reached the expected level," they quoted him as saying.

Tarique directed everyone to refrain from any untoward incidents and to maintain unity within the party, they added.

Lawmakers also told the meeting that any move to increase electricity prices could trigger public discontent and put additional pressure on the government at a time of rising living costs.

They added that load-shedding in rural areas was increasing every day and warned that if it continues, it could create a negative impression of the government.

The MPs also advised Tarique to visit areas outside Dhaka more frequently so that people could feel closer to the government and develop greater trust in its leadership.

Number of July martyrs debated in parliament

FROM PAGE 3

"We need to know the actual number. If you did visit, no objection... But we want the actual figure. The July uprising happened only recently, not decades ago. If memories fade now, then in 10 or 20 years this history will be distorted," he added.

He said people commercialised the Liberation War and its spirit, and capitalised on it over the past 54 years.

"We do not want a new business to emerge centring the July uprising. To stop this, we need the real history -- how many were martyred and their political identities," Razib said.

Referring to a widely circulated video clip of a frontline July uprising leader remembering how much influence they had wielded during the tenure of the Yunus government, Razid said, "One student leader recounted how they lived... they could go and meet the chief adviser at his house whenever they wished. Such privileges are no longer available," Razib said.

Later, the opposition leader took the floor to respond.

He said, "If the (state) minister's claim of the number of July martyrs is just over 800 -- then how could I have visited 1,200 homes?"

The opposition leader pointed out that the state minister was not present in the chamber during his speech. "Had he been here, I would have told him to seek clarification from the honourable state minister for fisheries and livestock [Sultan Salahuddin Tuku], who himself said in his speech that more than 1,000 martyrs were from the BNP and its affiliated organisations."

"If I endorse his statement, then the calculation is right there; he need not come to me," he said.

Shafiqur continued, "Secondly, I did not utter anything fabricated. We have a complete profile on this matter, and many present here have received that profile. It is available on our website. Only after thorough checking and cross-checking did we prepare these lists."

He further said his statement is not based on any domestic agency's citation. The UN Human Rights Fact-Finding Committee itself reported that the number is around 1,400.

"Wherever I go, people come to me, looking helpless, asking: 'Do you have any information about my father?' During those two days when the internet was shut down, people were killed and forcibly disappeared -- no one is accounting for them. That number is even higher. When we speak in this post-August national parliament, our words must reflect responsible conduct. I urge that this be treated with seriousness."

PRAYER TIMING
APRIL 27

	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

Govt orders action

FROM PAGE 4

food provided under the mid-day meal programme, the ministry said in a statement signed by Senior Information Officer Abdullah Shibli Sadiq.

The ministry noted that the programme was introduced to encourage primary education and provide nutritious food to students.

In response, the Madaripur deputy commissioner has formed a five-member probe committee. The project director has also issued a show-cause notice to the food suppliers in Madaripur, asking why their contracts should not be cancelled.

Education and Primary and Mass Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon has instructed the Chapainawabganj deputy commissioner to form a committee, including the civil surgeon, to investigate the matter.

The Chapainawabganj district primary education officer has already conducted an inquiry and submitted a report. A show-cause notice will also be issued soon against the food supplier there.

District primary education officers in both districts will take legal action against those responsible under the Food Safety Act.

BNP considering campaigns to counter

FROM PAGE 3

the local administration's role in taking action against hoarding and illegal stockpiling.

"Drives are underway, but the syndicate has not been broken," said one source.

Local administration recovered 5.77 lakh litres of fuel between March 3 and April 21.

The BNP leaders also said local administration should be more active in taking legal action against hoarding, while party leaders and activists should politically counter the opposition's ongoing negative campaign in and outside the parliament, aimed at creating the impression that the government is not prepared to handle the situation.

"People do not believe only official statements. They believe what they see...The opposition is trying to use this issue to stir up people against the government," said a senior BNP leader, who had attended the meeting, wishing anonymity.

"If the situation continues for long, it may create a negative impression on the public," he added.

BNP leaders also said the government's initial decision to introduce a fuel rationing system created panic among people and proved to be a slip-up in managing the crisis. The government later withdrew the measure.

Meanwhile, opposition Jamaat-e-Islami has already held protest programmes over the past week, where its leaders strongly criticised the ruling BNP.

BNP leaders said the opposition parties may also try to connect the fuel issue with other public grievances, including inflation, unemployment, load-shedding and poor services.

They also expressed concern over the power situation, saying load-shedding has increased in several areas, especially in rural areas, leaving people suffering as power cuts affect homes, shops, small businesses and farming.

Farmers who depend on diesel-run machines for irrigation during the Boro season may be badly affected if the fuel problem continues, they said, adding that if diesel is not available on time, or if its price rises sharply, it will adversely affect crop production.

The situation may worsen if power cuts continue in the coming summer months when demand for electricity and fuel usually rises, leading to public frustration, the leaders warned.

They urged the government to update the people on fuel stocks and emergency plans in a clear and coordinated manner and address their sufferings through better service delivery.

