

Regardless of faith or identity, equal rights for all

Pledges PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday said the government does not engage in religion-based politics, reaffirming its commitment to equal rights and security for all citizens regardless of faith or identity.

"Our government's view is this - religion belongs to each individual, and everyone has the right to security," he said, according to a press release from the Prime Minister's Office.

"Regardless of religion or identity, Bangalee and non-Bangalee, believers and non-believers - all will enjoy equal rights in every field."

He made the remarks while exchanging greetings with leaders of the Buddhist community on the occasion of Buddha Purnima

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Prime Minister Tarique Rahman exchanges greetings with leaders of the Buddhist community on the occasion of Buddha Purnima at a meeting in the conference room of the Ministry of Public Administration at the Secretariat yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Digital IDs, relocation plans rolled out for Dhaka hawkers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday launched coordinated initiatives to ensure pedestrian-friendly sidewalks, regulate activities of hawkers and rehabilitate them through structured systems and digital identification.

At DSCC's Nagar Bhaban auditorium, Administrator Md Abdus Salam formally inaugurated hawker rehabilitation activities under the proposed "Dhaka City Hawker Management Policy-2026".

Under the new policy, QR code-enabled digital ID cards and specific locations with operating hours have been designated to hawkers across key areas, including Gulistan, Motijheel, New Market, and Shahjahanpur. Some locations will operate as daily markets, while others will function as evening markets between 6:00pm and 10:00pm.

As part of the initiative, 100 hawkers from the Gulistan area were issued digital IDs and relocated to the link road adjacent to Ramna Bhaban.

Md Salam said the initiative, taken under the prime minister's directive, aims to create safer, more organised streets while improving the livelihoods of marginal communities through a humane, transformative effort.

DSCC CEO Md Zahirul Islam said the digital ID system would ensure transparency and accountability while allowing traffic police to easily verify vendors' legality and assigned locations, adding that at least 5-6 feet of

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'No right to remain in Bangabhaban'

Nahid renews call for Shahabuddin's arrest at JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Chief Whip and NCP Convener Nahid Islam yesterday renewed his demand in the parliament for the removal and arrest of President Mohammed Shahabuddin, branding him as "corrupt, incompetent, deceitful, and complicit in genocide".

While taking part in the discussion on the thanksgiving motion on president's address to the House, he also said the Consensus Commission was pressured through force to insert a "note of dissent" into the July Charter. "It is now time for the Consensus Commission members to speak out on the matter," he said.



Coming down heavily on the president, Nahid, also a frontline leader of July uprising, said, "We made it very clear that the president must be removed and arrested. He has no right to remain in Bangabhaban or to deliver an address here (in the parliament)."

He went on to outline the president's "misdeeds", saying Shahabuddin was appointed as an Anti-Corruption Commission commissioner with three objectives - to ensure corruption charges against Khaleda Zia and Tarique Rahman, to give Awami League a clean chit in the Padma Bridge corruption allegations, and to dismiss corruption cases against Sheikh Hasina and other Awami League leaders during the Fakhruddin-Moinuddin caretaker government.

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BHABADAH REGION

Waterlogging wipes out Boro hopes for 25,000 farmers

Silted rivers, stalled drainage leave 17,800 hectares fallow months after monsoon

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Prolonged waterlogging in the Bhabadah region has left over 25,000 farmers unable to cultivate Boro this season, deepening food insecurity and financial distress across parts of Jashore and Khulna.

Even after the last monsoon, large areas remain submerged despite the presence of drainage infrastructure, rendering the Boro planting window ineffective, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

For farmer Proddip Mondal of Kalishakul village, the promise of recovery has turned into yet another year of loss.

His home lies within half a kilometre of a 21-vent sluice gate meant to drain at least 27 surrounding beels, yet his land remains under more than three feet of water.

Like many others, he tried to recover Aman losses by preparing a Boro seedbed on a nearby plot.

