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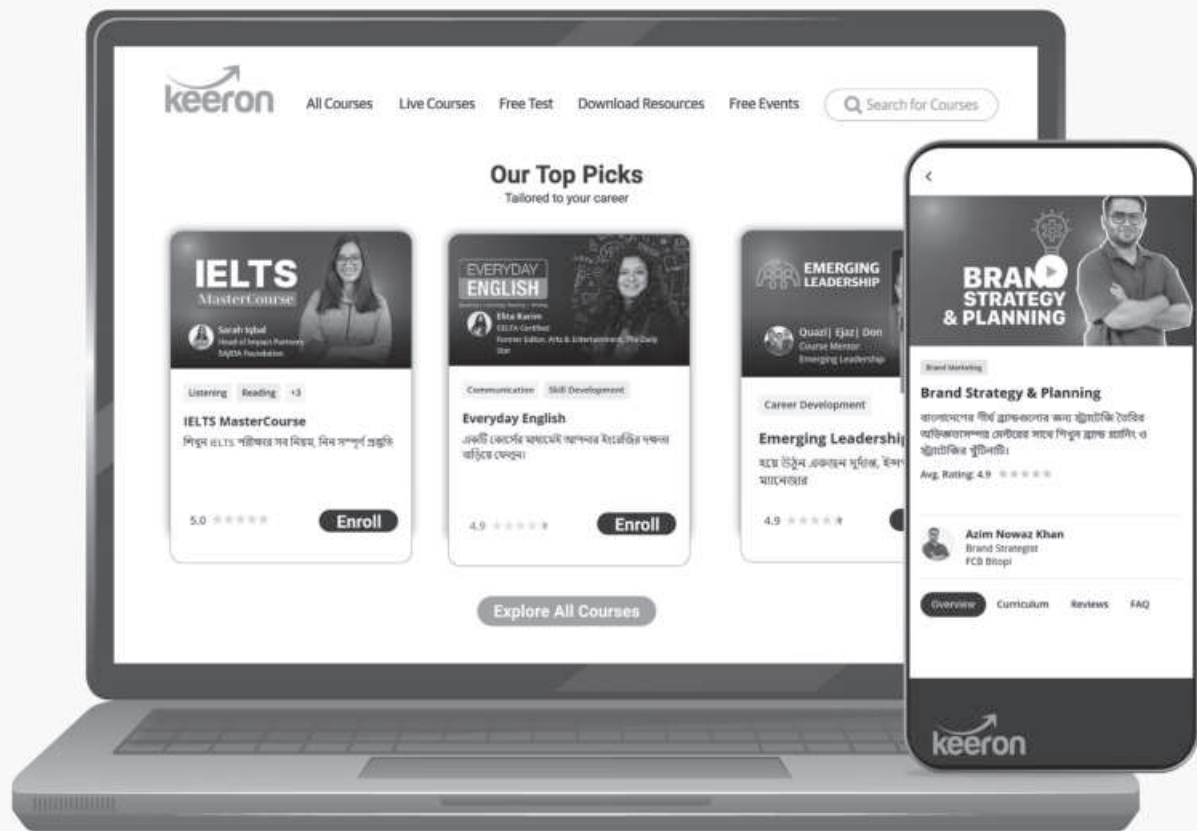
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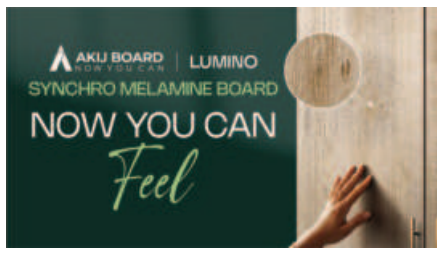
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Bangladesh staring at \$1.07b extra LNG subsidy

IEEFA projects for this quarter, warns of higher gas, power prices

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh will likely have to pay an additional \$1.07 billion, or about Tk 13,134 crore, in LNG subsidies during the April-June quarter if global prices remain elevated, according to a new study by a US-based international non-profit.

The report by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) highlighted the risks, raising fears of domestic electricity and gas tariff hikes.

It noted that Bangladesh's dependence on imported fossil fuels is exposing the country to volatile international markets and sharply increasing fiscal stress.

LNG SUBSIDY BURDEN

In Tk crore

	LNG IMPORT COST	PETROBANGLA INCOME	SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT
April	7,384	3,164	4,220
May	7,729	3,815	3,914
June	7,550	3,688	3,861
Total	22,664	10,668	11,996

SOURCE: PETROBANGLA

For example, the ongoing US-Israel war on Iran has disrupted global fuel supply chains and driven up prices of LNG, coal, and oil.

If disruptions persist through the summer, the country could incur the additional subsidy burden at an assumed spot LNG price of \$20 per MMBtu, according to the report. The figure could rise further once regasification and transmission costs are included.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Power tariff hike looms

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The people will once again have to bear the rising costs driven by idle power generation capacity and soaring global prices of liquefied natural gas, coal, and furnace oil as regulators begin reviewing proposals for a new round of electricity tariff hikes.

The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) on Tuesday formed a technical committee to assess proposals submitted by the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) and other transmission and

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A farmer transports his recently harvested paddy by boat to keep it in a dry and safe place yesterday. Two days of heavy rain have submerged the fields where farmers in Sunamganj's Dekhar Haor dry their paddies, forcing them to scramble to save both their crops and cattle feed amid fears of severe losses.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Peace deal hope rises

Sources say US, Iran working on a one-page MOU; Trump halts plan to guide ships thru Hormuz

President Trump says Iran deal 'very possible'

Rubio says offensive stage of Iran war is 'over'

Oil prices fall sharply on hopes of end to disruption

China says will play 'greater role' in ending fighting

AGENCIES

The United States and Pakistan, a key mediator in the Middle East war, expressed new hope of talks leading to a peace deal with Iran yesterday, after sources said Washington and Tehran were closing in on a one-page memorandum to end the war in the Gulf.

An Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson, cited by Iran's ISNA news agency, said Iran would convey its response soon via Pakistan.

Adding more hope, President Donald Trump halted a plan to guide ships through the Strait

of Hormuz.

In an early morning social media post, Trump gave no details of any specific proposal but said the war could end if "Iran agrees to give what has been agreed to". He later told the New York Post it was still too soon to consider face-to-face meetings to sign an agreement.

Late yesterday, he said that a deal with Iran was "very possible" following "very good talks" over the past day.

"We've had very good talks over the last 24 hours, and it's very possible that we'll make a

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

DCs told to recover nearly 10,000 guns not surrendered

On final day of conference, home boss says July cases will be probed quickly

BAHARAM KHAN

Deputy commissioners have been instructed to recover and seize the nearly 10,000 firearms that have not yet been surrendered despite directives, and to take legal action against those concerned, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said.

Speaking at a press briefing following a session related to the home ministry on the final day of the four-day DC Conference at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium yesterday, he also said the cases filed during the interim government's tenure are under district-wise review.

The home minister said letters were issued asking licence holders to return firearms licensed before January 6, 2009, and after August 5, 2024, and that district-level

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 3

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Hawkers continue to occupy sidewalks and parts of roads in the capital's Gulistan, disrupting the movement of vehicles and pedestrians despite, various initiatives by the two Dhaka city corporations to clear walkways and rehabilitate street vendors. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Mamata to challenge poll results in SC

4 deaths reported in West Bengal in post-polls violence

PARAMASHISH GHOSH ROY

Mamata Banerjee, outgoing West Bengal chief minister and Trinamool Congress supreme, yesterday announced plans to take the 2026 West Bengal poll mandate to the Supreme Court, alleging major electoral malpractice by the BJP and the Election Commission of India.



A day after refusing to resign, Mamata, addressing a closed-door meeting with newly elected party legislators at her Kalighat residence, declared she would

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Measles deaths more than reported

Mymensingh, Barishal data show 34 suspected measles deaths missing in DGHS tally

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The actual number of measles deaths is likely higher than the central tally, as data from two divisional offices of the health directorate show at least 34 more suspected deaths than reported in the official figures.

No suspected deaths were reported from Mymensingh division, according to central data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). The division recorded two confirmed deaths until 8:00am yesterday.

However, data from the office of the DGHS director for Mymensingh division show that 25 suspected deaths were reported there in addition to the two confirmed deaths by this time.

All the suspected deaths occurred at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), said Mainuddin Khan, the hospital's assistant director (administration).

He confirmed the total deaths to be 25 as of Tuesday and the data has been sent to the DGHS headquarters.

DGHS's Mymensingh Director Pradip Kumar Saha said they

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন (ডিএসসিসি) এলাকার সকল সম্মানিত নাগরিক, সরকারি-বেসরকারি প্রতিষ্ঠান, শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, এডিস মশাবাহিত ডেঙ্গু ও চিকুনগুনিয়া প্রতিরোধ এবং নগরীকে পরিচ্ছন্ন রাখার লক্ষ্যে মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী কর্তৃক ঘোষিত সাপ্তাহিক পরিচ্ছন্নতা দিবসকে ফলপ্রসূ করার লক্ষ্যে ডিএসসিসি প্রশাসক বীর মুক্তিযোদ্ধা মোঃ আবদুস সালাম প্রতি মাসের প্রথম শনিবারকে 'ক্লিনিং ডে' হিসেবে ঘোষণা করেছেন।

এই ঘোষণা অনুযায়ী, আগামী ৯ মে ২০২৬ খ্রি. (শনিবার) ডিএসসিসি এলাকায় প্রথমবারের মতো আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে 'ক্লিনিং ডে' পালন করা হবে।

'ক্লিনিং ডে' তে করণীয়

সকল সম্মানিত নাগরিককে নিজ নিজ বাসভবন, ভবনের ছাদ এবং বাসার চারপাশ পরিষ্কার করার অনুরোধ জানানো যাচ্ছে। ফুলের টব, টায়ার, ডাব বা নারিকেলের খোসায় বা অন্য কোথাও জমে থাকা পানি অপসারণের মাধ্যমে মশার প্রজননক্ষেত্র নিমূল করতে হবে। মনে রাখবেন এডিস মশা পরিষ্কার ও স্বচ্ছ পানিতে ডিম পাড়ে।

সরকারি-বেসরকারি দপ্তর, কোয়ার্টার, স্কুল-কলেজ-মাদ্রাসা, মার্কেটসমূহ, রাজউক ও রিহাবের আওতাধীন এলাকা এবং ব্যক্তি মালিকানাধীন প্লটসমূহে স্ব-স্ব উদ্যোগে পরিচ্ছন্নতা অভিযান পরিচালনা করতে হবে।



আসুন, প্রতি মাসের প্রথম শনিবার 'ক্লিনিং ডে' সফল করি, ডেঙ্গু মুক্ত পরিচ্ছন্ন ঢাকা গড়ি

কর্তৃপক্ষ
ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন

Seven more die from measles, with symptoms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven more children died from measles and measles like symptoms in the 24 hours to 8:00am yesterday, taking the total number of confirmed and suspected measles deaths to 324.

Two deaths were confirmed as being from measles, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). With these, both reported from the Chattogram division, confirmed deaths rose to 56.

Meanwhile, five more suspected measles deaths were reported during the same period, the DGHS said, pushing suspected deaths from measles to 268. Two were reported from the Rajshahi division, while one death each was reported from the Sylhet, Barishal, and Khulna divisions.

During the same period, 373 new confirmed cases were reported, bringing the total to 6,099.

Besides, the DGHS recorded 1,281 new suspected cases in 24 hours, bringing the total to 44,260.



Biplobi Chhatra Maitree activists, carrying symbolic bodies of children, demonstrate at Raju Bhashkorjo on Dhaka University campus yesterday, demanding the trial of interim government's advisers for the deaths of children from measles. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Troops to head to barracks from early June

Decides core committee on law and order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The armed forces, deployed in July 2024 to assist the civil administration during the quota reform protests, are set to return to the barracks from June 6 in phases.

The personnel, who remained in the field throughout the tenure of the interim administration, will be withdrawn following the formation of an elected government.

Troops will be pulled out first from remote districts, followed by divisional cities and larger districts in subsequent phases. The process is expected to be completed by the end of June, according to the decision made by the core committee on law and order.

The committee held its first meeting on Tuesday after the BNP formed the government following the 13th parliamentary election. The committee, reconstituted on April 21 with Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed as the chair, has been tasked with reviewing law and order, and setting operational priorities.

The meeting was also attended by the inspector general of police, Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner, director general of Border Guard Bangladesh, and senior officials from relevant agencies.

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Bangladesh staring at \$1.07b extra

FROM PAGE 1
The report identified LNG as a major source of fiscal stress, with March spot shipments procured at \$19.77-\$28.28 per MMBtu, far above historical averages.

These purchases required subsidies of about Tk 67.50 per cubic metre, excluding terminal costs, the report said. The cost of per cubic metre of imported LNG was Tk 91.3 that month, whereas the average domestic gas price was Tk 23.82.

If imports during April-June match last year's 74.7 million MMBtu, the subsidy burden could swell dramatically. While the IEEFA report projected LNG import subsidy in April-June at Tk 13,134 crore, Petrobangla estimated Tk 11,996 crore will be required during the quarter.

The estimated quarterly subsidy for LNG has far exceeded the annual target. The government has allocated Tk 9,000 crore for entire FY2025-26.

The government plans to import 30 LNG shipments in this quarter, including at least 24 from the spot market at an average \$19 per MMBtu.

Officials at the power and energy ministry said they are assessing the evolving market situation.

"We are monitoring the developments closely and evaluating available options to minimise pressure on consumers," a Petrobangla official told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

Attempts to reach Petrobangla Chairman Md Arfanul Hoque were unsuccessful.

Prof M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser to the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, warned that rising LNG import costs could trigger another round of gas tariff hikes. "Gas prices will certainly be increased. The current trend clearly points in that direction."

He questioned the rationale of importing LNG at such high prices.

"Despite importing expensive LNG, there is no meaningful improvement in electricity supply. Then what is the justification for this additional

expenditure?" He criticised repeated failures to accelerate domestic gas exploration, citing reserves such as Chattak East that remain untapped. "The previous Awami League government said it would increase domestic gas exploration. The caretaker administration said the same thing. The current government is also saying it. But where are the results?"

Consumers, he noted, have long contributed around Tk 1,500 crore annually to energy development

"Despite importing expensive LNG, there is no meaningful improvement in electricity supply. Then what is the justification for this additional expenditure?"

Prof M Shamsul Alam
energy adviser to CAB

funds intended to boost domestic production and shield against global volatility. "These funds were created so that when international prices rise, consumers would receive temporary protection. But none of that has happened. Instead, our market has become increasingly tied to volatile import dependence."

POWER UNDER PRESSURE
Coal and oil prices have also spiked amid fears of prolonged international instability.

This is likely to further raise Bangladesh's electricity generation costs, as imported coal fuels most large plants and expensive furnace oil continues to play a major role during peak demand.

But analysts argue that Bangladesh's

own power sector inefficiencies are magnifying the impact of every external shock. The country currently maintains far more generation capacity than required. Its reserve margin reached 61.3 percent in FY2024-25, meaning a large portion of installed power plants remains underutilised while still receiving contractual capacity payments.

These payments continue regardless of electricity generated.

According to the IEEFA analysis, private oil-fired plants received average capacity payments of around Tk 9.5 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), while private coal-fired plants received around Tk 5.9 per kWh, significantly inflating average generation costs.

This overcapacity has contributed to a sharp rise in generation costs.

Bangladesh's average grid-based electricity generation cost has climbed from Tk 6.61 per unit in FY2020-21 to Tk 12.1 in FY2024-25.

"Renewable energy contributes only 2.3 percent of Bangladesh's total power generation, far below the global average of 33.8 percent, leaving the country heavily exposed to imported fuel volatility," reads the IEEFA report.

The report recommended rapidly scaling up solar generation, reducing dependence on costly oil-fired plants and expanding regional hydropower imports to lower LNG demand.

It also urges policymakers to rationalise future power expansion plans and reduce reserve margins to contain subsidy costs.

Shaiful Alam, IEEFA's lead energy analyst for South Asia who conducted the study, noted that Bangladesh is under pressure from international lenders to reduce subsidy burdens under ongoing reform commitments.

"A prolonged spike in fuel import costs could complicate those efforts and force difficult policy decisions, including fresh tariff adjustments," he told this newspaper.

Measles deaths more than reported

FROM PAGE 1
collect data from civil surgeon's office and medical college hospital but they do not send the data to the headquarters.

The civil surgeon's office sends data to the headquarters, he told The Daily Star yesterday. "But our data is accurate."

Contacted, Mymensingh Civil Surgeon Faisal Ahmed asked this correspondent to contact with a staffer of his office as he could not recall the number immediately.

The staffer said they have collected the total number of suspected deaths at MMCH and found 12 of them were from Mymensingh district.

Both said they send the data to the DGHS headquarters every day.

On the other hand, central data show 11 suspected and five confirmed deaths in Barishal division, whereas divisional

data indicate 22 suspected deaths and three confirmed deaths since March.

This means at least 34 more suspected measles deaths – 25 in Mymensingh and nine in Barishal – are yet to be added to the official tally.

Of the suspected measles deaths in Barishal, 14 occurred at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal, six in Bhola and two in Jhalakathi. Three confirmed deaths were recorded in Barguna.

Of the deaths, eight, including three confirmed deaths, were recorded in March, 14 in April and three in May, Abdullah Al Mamun, an official of the divisional health office, told our Barishal correspondent.

Contacted, DGHS Barishal Director Lokman Hakim said they collected the data from the civil surgeon's office and medical college hospitals and compiled

it.

"There might be a communication gap resulting in the number mismatch – we will look into the matter," Abu Ahammad Al Mamun, DGHS's director for management information system (MIS) that compiles and publishes the data, told The Daily Star last night.

The data from civil surgeons' offices across the country is collected and then compiled.

Mamun said that they have no intention to suppress death figures.

The Integrated Control Cell of DGHS has been publishing measles data, including suspected cases and deaths, confirmed cases and deaths, division-wise suspected cases and deaths, and confirmed cases and deaths on a daily basis on its website.

[Our correspondents in Barishal and Mymensingh contributed to the report]

Mamata to challenge poll results in SC

FROM PAGE 1
not step down under any circumstances and was prepared to face dismissal if required.

She said even the imposition of President's Rule would not deter her, framing her stance as a form of political protest intended to leave a lasting institutional record.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP defeated TMC, which has ruled West Bengal since 2011, securing 206 of 294 seats. The TMC tally fell to 80 from 215, with Mamata herself losing her seat.

Under the constitution, the state's governor can seek Mamata's resignation or wait for her term to expire, after which newly elected lawmakers will be sworn in, and the process of forming a new government will begin.

Mamata's term is set to end on Thursday.

The BJP-led government will be sworn in on Saturday (May 9) in the presence of Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP West Bengal President Samik Bhattacharya said yesterday.

Mamata's challenge to the outcome is rooted in allegations of widespread irregularities. According to her, nearly 100 assembly seats witnessed what she described as systematic manipulation, leading to the defeat of her party's candidates. A key element of her argument centres on technical anomalies during counting.

She cited reports from party agents present at counting centres, alleging Electronic Voting Machines retained unusually high battery levels – around 90 to 92 percent by the end of counting. She suggested such figures are inconsistent with normal operations, raising questions about potential tampering of the machines.

While these claims remain contentious and subject to verification, they form a central pillar of the legal case her party intends to present before the apex court.