Also, law enforcement agencies should not respond harshly to public anger, they added.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী (সওজ) এর কার্যালয়
সড়ক বিভাগ, নোয়াখালী
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স্মারক নং-৩৫.০১.৭৫০০.৪৫৭.০৩.০০৩.২০-৭৮৩ তারিখঃ ২৬.০৪.২০২৬খ্রিঃ

গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, মহাসড়ক আইন, ২০২১ (২০২১ সনের ২৮নং আইন) এর বিধি ৯ এর উপ-বিধি ১১ নিম্নরূপঃ

"মহাসড়কের সংরক্ষণ রেখার মধ্যে কোনো স্থাপনা নির্মাণ করা যাইবে না"

এক্ষেত্রে,
"মহাসড়ক" অর্থে সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তরের সড়ক নেটওয়ার্কভুক্ত জাতীয়, আঞ্চলিক ও জেলা মহাসড়ক, বাংলাদেশের ভৌগোলিক সীমানায় অবস্থিত আন্তঃদেশীয়, আন্তঃআঞ্চলিক ও মহাদেশীয় মহাসড়ক ছাড়াও-
(ক) মহাসড়কের প্রান্তসীমা (right of way) এর অন্তর্ভুক্ত ভূমি;
(খ) মহাসড়কের ঢাল, কিনারা (berm), নয়নজুলি, বরো-পিট (borrow-pit) এবং পার্শ্ববর্তী নালা;
(গ) অধিদপ্তরের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন মহাসড়ক সংলগ্ন সকল ভূমি ও মহাসড়ক বাঁধ;
(ঘ) মহাসড়কস্থিত ভূগর্ভস্থ অথবা মহাসড়কের উপর দিয়া নির্মিত যে কোনো স্থাপনা ও কাঠামো;
(ঙ) অধিদপ্তরের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন মহাসড়ক অথবা মহাসড়ক সংলগ্ন ভূমির উপরে অবস্থিত প্রাচীর, খুঁটি, সড়ক অবকাঠামো এবং মহাসড়কের দুইপার্শ্বে এই ধরণের ভূমির উপর বিদ্যমান সকল বৃক্ষ; এবং
(চ) নদী, সাগর অথবা বৃহৎ জলাধারের পার্শ্বে মহাসড়কের প্রতিরক্ষামূলক কার্য, সেতুর ক্ষেত্রে উজান ও ভাটির উভয় দিকে গাইড বাঁধসহ নদী তীর প্রতিরক্ষামূলক কার্য অথবা নদীশাসন কার্যসমূহও; ইহার অন্তর্ভুক্ত হইবে। এবং "সংরক্ষণ রেখা" অর্থ মহাসড়কের উভয় পার্শ্বে ভূমির প্রান্তসীমা (Right of Way) হইতে ১০ (দশ) মিটার অথবা সরকার কর্তৃক গেজেট প্রজ্ঞাপনের মাধ্যমে নির্ধারিত রেখা।

উপর্যুক্ত বিধির লংঘন দন্ডনীয় অপরাধ।
এ বিষয়ে সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের সহযোগিতা কাম্য।

২৬/০৪/২০২৬
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ
সড়ক বিভাগ, নোয়াখালী

GD-916

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Directorate General of Drug Administration
Aushad Bhavan, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212
www.dgda.gov.bd

Memo No. DGDA/Tender/2025-26/6598 Date: 26/04/26

Invitation for Tender (OTM)
e-Tender Notice No. 01 (2025-26)

e-Tender is invited to the National e-GP System Portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the Procurement of the following Physical Service (Outsourcing):

Sl No.	Tender/ Proposal ID and Package No.	Description of package	Tender/ Proposal publication date and time	Last selling date and time	Closing/opening date and time
01	1258692 dgda/accounts-03/Rev/procure/2022-23/SR-03	Physical Service (Outsourcing)	27-04-2026 12:00	11-05-2026 10:00	11-05-2026 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted on the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any branch of the banks registered in the e-GP System.

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

26/04/2026
Mohammad Nayeem Golder
Director (c.c)
Directorate General of Drug Administration
Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212
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GD-913

A NEW READING OF
Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah and Sonargaon's independence

Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah, being aware of the political condition of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, took full advantage of his location and the geographical setting and declared independence in Sonargaon. His reign period was sixteen years (734–750 AH), with a short interregnum. How short it was and when it occurred remains a debated issue.

SAHIDUL HASAN

This occasion presented a favourable opportunity to Fakher Adden [Fakhruddin] the armour-bearer of Bhiram Khan, not only to assume the government of Sunergong without permission, but also to declare him an independent monarch, assuming the title of Sultan Sekunder.

.... Fakher Adden ... succeeded in regaining his authority, caused himself to be proclaimed sovereign of Bengal; and ordered the coin to be stamped, and all public papers were issued in his name.... Bengal remained for many years afterwards an independent and distinct Kingdom.