"I thought once the water receded, I would transplant the seedlings to my field, but the water never went down. I couldn't plant a single sapling this year," he said.

Now surviving by catching fish, he added, "I couldn't grow Aman due to waterlogging. I hoped Boro would help me recover some losses. At least we would have rice for the year. But now I have nothing. What will we eat?"

A normal harvest of about 50 maunds would meet his four-member family's



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

I couldn't plant a single sapling this year. I couldn't grow Aman either due to this waterlogging. I hoped Boro would help me recover some losses. At least we would have rice for the year. But now I have nothing. What will we eat?"

PRODDIP MONDAL  
Farmer of Kalishakul village

First and foremost, water must be drained. Without solving the drainage problem, agriculture cannot recover here. If water could be removed in time, much more land could have been cultivated.

SAMOREN BISWAS  
Additional deputy director of DAE in Jashore

yearly food needs. "Now I have to buy rice by selling vegetables and catching fish," he added.

His experience reflects a wider crisis, as more than 250 families in his village alone failed to cultivate Boro this season after their Aman crops were also lost to flooding. Many who once sold surplus rice are now struggling to buy food.

Padma Rani Mondal in Monoharpur village in Monirampur, along with her husband Goutam Mondal, now relies on fish farming and cattle rearing.

They own around one and a half bighas of land in Kapalia Beel but have been unable to cultivate paddy since 2022 due to persistent waterlogging.

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FROM PRESS GALLERY



JS removes age limits for BSEC, IDRA appointments

STAR REPORT

The parliament yesterday passed two bills removing age limits for appointing the heads and members of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) and the Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA).

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2026, abolishes the existing 65-year age cap for the BSEC chair and commissioners. The Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (Amendment) Bill,

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1,800 cases filed after July uprising Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman yesterday informed the parliament that 1,855 cases have been filed across police stations in various districts over murders, enforced disappearances and torture committed in the aftermath of the July uprising.

Responding to a question from MP Anwarul Islam, the minister said 799 of the cases relate to murder, while 1,056 fall under other legal provisions.

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Leadership void stirs unrest in tea gardens

No elections for eight years leave workers without representation

MINTU DESHWARA, Moubibazar

The Bangladesh Tea Workers Union has gone through eight years without an election, leaving workers without elected representation for the third consecutive tenure.

The situation is raising concerns over a leadership vacuum, internal feuds, and growing worker dissatisfaction.

Founded in 1948, the union represents over one lakh workers across tea gardens in the country's north-eastern districts.

The union last held its triennial polls on June 24, 2018. Under its constitution, although fresh elections were due in 2021 and again in 2024, it was not held in either year, leaving the same

committee in office for nearly twice its mandated term.

The union has a three-tier structure - panchayat (garden-level), valley, and central committees - each elected directly by workers for three years. With the terms long expired, many of these committees have effectively become inactive.

Workers say the absence of elected representation has weakened their ability to raise grievances or negotiate with garden authorities.

Geeta Rani Kanu, a labour leader, said expired committees lacked the legitimacy to negotiate effectively with estate owners, leaving workers' demands unaddressed.

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Members from low-income families queue behind a TCB truck to purchase essential food items at subsidised prices. Many are increasingly reliant on the government programme as it provides basic goods, such as rice and lentils, at lower-than-market prices amid rising living costs. The photo was taken in Dhaka's Shyamoli area yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

MARCH 7 SPEECH HC grants bail to Emi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted ad interim bail to Sheikh Tasnim Afroz Emi, former vice president of Shamsunnahar Hall Union at Dhaka University, in an anti-terrorism case filed over playing Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's March 7 speech on a loudspeaker.

The court also issued a rule asking the government to explain why Emi should not be granted permanent bail in the case.

The HC bench of Justice KM Zahid Sarwar and Justice Sheikh Abu Taher issued the rule and passed the order following a petition filed by Emi seeking bail.

There is no legal bar to Emi's release following the High Court order, her lawyer, Muhammad Noman Hossain, told The Daily Star.

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