Meanwhile, the political atmosphere in the state has remained tense since the results were announced on Monday, with sporadic violence reported across several districts. At least four deaths

have been confirmed so far.

In Kolkata, tensions flared in the New Market area during victory processions, with reports of damage to local establishments. Elsewhere, districts such as South 24 Parganas, Nadia, Murshidabad, Howrah, and parts of North 24 Parganas, including Barasat, witnessed clashes between rival groups.

In several instances, party offices were targeted, and residential properties were reportedly damaged.

BJP state leader Samik told AFP two of the party's workers were killed after the results were announced, insisting the party is "for peace".

The TMC, in a social media statement, reported the killing of two party workers. "Our party offices were attacked in several areas of the state," TMC spokesperson Narendranath Chakraborty told AFP.

A senior police officer, who was not authorised to speak to reporters, confirmed four deaths in clashes and said one officer had been shot in the leg.

DCs told to recover nearly 10,000 guns

FROM PAGE 1
committees were formed to review whether those licences had been issued on political consideration or outside policy guidelines.

"Based on the committee's assessment, firearms under licences that appear to have been issued in violation of policy or on political consideration will be excluded from return, while the rest will be returned."

About the cases filed after August 5, 2024, he said district wise lists have been sought.

"We are reviewing all the cases to see how many have been filed in each district," Salahuddin said, adding that the numbers may be lower in peripheral districts but higher in metropolitan areas.

"Thousands have been accused in these cases. Steps have been taken to complete the investigations quickly so that the real offenders are identified."

Responding to a query, he said the government has formed a committee to review the post-August 5 murder cases in which journalists have been named as accused.

On law and order, the minister said the government's "zero tolerance" policy against drugs, extortion, and online gambling remains in place.

Asked whether "push ins" along the border could increase following political developments in India and recent rhetoric referring to Muslims as Bangladesh infiltrators, he said he did not see any such possibility after the BJP's victory in West Bengal.

"We have instructed the BGB to stay alert along borders. Although we do not see such a possibility, we have taken precautions in advance so that we can address the situation if it arises."

Meanwhile, during the four-day conference – the first under the BNP government – top policymakers instructed DCs to maintain professionalism, honesty, dedication, and sincerity in performing their official duties.

IGRD Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir and Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman, among others, also praised the DCs' professionalism and leadership in skillfully conducting the

13th National Parliamentary Election on February 12.

Speaking to this correspondent, a DC from Mymensingh Division said being praised for election duties was very rewarding.

The conference featured discussions on more than 500 proposals, including both written and verbal ones.

DCs requested the government to bring the Land Office and the Registry Office under the same ministry. Currently, the Land Office is under the land ministry, while the Registry Office falls under the law ministry.

A DC from Dhaka Division told The Daily Star that if both offices operated under the land ministry, land-related

corruption would drop by more than half.

Meanwhile, ministers and secretaries from various ministries sought the DCs' cooperation in expediting land acquisition issues for development projects.

To prevent corruption and mismanagement in the process, DCs suggested introducing an online system for land-related compensation payments.

Policymakers emphasised the importance of coordination among the district administration, district judge courts, and the police department to maintain law and order at the local level.

DCs also urged the government to take special measures to reduce digital device addiction among children and teenagers, while the government highlighted the importance of increasing the number of playgrounds, libraries, and cultural events to tackle both drug and device addiction.

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Additionally, DCs were instructed to conduct regular mobile courts to prevent syndicates and hoarding of essential goods during peak seasons. In turn, the DCs suggested building the necessary storage facilities to preserve locally produced goods.

Policymakers also instructed DCs to re-verify the list of beneficiaries to ensure transparency in social safety net programmes.

Following discussions on preventing workplace sexual harassment, the government said work is underway to place a draft of a strict law in this regard before the Cabinet soon.

Regarding healthcare, DCs urged the government to fill vacant doctor positions in district and upazila health centres and ensure the regular attendance of existing medical staffers.

Speaking at the Annual Gathering 2026 of the Bangladesh Administrative Service Association at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Agargaon yesterday, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman urged the DCs to make the administration more people-oriented, reports UNB.

The event was held marking the conclusion of the four-day DC conference.

"The administration must be made people-oriented, and much of that depends on your role," Tarique said.

"Our government wants an administration where ordinary people receive services at government offices with respect, quickly, transparently and without harassment. It is you who must ensure this."

He also called upon deputy commissioners and divisional commissioners to work impartially and without fear for the welfare of the country and its people.

The PM described public trust as the state's greatest asset, saying it grows gradually through transparency and accountability in government and administration.

"I strongly believe you will remain careful about this. We must remember that the administration is not just a tool for enforcing the law; rather, it is a means of serving the people."

DCs also urged the government to take special measures to reduce digital device addiction among children and teenagers, while the government highlighted the importance of increasing the number of playgrounds, libraries, and cultural events to tackle both drug and device addiction.

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ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূবালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়

Dhaka, Delhi plan series of meetings to improve ties

PORIMOL PALMA, from New Delhi

Bangladesh and India are preparing a series of meetings in the coming weeks as they re-engage after relations soured during the interim government that followed the fall of the Awami League.

"We are getting down to reactivating all tools of bilateral relations. Contacts are being made at the ministerial level," Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said during an interaction with a Bangladeshi media delegation at the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi on Monday.

The two countries have over 40 bilateral mechanisms covering different issues, including water, trade, border management, and consular services. Most remained dormant during the interim period, when India also drastically reduced visas for Bangladeshis.

Following the BNP's victory in the February polls, both sides began easing restrictions.

Bangladesh resumed issuing all categories of visas for Indians. India,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



A sudden downpour catches commuters off guard, leaving many stranded in mounting traffic congestion in the capital's Karwan Bazar area last evening.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Govt mulls law against sexual harassment at workplaces

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering the enactment of a law to prevent sexual harassment at workplaces.

This issue was discussed during the session related to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs on the fourth day of the Deputy Commissioners' (DC) Conference yesterday, according to Cabinet Division sources.

The four-day conference began on Sunday at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka.

Yesterday, discussions were held across eight sessions covering 12 ministries and divisions, including the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the Ministry of Social Welfare, and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

An official who attended the meeting noted that although the issue of workplace sexual harassment has been highlighted multiple times, no specific laws have been enacted.

Due to the absence of a strong legal framework, many victims remain silent. Consequently, field administrators

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



Govt procuring vaccines on large scale: minister 1.5 million doses of measles-rubella vaccine arrive

The decision to procure vaccines through open tender had been cancelled, and instead the government opted for direct procurement through Unicef, which is being implemented swiftly.



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain yesterday said the government is procuring vaccines on a large scale to strengthen the country's immunisation programme.

He made the comment while receiving 1.5 million doses of measles-rubella (MR) vaccine and 0.9 million doses of tetanus and diphtheria (TD) vaccine, supplied through Unicef, at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka.

The vaccines arrived on a regular Qatar Airways flight, said a health ministry press release.

Briefing journalists there, the minister said although the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) had been affected by certain decisions of the previous government, the current administration was giving it the highest priority.

He also said the decision to procure vaccines through open tender had been cancelled, and instead the government opted for direct procurement through Unicef, which is being implemented swiftly.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

IRAQI FIELD IN DHAKA

A playground in name, market in reality

Makeshift stalls spread across the field, with little room left for kids to play

DIPAN NANDY

The historic Iraqi Field, adjacent to Azimpur New Paltan Lane in Dhaka, which had once been a spacious playground, is now overrun by makeshift markets, depriving children and residents of a vital breathing space in the densely packed city.

At nearly four acres, Iraqi Field is a privately owned land and is not included in the development plans of the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

According to locals, the ground once belonged to members of an Iraqi community who lived in the area long ago. As their descendants no longer reside there, the field remains without formal caretakers. Part of it serves as a graveyard,



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON, PALASH KHAN

where members of the Iraqi community were buried in the past. Dhaka's shortage of playgrounds has long been a pressing issue. Experts estimate that the number of usable fields in the capital is only about 5 percent of what is necessary.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Form sexual harassment committees in all madrasas Demands MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday expressed deep outrage and grave concern over the rising incidents of sexual violence against children in madrasas, demanding immediate formation of sexual harassment committees in the institutions.

The rights body's demand follows a harrowing incident in Netrokona's Madan upazila, where an 11-year-old student was allegedly raped and impregnated by her madrasa teacher.

In a statement, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said, "Madrasas are educational institutions. There is no reason for these to stay outside the ambit of the High Court ruling."

According to data from Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, 1,028 women and girls were subjected to various forms of violence, including sexual violence, in the first four months of this year. Of them, 479 were girls.

In the Netrokona case, the First Information

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4



Bureaucratic delays hinder investment Says Fakhru

UNB, Dhaka

LGRD Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said Bangladesh's political situation has improved compared to the past and expressed hope that sustained stability would pave the way for stronger economic growth, increased investment, and job creation.

He was addressing a seminar titled "Cooperation on Markets, Policy, Alignment, Security, and Sovereignty", organised by the Institute of Strategy and Tactics Research at a Dhaka hotel.

Fakhru, also BNP secretary general, said government initiatives such as family cards, farmer cards and canal excavation programmes have created hope among the people.

However, he identified slow bureaucratic processes

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

EID-UL-AZHA

Advance train tickets go on sale on May 13

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Railway will begin selling advance train tickets on May 13 for passengers travelling home ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, following a decision taken at a high-level meeting at Rail Bhaban on April 30.

Tickets for journeys on May 23 will be available on May 13; tickets for May 24, 25, 26, and 27 will be sold on May 14, 15, 16, and 17, respectively.

Railway officials said ticket sales will start at 8:00am each day.

Each passenger will be permitted to purchase a maximum of four tickets for a single journey.

Passengers will also be allowed to buy tickets only once during the Eid period.

Bangladesh Railway further stated that advance and return tickets issued for the Eid rush will not be refundable. Standing tickets will be sold from station counters on the day of departure.

Officials said the number of standing tickets will be capped at 25 percent of total seat capacity.

Return tickets will be sold under a separate schedule, which will be announced later, officials added.



MEALS FOR GOOD DEEDS... Rickshaws line the street as drivers queue for lunch at "Bhalo Kajer Hotel," which offers low-income people a free meal in exchange for a daily good deed. Launched in December 2019 under Youth for Bangladesh, the initiative continues across several Dhaka neighbourhoods, promoting kindness while supporting livelihoods. The photo was taken at Agargaon yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

HC questions decision to cancel Monira Sharmin's candidacy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule questioning the legality of the Election Commission's decision to cancel the candidacy of National Citizen Party (NCP) Joint Convener Monira Sharmin for women's reserved seat in the 13th National Parliament.

In the rule, the court asked the EC and the government to explain why the cancellation of Monira Sharmin's nomination paper should not be declared illegal.

The bench of Justice Razik Al-Jalil and Justice Debashish Roy Chowdhury passed the order following a writ petition filed by Monira Sharmin challenging the cancellation of her candidacy.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Rohingya man shot dead in Cox's Bazar camp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Rohingya man was shot dead at a refugee camp in Ukhiya upazila of Cox's Bazar yesterday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Mohammad Kamal, 40, son of Musa Ahmed, from Camp 8 East in the Balukhali Panbazar area of Ukhiya. Kamal was a community leader of the same camp.

Riaz Uddin Ahmed, acting commander of Armed Police Battalion (APBn) 8, said the incident took place around 2:30pm at Camp 8.

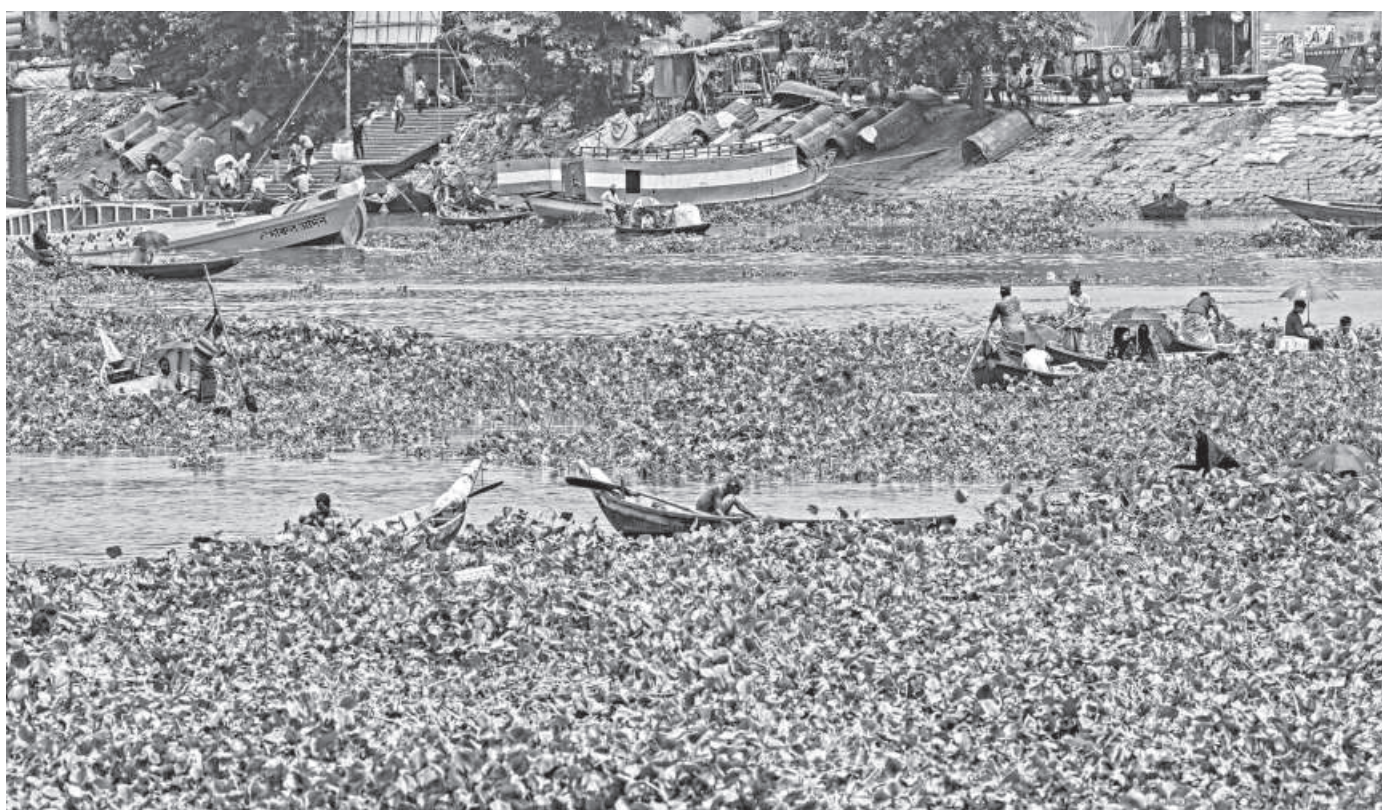
Kamal was the younger brother of Nabi Hossain, leader of the Arakan Rohingya Army (ARA), also known as the Nabi Hossain group, Riaz said.

Ayub Hossain, a cousin of Kamal, alleged that 12 to 13 members of the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) opened fire on Kamal after he went to a bazaar area following Zohr prayers at a mosque.

Riaz Uddin Ahmed said Kamal was rescued with bullet injuries and taken to a local hospital before being shifted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, where he was declared dead.

He was shot in the head and chest, the police official said.

Nayek Saiful Islam, in-charge of the hospital police outpost, said the body was sent for autopsy. The killing occurred within 24 hours of the murder of Rohingya armed group suspected commander Kafayet Ullah Halim of Arakan Rohingya Organisation (ARO), who was killed in a gun attack at the Balukhali refugee camp in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya.



Commuters are ferried through dense mats of water hyacinths strewn with plastic and household waste on the Buriganga River, where polluted banks highlight severe environmental damage. Despite delays and health risks, many still rely on this route between Keraniganj and Dhaka due to limited transport options. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Hill razing, sand extraction rampant in Kamalganj

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Indiscriminate razing of natural dunes and hill slopes, as well as illegal extraction of silica sand and alluvial soil, is continuing unabated in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar, raising alarm over potentially severe damage to the environment, biodiversity, and infrastructure.

In Chhayghari area under Islampur union, influential groups are reportedly using excavators in broad daylight to level red-soil dunes. Similar activities are ongoing on the hill slopes adjacent to Sunchhara Tea Garden in Alinagar union for the extraction of silica sand.

The illegally collected sand and soil are transported daily by trucks, pickups, and other vehicles, allegedly right under the nose of the authorities concerned.

Locals allege that the upazila administration has yet to take any effective step to this end, adding that unless prompt administrative action is taken, the ongoing situation may lead to devastating outcomes.

Enamul Haque Shamim, a social activist from Shamsheernagar, said locals seized a truck carrying illegally extracted silica sand at night recently and kept it at the Shamsheernagar police outpost.

Despite being informed, the upazila nirbahi officer took no action against the vehicle, he alleged.

In the Bishnupur area under Rahimpur union, soil is being extracted from beneath

a steel bridge on the Dhalai River, raising concern that the illegal activities would leave the bridge's foundation and adjacent embankment vulnerable and cause both to collapse at some point, causing significant damages.

With no visible intervention from the authorities, locally influential syndicates



With no visible intervention from the authorities, locally influential syndicates have long been continuing such operations across the upazila, causing degradation to the ecologically sensitive areas.

have long been continuing such operations across the upazila, causing degradation to the ecologically sensitive areas.

Local college teacher Jamshed Ali warned that unregulated sand and soil extraction is destroying natural tourist attractions and posing risks to roads, agricultural land, bridges, and culverts.

Nurul Muhaimin Milton, a network member of the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), said destroying dunes and hills for red soil and silica sand extraction is not only illegal but also ecologically disastrous for a fragile ecosystem that supports local biodiversity, regulates water flow, and protects surrounding agricultural land.

Such activities weaken the natural barriers that hold soil together and disrupt natural drainage systems, thereby raising the risk of erosion, flash flooding, landslides during the monsoon, damage to infrastructure, and the destruction of wildlife habitats, he added.

"The laws are very clear in Bangladesh -- hill cutting and illegal sand extraction are punishable offences. The failure here is not of legislation but of implementation," he said, urging authorities to take immediate action through enforcement drives, seizure of equipment, prosecution of those involved, and raising public awareness.

Milton further stressed sustainable land management practices and strict monitoring of ecologically sensitive areas like Kamalganj, known for unique landscapes and tourism potential.

Contacted, Kamalganj UNO Md Asaduzzaman acknowledged the dune razing incidents in Islampur union and said legal action will be taken upon investigation.

He called for cooperation from local residents to curb such activities.

ICT-2 asks Inu's defence to resubmit his statement

Ex-DIG Jalil seeks to become state witness in Shapla case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday asked former minister Hasanul Haq Inu's defence counsel to withdraw his client's written statement and resubmit it with corrections, after the prosecution said parts of the statement amounted to contempt of court.

The tribunal's directive came after the defence admitted their mistake and sought an apology from the tribunal after it asked Inu's defence to explain the matter.

After court proceedings, prosecutor Mizanul Islam told journalists, "The most serious remark he (Inu) made in his statement was, 'Will the court's verdict change because of my statement? Then why should I say anything?'"