The above excerpt is taken from a two-century-old history book titled *The History of Bengal* (pp. 81–82), published in Calcutta, the then capital of the Bengal Province under colonial rule. The author of the book was Charles Stewart, an Indologist who served in the Bengal Army in his early career. Later, he became a professor of Arabic, Persian, and Hindustani at the East India College in Haileybury, England. This was the first history book in the English language that attempted to reconstruct the political profile of the Bengal Delta. One may have many critiques of this book, and we may not disagree with them. However, there is little doubt or disagreement that Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah was the first independent Sultan of Sonargaon—a land located in the centre of the delta and surrounded by riverine geography. Stewart wrote that Bhiram (Bahram) Khan died in 739 AH/1338 CE at Sonergong [Sonargaon]. At that time, Muhammad bin Tughlaq had conquered a vast area in the Deccan and was heavily engaged in transferring his capital to the newly established city of Daulatabad. Taking this as an opportune moment, Fakhruddin declared independence in Sonargaon. This argument was further developed by Edward Thomas in *The Chronicles of the Pathan Kings of Delhi, Illustrated by Coins, Inscriptions, and Other Antiquarian Remains*. Thomas suggested that the most suitable moment for Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah was 737 AH/1336 CE, based on his reading of the date on Fakhruddin's coins as:

ضرب هذه السكه بحضرة سنارگاؤ سنة سبع وثلثين و سبعماية

[Translation: This sikkah was issued from Hadrat Sonargaon in the year seven hundred thirty-seven.]

Henry Blochmann, another orientalist, also critically examined the available textual records and numismatic evidence. He suggested a correction to the reading of Thomas and commented that, in the absence of nuktah or diacritical signs in the Arabic script, the initial *sin* (س) and *ta* (ت) appear similar, as do the words *saba* and *tisa*. Therefore, the correct reading of the date would be 739 AH, and he proposed that Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah ruled for 'ten years and some months'. On the basis of numismatic evidence, he concluded that Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah's reign period was 739–750 AH. It is evident that the debate centres on the reading of the date.

In the 1960s, Sukhamaya Mukhapadhyaya, in his *Banglar Itihaser Dusho Bachar: Swadhin Sultander Amal (1338–1538 AD)*, took the year of Fakhruddin's independence as the starting point of his historical narrative and ended with the defeat of Ghiyasuddin Mahmud in 1538 CE.

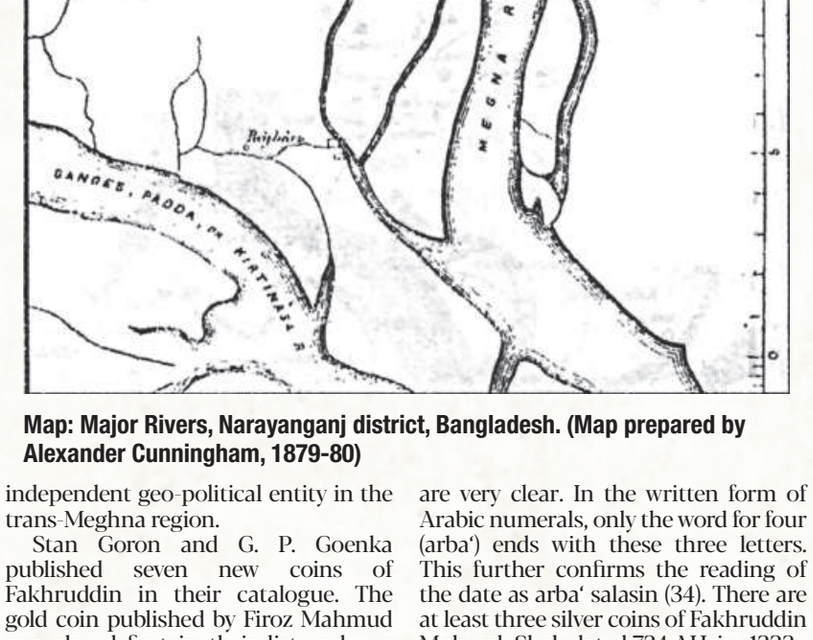
My humble effort today is to revisit this historical narrative with the help of numismatic evidence discovered in the last three decades. It is almost proverbial that the world of sultanate coinage is a mystery. A new coin, or even a re-reading of an old coin, advances the established debate further.

Firoz Mahmud published a gold coin issued by Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah, discovered in Sylhet and preserved in the Bangladesh National Museum (BNM). The gold coin contains the date in the marginal section, written in words, which is quite readable, although the upper portion appears to be cut off. It was probably issued to commemorate the declaration of independence by Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah in 739 AH.

It is interesting to note that an expert numismatist like Abdul Karim accepted the reading of the gold coin. However, this coin also created an opportunity for historians to revisit the issue.

The historiography centred on Fakhruddin largely depends on Persian chronicles as primary sources written under the patronage of North Indian rulers. Two *Tarikh-i-Firuzshahis* are the only contemporary texts. Later works such as *Tarikh-i-Mubarakshahi*, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, and *Tarikh-i-Firishta* also contain important information on Fakhruddin and the affairs of Bengal. The eighteenth-century historical compilation by Golam Hussain Salim (*Riyaz-us-Salatin*) also includes a separate section on Fakhruddin. Except for the last, all the other texts were written outside Bengal, and none of the writers ever came here. The imperial lens is a salient feature of these works, which is reflected in their writings on Bengal. They approached the events of Bengal through an imperialist lens. As a result, some of these works describe Bengal as a land of traitors, disobedient subjects, and troublemakers.

As a result, the coins issued by the rulers of Bengal are a more reliable primary source for reconstructing the history of the aforementioned period. However, clipped margins, scarcity of specimens, and the clumsy, sprawling scripts of the coins have created controversy among historians and numismatists. The importance of placing all the available coins of a Sultan side by side and carefully reading the date portion cannot be ignored.



Map: Major Rivers, Narayanganj district, Bangladesh. (Map prepared by Alexander Cunningham, 1879-80)

Obverse **Reverse**

PHOTO COURTESY: BANGLADESH NATIONAL MUSEUM

Picture 1: Gold coin of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah.

Obverse **Reverse**

PHOTO COURTESY: **NOMAN NASIR**

Silver coin of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah (734 AH)

New coins issued by the rulers of Bengal have been discovered and published by researchers as well as coin collectors. I propose 205 years (1333 to 1538 CE) of the Independent Sultanate period instead of 200 years (1338–1538 CE) on the basis of these numismatic researches. In doing so, I would like to re-read the date portion of the only gold coin of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah, now kept in the Bangladesh National Museum. My reading suggests that this ruler declared independence in 1333 CE, i.e. five years earlier than the prevailing date.

What was the force behind the rise of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah? What facilitated his emergence as an independent authority? In attempting to answer these questions, I would venture to examine the multi-faceted settings—man-made and natural—that played the role of catalysts in the making of Sonargaon as the first independent geo-political entity in the trans-Meghna region.

Stan Goron and G. P. Goenka published seven new coins of Fakhruddin in their catalogue. The gold coin published by Firoz Mahmud was placed first in their list and was dated to 739 AH by historians and numismatists. The second is a quarter tanka made of gold. Goron and Goenka proposed a new reading of the first coin (Picture 1), which is given below:

Obverse: *alsultan al azam fakhr al-dunya wa'l din abul muzaffar mubarak shah*

Reverse: *yamin khalifat allah nasir amir al-muminin*

On the border, the date is read as 734 AH. They also mentioned a silver coin of Mubarak Shah that was not included in the catalogue. J. P. Goenka published a silver tanka (Picture 2) issued from Sonargaon and read it as follows:

Obverse: *alsultan al azam/ fakhr al-dunya wa'l din/ abul muzaffar mubarak shah/alsultan*

Reverse: *yamin khalifat/ allah nasir/ amir al-muminin*

On the reverse of the above coin, the epithet is placed within a square field bounded by a circular border. Each side of the square field contains an annulet at the centre, positioned between the square and the circle. The date and the mint name are placed outside the circle. On the coins of Fakhruddin, the mint name is usually prefixed with jalal, but here it is shahr. On the basis of this silver coin and the gold coin mentioned earlier, Goenka questioned the established narrative that Fakhruddin declared independence in 1338 and that, in the initial phase, his independence was short-lived. The coins of Fakhruddin dated 734, 737, 738, and 739 indicate his authority in the eastern region for several years.

I have personally examined this gold coin and noticed that the last three alphabets—ra (ر), ba (ب), and 'ain (ع)—are very clear. In the written form of Arabic numerals, only the word for four (arba') ends with these three letters. This further confirms the reading of the date as arba' salasin (34). There are at least three silver coins of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah dated 734 AH, i.e. 1333–34 CE.

On the basis of the above numismatic evidence, it can be inferred that Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah declared independence in Sonargaon in 734 AH/1333–34 CE. This sixteen-year sovereignty was interrupted for a short period. Accepting this chronology, a humble attempt may be made to revisit the historiography of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah's independence. In this venture, an analysis of both the circumstantial and spatial contexts is made, which led—or rather, inspired—Fakhruddin to revolt and declare independence against the mighty Tughlaqs.

At present, Sonargaon is an upazila in Narayanganj district, about 27 miles north-east of Dhaka, and covers an area of 24 square miles. The earliest reference to Sonargaon is found as a mint town on the coins of Shamsuddin Firuz (705 AH/1305–06 CE). Major rivers and their tributaries played a dynamic role in the rise and development of Sonargaon as a capital city. The Old Brahmaputra created a natural defensive line on the northern side of Sonargaon. The River Sitalakhya flows through the west, while the Meghna passes through the east and south of the area. The northern boundary of Sonargaon was less definite, but three rivers—Sitalakhya, Dhaleshwari, and Meghna—provided a clear defensive perimeter around a triangular landmass in the southern part of Sonargaon. Menikhal, a watercourse that runs between the Sitalakhya and Meghna, created a second line of defence as well as an interconnection between the river routes. The river network around Sonargaon facilitated both the formation of a political entity and its economic prosperity. It was connected to the Bay of Bengal maritime zone through the southern river networks (See Map).

Mamtazur Rahman Tarafder identified the Sultanate capital city in the Mugrapara–Goaldi locality, which contains three Sultanate mosques, a few tombs, ruined monuments, and other relics of historical significance. Habiba Khatun, in her attempt to identify the present location of the capital Sonargaon, noticed that the mint Sonargaon and the *iqlim* Sonargaon were not the same administrative entity. The former had a limited spatial coverage, while the latter had a wider administrative and spatial significance. She concluded that settlements in Sonargaon in its early phase were centred on the banks of two rivers: (a) the western bank of the Brahmaputra and (b) the eastern bank of the Sitalakhya. With an analysis of the archaeological sites and place names, she commented, "Sultan Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah was the first Sultan of Sonargaon who minted coins from 'Hazrat Jalal Sonargaon'. The place could be identified with the present village Hazratpur–Jalalpur."