"In other words, he challenged the court, implying that the court does not deliver its own verdicts -- that the decisions come from elsewhere, from someone else," Mizanul added.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Lightning strikes kill five farmers in three districts

STAR REPORT

Five farmers were killed in separate lightning strikes in three districts yesterday, according to reports from our correspondent and a news agency.

Our Lalmonirhat correspondent reports, two farmers were killed in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram around noon.

The deceased were identified as Yusuf Ali, 38, of Kaliganj upazila in Lalmonirhat and Obaidul Haque, 54, of Nageshwari upazila of Kurigram.

Police said Yusuf had been working in his maize field since morning when the sky suddenly turned overcast. As rain began, a lightning strike hit him. Meanwhile, Obaidul was harvesting boro paddy in his field when a sudden spell of rain accompanied by lightning struck the area. He was injured and later taken to Nageshwari Upazila Health Complex, where he was declared dead.



The incidents were confirmed by Kaliganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge (Investigation) Osman Goni and Nageshwari Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abdullatif Hil Zaman.

UNB adds, three farmers were killed in lightning strikes while harvesting paddy in Mahadebpur and Niamatpur upazilas in Naogaon in the afternoon. Mahadebpur Police Station OC Omar Faruk said Dilip Chandra Barman was struck by lightning while working in cropland at Kurapara village.

In a separate incident, two more people were killed in the upazila, said Niamatpur Police Station OC Mahabubur Rahman.

Among them, Rafiqul Islam died on the spot after being hit by lightning while harvesting paddy in Hajinagar. He had come from Shibganj in Chapainawabganj to work as a labourer.

Another victim, Anukul Chandra Mohanta, was killed at Ramnagar in Chandan Nagar while bringing harvested paddy home.

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A playground in name

FROM PAGE 3

vegetables, fish, meat, clothes, toys, and other essentials throughout the day. In the evening, the space turns into a busy food market, continuing till late into the night.

"During the Awami League government's tenure, we had to pay Tk 150-300 daily to extortionists, but since August 5, 2024, we haven't had to pay anyone," said Ashraf, a vegetable vendor. Md Biplob, a toy seller, argued that the market benefits the community. "It's convenient for local people to shop here. We also get to earn a living."

For children, however, the reality is different. A small portion of the field that still remains open turns barren and dusty during dry months and muddy during monsoons.

"We play here because there's no other playground nearby," said teenager Anindya Roy. "But there's hardly any grass, and the shops leave little room to play."

Another teenager, Jishan Islam, said, "The ground is

rough, so whenever we fall, we get cuts and bruises."

Older residents recall a very different Iraqi Field.

"Before independence, there was a boundary wall here. It was demolished later, and since then locals have used it for sports. I played here, then my son, and now even my grandchildren," said Abdul Haque, an elderly local resident.

"However, for years, the field has been occupied by shops with political backing. Police sometimes drive them away, but they always return once an understanding is reached. Locals also don't complain much because it's convenient for their grocery shopping," he added.

Ashish Sen, another elderly resident, expressed regret. "I have so many childhood memories here. The field was larger, with trees all around. I wish it could be restored for people of all ages to use it for walking and sports. With a little effort from the city corporation, it can be revived."

However, the DSCC says the matter is out of its hands.

Bureaucratic delays

FROM PAGE 3

as a major obstacle to investment, noting that delays by government agencies often discourage foreign investors.

The pace at which our agencies handle investment issues creates a negative situation. "Foreign investors become frustrated. This has become a major problem," he said.

He said the government

is working to reform the bureaucracy and improve the overall investment climate, acknowledging that the current business environment is not yet satisfactory.

Highlighting challenges in the energy sector, he said Bangladesh is moving towards renewable energy, particularly solar, alongside efforts for onshore and offshore exploration of oil and gas.

Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC.

Plot No.: 1088, Block No.: I, Road No.: Sabrina Sobhan 5th Avenue, Bashundhara, Vatara, Dhaka-1229, Phone: +8809606-555555, Fax: +8809606-555550
Email: cswhil@waltonplc.com, Website: www.waltonplc.com

REVISED NOTICE ON CONVENING MEETING OF CREDITORS

MEETING OF THE CREDITORS OF WALTON HI-TECH INDUSTRIES PLC PURSUANT TO DIRECTION OF THE HON'BLE HIGH COURT DIVISION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH IN COMPANY MATTER NO. 318 OF 2026.

An application has been made before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh for approval of the proposed Scheme of Merger of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC (Transferee Company) under Sections 228 and 229 of the Companies Act, 1994.

Revised Notice is hereby given that in accordance with the direction of the Hon'ble High Court issued by Mr. Justice Sikder Mahmudur Razi in Company Matter No. 318 of 2026, the Meeting of the Creditors of Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC (the "Company") will be held on Tuesday, 02 June, 2026 at 03:00 p.m. instead of earlier decision of holding the creditors meeting on Thursday, 07 May, 2026 at Plot No: 1088, Block No: I, Road No: Sabrina Sobhan 5th Avenue, Bashundhara, Vatara, Dhaka-1229, to transact the following business:

AGENDA

- Approval of the Scheme of Merger of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC (Transferee Company).

To consider, and if thought fit, to pass the following resolution with or without modification:

"RESOLVED THAT Draft Scheme (the "Scheme") of Merger of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited (Transferor Company) with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC (Transferee Company) be and is hereby approved and subject to sanction of the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh in accordance with the provisions of Sections 228 and 229 of the Companies Act, 1994 and approval of the same Scheme by the Creditors of Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited, and in the similar manner Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited be merged with Walton Hi-Tech Industries PLC in terms of the Scheme."

Dated: 06 May, 2026

By Order of the Board
Sd/-
Md. Rafiqul Islam, fcs
Company Secretary

Notes:

- Copies of the Scheme of Merger and relevant documents will be available for inspection at the registered office of the Company during business hours.

ACC ZEM VOE Safe MARCEL WALTON

Walton Digi-Tech Industries Limited

Plot No.: 1088, Block No.: I, Road No.: Sabrina Sobhan 5th Avenue, Bashundhara, Vatara, Dhaka-1229, Phone: +8809606-555555, Fax: +8809606-555550
Email: digitech@waltonbd.com, Website: www.waltondigitech.com

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Dated: 06 May, 2026

By Order of the Board
Sd/-
Asadullah Mahmud, FCS
Company Secretary

Notes:

- Copies of the Scheme of Merger and relevant documents will be available for inspection at the registered office of the Company during business hours.



A handout picture released by the Marine Nationale (French Navy) yesterday shows its Carrier Strike Group that includes the flagship aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle (unseen) and its escort transiting the Suez Canal en route to the southern Red Sea to pre-position for a possible mission to restore navigation in the Strait of Hormuz. PHOTO: AFP

Russia choosing war

Says Zelensky as 28 people killed in strikes; dual ceasefires falter

AFP, Kyiv

President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday said that Russia had decided to reject efforts to halt fighting and save lives by launching fresh attacks on Ukraine, which had called a unilateral ceasefire.

His comments raise the spectre of retaliatory Ukrainian strikes on Moscow during mass public events celebrating the end of World War II on May 9, after the Kremlin announced it would hold off attacks on Ukraine that day, hoping Kyiv would do the same.

"Russia's choice is an obvious spurning of a ceasefire and of saving lives," Zelensky wrote on social media.

Ukraine, he added, had earlier vowed to "act in kind" to the Russian ceasefire proposal this weekend, when Russians typically flood streets across the country to mark victory over Nazi Germany in World War II.

"It is obvious to any reasonable person that a full-scale war and the daily murdering of people are a bad time for public celebrations," the Ukrainian leader said.

Kyiv said Russia had attacked eastern and southern Ukraine with more than 100 drones overnight, a day after Russian strikes killed almost 30 Ukrainian civilians.

Moscow had never said it would abide by Kyiv's call to halt fire from midnight on May 6 – a counter-truce Zelensky proposed after Russia announced a ceasefire to cover its Victory Day parade Saturday on Red Square in Moscow.

Zelensky had dismissed Russia's "utter cynicism" for calling for a ceasefire to protect the parade – one of the most important days of the year for Russian leader Vladimir Putin – while launching deadly strikes on his country.

A Ukrainian officer at the eastern front, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP: "The enemy continued to carry out infantry raids and attempts to storm our positions."

Since Russia "did not comply" with the

Kyiv suggested ceasefire, "our unit responded in kind and countered all provocations", he added.

Another frontline commander said: "The intensity of combat operations remains at the same level."

His unit, he said, was also responding: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!".

attacked after Kyiv's unilateral truce was supposed to come into effect at midnight.

Late on Tuesday, Ukrainian drone attacks on the north of Russian-annexed Crimea killed five people, Moscow-installed authorities in the peninsula said.

The strike hit hours after Russia had pounded several Ukrainian cities with the



Kyiv said at least one person had been killed in the overnight strikes.

Russian forces also struck a kindergarten in the eastern border region of Sumy on Wednesday morning, killing a security guard, local officials said.

The Kremlin has not commented on the Kyiv proposed ceasefire, only calling for Ukraine to halt attacks for May 9.

Moscow's defence ministry said it had downed 53 Ukrainian drones between 21:00 and 07:00 (1800-0400 GMT) – far fewer than in previous days.

It did not say whether any of the drones

deadliest attacks in weeks – killing at least 28 people in 24 hours.

Zelensky called on Ukraine's allies to condemn the attacks. A strike on the centre of Zaporizhzhia city, which killed 12 people, had "absolutely no military justification", he added.

Kyiv on Tuesday hit deep inside Russia, killing two people in Cheboksary, a city on the Volga, hundreds of miles from Ukraine.

The attacks have created a sense of nervousness in Russia ahead of the May 9 parade. Moscow has said it will remove military hardware from the procession for the first time in almost 20 years.

N Korea drops 'unification' from charter

AFP, Seoul

North Korea has deleted all references to uniting with South Korea from its constitution, a document reviewed by AFP yesterday showed, underscoring Pyongyang's push for a more hostile policy towards Seoul.

North and South Korea remain technically at war because their 1950-53 war ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty.

Pyongyang's constitution had previously contained a clause stating that it aimed "to realise the unification of the motherland".

That reference no longer appears in the latest version, presented yesterday by a professor during a news conference at South Korea's Unification Ministry and subsequently seen by AFP.

The revised constitution, which the document indicated was introduced in March, also includes a new clause delineating North Korea's territory.

Using South Korea's official name, it says that includes the area bordering China and Russia to the north, "and the Republic of Korea to the south".

North Korea "absolutely does not allow any infringement on its territory", it added.

G7 nations decry 'economic coercion' in swipe at China

AFP, Paris

The trade ministers of the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations yesterday criticised "economic coercion" by powers placing arbitrary restrictions on exports, particularly critical minerals, in a clear swipe at China.

While never mentioning China by name, the ministers clearly took aim at Beijing and its stringent export controls on rare earths in their statement, after two days of meetings in France.

"We express our grave concerns regarding economic coercion, including coercion through arbitrary export restrictions that may lead to supply chain disruptions, notably for critical minerals, and undermine economic security and resilience," the ministers said.

China dominates the global industry for rare earths, which are critical for making a wide range of products – from everyday consumer electronics to equipment used in the defence sector.

The country's leaders leveraged that strength in spectacular fashion last year, reaching a deal with Washington in October to pause a blistering trade war after Beijing's curbs on their exports sent shockwaves across supply chains.

The G7 ministers vowed to work with partners to not only reduce their dependency upon rare earths, but to "ensure that attempts or threats to weaponise economic dependencies will fail."

"We seek to deter and stand ready to take actions, where necessary, against economic coercion," they added.

Pakistan Navy helps stranded Indian ship in Arabian Sea

AGENCIES

The Pakistani navy reportedly responded to a distress call from an Indian ship stranded in the Arabian Sea after a critical technical failure, assisting the crew with food, medical and other emergency support.

The vessel, named MV Gautam, had suffered a critical technical failure while en route from Oman to India, leaving it stranded at sea, news agency Reuters reported, citing a Pakistani military statement.

The Pakistan Navy launched a rescue and support operation for the crew – six Indians and one Indonesian – after the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre in Mumbai contacted authorities in Islamabad and requested assistance.

Responding to the request, the Pakistan Navy deployed the ship named PMSS Kashmir to carry out rescue operations.

Emergency assistance, including food, medical aid, and technical support, was provided to the crew of MV Gautam to stabilise the vessel and ensure the crew's safety, the statement said.

The navy was reportedly assisted by the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) in the rescue and support operation.

The Gulf Times tweeted the video of the rescue mission, where the Pakistan Navy's boat can be seen helping MV Gautam's crew members.

The vessel experienced a total power failure on May 3 due to a generator malfunction. At the time of the incident, the vessel was located within the Pakistan Search and Rescue Region (SRR).

Peace deal hope rises

FROM PAGE 1

deal," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

A Pakistani source and another source briefed on the mediation confirmed information initially reported by the US media outlet Axios about a proposed 14-point, one-page memorandum that would formally end the war.

Axios, citing two US officials and two other sources briefed on the issue, reported that the MOU is being negotiated between Trump's envoys, Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, and several Iranian officials, both directly and through mediators.

The draft would see Iran commit to a moratorium on nuclear enrichment, while the US would gradually lift sanctions, release billions in frozen Iranian funds, and both sides would ease restrictions on transit through the Strait of Hormuz.

In its current form, the MOU declares an end to the war and begins a 30-day negotiating period toward a detailed agreement covering the reopening of the strait, limits on Iran's nuclear programme, and sanctions relief. Talks could take place in Islamabad or Geneva, two sources said.

During this period, Iran's restrictions on shipping and the US naval blockade would be gradually lifted, according to a US official.

The duration of the enrichment moratorium remains under negotiation. Three sources said it would last at least 12 years, with one citing 15 years as a likely compromise. Iran has proposed five years; the US has demanded 20. Iran would be allowed to enrich uranium to 3.67% after the moratorium ends.

Under the MOU, Iran would pledge never to seek nuclear weapons or pursue weaponisation activities, potentially including a ban on operating underground facilities, alongside enhanced inspections with snap UN checks.

The US would gradually lift sanctions and release frozen funds. Iran may also remove its highly enriched uranium, possibly transferring it to the US, sources said.

US officials expect Iran's response within 48 hours.

While nothing is final, sources said this is the closest the sides have come to a deal, though many terms remain contingent on a final agreement, leaving risks of renewed conflict or prolonged uncertainty.

"We will close this very soon. We are getting close," said the source from Pakistan.

Reports of the possible agreement caused global oil prices to plunge, with benchmark Brent crude futures falling around 11 percent to around \$98 a barrel LCOc1. Global share prices also leapt and bond yields fell on optimism of an end to a war that has disrupted energy supplies.

In his morning post, Trump said: "Assuming Iran agrees to give what has been agreed to, which is, perhaps, a big assumption, the already legendary Epic Fury will be at an end, and the highly effective Blockade will allow the Hormuz Strait to be OPEN TO ALL, including Iran."

"If they don't agree, the bombing starts, and it will be, sadly, at a much higher level and intensity than it was before," Trump added.

While the sources said the memorandum would not initially require concessions from either side, they did not mention several key demands Washington has made in the past, which Iran has rejected, such as curbs on Iran's missile programme and an end to its support for proxy militias in the Middle East.

In a post on X, Iranian lawmaker Ebrahim Rezaei, a spokesperson for parliament's powerful foreign policy and national security committee, described the text reported by Axios as "more of an American wish list than a reality".

"The Americans will not gain anything in a war they are losing that they have not gained in face-to-face negotiations," he wrote.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Aragchi, visiting China, made no mention of Trump's latest remarks, but said Tehran was holding out for "a fair and comprehensive agreement".

After talks with Aragchi, his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi called for an end to hostilities and for both countries to reopen the Strait of Hormuz "as soon as possible".

China "will work harder to ease tensions and end the fighting, continue to support the launch of peace talks, and play a greater role in restoring peace and tranquility to the Middle East", said Wang.

Trump's conciliatory tone came hours after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the US had completed its offensive operations against Iran.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর

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০৪/০৫/১০২৬ খ্রিষ্টাব্দ

গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

কৃষিমাটি সুরক্ষা ও বায়ুদূষণ রোধে পোড়ানো ইটের পরিবর্তে ব্লক ব্যবহার করুন

কৃষিমাটি সুরক্ষা ও বায়ুদূষণ রোধে সরকার সকল প্রকার সরকারি নির্মাণ ও সংস্কার কাজে পোড়ানো ইটের পরিবর্তে ব্লক ব্যবহার (মহাসড়ক ব্যতীত) বাধ্যতামূলক করেছে। ব্লক ব্যবহারে কৃষিমাটি সুরক্ষা ও বায়ুদূষণ রোধ ছাড়াও নিম্নরূপ সুফল ও সুবিধাদি রয়েছেঃ

ব্লক ব্যবহারের সুফল ও সুবিধাদি

- "অপোড়ানো পদ্ধতির ব্লক উৎপাদন প্রক্রিয়া বায়ু দূষণ সৃষ্টি করে না"- ফলে এটি জনস্বাস্থ্যের জন্য সহায়ক;
- ব্লক উৎপাদনে মাটির পরিবর্তে বালি, ড্রেজিং ম্যাটেরিয়াল, পরিত্যক্ত বিস্ত্রিংয়ের কংক্রিট, বিভিন্ন ধরনের বর্জ্য ইত্যাদি ব্যবহারের ফলে কৃষি জমির উর্বর মাটি রক্ষা ও বনজ সম্পদের অপচয় রোধ হয়;
- নদীর ড্রেজড ম্যাটেরিয়াল ব্যবহার করা যায় বিধায় নদীর নাব্যতা বৃদ্ধির সাথে সাথে ব্লক তৈরীর কীচামাল প্রাপ্তিতে সহায়ক ভূমিকা রাখে;
- স্থায়ীকাল ও কাঠামোগত ভারসাম্য বেশী ও অধিক ভূমিকম্প সহনীয়;
- ব্লক নির্মিত অবকাঠামো তাপ ও অগ্নি নিরোধক এবং শব্দদূষণ রোধে সহায়তা করে;
- বায়ুদূষণ ও কার্বন ডাই-অক্সাইড নিঃসরণ হ্রাস করে বৈশ্বিক উষ্ণায়ন ও জলবায়ু পরিবর্তনে ইতিবাচক ভূমিকা রাখে;
- সারা বছরব্যাপী ব্লক উৎপাদন করা যায় এবং ক্ষুদ্র ও মাঝারি উদ্যোক্তারা এই কার্যক্রমে অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারে।

এমতাবস্থায়, পরিবেশ সুরক্ষা, কৃষি জমির মাটি সংরক্ষণ এবং জনস্বাস্থ্য ও টেকসই উন্নয়ন নিশ্চিতকরণের লক্ষ্যে ইটের বিকল্প হিসেবে পরিবেশবান্ধব ব্লক উৎপাদন ও ব্যবহারে সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের আন্তরিক সহযোগিতা ও সক্রিয় অংশগ্রহণ কামনা করা যাচ্ছে।

মহাপরিচালক
পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Fix the testing gap, contain measles

Secure adequate supplies of testing kits, explore alternative procurement channels

At a time when the country is grappling with a severe measles outbreak, with infections, hospitalisations, and deaths continuing to rise, another worrying problem has emerged: a shortage of measles testing kits. According to recent reports, the country's only measles testing facility at the Institute of Public Health in Mohakhali has only a handful of kits left. At the current rate, testing could come to a halt after May 11 if fresh supplies do not arrive. The inability of the health authorities to ensure even basic testing capacity shows how fragile and inadequate our measles response has been.