The geomorphology and spatial context created a favourable opportunity for Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah to establish a separate political entity in the eastern part of Bengal. The location, topography, and environs of Sonargaon were suitable for naval warfare, even in the rainy season, which acted as a natural barrier against the invading imperial army. Rivers around the area functioned both as boundary lines and as means of rapid movement. Fakhruddin was well acquainted with this area. One may raise the question: what is the basis of such a proposition? Is there any particular written text on Fakhruddin? The answer is negative. However, an analysis of Ibn Battuta's travelogue and *Tarikh-i-Mubarakshahi* may support the conjecture. Sarhindi wrote that there was resentment among the soldiers of Qadar Khan in Sonargaon. At that time, Fakhruddin was hiding in a safe place on the opposite side of the river. He succeeded in establishing a rapport with the recalcitrant soldiers of the imperial army. At one stage, Qadar Khan was killed by his own soldiers. After that, Fakhruddin marched towards his capital to recapture it. He distributed the wealth of the *khazana* (treasury) to the imperial soldiers according to his promise made to gain their support. The situation described by Sarhindi indicates that Fakhruddin was hiding in a nearby place on the other side of a river which was flowing near the capital Sonargaon at that time. He was waiting for a favourable moment to regain his lost kingdom. Jadunath Sarkar also explained the situation in a similar tone. Heavy rain resulted in damp conditions, and the imperial soldiers were not accustomed to such a climate. Sarkar described the political scenario of Sonargaon in a striking manner. According to him, "like the ever-shifting course of the rivers, the political current in the eastern capital took bewildering turns." The geographical setting of the area contributed to the defeat of Qadar Khan within a very short time.

The Tughlaq governors posted in eastern India jointly marched against the rebel Fakhruddin. None of the textual references indicate that any military assistance came from Delhi. Was this an indication of the negligence of Muhammad bin Tughlaq? As we know, Muhammad bin Tughlaq is famous for his ambitious projects. In 1327 CE, he began shifting his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad in the Deccan. This initiative caused him to lose a great amount of wealth and life. The elites of Delhi became deeply frustrated. In 1334, a revolt took place in Mewar. The Sultan himself fell ill due to a bubonic plague which originated in Bidar. The Karachil expedition in 1333 was also disastrous for him: more than one lakh soldiers were killed, and he had to retreat. A possible attack was looming on the northern frontier. All this shows that he was heavily preoccupied with wars, financial losses, and human casualties. His ambitious projects and the possibility of a Mongol attack kept him fully occupied. He was not in a position to keep a close eye on the affairs in Bengal. This created a perfect opportunity for Mubarak Shah. Located on the easternmost border of the empire, Sonargaon became independent.

Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah, being aware of the political condition of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, took full advantage of his location and the geographical setting and declared independence in Sonargaon. His reign period was sixteen years (734–750 AH), with a short interregnum. How short it was and when it occurred remains a debated issue. This long sixteen-year rule can be regarded as the first independent political reign in the eastern and south-eastern parts of Bengal in the fourteenth century. Sonargaon had a flourishing trading hub under its jurisdiction. As a result of these trading activities, Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah had to issue more coins. These coins bear testimony to his sovereign authority in the trans-Meghna region.

Dr Sahidul Hasan *is an Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Dhaka.*

Star
DHAKA MONDAY APRIL 27, 2026, BAISHAKH 14, 1433 BS

SPORT

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
First T20I
Bangladesh vs New Zealand
Live from 2:00 pm
STAR SPORTS

SELECT HD1
Premier League
Man United vs Brentford
Live from 1:00 am (Tuesday)

ORPITA & CO SEAL MAIDEN ASIAN GAMES SPOT

Bangladesh captain Orpita Pal celebrates with teammates during their 2-1 win against Hong Kong in their final Pool A fixture of the Asian Games Qualifiers in Jakarta yesterday. Nadira Ema and Kona Akter scored the two goals after Hong Kong had taken the lead. The women in red and green, playing their first international tournament at senior level, sealed a semifinal berth in this campaign, thereby earning a place in the Asian Games.

PHOTO: AHF

'LET THEM PLAY'
Litton sets tone for T20 return

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI *from Chattogram*

Bangladesh return to T20I cricket today after around a five-month gap, with skipper Litton Das keen to strike a balance between rediscovering rhythm and laying the groundwork for sterner tests ahead.

Still smarting from missing out on the T20 World Cup earlier this year, the Tigers begin their three-match series against New Zealand at the Bir Sreshtho Flight Lieutenant Matiur Rahman Stadium in Chattogram. Yet, rather than burden his side with expectations, Litton has opted for a more relaxed approach.

"Let them play," the captain said on the eve of the match -- a simple message that reflects both the mood in the camp and the nature of this return.

Litton, however, is not looking to start from scratch. Instead, he wants to build on the cohesion developed during campaign for the last T20 World Cup.

"We had great team bonding, and our preparation for the last T20 World Cup was very good. I will try to hold onto the team well and build from there," he said.

Confidence is also buoyed by a 2-1 comeback win in the preceding ODI series against the Black Caps. But while Bangladesh may approach this contest with a degree of freedom, there is little room to ignore the issues that have lingered.

Recent T20 form paints a mixed picture. Last year, series wins over Afghanistan and Ireland showed promise, but the 3-0 whitewash against the West Indies exposed vulnerabilities -- particularly with the bat.

The bowling unit has largely held its own, but the batting remains a concern despite a relatively settled line-up over the past year and a half. Opener Tanzid Tamim has impressed, but Saif Hassan has struggled for consistency. Litton himself comes into the series on the back of runs in ODIs, yet questions persist in the middle order.

Parvez Hossain Emon, Towhid Hridoy, and Shamim Hossain are still searching for stability in their roles. Hridoy, in particular, has struggled to maintain tempo, crossing a strike-rate of 100 in only three of his last 12 T20I innings. Shamim, meanwhile, has yet to make a significant impact in recent outings, especially in the finishing role.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Lower down, Mohammad Saifuddin offers depth with the bat, but contributions from others remain inconsistent. While Rishad Hossain has shown glimpses of power-hitting, greater reliability is needed, especially with high-profile series against Australia and India looming later this year.

Litton acknowledged the imbalance but stressed clarity of roles.

"As a batter, if we fulfil our roles, there's no need to rely on the lower order," he said.

He also pointed to the importance of building deeper batting resources. "Big teams have immense batting depth, often down to number nine. If we can build that depth, our top-order batters will be able to play much more freely."

For now, though, the focus remains on easing back into the format without overcomplicating things.

"We are playing the T20 format again after a long time," Litton said. "I don't want to put any extra pressure on anyone."

New faces like Abdul Gaffar Saqlain and Ripon Mondol could get opportunities as part of that process, with the captain keen to test combinations.

With nine T20Is against top opposition lined up in quick succession later this year, Litton sees this phase as a stepping stone.

For Bangladesh, this is more than just a return -- it is a reset. A chance to play with freedom, address lingering flaws, and gradually shape a side capable of standing up to tougher challenges on the horizon.

Latham relying on footage, adaptability

SPORTS REPORTER *from Chattogram*

Tom Latham said New Zealand have been analysing available footage of Bangladesh players ahead of the T20I series, particularly as several members of the hosts' squad are yet to debut in the format.

Bangladesh have included newcomers Ripon Mondol and Abdul Gaffar Saqlain, while frontline seamers Taskin Ahmed, Mustafizur Rahman and Shoriful Islam have been rested for the series, which begins today.

"We've seen a bit of footage on the guys. Understand there might be some guys that haven't debuted yet in this format. So I guess when, you know, there's not heaps of information on players that you haven't seen, it's about trying to adapt as quick as you can," Latham said during the press conference on Sunday.

The New Zealand skipper was unsure whether this Bangladesh side was the most explosive in the format, but stressed the importance of focusing on their own approach. "It's about playing what's in front of us, regardless of the opposition personnel, and making the best decisions from there," he added.

New Zealand have also made several changes from the ODI side that suffered a 2-1 series defeat. Latham believes those with limited international exposure can rely on their domestic experience.

"We do have guys with international or not as much experience internationally, but they do have a lot of experience domestically. So for them it's just going out, expressing themselves as much as they can, for us playing our brand of cricket, a brand that we want to play, and obviously adapting," he concluded.

- Bangladesh have a poor head-to-head record against New Zealand, winning only four of the 20 T20Is between the two sides. The Black Caps have won 15, while one match produced no result.
- This will be New Zealand's first T20I against Bangladesh at this venue in Chattogram. All six of their previous T20Is against the hosts were played in Mirpur.
- However, New Zealand have played four matches at this venue before, during the 2014 T20 World Cup.

Domestic form earns Amite, Tanzid maiden Test call-ups

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh have handed maiden Test call-ups to Tanzid Tamim and Amite Hasan for the opening match of next month's two-Test series against Pakistan, with selectors rewarding consistent performances in the longer format.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) announced a 15-member squad on Sunday for the first Test, scheduled to begin on May 8 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur. The second Test will be held in Sylhet from May 16, with both matches forming part of the 2025-27 ICC World Test Championship cycle.

The spotlight, however, falls firmly on the two uncapped batters.

When it comes to the longer format, Amite could indeed be said to have "earned" his way into the side. A regular across competitions such as the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) and the National Cricket League (NCL), the 23-year-old has been on an upward trajectory since making his first-class debut in 2019. He has accumulated 3,650 runs in 49 matches, including 11 centuries and 17 fifties, at an average of just over 49.

"Amite has earned his call-up as he has been

one of the most consistent batters in our first-class cricket. His temperament stands out and we believe it is well-suited for Test cricket. This format demands patience and discipline, and he has shown those qualities over a sustained period," chief selector Kazi Habibul Bashar said in a BCB media release.

His progress has been underpinned by notable performances. Last year, he scored his second NCL double century, matching his career-best 213, and recently struck 162 for East Zone against Central Zone in Sylhet in the opening round of the BCL.