While the laboratory should be testing hundreds of samples daily, it is now able to process only a fraction of that number. Thousands of samples from across the country are already pending, with more arriving every day. In many cases, delayed test results are prolonging hospital stays and hiding the true scale of infections and deaths. The shortage first emerged in April, but earlier warnings appear to have gone unheeded. The Institute of Public Health had reportedly requested additional kits in February, but supplies arrived only in mid-April, in insufficient quantities. Promised follow-up deliveries have also been delayed. These gaps point to a serious lack of urgency, both among national authorities responsible for procurement and international partners tasked with supply.

The centralisation of testing in Dhaka has also compounded the crisis. With no facilities at district or divisional levels, samples must be transported from across the country, leading to delays in diagnosis and treatment. Paediatricians have warned that such delays are contributing to severe complications among children, including pneumonia, oxygen deficiency, and even neurological conditions. The lack of adequate infrastructure outside the capital, particularly ICU beds and oxygen support, has further worsened the outbreak.

Experts have repeatedly stressed that the outbreak has reached an alarming level and should be treated as an epidemic. This would have enabled a coordinated treatment protocol, rapid training and deployment of healthcare workers, and a systematic approach to testing, isolation, and patient care. Sadly, our health authorities have not taken such a step.

Since March 15, some 263 children have reportedly died in the country from measles or related symptoms, with 54 confirmed measles cases. Unless the outbreak is declared an emergency and addressed accordingly, more deaths are likely to follow.

We therefore urge the government to take all-out action to contain the outbreak and save children's lives. Authorities must urgently secure adequate supplies of testing kits, explore alternative procurement channels, and remove bureaucratic barriers that delay response. Testing must be decentralised, district-level healthcare must be strengthened, and a coordinated national response put in place. Greater transparency, stronger inter-agency coordination, and meaningful engagement with both public and private healthcare providers are also essential. While the vaccination drive has made some progress, it must continue at pace. No more children's lives should be lost to preventable gaps in the system.

Press freedom should not be elusive

Amend laws, train police appropriately to stop journalist harassment

When a new government assumed power following a landslide victory in a free and fair election after the 2024 July uprising, there was a flicker of hope that journalists' safety would finally be ensured in Bangladesh. However, a recent report by the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), noting that at least 75 journalists were harassed across the country just last month, dashes that hope. According to the report, which aggregated information from 14 dailies, 42 journalists were injured, 17 assaulted, 10 threatened, three detained, and five were accused in four separate cases. It has been nearly three months since the BNP government took office, yet the number of harassment incidents is already higher than last year's monthly average (HRSS recorded 318 attacks throughout 2025). This raises a vital question: can we ever expect a regime where journalists can carry out their work in this country without fear of harassment, threats or arrests?

Sadly, an analysis by this daily of Sweden-based Varieties of Democracy's (V-Dem) press freedom data shows there has never been a period in our history when journalists did not face harassment from powerful actors, be it government or non-government. V-Dem scores range from -3.33 (journalists cannot operate without facing certain harassment) to 4.13 (journalists are never harassed). In its 55 years, and irrespective of whether it had a political or non-political government, Bangladesh never went above 0.5, indicating an environment where some journalists were suppressed while others managed to continue freely. The only period when the situation was relatively better was during the tenure of President Ziaur Rahman, father of current Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

One might expect the BNP to follow that example to ensure a fear-free environment. Indeed, their manifesto pledges to ensure freedom of expression, and the party boasted about doing so in its "60 notable initiatives" in its first 60 days. Ironically, around the same time, a cartoonist was arrested under the Cyber Security Ordinance, 2025 for satirising a BNP politician. Although he was later granted bail, a number of journalists, who were arrested—often on flimsy and false charges—after the fall of Sheikh Hasina, remain behind bars without trial, some for over 600 days.

As we noted recently, as long as problematic clauses in laws like the Cyber Protection Ordinance remain, journalists will face harassment. We urge the government to revisit and amend laws that restrict free speech, train law enforcers on this issue, and rein in party activists. Above all, forming a media commission and a functional and independent National Human Rights Commission is urgent to ensure press freedom and journalists' safety.

Political shift in West Bengal and its regional ripples



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KAMAL AHMED

BJP's victory in the West Bengal assembly elections has been widely described as a tectonic shift—only the second change in power in the state in the last 50 years. Both transitions are significant: the first ended 34 years of rule by the socialist Left Front, while the second has now replaced the centrist Trinamool Congress (TMC) with the right-wing BJP, a party rooted in Hindutva politics.

Although broadly secular forces governed West Bengal after India's independence, the state was also home to the early seeds of Hindutva-based politics. BJP's ideological forebear, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, who was associated with the Hindu Mahasabha and Jana Sangh, hailed from West Bengal. It is, therefore, unsurprising that BJP's state leadership marked its victory by paying homage to him, underscoring the symbolic significance of this political shift.

According to data from the Election Commission of India, the BJP secured 45.84 percent of the vote, improving upon its roughly 40 percent share in the previous three elections, while the TMC's vote share declined to 40.80 percent. Muslims constitute about 27 percent of the state's population, and nearly one-third of constituencies have substantial Muslim electorates. In 2021, the TMC won 84 out of 88 Muslim-majority seats, reflecting strong consolidation behind Mamata Banerjee. While early indications suggest that the TMC retained considerable Muslim support in this election, minor inroads by smaller Islamic groups were noted in some areas.

The BJP, meanwhile, appears to have offset this through broader Hindu consolidation, aided by its electoral strategy. A high voter turnout—reported to be more than 92 percent—further reflected the intensity of the contest. Ironically, Mamata Banerjee herself had earlier facilitated the BJP's entry into the state's political landscape through an alliance during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee era, a partnership that has

now come full circle.

The deletion of around 2.7 million voters under the controversial Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls added another layer of complexity. While its precise impact on the outcome remains debated, preliminary analyses suggest that in at least 49 constituencies, including Banerjee's own, the margin of defeat was smaller than the number of removed voters. Nonetheless,



Election officials count votes of the West Bengal state legislative assembly election, inside a counting centre in Kolkata, India on May 4, 2026.

incumbency fatigue, allegations of corruption, and concerns over law and order, particularly involving alleged party-linked elements, contributed to public discontent. BJP's promise to expand social protection programmes with a larger financial outlay also resonated with sections of the electorate. Above all, the party's rhetoric of change appears to have found a receptive audience.

Critics argue that the SIR disproportionately affected poorer and minority voters, especially Muslims and migrant communities in border districts. Yet, the scale

of BJP's rise cannot be attributed to this factor alone. For many observers, it represents the delayed political consolidation of a legacy long associated with Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. Notably, his opposition to Article 370 and subsequent death in detention in 1953 in Jammu and Kashmir has acquired renewed political symbolism, especially after the provision's abrogation in 2019.

Celebrating the victory, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasised that it was "a time for change, not revenge." His campaign centred on transformation, though a dominant theme was the issue of so-called "infiltration," portrayed as a root cause of problems such as unemployment, crime, cross-border smuggling, and security threats. These concerns were frequently linked to migration across the eastern

lose citizenship and face risks of being deported. A logical question arises: to where will they be sent? Given the recent admission by BJP's Himanta Biswa Sarma, chief minister of Assam, another northeastern state in India, that he pushes Bangla-speaking Muslims into Bangladesh under the nighttime darkness, there is every reason to fear a repetition of similar tactics by another state run by his party. If any such coordinated operation is mounted from three surrounding BJP-run states (the third being Tripura), then Bangladesh will face a serious humanitarian crisis.

Sarma's statement last month warranted the summoning of the acting high commissioner of India at the foreign ministry in Dhaka to express its displeasure and concerns. It was the first occasion of an unpleasant diplomatic development since a newly elected BNP government led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman took office. Delhi, it may be recalled, welcomed his election, expressing hopes of a reset in strained relations. Dhaka-Delhi bilateral relations dipped to a low level following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina as the interim government led by Prof Muhammad Yunus sought her repatriation, and reciprocal visa bans adversely impacted trade, road, and rail transportation as well as jointly undertaken projects.

For decades, Kolkata has been portrayed as a centre of intellectual and cultural progressivism in the subcontinent. BJP's sweeping victory challenges that perception, suggesting a shift in the state's political and cultural identity. Mamata Banerjee's efforts to promote a distinct Bangalee identity—symbolised by slogans like "Joy Bangla"—appear, in this context, to have produced unintended consequences.

Dhaka has largely refrained from publicly commenting on the rise of religion-based politics in India, even as Indian discourse often frames Islamist politics in Bangladesh as a security concern. However, the growing prominence of religious polarisation in the region risks fuelling reciprocal dynamics across borders. With unresolved bilateral issues, including water sharing, border management, and trade imbalances, such developments could complicate efforts to maintain regional stability. The hope remains that political leadership on both sides will act with restraint and foresight to preserve harmony in the region.

Rethinking healthcare for children in the CHT



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SUMIT BANIK

In the remote hills of Bandarban, a child's illness is rarely just a medical event. It is a test of distance, terrain, poverty, and trust. A recent report in The Daily Star on child deaths and suspected measles-like illness in Alikadam brings this reality into sharp focus. For many families from Mro and Marma communities, accessing formal healthcare can be an excruciating ordeal. The journey to the nearest facility can take hours, sometimes even days, requiring crossing steep, unforgiving paths, with costs that far exceed a family's monthly income. Such harsh realities often lead to the community members relying on traditional remedies, which is not always a choice on their part.

It is tempting, from a distance, to prescribe familiar solutions: build more hospitals, deploy more doctors, and expand infrastructure. But those who have lived and worked in the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) know that this terrain resists one-size-fits-all solutions. The crisis is seldom only about the absence of services; it's also about the lived realities of the hills.

The first step towards a meaningful response would be to shift how we approach the problem. Instead of expecting patients to travel for healthcare services, it must be ensured that care reaches patients

regardless of geographical challenges. To bridge immediate gaps, facilities such as mobile healthcare units—equipped for immunisation, maternal and child health services, and basic diagnostics—can be introduced. These ideas are not new, but their consistent and well-resourced deployment in hard-to-reach unions remains limited. Regular outreach, on fixed schedules known to communities, can build both access and trust, ensuring that services are not sporadic but dependable.

Investing in people from these communities is equally important, especially when it comes to bridging the healthcare gap in the CHT region. Training local youth as community health workers could be an important long-term strategy. These workers would have the unique advantage of understanding the language, cultural nuances, and the topography. They can help identify early symptoms of an outbreak, provide basic care, support immunisation drives, and facilitate timely referrals. In places where an outsider's advice may be met with hesitation, a familiar face can make the difference between delay and action.

However, referral itself remains a weak link. When a child develops complications, the window for effective treatment is narrow.

For many hill families, arranging transport—be it by foot, boat, or motorcycle—is both logistically complex and financially crippling. A community-based emergency transport and referral system is, therefore, essential. This could include locally managed funds to cover urgent travel costs, transport options adapted for hilly terrain such as motorbike ambulances, and simple communication networks to alert facilities in advance. Without such mechanisms, even the best primary care cannot prevent avoidable deaths.

Another dimension that demands careful engagement is the role of traditional healers and Indigenous knowledge systems. Public health responses often treat these as obstacles to be overcome. In reality, they are deeply embedded sources of trust. A more pragmatic approach would be to engage local healers to recognise danger signs and encourage timely referrals, while respecting their role within the community. This could help bridge the gap between tradition and modern healthcare.

Communication strategies also need recalibration. Health messages crafted in the capital rarely resonate in remote CHT villages. Language barriers, differing worldviews, and limited exposure to formal education—all shape how information is received. Hence, community engagement must be participatory and localised. Campaign materials should use Indigenous languages, adopt the hill's style of storytelling, and utilise trusted community forums. When mothers understand why a vaccine matters, not as an abstract concept but as a shield against a familiar fear, they are more likely to seek it.

At the same time, there is a need

for modest but strategically placed health posts. They should not aim to replicate urban hospitals; they would serve as the first point of contact. They could be instrumental in offering essential medicines, routine services, and a base for outreach teams. Over time, such initiatives can strengthen the overall referral network, making the system more responsive and less fragmented.

All of these interventions, however, require a policy framework that recognises the unique advantages and challenges of the CHT. Uniform national strategies often fail to capture the diversity and complexity of the hills. Dedicated budget lines, flexible implementation models, and stronger collaboration between government agencies and NGOs are critical. Development partners, too, must move beyond pilot projects and support scalable, context-sensitive programmes.

The measles situation in Bandarban reminds us that even if inequity in healthcare is not always visible, it is deeply felt. A child in Alikadam should not have a lower chance of survival simply because of where they are born. Addressing this injustice demands more than infrastructure; it needs empathy translated into policy and policy translated into practice.

Those who have spent time in the hills know that communities are not passive recipients of aid. They are resilient, resourceful, and willing to engage if approached with respect and understanding. The task before us is to listen, adapt, and act. Because in the end, healthcare is more than about facilities and medicines; it is about reaching people where they are and standing with them when it matters most.

What the Bangladesh-Japan trade agreement means for our bio-cultural resources



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PAVEL PARTHA

Just like the Bangladesh-US trade deal, the signing of the Bangladesh-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) at the end of the interim government's tenure has sparked much debate. There are concerns that this agreement could put the country's sovereignty, agriculture and food systems, traditional knowledge, economy, and intellectual property rights at risk.

To ensure a stable and rules-based trade framework, Bangladesh has entered into this economic partnership agreement with a developed country for the first time. The 1,272-page agreement, consisting of 22 chapters and nine annexes, covers tariff reduction or elimination on goods, liberalisation of services, investment protection and promotion, customs and trade facilitation, and the protection of intellectual property rights. The EPA includes provisions about protecting genetic resources, geographical indications (GI), and intellectual property rights (IPR) in line with the World Trade Organization's (WTO's) Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement.

However, Article 27.3(b) of TRIPS remains highly controversial for allowing patents on inventions derived from genetic resources and traditional knowledge. If implemented without adequate safeguards, this could threaten the rights of farmers, rural communities, and Indigenous peoples over their traditional knowledge, bio-cultural resources, and intellectual property. Therefore, this agreement should not be implemented without full public consent, meaningful participation, and a strong public framework to protect national interests.

Local genetic resources, traditional knowledge, and the biopiracy debate

Across the world, in the name of research, development, bioprospecting, or innovation, numerous cases of biopiracy have taken place without the consent of local and Indigenous communities. Vandana Shiva's *Biopiracy: The Plunder of Nature and Knowledge* (1997)

and Graham Dutfield's *Intellectual Property, Biogenetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge* (2004) both highlight these dangers and call for stronger protection of community rights over traditional knowledge.

Beyond Ayurveda, Unani, and Chakra traditions, numerous medicinal plants are used in traditional healing practices among Bangalee and indigenous communities in Bangladesh. The EPA could put these local herbal resources, their traditional uses, and local markets at risk. Foreign companies may isolate specific pharmacological properties, create new formulations, patent them, and engage in unilateral commercialisation. There is no strong public framework or registry in Bangladesh to prevent biopiracy or protect traditional intellectual property.

Authoritarian patents and IPR

Philosophically, Bangladesh's subaltern communities have long opposed the patenting of life. Yet, under the global patent regime, both biological and intellectual resources are increasingly appropriated. Several plants widely used in Bangladeshi traditional medicine have already been patented abroad. In 1990, the US company W.R. Grace patented Neem; in 1995, the University of Mississippi Medical Center patented turmeric; and in 1997, RiceTec attempted to patent Basmati rice—sparking global debates on intellectual property rights. Japan holds patents related to the Berela plant (*Sida cordifolia*), commonly used in Bangladesh. Japanese companies, including Fujifilm Corporation, Morishita Jintan Co. Ltd., and Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd., have patented applications involving *Salacia reticulata*, traditionally used in diabetes treatment.

Under the Bangladesh-Japan EPA, intellectual property includes copyright, trademarks, GI, industrial designs, patents, plant variety protection, integrated circuit layout designs, and the protection of undisclosed information. Article 12 of the EPA

states that Japan and Bangladesh will work together to ensure effective and balanced protection of intellectual property in line with international agreements. But how can Bangladesh, with its still fragile institutional framework, build capacity equal to that of a wealthy and technologically advanced country like Japan?

According to the Bangladesh Patent Act, 2022, only technological inventions that

Will local innovators receive recognition?

While the EPA permits Bangladesh to develop its own unique (*sui generis*) laws for plant protection, it requires that these laws be "effective." Because the TRIPS agreement fails to define "effectiveness," the term often functions as a legal loophole. In practice, international trade pressure typically forces developing nations to abandon local protections in favour of rigid, corporate-

friendly standards—such as Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV)—effectively neutralising any laws designed to protect traditional farming practices.

In light of the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) and TRIPS, Bangladesh enacted the Plant Variety Protection Act in 2019 as its *sui generis* system. However, this law has yet to become fully effective in protecting crop varieties. Many locally developed rice varieties created by farmers and breeders still await formal recognition. A local variety from Jashore known as Khaskhani was later refined through pure-line selection and released as BRRI Dhan 34. Through the EPA, will Japan recognise this rice as Khaskhani or simply as BRRI Dhan-34? Will the farmer who preserved and developed the original variety receive any share of the benefits? Bangladesh still lacks a national benefit-sharing guideline and policy for traditional knowledge and genetic resources. Through the EPA, foreign companies or institutions could use aromatic local rice varieties like Kalijira, Kataribhog, Chinigura,

GI and Nakshikantha rights

Bangladesh enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act in 2013. Although Nakshikantha is woven across the country, on April 24, 2024, it was granted GI of Jamalpur (GI-35). According to the Department of Patents, Designs and Trademarks, Bangladesh has 62 GI products. The EPA states that each country must protect GI under its own laws in a manner consistent with TRIPS (Article 12.25). This is intended to prevent misuse of names and the marketing of counterfeit or misleading products.

Since 1985, the Bangladesh-Japan Cultural Exchange Association has supported a Nakshikantha project involving rural women in Jashore's Sharsha upazila, and Nakshikanthas collected from various sources have been exported to Japan. If GI protection is to be enforced under the EPA, will Nakshikantha be branded solely as Jamalpuri Nakshikantha, or will versions from other regions also receive GI recognition?

According to the agreement, the two countries will, through a sub-committee, regularly discuss and coordinate on the protection of intellectual property and will seek to recognise each other's GIs. However, the agreement does not explain how the representation of farmers, cottage industry workers, artisans, weavers, and rural craftspeople will be ensured in this sub-committee.

Let citizens unite to protect public resources

The resources included within the EPA's framework are part of the living heritage of both countries. Shaped by the complex interplay of nature and culture, they embody history, heritage, existence, identity, and pride. The commercialisation, degradation, appropriation, or control of these public resources without consent through any agreement will not be accepted. For a comprehensive public review, the agreement should be made accessible to people of all classes and groups in the country.



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

are novel, involve an inventive step, and are industrially applicable are patentable. Natural objects, agricultural methods, literature, performing arts, music, artworks, and innovations derived from traditional knowledge are excluded from patentability.

On the other hand, under Article 12.33 of the EPA, any new, inventive, and industrially applicable product or process is patentable without discrimination. However, inventions against the interest of humans, plants, animals, or the environment cannot be patented, while plants, animals, and essentially biological processes are also excluded. However, microorganisms and microbiological processes may still be patented. This has serious implications. Traditional fermented foods, drinks, and many heritage agricultural products rely on microbial processes. The commercial patenting of such microorganisms, techniques, or preparations could undermine the collective ownership embedded in the cultural practices.