Tanzid's inclusion, meanwhile, brings a different dimension. Known for his exploits in white-ball cricket and part of Bangladesh's Under-19 World Cup-winning squad in 2020, the left-handed opener has also built a solid first-class record. He has scored 1,792 runs in 25 matches at an average of 40.

"Tanzid has been in our thoughts for Test cricket. He has a very good first-class record and we felt he deserved the opportunity to showcase his ability in Tests. He has a sound technique and plenty of natural ability. We are confident that if he gets the chance, he can perform well in the longer format," Bashar said.

Meanwhile, Taskin Ahmed returns to the Test side after an extended absence due to injury concerns, alongside Shoriful Islam. Off-spinner Nayeem Hasan has also been recalled, having last played against Sri Lanka in June last year.

For Tanzid and Amite, the upcoming Test offers an opportunity to carry their domestic form onto the international stage and establish themselves in Bangladesh's red-ball setup.

SQUAD

Najmul Hossain Shanto (Captain), Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Shadman Islam, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Litton Das, Mehidy Hasan Miraz (Vice Captain), Taijul Islam, Nayeem Hasan, Ebadot Hossain Chowdhury, Shoriful Islam, Taskin Ahmed, Nahid Rana, Tanzid Tamim, Amite Hasan

45 DAYS TO GO

From sparse stands to packed arenas

Across the 22 FIFA World Cups held so far, the average attendance per match stands at 45,577 spectators. The highest average crowd was recorded at the 1994 USA World Cup, with 68,991, while the lowest came in the 1938 France World Cup, with 20,889.

Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Germany vs Germany: The duel that happened only once'

Sabastian Sawe proudly holds aloft a running shoe while posing in front the electronic time, showing his record-setting run in the London Marathon yesterday. The Kenyan defending champion broke the two-hour mark for the first time in history, crossing the finish line in 1hr 59min 30sec. It shattered by 65 seconds the previous best of 2:00:35 set in Chicago in 2023 by the late Kelvin Kiptum.

PHOTO: REUTERS

BFF trims list of coaches to 26

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) on Sunday narrowed its shortlist of candidates for the national team's head coach to 26, with European and Latin American applicants dominating the pool.

A four-member committee, including BFF technical director Saiful Bari Titu, has been tasked with reviewing applications. Despite the submission deadline set for April 30, the committee has already reduced the number of applicants from around 270 to 26.

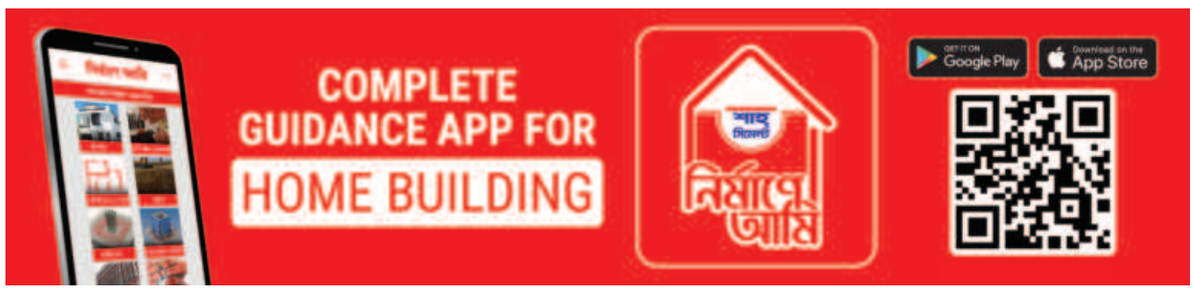
"On Saturday, we cut the list down to 30, and today [Sunday] we have brought it down to 26, which features coaches from Germany, Portugal, Belgium, Croatia, Argentina, Brazil, along with one from Bangladesh," BFF technical committee chairman Kamrul Islam Hilton told The Daily Star.

He added that Zulfikar Mahmud Mintu is the sole Bangladeshi coach to be among those shortlisted.

Hilton further revealed that the number of goalkeeping coach candidates has been reduced to 10, which includes local coach Nuruzzaman Noyon.

"We will meet once or twice more before forwarding the final shortlist to the National Teams Committee by April 30. Applications are still coming in and we are waiting to see if any more high-profile coaches submit their CVs," he said.

Responding to queries about the selection process, Hilton explained that candidates are being assessed based on several criteria, including professional coaching licences, an age range of 40 to 60, prior experience with national teams, and familiarity with working in Asia, among other factors.



Iran FM back in Pakistan to set out 'talks terms'

Uncertainty deepens over negotiations after Trump scraps envoys' visit, withdraws security gear

AGENCIES

Iran's foreign minister returned to Islamabad for more consultations yesterday, as international mediators tried to keep peace talks on track despite US President Donald Trump calling off his envoys' planned trip.

According to the Iranian news agency ISNA, Abbas Araghchi was to sit down with Pakistani officials to convey "Iran's positions and views on the framework of any understanding to completely end the war" in the Middle East.

The minister had already been in Islamabad only the day before, after which he travelled to Oman, while other Iranian envoys went to Tehran "to consult and obtain the necessary instructions on issues related to ending the war", according to the agency.

Before Saturday's Iran-Pakistan meetings in Islamabad, the White House had announced that Trump's peace envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner were planning to leave for Pakistan to engage in further negotiations.

But Trump later told Fox News he had scrapped the trip, saying there was no point "sitting around talking about nothing". He dismissed Tehran's negotiating position, but added that it had revised its proposal within minutes of his decision.

- Iran demands lifting of Hormuz blockade before any negotiations begin
- Trump said Iran's new peace offer better but still inadequate
- Israel PM says Hezbollah 'dismantling' ceasefire with Lebanon

"They gave us a paper that should have been better and -- interestingly -- immediately when I cancelled it, within 10 minutes, we got a new paper that was much better," he told reporters, without elaborating.

Asked separately whether halting the trip meant a return to open hostilities, Trump said: "No, it doesn't mean that. We haven't thought about it yet."

Later, after a gunman was arrested at the White House Correspondents'

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PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Lightning branches across a brooding sky, casting a bluish-white glow over the storm clouds just moments before they burst, drenching the capital with a heavy downpour for around an hour yesterday evening.

DU student found dead at home

Her teacher arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested a Dhaka University teacher after one of his students was found dead at her home in the capital's Uttar Badda area early yesterday.

Munira Mahzabin Mimo, a master's student in theatre and performance studies who is suspected to have died by suicide, left a note that mentioned the

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

At least 12 killed in lightning strikes

Flash floods forecast in Sylhet haors, farmers asked to harvest fast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 12 people, including a child, died and eight others were injured in lightning strikes during thunderstorms yesterday across seven districts -- Gaibandha, Bogura, Natore, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Jamalpur, and Sirajganj.

The rainfall that accompanied the storms ended a week-long heatwave, bringing relief to many, though hailstorms damaged crops in some areas.

Meteorologists said rains may continue for about a week, lowering temperatures. "However, the heatwave could return in the second week of May," said Bazlur Rashid, senior meteorologist of Bangladesh Meteorological

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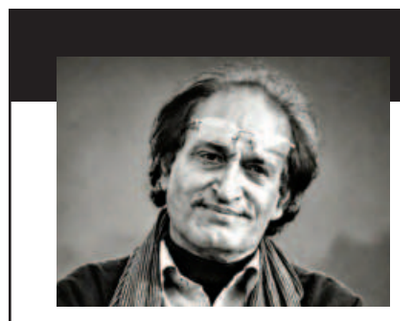

Raghu Rai (1942-2026)

Liberation War lensman passes away

STAR REPORT

Internationally acclaimed Indian photographer Raghu Rai, who photographed the Bangladesh Liberation War, died of cancer in New Delhi yesterday.

He was 83.

An Instagram post from the verified account "raghurai.official" announced his death. He was born in 1942.

In 2013, Rai was conferred the "Friends of Liberation War Honour" by the Bangladesh government for his contributions to the Liberation War.

According to a report published by The Statesman in 2021, Rai was only five years into his career when the war erupted in March 1971. He was dispatched by the newspaper to document the exodus of refugees, who would eventually number around 10 million, as they streamed into West Bengal and neighbouring states to escape atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army.

He could immediately empathise with the refugees,

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On a suspended bamboo scaffold six floors above the ground, two construction workers plaster the side of a high-rise government building. Without any safety harnesses or protective gear, the risk of a fall is serious. The photo was taken yesterday near the capital's Tejgaon Truck Stand area. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

DEVELOPMENT WORK

BNP MPs irked at ministers over poor response

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

A section of ruling BNP lawmakers yesterday expressed anger at several ministers, saying they were not receiving satisfactory responses regarding development work in their constituencies.

They also said the local administration was not meeting their demands related to public interest, making it difficult for them to respond to constituents.

Lawmakers argued that the lack of response and adequate support could create frustration among MPs and the public, as constituents rely on their elected representatives for solutions.

The issue came up at a meeting of ruling party lawmakers at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday, chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

The overall power and energy situation was also discussed, including how electricity would be managed amid fuel and gas shortages.

Tarique asked lawmakers what problems they were facing in their constituencies

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16-yr-old at centre of militant alert

Court filings show the boy had regular contact with 2 dismissed army personnel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thursday's nationwide alert for potential militant attacks on key installations came after police detected communications between several alleged Neo-JMB members, according to intelligence findings.

The intel showed that a 16-year-old boy from Habiganj Sadar upazila had been in regular contact with two dismissed army personnel.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided Zia Udyan in the capital and arrested a militant suspect named Ahsan Zahir Khan on February 1. Police later detained several others, including Mohammad Daniel Islam and Md Russel alias Palash Abu Baser Al Faruk.

After arresting the teen boy in Habiganj on April 2, the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit seized his phone, uncovering "evidence" of his ties with Neo-JMB, and his presence at the clandestine meeting in Zia Udyan, court documents show.

The documents describe the boy as "an IS-ideology follower/Neo-JMB member".

According to a forwarding letter submitted before a Dhaka court on April 3, preliminary analysis of the device indicated the boy's links to a banned extremist organisation.

In his statement to investigators, the boy said he, along with other accused, gathered at the Zia Udyan to plan acts of sabotage aimed at damaging state property, inspired by Neo-JMB ideology.

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