Nuclear power and the sun we wasted



Dr. Ahad Chowdhury is a geologist, currently teaching at Jefferson Community and Technical College in Louisville, Kentucky.

AHAD CHOWDHURY

Last week, uranium fuel loading began at the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant in Pabna, a moment Bangladesh's scientists and engineers have awaited since plan to build a nuclear power plant was first conceived in 1961. According to *Prothom Alo*, this milestone makes Bangladesh the 33rd country in the world to operate nuclear power and the third in South Asia after India and Pakistan. The achievement is real and deserves acknowledgment. Yet as the nation celebrates entry into this exclusive club, a harder question demands an answer: how did Bangladesh arrive at a point where a \$12.65 billion debt-financed reactor became the primary answer to its energy crisis, when solar energy could be significantly more affordable?

The Rooppur plant, built by Russia's Rosatom, will eventually generate 2,400 megawatts across two units and is expected to meet around 10 percent of Bangladesh's electricity demand. *The Daily Star* reports that initial grid supply of around 300 MW is anticipated by late July or early August this year, with full capacity reached gradually over the next two years. Considering Bangladesh's chronic electricity deficit and high annual



Despite being considerably more affordable than nuclear energy, Bangladesh's solar energy sector continues to lag behind due to policy failures.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

demand growth, this energy development is truly significant.

But the financial architecture of Rooppur should propel every Bangladeshi to pause

and think for a moment. Russia extended \$11.38 billion in export credit for the Rooppur project. As the taka depreciates against the dollar, *Prothom Alo* reports that actual expenditures have risen by Tk 260 billion above contractual amounts, with total outlays now approaching Tk 1.39 trillion. Debt service on a foreign-currency obligation of this scale, especially for a country already burdened with LNG import costs and coal procurement

has initiated a formal investigation into allegations of financial irregularities in Rooppur's procurement process. The full scope of those allegations remains under active investigation, and the public deserves a transparent accounting before the debt repayments that will burden the national budget for the next two decades are simply accepted as the cost of doing business.

These grievances would have been more tolerable had Bangladesh simultaneously invested in domestic renewable energy. Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) reports that Bangladesh installed only 245 MW of rooftop solar capacity in the entire 17 year period from June 2008 to June 2025. For a tropical nation receiving 4-5 kilowatt hours of solar irradiance per square metre daily, this figure is indefensible. The Financial Express reports that within Dhaka alone, approximately 375 MW of installed rooftop solar sits almost entirely idle because no functioning net metering system exists and no government plan integrates this capacity into the distribution grid. Bangladesh mandated solar panels on new buildings in 2012 and then never built the regulatory infrastructure to use the power those panels generate.

The argument that solar is unreliable or insufficient does not survive scrutiny. Germany, at 51 degrees north latitude, receives a fraction of Bangladesh's sunshine but has an impressive solar capacity. Vietnam deployed more than 20 gigawatts in five years through decisive feed-in tariff policy. Morocco now exports solar electricity to Europe. However, despite strong sunlight, Bangladesh has produced only a bit over 1 GW of solar power after 20 years of policy efforts.

The reason is not entirely technical but political too. Importing LNG generates lucrative procurement contracts. Importing nuclear technology and fuel generates commissions accessible to politically connected intermediaries. Domestic solar, by contrast, is decentralised, transparent, and difficult to extract rent from. The sun does not require a middleman. This structural misalignment between the public interest and the interests of energy procurement syndicates has cost Bangladesh dearly—in foreign exchange, debt accumulation, and in the foregone clean energy that could have powered millions of homes at zero recurring fuel cost.

A \$5 billion investment in distributed rooftop solar and utility-scale ground arrays, less than half the Rooppur debt, could have delivered 5,000 to 8,000 MW of domestic capacity with no fuel import cost, no foreign-currency loan, and no geopolitical dependency. According to IEEFA, Bangladesh now needs to deploy approximately 760 MW of new renewable energy annually between 2026 and 2030 just to achieve its modest goal of 20 percent renewables by that date. The FY2025-26 national budget allocates no specific incentives to the renewable energy sector. The gap between stated targets and budgetary commitment is itself an indictment.

Rooppur will generate electricity we need. But Bangladesh must understand that a single \$12.65 billion nuclear plant—financed by a geopolitical creditor, repayable in foreign currency over 20 years, vulnerable to sanction disruption—is not an energy strategy. It is a monument to the failure to develop what was free, domestic, and abundant.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

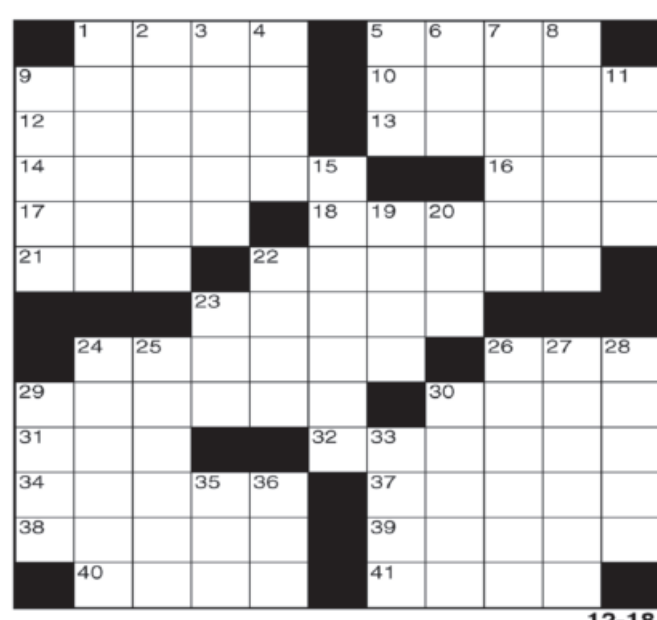
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- 22 Kayaks' cousins
- 23 Moscow money
- 24 Rather
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- 29 Singer King
- 30 Surrounding glow

DOWN

- 1 Mechanic's place
- 2 Facilitate
- 3 Political meeting
- 4 Different
- 5 In favor of
- 6 Stop N dime
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offer

- 8 Cafe fixtures
- 9 Fake
- 11 Teller of tales
- 15 Horse houses
- 19 Just
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- 23 Carnival city
- 24 Aesop's output
- 25 Secret
- 26 New Orleans university
- 27 Builds
- 28 Chores
- 29 Group of actors
- 30 Dogpatch boy
- 33 Regarding
- 35 Cowboy nickname
- 36 Pig's place



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Afzal Hossain discusses recent project, tribute to Ferdousi Majumdar

“She still remembers many of her dialogues by heart. It feels wonderful to even think about it. Watching her closely and seeing her perform has been deeply inspiring. I truly enjoyed acting alongside her.”

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Afzal Hossain remains one of Bangladesh's most enduring screen icons—once the most celebrated leading man of television dramas and still active across OTT platforms, films, and television today. A recipient of the Ekushey Padak, his creative identity extends beyond acting; he is also an accomplished director, painter, and writer.

He has recently appeared in the telefilm *Zohra Begumer Ichhapetro*, written by Tauquir Ahmed and directed by Arif Khan. In the project, he plays the elder son of veteran actress Ferdousi Majumdar. “There is still one more day of shooting left,” he noted.

The telefilm marks a reunion between the two artistes after many years. Afzal Hossain had written a drama titled *Shundor Sarbonash* long ago, in which Ferdousi Majumdar had



performed. This time, they share the screen again in a work that carries both personal and artistic significance.

Speaking about her, Afzal Hossain said, “She is one of the most distinguished artistes in this country—a truly gifted performer who has won audiences' hearts through her contributions in the art and cultural arena. She remains just as fluent and compelling on stage even now.”

He added that roles are rarely written with artistes of

her stature in mind. “However, this time it has happened. She plays the role of an actress in the telefilm—something quite fitting for her.”

He expressed admiration for her dedication and experience. “She still remembers many of her dialogues by heart. It feels wonderful to even think about it. Watching her closely and seeing her perform has been deeply inspiring. I truly enjoyed acting alongside her.”

Reflecting on the shoot, he

said the entire team worked with great joy. “Everyone involved approached the work with genuine enjoyment. We spent time chatting, taking breaks, and filming together. It felt as though certain emotions that had been lost over time were rediscovered.”

The telefilm also brings together artistes from multiple generations. “Yes, several generations have acted together in this project. That in itself is a valuable experience. The days we spent shooting were truly memorable.”

Afzal Hossain revealed that the project was initiated by him as a tribute. “I proposed making this telefilm to honour Ferdousi Majumdar. I felt she deserved such recognition. After completing the project, it feels like our wish has been fulfilled.”

Meanwhile, he is also set to appear in Nuhash Humayun's upcoming film *Moving Bangladesh*.



‘Tomader Golpo 2’ set to premiere this Eid

After gaining over 47 million views, the popular drama *Tomader Golpo* is returning with a sequel this Eid. The new instalment, titled *Tomader Golpo 2*, is directed by Mohammad Mostafa Kamal Raz.

The first drama aired during Eid-ul-Fitr last year and received widespread praise from audiences. The story, centred on family emotions and relationships, attracted millions of viewers.

The sequel is now being produced with a script by Siddiqur Rahman. Shooting is currently underway. The drama is scheduled to air this upcoming Eid on Channel i and Cinemawala YouTube channel.

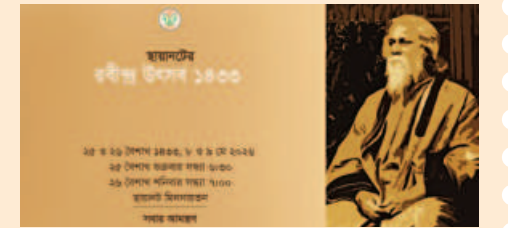
The cast includes Jovan, Totini, Intekhab Dinar, Deepa Khandakar, Monira Mithu, Saberi Alam, Dilara Zaman, Khairul Alam Sabuj, Dr Ejajul Islam, among others.

WHAT'S THE HAPS?

‘Rabindra Utsab 1433’

Chhayanaut marks the 165th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore with its annual two-day *Rabindra Utsab*, returning to a repertoire that has shaped its identity for decades. Featuring Rabindra Sangeet, recitation and dance, the programme brings together senior and emerging performers in a disciplined, collective reading of Tagore's work.

DATE: FRIDAY-SATURDAY | MAY 8-9, 2026
TIME: 6:30 PM-9:30 PM
VENUE: CHHAYANAUT SHANGSKRITI BHABAN, DHANMONDI



Irrfan Khan, Vidya Balan's ‘The Last Tenant’ released after 25 years

A long unreleased film starring Irrfan Khan and Vidya Balan has finally been released nearly 25 years after it was made. Titled *The Last Tenant*, the film premiered on YouTube on April 29, marking Irrfan Khan's death anniversary.

Directed by Sarthak Dasgupta, the project was shot around 2000 but remained shelved after its original footage was lost. A recovered VHS copy later made restoration possible. The film offers an early glimpse of both actors before their rise to prominence and remains their only on-screen collaboration.

Set around a reclusive musician preparing to leave the country, the story explores memory, loneliness and longing. Viewers have since shown strong interest in the archival release, revisiting a rare chapter of contemporary Indian cinema history.



NEWS

Urban primary healthcare moves to DGHS Dhaka seeks Beijing's support

FROM PAGE 14
The following day, the Health Services Division asked all civil surgeons to take over the centres from the authorities concerned by April.

The Tk 1,209 crore second phase of UPHCSDP began in 2018 and ended in December last year.

During the 2023-24 fiscal year, 8.37 lakh women received maternal services, including antenatal and postnatal care. Over 4 lakh children received treatment for diarrhoea, measles, respiratory diseases, and malnutrition during the period, according to the LGD's 2023-24 annual report.

After the project's expiry, city corporations and municipalities have been continuing services with support from NGOs.

The 23 municipalities include Sirajganj, Kushtia, Gopalganj, Kishoreganj, Faridpur, Shariatpur, Netrokona, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jagannathpur, Derai, Benapole, Tarabo, Laksam, Pirganj, Cox's Bazar, Jamalpur, and Patuakhali.

However, health experts say primary healthcare services remain relatively weak in the urban areas, forcing people to rely on curative care amid a growing urban population.

“This is definitely the right decision to hand over,” said Aminul Hasan, member secretary of the UHC Forum, a platform of health professionals and activists working towards universal health coverage (UHC).

“One of the major challenges in our health service delivery, particularly in urban health, has been governance.

The health ministry oversees almost everything except urban health. Bringing this under the ministry would improve coordination and implementation,” he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Responding to a question about managing a large number of facilities amid manpower shortages in the health department, he said, “There are, of course, management issues.”

“While this will certainly be a challenge, I believe coordination will ultimately improve if challenges can be addressed properly.”

The Prime Minister's Office in March formed a nine-member committee, led by the cabinet secretary, to review UPHCSDP and assess the possibility of handing over its infrastructure to the health ministry, sources said.

The April 22 meeting was chaired by LGRD State Minister Mir Shahe Alam. He told the meeting that the centres should be handed over to the health ministry, documents show.

Upon taking charge of the facilities, the health authority will operate, maintain, and repair them, the documents said, directing the authorities concerned to complete the handover by April.

Talking to this correspondent on Tuesday, Dhaka Civil Surgeon Mohammad Zillur Rahman said they already wrote to the two city corporations to hand over some 45 facilities.

Authorities of the city corporations are preparing checklists of equipment and other materials before formally

handing them over, he added.

The facilities continue to provide services, and to keep them operational without disruption, the city corporations have sought an inter-ministerial meeting to resolve outstanding issues, Zillur said.

Contacted yesterday, Jahane Ferdous Binte Rahman, chief health officer of Dhaka South City Corporation, said they already sent a list of their facilities to the Dhaka Civil Surgeon's Office.

She added that the health ministry has called a meeting on the issue today and hoped that everything would be clarified there.

On May 4, the ministry asked the Directorate General of Health Services to submit a report outlining the manpower, medical equipment, and other requirements needed to make those facilities functional, said ministry officials.

It sought details on the services that can be provided, the staffing structure for each centre, and the condition of the physical infrastructure, including the estimated repair and renovation costs needed to make them operational.

Speaking to this newspaper, Health Secretary Quamruzzaman Chowdhury said they were taking over the facilities following the PM's directives.

Replying to a question, he said they may retain existing manpower, apart from recruiting new staffers to operate the facilities. “Our aim is to improve primary healthcare in urban areas to reduce dependency on secondary and tertiary hospitals.”

FROM PAGE 14

Both sides agreed to uphold the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, maintain high-level exchanges, deepen political mutual trust, and enhance synergy between their development strategies to advance the China-Bangladesh Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership.

Bangladesh reiterated its firm adherence to the One-China principle, reaffirming that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory and opposing any form of “Taiwan independence”.

Wang stressed that China's

development of relations with Bangladesh and other South Asian countries does not target any third party, nor should it be influenced by any third party, UNB reports.

The two countries agreed to promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and expand collaboration in the economy, trade, investment, industry, the digital economy, water resources, health, and people-to-people exchanges.

The Bangladeshi side highly appreciated Chinese President Xi Jinping's initiative to build a community with a shared future

for mankind and welcomed China's major global initiatives.

Regarding the Rohingya crisis, China said it would continue to support Bangladesh and Myanmar in finding a mutually acceptable solution to the issue of forcibly displaced people from Rakhine State through dialogue and consultation, and would continue supporting repatriation efforts to the best of its capabilities.

Khalilur invited the Chinese foreign minister to visit Bangladesh at a mutually convenient time.

New cyber law remains repressive

FROM PAGE 14
citing insights from an online traffic analysis.

Maj Gen (retd) Emdad Ul-Bari, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), stated that the BTRC only processes take-down requests from various agencies and law enforcing agencies and does not have the authority to judge the content itself.

He identified a lack of inter-agency coordination as a major hurdle in their operation regarding processing the requests.

Emdad Ul Bari said the BTRC last year requested platforms to remove around 27,000 posts or links, of which about 17,000 (63 percent) were taken down.

He added that links related to suicide and child abuse saw removal rates of 100 percent and 98 percent respectively, while requests concerning misinformation and fake news had only a 56 percent take-down rate.

Bari noted that the spread of deepfake videos before the election led to a concerning trend where people stopped believing in authentic content.

Stressing that non-regulation is not an option, he suggested social media sites should mark all AI-generated content so audiences can judge its authenticity.

Many speakers questioned the need for the accountability of tech giants regarding misinformation and hate speech.

Joan Barata, an international legal expert working with Unesco, argued that broad and vaguely defined laws give platforms an excuse to dodge accountability.

“If you have a legal system that is open for interpretation ... platforms will say they don't know how to proceed,” he explained, contrasting this with markets where clear laws force compliance.

Moderated by rights activist Shahidul Alam, the event was also addressed by Unesco Representative Susan Vize; Paola Castro Neiderstam, senior manager at the Embassy of Sweden; Ashok Barua, co-convenor of Voice for Reform; and representatives from Tech Global Institute and Blast.

Teacher accused of child

FROM PAGE 14
hearing was not held today.”

On April 23, the mother of the child filed a rape case against two people, including Sagor, with Madan Police Station after discovering that her daughter was seven months pregnant.

The incident has since sparked outrage across the country.

According to the First Information Report, on October 2 last year, after classes ended in the afternoon, Sagor told the child to sweep the mosque adjacent to the madrasa. By that time, other teachers and students had already left for their homes. After the child finished sweeping, he told her to clean his room. As soon as she entered the room, he raped her.

The FIR further said that when the child cried out, he threatened to beat her and expel her from the madrasa.

The child was allegedly raped on four or five more occasions in a room adjacent to the mosque's veranda and also in classrooms, the FIR read.

On April 18, when the mother suddenly noticed physical changes in the child, she took her to a local diagnostic centre for a check-up. There, a doctor found that the child was in her third term of pregnancy.

Meanwhile, Sagor, founder of the madrasa, went live on Facebook on Tuesday from an undisclosed location claiming his innocence and demanding a DNA test to determine the paternity of the unborn child.

Israeli strikes on Lebanon kill 4 despite ceasefire

AFP, Beirut

An Israeli strike in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa valley killed four people yesterday, while the Israeli army said it struck Hezbollah targets in the south, after warning residents of a dozen towns to evacuate.

Israel and Hezbollah have been trading accusations of violating the ceasefire agreement in force since April 17. Hezbollah has claimed responsibility for several operations targeting Israeli forces in southern Lebanon, as well as attacks on northern Israel.

USF to confer posthumous doctorates

FROM PAGE 14
from the university, he said USF formally informed the Bangladesh Consulate in Miami of the decision through a letter dated yesterday.

The university has requested a consulate representative to attend the convocation to receive the honours on behalf of the bereaved families.

In a separate update, Mortuza said the body of Nahida Sultana Bristy is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka on May 9.

He said her body will be flown from Orlando International Airport on May 7 at 8:50pm (local time) on Emirates flight EK 0220 to Dubai,

and then onward on EK 0582, arriving in Dhaka at 8:40am.

The process is being overseen by the Bangladesh Consulate in Miami, while the Bangladesh Embassy in the United States is coordinating arrangements in consultation with the foreign ministry in Bangladesh.

The first namaz-e-janaza for Bristy is scheduled to be held in Tampa at 2:00pm (local time) on May 6.

Zamil Ahmed Limon and Nahida Sultana Bristy, both 27, went missing in Florida on April 16. A friend later informed the university authorities.

According to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, Limon's body was recovered on April 24

near the Howard Frankland Bridge area following the interrogation of a suspect. The body bore multiple stab wounds and was found dismembered inside black garbage bags.

Two days later, on April 26, fishermen spotted a black polythene bag while kayaking in a nearby mangrove area. Police later recovered dismembered human remains from the scene. At a press conference on April 30, authorities confirmed the remains belonged to Bristy.

In connection with the killings, Limon's roommate, US citizen Hisham Abugharbeh, has been arrested.



PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Uprooted trees lie scattered along an embankment in Uttar Jhatibunia in Patuakhali recently, where renovation work has allegedly led to the removal of nearly 200 trees planted under a social forestry programme decades ago. Locals claim financial losses and accuse the authorities of carrying out the work without prior notice.

ICT-2 asks Inu's defence

FROM PAGE 4
The prosecution brought the issue to the tribunal's attention while placing arguments in a crimes against humanity case against Inu following the conclusion of the defence argument.
Meanwhile, defence counsel for former deputy inspector general of police Abdul Jalil Mondal yesterday sought his bail and informed ICT-1 that his client intends to become a state witness in the crimes against humanity case filed over the 2013 Shapla Chattar crackdown.
The lawyer also told the tribunal that Jalil is suffering from cardiac complications and has already been diagnosed

with seven blocks.
After reviewing his medical report, the tribunal observed that no critical condition had been mentioned by the doctor, adding that it would look into the matter.
In another development, the defence completed the cross-examination of Shafiqul Islam, a prosecution witness in a crimes against humanity case against 17 individuals, including former top officials and army officers linked to enforced disappearances, detention and torture at the Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) cell allegedly operated under Rab.
Defence counsel claimed that members of law enforcement agencies had seized some "jihadi" books from the witness at the time of arrest, but he denied the allegation.
The tribunal asked the defence what it meant by "jihadi books", remarking that simply labelling Islamic books as jihadi was problematic.
The defence lawyer responded that the term appeared in the seizure list, which is why he used it.
The defence also claimed that the witness was a member of Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JMB) and had links with its other members.
The witness denied the claims. The tribunal recorded both claims.

Govt procuring

FROM PAGE 3
He informed that the government has already paid US \$83.6 million to Unicef to supply around 95 million doses of 10 types of vaccines.
On May 3, more than 1.5 million doses of IPV vaccine arrived in the first shipment. Yesterday, another 1.5 million doses of MR vaccine and 0.9 million doses of TD vaccine arrived, he added.
The minister further said by May 10, around 180 million doses of MR, TD, BCG, TCV, oral polio vaccine (OPV), and pentavalent vaccines are expected to arrive. The full supply is planned to be completed by September.
He mentioned that more than 1.68 crore children have been vaccinated as of May 5, covering 93 percent of the total target, in the nationwide "Measles-Rubella Vaccination Campaign 2026" currently underway to control the ongoing measles outbreak.
The minister stressed that there is an adequate stock of TCV and HPV vaccines in the country, adding that the new supplies will ensure that no vaccine shortage occurs in the next eight to 12 months.

HC questions

FROM PAGE 4
Lawyers Mohammad Hossain Lipu, Mustafizur Rahman Khan, and Md Muzahidul Islam Shahin appeared for the writ petitioner, while Deputy Attorney General Jamila Momtaz represented the state during the hearing.
Advocate Muzahidul Islam Shahin told The Daily Star that Monira Sharmin cannot contest the election as the High Court did not issue any directive to this effect.
Earlier, on April 30, Monira Sharmin filed the writ petition with the High Court challenging the legality of the EC's decision to cancel her nomination for the reserved parliamentary seat.
On April 23, the returning officer had rejected her nomination paper, citing provisions of the Representation of the People Order, 1972. The officer said she was not eligible to contest the election as three years had not yet passed since her resignation from government service.
She appealed to the Election Commission against the returning officer's decision on April 26.
However, after a lengthy hearing the following day, the EC dismissed her appeal.

Form sexual

FROM PAGE 3
Report (FIR) alleges that a madrasa teacher sexually abused the child multiple times since October last year. The case surfaced on April 18 after medical tests confirmed advanced pregnancy.
The accused has been detained by Rab, though he reportedly denied the allegations on social media.
In a separate incident, a madrasa teacher in Patuakhali was recently jailed over the alleged sexual abuse of a 10-year-old student.
MJF noted that although the High Court in 2009 issued a landmark judgment - reiterated for all educational institutions in 2023 - to form committees to prevent sexual harassment, many madrasas have remained outside the effective implementation of the directive.
"Such cases are often suppressed due to the influence of perpetrators within local communities. It is time to break the silence and ensure accountability," MJF said in the statement.
The organisation called for the full enforcement of the Nari O Shishu Nirjatan Daman Ain (Women and Children Repression Prevention Act), 2000, and swift justice for victims.
It urged the government to ensure immediate implementation of the HC directives and expedite the enactment of the sexual harassment prevention law, which is currently pending in parliament.
MJF added that both the state and society have a shared responsibility to ensure child safety, warning that current failures are putting children at continued risk.

Dhaka, Delhi plan series

FROM PAGE 3
however, has yet to fully restore visas for Bangladeshis.
Misri said they were working on the full resumption of visa issuance for Bangladeshis but did not specify any date.
Trade restrictions and political rhetoric also strained ties during the interim government. The situation began to shift after the election, with Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman visiting India in early April.
Addressing the media delegation, Misri said India seeks a "constructive, positive and pragmatic relationship" with Bangladesh, placing people at the centre.
Noting that the two countries share over 4,000 km of border and 54 transboundary rivers and are key trade partners, he said, "We want to progress and modernise our economic partnership with Bangladesh."
He acknowledged challenges during the interim government but stressed that India is now re-engaging with the elected government.
"Meetings are being scheduled. Results will be known in the next weeks and months," he said.
A Bangladesh foreign ministry official said a meeting between Border Guard Bangladesh and India's Border Security Force is planned for late May.
Misri said the present world situation provides lessons that strong cooperation among the neighbouring countries is more important than ever, and India and Bangladesh have been working towards this end.
He highlighted energy cooperation, saying India's supply of power and diesel is benefiting Bangladesh. He assured continued support in this regard.
Asked about the trade restrictions, Misri said India stands ready to take forward the discussions, as the livelihoods of people in both countries are affected since they are commercially engaged.
Trade will be something that will come up in the discussion first, he said, adding, "We want mutual benefits on both sides."
Regarding projects under the Indian Line of Credit, Misri said Bangladesh had shown less interest in some projects after review. "Both sides will discuss the projects Bangladesh prioritises, and India will consider financing," he said.
The Ganges water treaty expires this year, while the Teesta treaty has remained unsigned since 2011 due to opposition from then West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee.
Misri said the Joint River Commission will discuss technical issues for early solutions. Asked if Mamata's defeat to the BJP would ease the Teesta deal issue, he replied that foreign policy "operates from the capitals".
About push in of people whom India says are Bangladeshis, Misri said due process must be followed in this regard.
India has provided a list of 3,000 irregular Bangladeshis for verification, but Dhaka has yet to clear it, according to him.
A Bangladesh foreign ministry official said most on the list could not be traced or lacked proof of citizenship. "We cannot repatriate them under such circumstances," the official said.
Asked about Bangladesh's initiatives to revive South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation while maintaining ties with Pakistan, Misri said it was up to Bangladesh how it maintains relations with other countries.
However, New Delhi hopes that Dhaka does not do anything that negatively affects the interests of India and the relations between the two countries, he said.
He rejected the notion that India had engineered Bangladesh's elections and showed bias toward the Awami League. He stressed the relationship has always been and will be "people-centric".
"We always work with the government elected by the people. People of a country may not be happy with any government, but a foreign country cannot do anything about it," he added.

Govt mulls law against sexual

FROM PAGE 3
have urged the government to prioritise the formulation of such a law, the official added.
In this regard, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has already held several meetings with stakeholders.
Sources from the ministry indicated that work is underway to place a draft of the law before the Cabinet before the next parliamentary session.
Following the session, State Minister for Social Welfare Farzana Sharmin told reporters that the existing list of social safety net beneficiaries is being re-verified.
She instructed the DCs to ensure that only those who are truly eligible remain on the list, removing questionable entries and including genuine beneficiaries who were previously left out.
The state minister added that the process of selecting beneficiaries through the G2P (government-to-person) system is ongoing. She emphasised that the role of field administration is crucial and directed everyone to maintain professionalism in the selection process.
Other topics discussed at the conference included the construction of a daycare centre in every district and the recruitment of physical education teachers for children's mental and physical development.
Furthermore, the Ministry of Youth and Sports addressed ways to shift children away from addiction to devices and back to sports fields.
Discussions included the renovation of stadiums, the creation of new playgrounds, and encouraging year-round sports alongside studies through the "Notun Kuri" sports programme.
Other proposals included creating the post of upazila sports officer in every sub-district, building a swimming pool in every district, and enhancing youth skills through training in third languages, mobile servicing, and freelancing.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, পাবনা
(সাধারণ শাখা)
www.pabna.gov.bd
তারিখ: ২৩ মে ২০২৬
সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতির জন্য ই-টেন্ডার বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০১/২০২৬-২৬
এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, পাবনা-এর অধীনে নিম্নবর্ণিত ছক অনুযায়ী পণ্য ও সেবাসমূহের আবেদনকারীরা জেলা প্রশাসকের ই-টিংগিং পোর্টাল (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)-এ ই-টেন্ডার আহ্বান করা হয়েছে।

ক্রম:	টেন্ডার আইডি নং	কাজের বিবরণ	ই-টিংগিং সিস্টেমে দরপত্র প্রকাশের তারিখ ও সময়	ই-টিংগিং সিস্টেমে দরপত্র দাখিল করার তারিখ ও সময়	ই-টিংগিং সিস্টেমে দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	যে সমস্ত টিকাদার/টিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠান উল্লিখিত কাজে অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবে
০১	১২৭১২১৫	জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, পাবনা এ সফটওয়্যার সিস্টেম সরবরাহ ও স্থাপনকরণ।	৭ মে, ২০২৬ সময়: ২৩:০০	১৭ মে, ২০২৬ সময়: ১৬:০০	১৮ মে, ২০২৬ সময়: ১৬:০০	শুমারার বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ডের আওতাধীন সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতির জন্য টিকাদার/টিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠান উল্লিখিত দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন।

১। এই ই-টেন্ডার জারী ই-টিংগিং পোর্টাল (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)-এ অনলাইনের মাধ্যমে দরপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে।
২। ই-টেন্ডার অংশগ্রহণের জন্য দরদাতাদেরকে জারী ই-টিংগিং পোর্টালে নিবন্ধন করতে হবে।
৩। দরপত্র দাখিলের পূর্বে অনলাইনে টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্টস ডাউনলোড করে বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে যোগাযোগ করা নিতে হবে।
৪। টেন্ডার বি ও ডাউনলোড জারী ই-টিংগিং পোর্টালের মাধ্যমে অনলাইনে পদ্ধতিতে প্রদান করতে হবে।
৫। দরপত্র দাখিলের নিয়মাবলি ও বিজ্ঞপ্তি জারী জারী ই-টিংগিং পোর্টাল এবং নিম্নবর্ণিত কার্যালয়ে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে পাওয়া যাবে।

(আমিনুল ইসলাম)
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ক্রম নম্বর	পণ্য ও দরপত্র সংক্রান্ত তথ্যাদি
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২	প্রতিষ্ঠান: বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট, আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
৩	সম্প্রদায়িক প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম ও ঠিকানা: বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট, আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
৪	সম্প্রদায়িক প্রতিষ্ঠানের কোড: প্রয়োজ্য নহে।
৫	সম্প্রদায়িক প্রতিষ্ঠানের জেলা: ঢাকা।
৬	দরপত্র আহ্বানের বিষয়: আইন পুস্তক ও সাময়িকী ক্রয়
৭	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নম্বর: ০৫/২০২৬-২০২৬
৮	ক্রম পদ্ধতি: উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি।
৯	পণ্য সনাক্ত পদ্ধতি: উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি।
১০	পাঠ্য সনাক্ত পদ্ধতি: উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি।
১১	বাজেট ও অর্থবিশেষ উৎস: জাতীয় বাজেট বাজেট।
১২	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ: ০৭/০৫/২০২৬খ্রিঃ
১৩	দরপত্র বিক্রয়/সম্প্রদায়িক শেখ তারিখ: ১৭/০৫/২০২৬খ্রিঃ বেলা ০২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১৪	দরপত্র দাখিল হ্রাসের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়: ১৮/০৫/২০২৬খ্রিঃ বেলা ০২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১৫	দরপত্র উন্মুক্ত করার তারিখ, সময়: ১৮/০৫/২০২৬খ্রিঃ বেলা ২:০০ ঘটিকা।
১৬	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্তৃক ঠিকানা: বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট, আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
১৭	দরপত্র দাখিল বিস্তারণ: লাইব্রেরী শাখা, কক্ষ নং- ১০৫ (শীচ তলা), আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
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২০	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর কর্তৃক ঠিকানা: বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট, আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
২১	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর কর্তৃক ঠিকানা: বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট, আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
২২	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর কর্তৃক ঠিকানা: বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট, আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
২৩	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর কর্তৃক ঠিকানা: বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট, আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
২৪	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর কর্তৃক ঠিকানা: বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট, আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
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২৬	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর কর্তৃক ঠিকানা: বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট, আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।
২৭	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর কর্তৃক ঠিকানা: বাংলাদেশ সুপ্রীম কোর্ট, আপীল বিভাগ, ঢাকা।

(এম. রিসাল ইসলাম)
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তারিখ: ০৫/০৫/২০২৬খ্রিঃ

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ID	Reference	Title of Works
1270161	27.21.0000.727.07.002.26.892; Date: 03/05/2026	Procurement of electrical goods for different grid substation under GMD, Power Grid, Rangpur.

আগ্রহী টিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্র অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।
মোঃ শাহজাহান আলী
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, জিএমডি, রংপুর

খুলনা এসেনসিয়াল ল্যাটেক্স প্রান্ট
(ইউসিএল এর একটি অঙ্গ প্রতিষ্ঠান)
মাগুরা, গিলাতলা, খুলনা।
Ammonia Exhaust System তৈরী করার জন্য দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

খুলনা এসেনসিয়াল ল্যাটেক্স প্রান্ট, মাগুরা, গিলাতলা, খুলনা গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের একমাত্র বৃহত্তম প্রকৌশলী প্রতিষ্ঠান। প্রতিষ্ঠানের ডিপিং মেশিনের জন্য Ammonia Exhaust System তৈরী করার জন্য দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। বিস্তারিত নিয়মাবলীসহ দরপত্রের সিডিউল খুলনা এসেনসিয়াল ল্যাটেক্স প্রান্ট মাগুরা, গিলাতলা, খুলনা এর হিসাব বিভাগ এর ক্যাশ শাখা হতে নগদ ৭৫০/= (সাতশত পঞ্চাশ) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য) মুদ্রা আগামী ১৯/০৫/২০২৬ ইং তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে ক্রয় করা যাবে। আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠান সমূহকে আগামী ২০/০৫/২০২৬ ইং তারিখ বেলা ০৩:০০ ঘটিকা মধ্যে খুলনা এসেনসিয়াল ল্যাটেক্স প্রান্ট এর ত্রয় বিভাগে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার বাস্তব সিডিউল দাখিল করতে হবে। যা ঐদিন বেলা ০৩:০১ই ঘটিকা থেকে হবে। কেইএলপি কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন প্রকার কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন অথবা সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার পূর্ণ ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন। উল্লেখ্য যে, দরপত্র দাখিলের দিন কোন প্রকার দরপত্র বিক্রয় করা হবে না।

ইন-চার্জ, ক্রয় বিভাগ
পক্ষে, ডিজিএম প্রান্ট (সেটি দায়িত্ব)

Family Card to cost Tk 1,34,000cr

from page 14
Development partners, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, have advised preparing the safety net budget in a more structured manner.

The main objective of the Family Card programme will be to ensure that assistance reaches genuine beneficiaries and that the same person does not receive benefits from multiple programmes, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the WB's Dhaka office.

For this, an effective database will be required, containing the names, addresses and contact information of beneficiaries.

"Running different social safety net programmes separately is costly and complex. Therefore, the government may gradually move towards integrating these programmes. The proposed Family Card scheme could serve as an alternative to existing cash assistance and food-based transfer programmes."

However, the biggest challenge will be coordination among ministries, he said.

At present, social protection programmes are run under multiple ministries, including Social Welfare, Labour, Health, Education, and Women and Children Affairs.

While the Family Card programme logically

falls under the social welfare ministry, the other ministries may be reluctant to give up their programmes, arguing that existing beneficiaries could be deprived.

To make such reforms effective, clear directives will be needed from the highest levels of government.

The Family Card programme must be integrated with the existing social safety net system, said Sayema Haque Bidisha, a professor at the University of Dhaka's economics department.

Before launching any new programme, both the existing safety net schemes and the Family Card system should be considered

together, she said, citing the holistic approach used for the rollout of the National Social Security Strategy.

But one of the biggest problems in the current social safety net sector is inclusion and exclusion errors: genuine beneficiaries are often left out, while some individuals receive multiple benefits, she said.

When new programmes are introduced, it is often seen that the intended target groups do not receive support. Instead, those already covered by various programmes end up receiving additional benefits.

She stressed the need for a comprehensive mapping based on national ID (NID) to identify who is covered under which social safety net programme.

The current criteria for selecting beneficiaries need to be reconsidered as much of the data and indicators used in social safety net programmes still rely on outdated information.

As a result, many people are being excluded, even though their actual poverty situation is worse than the previously defined criteria.

"Those we consider to be below the poverty line and plan to support are, in reality, often in an even worse condition. But those calculations have not yet been updated. This is a fundamental problem."

Troops to head to barracks from early June

FROM PAGE 2
The nearly two-and-a-half-hour meeting discussed the complete withdrawal of armed forces personnel from the field level, overall law and order, extortion incidents across the country, and changes to police uniforms, among other issues.

Following the escalation of unrest during the 2024 quota reform protests by students, the then Awami League government imposed a curfew on July 19 and deployed the armed

forces personnel.

After the government was ousted on August 5 that year amid mass uprising, the police force became destabilised, prompting the armed forces to remain deployed on the field. On September 17, the interim government granted them magistracy powers.

According to sources, around 17,000 armed forces personnel are still deployed across the country. The defence ministry earlier requested the home

ministry on several occasions to complete the withdrawal, citing fatigue among personnel due to prolonged deployment and the need for rest.

In this context, the core committee meeting decided on the final withdrawal of the armed forces from field duties, sources present at the meeting said. The home ministry will now formally communicate the decision with the defence ministry through an official letter.

Teen shooter kills two at Brazil school

AFP, Rio de Janeiro

A teenager shot dead two staff members and injured two other people, including an 11-year-old girl, on Tuesday in the latest school shooting to rock Brazil.

A 13-year-old boy was arrested over the attack at Sao Jose Institute, a junior high school in Rio Branco, capital of northwestern Acre state, the local government said.

PRICE SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Bank Asia

This is for information of all concerned that the Board of Directors of Bank Asia PLC., in its 584th meeting held on May 06, 2026 at 3:00 p.m. at Bank Asia Tower, 32 & 34 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215, has approved the issuance of **Green Sustainable Subordinated Bond of BDT 10,000 Million** (Ten Thousand Million Taka). The proposed Green Sustainable Subordinated Bond will be Non-Convertible, Unsecured, Fully Redeemable, Coupon-Bearing, Floating Rate for a tenure of 07 years through private placement.

The proceeds will be utilized to strengthen the Bank's Tier-II regulatory capital in line with Basel III requirements and to finance eligible green and sustainable initiatives, subject to approval of the relevant regulatory authorities.

Bank Asia PLC.

Dated: Dhaka
06 May 2026

Corporate Office, Bank Asia Tower
32 & 34, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue
Karwan Bazar, Dhaka-1215



ESSENTIAL DRUGS COMPANY LIMITED

395-397, Tejgaon Industrial Area
Dhaka-1208

INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE (Short date)

EDCL invite an International Press Tender for Importation of following Raw Material for Male Latex Condom of Khulna Essential Latex Plant (KELP) on C&F @ Chittagong By Air & Chittagong by Sea basis :-

S.L No.	Tender No. & Date	Name of the Item	Cost of Tender Schedule
01.	IMP/RM/KELP/13/2025-2026 Dated : 06/05/2026	Raw Material for Male Latex Condom (Hero & Nirapad): 01. Silicone Oil (Details as per Tender Schedule)	Tk. 1500.00/set Equivalent to US\$ 12.00 Non-refundable

Tender schedule will be sold from the Accounts Department of **Essential Drugs Company Limited**, Dhaka on payment as stated above during office hours on all working days (except Friday, Saturday and Govt. Holidays). No tender schedule will be sold on the opening date of the tender.

The tender will be accompanied by an amount of Earnest Money @ 1% of that quoted value in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order from any Schedule Bank of Bangladesh in favour of "Essential Drugs Company Limited" without which the tender will be considered as non-responsive. The interested bidder may drop their offer along with the relevant papers to the tender box kept at the purchase department of EDCL, Dhaka till 11.00 AM on 24.05.2026, Which will be opened on same day at 11.15 AM in presence of the bidders/ their representatives (If any).

Essential Drugs Company Limited authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

N.B: This Information is also available at our Website : www.edcl.gov.bd

General Manager (CC).
Procurement Deptt.
For : Managing Director.

Size- 6" x 4 col.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Principal
Sylhet Polytechnic Institute, Sylhet-3100
Website: <https://sylhet.polytech.gov.bd>
E-mail: principalsylhetpoly@gmail.com

Memo No. 57.03.9131.349.04.007.0001.25-101

Date: 06/05/2026

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender Notice will be invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for following procurement.

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Package description	Tender publication date and time	Tender closing & opening date and time	Remarks
1269938	GOB-SPI-2024-25-GD-22	Supply of Engineering & Equipment - Interactive Flat Panel for Classroom & Lab/Shop (4112304)	07-May-2026 12:00:00	17-May-2026 12:00:00	

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal; and offline or hard copies will not be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

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

Mohammed Rehan Uddin
Principal (Additional Charge)
Phone: 02-9966-32529

GD-1041

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Narsingdi

Nezarat Section

www.narsingdi.gov.bd

No. 05.30.6800.000.106.59.0001.26-216

Date: 05/05/2026

Invitation for Tender

e-Tender Notice No. 01/2025-2026

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

SI No.	Package No.	Name of the tender	Publication date	Tender last selling date	Tender closing & opening date and time	Tender ID	Procurement method
1	DC_Nsd Computer Consumables 2025-26 GRI	Computer Consumables: Toner, Ink, Duplicating Machine Master Roll etc.	05/05/2026	17/05/2026	17/05/2026 14:30	1271169	OTM
2	DC Nsd Printing and Binding 2025-26 GR2	Printing and Binding: Bag, Wrapping Paper, Tissue, Register etc.	05/05/2026	17/05/2026	17/05/2026 14:30	1268061	OTM
3	DC Nsd Other Stationery 2025-26 GR3	Other Stationery: Envelope, Stapler Machine, Calculator, Clip Board, Pen, Program Stand, Toilet Cleaner, Offset Paper, Spoon, Acrosol etc.	05/05/2026	17/05/2026	17/05/2026 14:30	1268728	OTM
4	DC_Nsd Electrical Equipment 2025-26 GR5	Electrical Equipment: Circuit Breaker, Distribution Panel Board, Bulb, Light, Socket etc.	05/05/2026	17/05/2026	17/05/2026 14:30	1268870	OTM
5	DC Nsd Office Equipment 2025-26 GR6	Office Equipment: Sound system-Central Unit, Chairman Unit, Delegate Unit, Microphone etc.	05/05/2026	17/05/2026	17/05/2026 14:30	1269175	OTM
6	DC_Nsd Furniture 2025-26 GR7	Furniture: Table, Chair, Coat Hanger, Sofa Set, File Cabinet, Computer Table, Office Locker etc.	05/05/2026	17/05/2026	17/05/2026 14:30	1269195	OTM

This is an online tender, 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 National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches.

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

Signed
Israt Jahan Keya
Deputy Commissioner
Narsingdi
Phone: +880224452500
Fax: +880224454433
Email: dcnarsingdi@mopa.gov.bd

GD-1042

ACHIEVING EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW IN BANGLADESH

An Assessment of the Law from a Gender Perspective



The Daily Star



A roundtable was organized on March 9, 2026, by UN Women in partnership with The Daily Star, with support from the European Union. The event marked the launch of a report providing a timely and comprehensive gender-based analysis of Bangladesh's legal framework, identifying gaps, highlighting discriminatory provisions, and proposing actionable recommendations. Here is a summary of that discussion.



GITANJALI SINGH
Representative
UN Women
Bangladesh

The UN Women report is a timely contribution to advancing gender equality and justice in Bangladesh. Despite the promise of equality enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW and the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the reality for many women and girls remains starkly different. Across the most fundamental aspects of life – work and income, family and property, mobility, safety and security – women continue to face systemic disadvantage. Harmful social norms persist, reinforcing structural barriers to equal justice. There has been progress, and it deserves recognition. Discriminatory provisions in the Evidence (Amendment) Act 2022 have been repealed. Amendments to the Domestic Violence Act, 2010, are underway. Most recently, the Interim Government's approval of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace and Educational Institutions Ordinance 2026 marks an important step forward – even as we await the formal enactment. A coordinated, whole-of-society approach is essential to translate legal reforms into real change for women in Bangladesh. As we mark International Women's Day and the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), we are reminded that equality requires more than commitments; it requires enforcement, accountability, and transformation.



ENRICO LORENZON
First Secretary
Head of Inclusive
Governance

Delegation of the European Union to Bangladesh
Equality before the law remains a fundamental principle essential to human dignity, democratic governance, and sustainable development. In Bangladesh, this principle is embedded in the Constitution and reinforced through international commitments such as The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet legal guarantees must translate into real and accessible justice. A right recognised in law must also be real in practice. It must be accessible, enforceable, and enjoyed equally by all. The UN Women report offers an evidence-based assessment of 32 laws affecting women's rights across family relations, employment, property, citizenship, and protection from gender-based violence. It identifies 19 laws requiring amendment, highlights outdated provisions, and recommends new measures on sexual harassment prevention, anti-discrimination, and post-divorce maintenance. It also stresses that legislation alone



based violence, labour rights, and family laws. Significant legal gaps are identified, alongside detailed reform proposals. Recommendations include reforming the definition of rape, criminalising the rape of child brides, modernising colonial-era language in sexual offence laws, and introducing explicit provisions on sexual harassment. The study also highlights the need to strengthen procedural protections, particularly for persons with disabilities within the justice system. In labour law, proposed reforms include comprehensive sexual harassment legislation, improved maternity protection, and greater inclusion of the informal sector. Family law reforms address child marriage, post-divorce maintenance, inheritance rights, guardianship, and adoption, while urging gender-neutral marriage registration. The study further calls for reviewing discriminatory provisions in citizenship, trust, and abortion laws, alongside adopting a comprehensive anti-discrimination framework.



SARA HOSSAIN
Honorary Executive
Director
BLAST

The proposal to repeal the Guardians and Wards Act entirely could create serious challenges if no clear replacement is planned. Even an imperfect law allows for progressive interpretation and practical remedies, and focus should be on improving existing codified laws rather than pursuing ambitious but currently unachievable goals like a uniform family code. Recent controversies over second marriages show the need for awareness of legal provisions, as even highly educated individuals misunderstand them. Divorce and maintenance laws remain discriminatory, varying by religion, and reforms pending for decades have yet to be implemented. The Special Marriage Act also requires an amendment to protect religious rights. Maintenance cases, often involving small amounts, need expedited resolution. Effective remedies require awareness, education, and stronger collaboration between courts, alternative dispute mechanisms, and community organisations. Existing laws offer opportunities that must be fully utilised.



MUHAMMAD AMIRUL HAQ TUHIN
Advocate,
Supreme Court of
Bangladesh

The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act is a progressive legislation, yet awareness and practical application remain limited across Bangladesh. In Dhaka, more lawyers are beginning to utilise its provisions, with encouraging cases emerging outside the capital. Remedies under the law include protection orders, compensation, residence, and custody orders. Challenges arise in proving the existence of a family relationship, especially when divorce claims are disputed or improperly documented, limiting access to remedies. Courts show inconsistent recognition of mental and psychological violence, and appellate processes often slow justice, reducing the effectiveness of orders. Low penalties for violations further weaken enforcement, while provisions penalising "unnecessary" claims remain unclear. Broader dissemination and practical guidance are needed to make the law more accessible. Amendments to clarify eligibility, strengthen remedies, and eliminate discriminatory gaps, such as in adultery provisions and post-divorce rights, are essential to ensure meaningful protection for women and children under this Act.



SHARMIN SULTANA MOUSHUMI
Advocate,
Labour Court Bar
Association

The workers from remote areas face unique challenges that existing labour laws often fail to address. Bangladesh's labour legislation primarily covers the formal sector, leaving a vast number of informal workers without legal protection, creating a significant gap. EPZ workers face further restrictions, with limited trade union rights that confine them within rigid frameworks. Maternity leave remains inadequate, with government employees receiving six months while many labourers endure only four months. Sexual harassment complaints in RMG factories frequently go unreported due to social pressures and family constraints, while counselling and support services remain minimal. Legal requirements such as childcare facilities are poorly enforced, often existing only to meet compliance standards rather than genuinely supporting workers. Ensuring a safe, non-discriminatory, and dignified work environment requires practical enforcement of laws, coordination among labour administration, employers, trade unions, civil society, and legal actors, and increasing awareness so that women workers can exercise their rights effectively.



MASUDA REHANA BEGUM
Joint General
Secretary
Bangladesh Mohila
Parishad

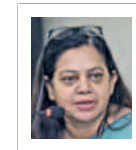
A Uniform Family Code is urgently needed to advance women's rights, strengthen society, and fulfil both national and international commitments. The current system links marriage, birth, and death registrations to religious prescriptions, creating inequality and fragmentation. A Uniform Family Code would transcend religion, allowing all citizens—Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians to marry under the same legal framework, with unified registration of key life events. Maintenance provisions would ensure that either spouse, regardless of gender, can provide support when able, promoting fairness within families. Optional implementation may ease transition, yet the Code addresses structural inequalities and reduces family breakdowns. Achieving such a framework is essential for progressing into the twenty-first century, aligning with social and SDG goals, and creating a society where people are recognised first as human beings, not divided by gender, religion, or custom.



DR UMME SARABAN TAHURA
Deputy Secretary,
Law and Justice Division
Ministry of Law

Under the Legal Aid Act, legal aid is entirely free for persons with disabilities, regardless of income. While general applicants may face income limits, no such restriction applies to persons with disabilities, ensuring broader access to justice. Regarding mediation, recent amendments clarify that some cases require mediation before proceeding, while others—such as domestic violence cases—are exempt. Legal Aid Offices are increasingly functioning as expanded mediation centres, with dedicated spaces for women. Pilot programmes in ten districts have demonstrated very high success rates, particularly where mediation is conducted under judicial oversight, encouraging constructive engagement between parties. This process also helps reduce the burden on courts and expedites dispute resolution. However, significant challenges remain in the implementation of existing laws,

contributing to low conviction rates. Social factors, party engagement, and evidentiary gaps continue to affect accountability and justice delivery.



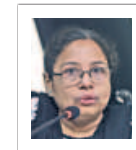
HUMAIRA AZIZ
Gender Programme
Specialist,
UNICEF

UN agencies play a critical role in supporting governments to address gender-based violence affecting women and girls. Through surveys such as UNFPA's Violence Against Women Survey and UNICEF's MICS, broader trends become visible, helping identify progress, gaps, and underlying causes. Such data allow the UN to support governments in understanding issues at a macro level. Another important role lies in providing technical assistance to translate international treaties and standards into practical, country-specific actions through collaboration with governments and civil society. The UN also creates convening spaces to discuss emerging challenges, including technologically facilitated gender-based violence. System strengthening remains central, particularly in improving justice systems and law enforcement to become more women-friendly and gender-responsive. Failure to ensure justice for women carries economic costs, as child marriage and domestic violence limit women's participation in the formal economy. Urgent attention is needed on child marriage laws, inheritance inequality for daughters, and legal protection for vulnerable girls aged 15-19, ensuring justice that empowers autonomy rather than offering remedies alone.



DR. TANIA HAQUE
Professor,
Department of
Women and Gender
Studies
University of Dhaka

The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equality before the law. Yet this homogeneous understanding of equality often overlooks the diverse and unequal realities of citizens. Justice requires more than the existence of laws; it requires recognising differences and addressing structural inequalities. Two critical questions arise: which laws remain gender blind, and why many existing laws continue to be underused or ineffective. In a deeply patriarchal society, social norms frequently override formal legal frameworks. Ensuring equality within difference, therefore, requires an intersectional lens that considers class, religion, social bias, and context. Political will also plays a decisive role, as justice mechanisms can be shaped or influenced by political actors. Several overlooked issues demand attention, including language violence, extramarital relationships, unpaid care work, and the gendered implications of daycare provisions under the Labour Act 2006. Complex legal language and lengthy procedures further limit accessibility. Strengthening justice, therefore, requires both legal reform and a more inclusive, intersectional approach to implementation.



SALMA MAHBUB
General Secretary
Bangladesh Society
for the Change and
Advocacy Nexus
(B-SCAN)

It is concerning that the issue of disability was overlooked in discussions on discrimination. Promoting judicial awareness and access to legal processes among persons with disabilities remains essential. Women with disabilities experience multiple layers of deprivation and often remain excluded from legal protection. Violence against them frequently occurs within families or among close community members, while

influential actors may discourage them from seeking justice. Although persons with disabilities were mentioned in parts of the discussion, the recommendations did not adequately address their needs. Access to justice also requires supportive infrastructure, accessible information, and institutional assistance, which are often absent in courts. Repeated legal procedures create further barriers, particularly for those at the grassroots level. Government support, including financial assistance, would help address these challenges. Current legislation, including the Disability Rights and Protection Act, fails to explicitly recognise women and girls with disabilities, highlighting the need for reforms that acknowledge their specific vulnerabilities and rights.



SEEMA ZAHUR
Vice President
Bangladesh National
Women Lawyers'
Association (BNWLA)

Community legal aid clinics have long supported women and children, particularly in remote areas, offering accessible spaces where disputes can often be resolved through discussion and mediation. The Legal Aid Act 2025, however, changes who can provide legal aid, raising concerns about the role of clinics and trained paralegals where lawyers' associations are absent. Many women seek mediation to preserve family relationships, yet direct referral to courts under the Domestic Violence Act can accelerate divorce. Emergencies, such as shelter at night, are complicated by requirements for written documentation and court orders. The absence of mediation in the Domestic Violence Prevention Act further hinders resolution. Clinics also assist trafficking victims and migrant workers, highlighting their broader role. Complex divorce procedures, harmful legal language, and limited recognition of third gender needs reveal persistent gaps, emphasising the need for careful reform and proper implementation of legal aid services.



TANJIM FERDOUS
Head of Strategic
Partnerships
The Daily Star
(Moderator of the
Session)

The principle of equality before the law is fundamental, yet its implementation in Bangladesh requires ongoing review and reform. Existing laws show gaps and discriminatory provisions, particularly affecting women's rights. Strengthening protections against gender-based violence, reforming family, marriage, and inheritance laws, and ensuring workplace rights and maternity protections remain urgent priorities. Legal reform must be accompanied by effective implementation, awareness, and accountability to transform laws into lived realities. This roundtable provided space to reflect, discuss, and commit to action, ensuring that equality before the law becomes a tangible reality for every woman and girl in Bangladesh.

ATM MORSHED,
Lead at Legal Aid and Policy
Advocacy at BRAC;

LAILA JASMIN BANU,
Programme Manager, Delegation of
EU to Bangladesh;

ASMA RUBA,
Project Coordinator at Ain o Salish
Kendra;

RUHI NAZ,
Deputy Director of Research
Initiatives Bangladesh;

FOUZIA KHANDAKER,
Executive Director, Pragroschor,
also spoke at the event.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶▶ Reform family, marriage, and inheritance laws to ensure equality for all women across religious communities.
- ▶▶ Strengthen protections against gender-based violence, including revising rape definitions and criminalising abuse in child marriages.
- ▶▶ Introduce and enforce workplace protections, maternity rights, and inclusion for informal and hazardous sector women workers.
- ▶▶ Ensure legal aid is accessible to persons with disabilities, with adequate infrastructure, information, and financial support.
- ▶▶ Expand mediation services in legal processes to reduce court burdens and preserve family relationships.
- ▶▶ Apply an intersectional lens in law and justice to address structural inequalities and barriers faced by women and girls.
- ▶▶ Promote awareness, accountability, and effective implementation to turn laws into lived realities.

is insufficient; effective institutions, enforcement, and accountability are equally critical. Despite persistent barriers such as discriminatory provisions, weak enforcement, and gender bias, recent international commitments by Bangladesh create an important opportunity for reform and inclusive progress.



DR. TASLIMA YASMIN
Associate Professor,
Department of Law,
University of Dhaka

The report presents a comprehensive review of Bangladesh's legal framework affecting women's rights. The study examines key thematic areas, including gender-

ESSAY

Ghosts in the secretariat: Mapping the Bangladeshi Gothic

NAZMUS SADAT

It is a Tuesday afternoon in Dhaka. Cars are honking, fumes are rising. A banker named Anirban rear-ends another car—typical for the city. Until he steps out. He sees that the other driver has been dead for what seems like days but is still moving. And he wants to talk.

This, we might call, for lack of a better term, the Bangladeshi Gothic. Its haunted spaces look nothing like the crumbling castles of its European ancestors; instead, terror emerges from Dhaka flyovers, government offices, and village lanes. Its protagonists are not knights or clergymen but bankers, doctors, freelance exorcists, and secret state agencies working for the PMO. Its theological ideas are drawn not from folklore alone, but also from scripture and the lived rituals of Islamic practice.

The books discussed in this essay reveal a certain movement taking shape across different settings, tones, and generations. Some are urban thrillers, some domestic hauntings, some rural exorcism tales, and some theological adventures. Yet all ask the same questions: what happens when institutions fail, when justice is delayed, and when the past refuses to remain past?

This literature uses the supernatural to ask unsettling questions about justice, history, and power. It imagines



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bangladeshi writers are shaping something rare: an indigenous occult procedural that treats faith, folklore, and institutional power as moving parts of the same engine. They deploy demons and exorcism not to escape reality, but to argue with it—about justice, history, and who we become when the law fails us.

institutions capable of confronting evil—and in doing so, quietly points to the ones we already live with. These books summon ghosts that carry the weight of 1971, of war criminals who prospered, and of wounds that official narratives failed to close. It creates antiheroes who operate in moral grey zones because easy answers no longer convince us.

Take, for instance, the opening of Aamer Ahmed's novel *Pappinjar* (Batighar Prokashoni, 2019). No single work announces these ambitions more vividly—and it does so in a traffic jam. Horror no longer waits for midnight; it appears in rush hour and demands to be taken seriously in broad daylight. But *Pappinjar* is not alone. Elsewhere, an aristocratic lineage is cursed by an

entity from the Garo Hills—embedding horror within regional history and geography. In another, rural politics are entangled with black magic and vengeful jinns, where power operates as much through the unseen as through the visible. On the surface, these are genre thrills, but beneath them lies something more serious: a deliberate re-situation of the Gothic within distinctly Bangladeshi social and spatial realities. That repositioning—from night to noon, from myth to municipality—signals a literary movement taking shape. Bangladeshi writers are shaping something rare: an indigenous occult procedural that treats faith, folklore, and institutional power as moving parts of the same engine. They deploy demons and exorcism not to escape reality, but to argue with it—about justice, history, and who we become when the law fails us.

Steering away from the traditional crumbling castles, Bangladeshi Gothic has discovered its own architecture of terror, and it looks suspiciously like the government real estate. In *Pappinjar*, Ahmed introduces the Directorate of Special Investigation (DSI)—a secret agency under the Prime Minister's Office tasked with handling, recording and archiving all supernatural phenomena. The DSI maintains archives and library, relic

rooms, and a Medical & Preservation Room. Enchanted artifacts, like the Maddiya min Hattusha dagger or the Goyju Hua (Demon Detection Box), are studied under fluorescent lights for containment, analysis and use. The administrative detail is meticulous: reporting hierarchies, jurisdictional turf wars, etc. It is Marvel's S.H.I.E.L.D. by way of the Bangladesh Secretariat—and we recognise it because we already know the parameters (as well as the failures) of this system. The question here then arises: if an institution must be invented to confront ancient evil, what does that say about the institutions we already possess? In a country where bureaucratic failure is a daily lived experience, watching a fictional agency function smoothly almost seems utopian.

Set against post-1971 Bangladesh (perhaps during the '90s), M J Babu's novel *Djinn* (Grantharajjo Books, 2022) follows Sajed, and his wife Tareen, who adopt a young girl named Mahaa after being unable to conceive—an intimate decision that soon draws them into an unexpected and supernatural journey alongside Muazzin Hafej. As the supernatural takes hold, beliefs are tested, and a cryptic adventure unfolds. Mohaimin Arefin's novel *Porompura* (Iha Prokash, 2022) turns horror domestic: a wealthy family's

mansion becomes a prison of inherited guilt, with curses passed down like heirlooms and death arriving before every wedding. With the last heir targeted to end the Rahman family's legacy, the question lingers: will they break the curse, or become its next victims? Nabiha Nupur's novella "Ekhan Bhoor Tarano Hoy" (Satirho Prokashona, 2025), moves terror to rural Bangladesh, where black magic becomes social technology—petty, vindictive, transactional. The village becomes a haunted house, every relationship potentially a trap.

These are just a few. What unites these settings and creates one of the characteristics of Bangladeshi Gothic is their ordinariness—the horror emerges from traffic jams, tenancy disputes, fluorescent offices, and villages thick with rumor. This grounding makes the supernatural incursion more threatening. When the uncanny rubs shoulders with everyday life, it stops being a foreign concept that we find in western literature.

Then there is theology. Much mainstream western horror rarely attempts the meticulous classification of the demon or djinn. But M J Babu through his novel *Djinn*, has seemed to create a theological textbook disguised as a thriller. Here, we learn about ifrit

and marid djinns, their habitats and relationships with humans, and the ethics of exorcism. The book delves into origins, creation theories, types of black magic, signs of possession, and methods and precise Quranic verses required for protection against the dark arts. These elements are built into the narrative framework in an engaging way. Many Bangladeshi readers approach these books with a lived, intimate relationship with the spiritual world—djinn are not merely metaphors but familiar beings named in the scriptures, discussed in sermons, and whispered about in family stories. "Ekhan Bhoor Tarano Hoy" similarly portrays ruqyah (Islamic exorcism) with clear research, blending ancient wisdom with contemporary storytelling. The rituals feel real because they are: drawn from practices still observed, prayers still recited. This theological sophistication distinguishes the genre from mere entertainment.

This is an excerpt. Read the full essay on *The Daily Star* and *Star Books and Literature* websites.

Nazmus Sadat is a Strategic Business Leader from the Bangladeshi corporate sector with extensive experience in key industries—including knitwear (RMG), home textiles, and footwear. He can be reached at nazmus.sadat@hotmail.com.

INTERVIEW

Faith, patriarchy, and resistance: Banu Mushtaq on 'Heart Lamp'

MOHAMMED FARHAN

Banu Mushtaq, an Indian writer who writes in Kannada language, was awarded the International Booker Prize in 2025 for "exploring the lives of those often on the periphery of society" in her collection of short stories, *Heart Lamp* (And Other Stories Publishing, 2024). The collection dominantly focuses on the havoc wrought on Muslim women by the Muslim men and their ensuing plight. Taking a dig in *Granta* magazine at what he sees as the lopsided portrayal in these stories, Thomas Meaney writes: "*Heart Lamp* could have been titled 'The Bad Deeds of Muslim Me'." However, some of the stories realistically flag the fraught questions about the ingrained issues of marriage, religion, and ignorance in the Muslim community. In this interview, Mushtaq talks about the Booker-winning collection and her journey of becoming a novelist.

When did it first strike that you should write fiction, and what was the first piece you wrote?

The realisation that I should write fiction did not happen as a sudden flash. It arrived quietly, like a whisper that insists on being heard. The very first piece I wrote was a short story titled "Naanu Aparadhiye?" ("Am I the Culprit?"). It was published in 1974 in the weekly supplement *Prajamata*, a reputed Kannada literary platform at the time.

When I wrote that story, I was moved by a single idea, just one burning question in my heart. I wrote it down and then,



ILLUSTRATION: MAHMUDA EMDAD

strangely, my mind became completely blank afterwards. The story simply rested with me for a long time; I did not know what to do next. At that stage, I had no literary circle, no mentor, not even the vocabulary to understand something as simple as the instruction to "write only on one side of the paper." There was no one to guide or correct me.

Later, during a personal visit to Bengaluru, I happened to notice the nameplate of the editor of *Prajamata* while walking on the street. With a mix of innocence and courage, I stepped in, introduced myself as a writer, and asked him how one should send stories for

publication. He was amused, but he guided me with remarkable kindness. I rewrote my story exactly as instructed and sent it. Then began the long wait—one year of checking, hoping, and slowly letting the anticipation settle in my heart.

So, my beginning in literature was not just about writing, it was about patience, innocence, learning without guidance, and holding on to a quiet belief that words find their way, even when life takes us elsewhere.

What would you like to say on the affinity between religion and patriarchy as it subtly reflects in the character of Abdul Khader in the story "Fire Rain"?

When we speak of religion and patriarchy, we are not speaking of faith itself, but of the structures that have settled around faith. In "Fire Rain", the character of Abdul Khader, the mutawalli of the mosque, precisely carries this layered complexity. The mosque is a sacred space, but even sacred spaces are not immune to the social hierarchies that shape our everyday lives.

What I try to express, in my writing and in my lived politics, is that patriarchy is not a single-faced enemy. It operates through many doorways, religion, domestic relationships, caste power, media influence, and political authority. It can look respectable, even pious. It can speak softly, quote scripture, and claim moral purpose, yet it works to diminish women's agency, intellect, and presence.

So, when we see Abdul Khader asserting authority in the name of religious propriety, what truly speaks is not Islam, but patriarchy wearing a religious mask. The mosque, therefore, is not an exception. No institution—religious or secular—is free from these power dynamics unless we consciously interrogate them. The struggle, then, is to reclaim these spaces, so that faith does not become a fortress of control but remains what it is meant to be: a refuge of justice, compassion, and dignity for all.

Suffering of children in a fraught marriage is another often ignored problem that you have explored in the story "Heart Lamp", where the character

of Salma embodies the suffering of a child. How do you look at this issue?

In our society, child rights and child psychology are among the most ignored aspects. We often assume that children are mere spectators to the conflicts unfolding around them, as though they are too young to absorb emotional harm. But children do not just witness pain, they inhale it. In a fraught marriage, the child becomes the silent corridor where every unspoken argument echoes.

In "Heart Lamp", Salma is not merely a character; she is a metaphor for all those young hearts who are forced to grow up in the shadow of adult failures. Her silence is not emptiness; it is a language of deep wounds. I wanted to show that when a family fractures, it is the child who gathers the broken pieces with bare hands.

As a society, we talk about children as the future, but we rarely protect their present. We forget to ask what the quarrels, the neglect, the emotional storms are doing to their sense of self. Children deserve dignity, emotional safety, and the right to be heard.

This is an excerpt. Read the full interview in *The Daily Star* and *Star Books and Literature* websites.

Dr Mohammed Farhan teaches English at Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He often writes on books, and interviews authors for various reputed English dailies including The Hindu, Hindustan Times, and Hindu Business Line, among others.

Butler's charges fly for Thailand with eyes on SAFF defence

STAR SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh head coach Peter Butler on Wednesday announced a 23-member final squad for the upcoming SAFF Women's Championship, set to be held in India from May 25. Two-time defending champions Bangladesh will undergo a 15-day preparation camp in Thailand, leaving for Bangkok today before flying to Goa on May 21.

The Bangladesh team will play two practice matches in Thailand – against top-tier club Kasem Bundit University FC on May 10 and second-tier outfit Bangkok Sports School on May 17.

Butler and his charges will begin their South Asian campaign against Maldives on May 28 before facing five-time champions and hosts India on May 31.

SQUAD

Rupna, Mili, Swarna, Halima, Shiuli, Afeida (captain), Surma, Kohati, Suravi Akter, Shamsunnahar Sr, Unnati, Arpita, Momita, Maria, Monika, Ripa, Ritu Porna, Umehla, Sagorika, Tohura, Anika Rania, Prity, Shamsunnahar Jr

DROPPED

Sapna Rani, Munki Akter, Sinha Jahan, Alpi Akter, Airin Khatun, Most Sultana

NEW FACES

Arpita Biswas and Momita Khatun

"Nabiran has an ACL injury. She wants to play, but she's not 100 percent fit. Sapna and Munki had poor performances and were not performing at the desired level. Hopefully, one day they will realise that I'm doing them a favour. So they are being left out of the group. They're not training with the group for valid reasons -- poor performance."

Bangladesh coach Peter Butler



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh's veteran wicketkeeper-batter Mushfiqur Rahim, alongside left-arm spinner Taijul Islam, looks skyward during their practice session in Mirpur yesterday -- perhaps gauging whether overcast conditions could influence their upcoming two-match Test series against Pakistan. Rain played a part in the Tigers' last white-ball series against New Zealand. And similar conditions could turn the Pakistan series into a battle of pace, bounce, and swing -- factors Bangladesh exploited to beat the same opponents in Rawalpindi in a Test series in 2024. Part of the World Test Championship, the Pakistan series begins tomorrow, with the first Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Will Tigers revisit Pindi template in Mirpur?

SPORTS REPORTER

Nahid Rana appeared at the Mirpur centre wickets near the evening yesterday and visualised bowling on the green track, ahead of his team's upcoming two Tests against Pakistan. Visualisation has sort of become a habit for the Bangladesh speedster, and he would not doubt have those memories from Rawalpindi in 2024, when Bangladesh put down a statement with their pace attack during a 2-0 series win.

The surface may not remain as green on Friday once trimmed, but it is evident that the home side are banking on their primary strength: pace.

Before that Rawalpindi Tests, Bangladesh's pace attack had a cumulative strike rate of 98.3 against Pakistan. During the series, that improved sharply to 48.4, with Hasan Mahmud, Taskin Ahmed, Rana and Shoriful Islam sharing 21 wickets. In the second innings of the second Test, Rana, Hasan and Taskin combined for all 10 wickets -- a first in Bangladesh's Test history.

That series win became a template, as Bangladesh had prepared wickets with a little bounce and pace in the most recent ODI series against Pakistan at home. At the beginning of this cycle, the Tigers are eager

to get wins under their belt and are going for the tried and tested.

With pace being pitted against pace, just like in Rawalpindi, Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons was asked which pace unit would fare better.

"I think we have two good fast bowling units... and two good spinning units... it's about who take hold of the important moments," Simmons said at yesterday's press conference, warning that on a "good cricket pitch", it is the batters who will have to "bat long and get big scores."

"We've got to put in place how we bat against them. You want to be higher in the rankings, so you have to play against all these top-class bowlers."

The former West Indies allrounder tried to downplay the effect of that last Test series in Rawalpindi. "It doesn't matter what happened then.

"It doesn't matter what happened then [in Rawalpindi]. Yes, you keep it in your mind, it gives you a boost inside that you won the last game, but it's a new game, it's a new place."

Bangladesh head coach Phil Simmons



Yes, you keep it in your mind, it gives you a boost inside that you won the last game, but it's a new game, it's a new place."

There are suggestions that the visitors may opt for a lone spinner in Noman Ali for the Mirpur Test due to the sporting conditions in store, which is usually not the norm in Bangladesh.

Pakistan pace spearhead Shaheen Afridi said the Pakistan bowling unit will be up to the challenge.

"Bangladesh have always prepared spin tracks at home in the past. Home teams always utilise their own conditions," Shaheen said.

"We also used home conditions for our spinners because visiting teams struggled against spin. Now, the track is green. Our bowlers are ready for the challenge. We know how to use these conditions to take wickets and win games for Pakistan."

BCB sets councillor nomination deadline

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) ad hoc committee decided to invite nominations for 192 councillors from various associations, clubs, and organisations for the upcoming elections, with a deadline set for May 16.

The decision was taken during the fourth meeting of the BCB ad hoc committee, held at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

"... the names of 192 councillors will be invited under three categories, pursuant to Article 12.7 of the BCB Constitution," a press release said.

In the last BCB elections, held on October 6 last year, a total of 192 councillors from three different categories were enlisted in the final voters' list. Among them, 71 were from regional and district cricket associations, 76 from the club category, and 55 from other organisations.

However, that election was marred by controversies, leading to an investigation into alleged irregularities. Following the probe, the National Sports Council (NSC) dissolved the Aminul Islam Bulbul-led board on April 7, subsequently appointing an 11-member ad hoc committee headed by Tamim Iqbal.

Additionally, the board will form a committee to assess applicants for 64 district coach positions through theoretical and practical tests. It also approved a three-month contract extension for match referees and umpires whose terms ended on April 30.



Players and officials of Chattogram City FC, champions of Bangladesh Championship League, celebrate their title following the last match at the Bishreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday. The port city outfit lost the last match 2-0 against runners-up City Club, yet finished six points ahead with a total of 42 points in 18 matches. Both clubs will be eligible to play in the Bangladesh Football League -- the top-tier professional league, next season.

PHOTO: BFF

Uzbekistan first to unveil provisional WC squad

AGENCIES

Uzbekistan became the first side to announce a preliminary squad for the upcoming FIFA World Cup 2026 -- set to be held across the USA, Mexico, and Canada from June 11.

Preparations for their historic debut will ramp up with a three-week training camp in Tashkent from May 6-26, with head coach Fabio Cannavaro naming a 40-man squad. The camp will include a series of closed-door friendlies against domestic Super League clubs. They will announce the final 26-man squad on June 2.

35 DAYS TO GO



Germans lead the final race

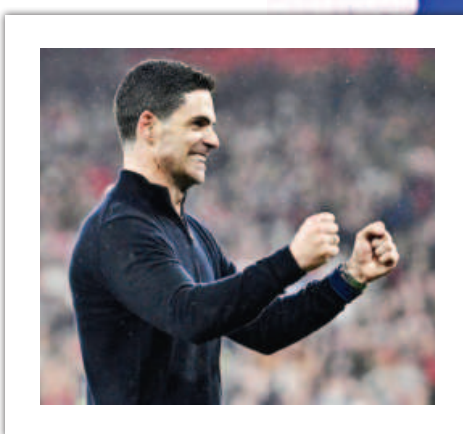
The eight teams that have won the World Cup have collectively appeared in 35 finals. Germany lead with eight final appearances, followed by Brazil with seven. Italy and Argentina have each played six finals. France have appeared four times, Uruguay twice, while England and Spain have reached the final once each.

**Visit The Daily Star's website to also read: 'Pele's dummy: The art of deception'

Arsenal end 20-year wait

STAR SPORTS DESK

Bukayo Saka's close-range finish in the first half of the second leg of their semifinal against Atletico Madrid sealed a 1-0 win on the night (2-1 on aggregate), sending Arsenal into the Champions League final for the first time in 20 years on Tuesday. The moment sparked wild celebrations at the Emirates Stadium among players, fans, and even coach Mikel Arteta -- a scene that underlined what it meant for the Gunners. Leading the Premier League title race, Arsenal now stand on the brink of a prestigious double: domestic glory and European supremacy.



** The showpiece in Budapest on May 30 will be only the second Champions League final in Arsenal's history; their previous appearance ended in a 2-1 defeat to Barcelona in 2006.

** The 20-year gap between Arsenal's two finals is the longest by any team in the European Cup/Champions League since Atletico Madrid (40 years, 2014), and the longest by an English side since Liverpool (2005).

** Tuesday marked Arsenal's 225th match in the European Cup/Champions League -- more than any club yet to win the trophy, ahead of Atletico Madrid (192).

** Of the 44 instances of teams playing 14 or more matches in a single Champions League campaign, Arsenal are the only side to remain unbeaten through their first 14 games.



PHOTO: ARSENAL

USF to confer posthumous doctorates on Limon, Bristy

Bristy's body to reach Dhaka on May 9



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University of South Florida (USF) has decided to award posthumous doctoral degrees to Zamil Ahmed Limon and Nahida Sultana Bristy, the two Bangladeshi PhD students who were brutally killed by Limon's roommate in Florida.

The decision will be formalised during the university's spring convocation on May 8, according to a Facebook post by Golam Mortuza, press minister at the Bangladesh Embassy in the United States.

Citing an official communication
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A local influential group is illegally trading sand after occupying a portion of the Bangshi river in the Nayarhat area of Savar, on the outskirts of Dhaka. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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Dhaka seeks Beijing's support in Teesta project

China FM says Sino-Bangla ties don't target any third party

AGENCIES

Bangladesh yesterday formally sought China's involvement and support in the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project (TRCMRP) as the two countries reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening their comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, reports BSS.

The issue came up during a bilateral meeting between Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, according to a joint press release issued after the meeting.

Khalilur travelled to China on a three-day visit at Wang's invitation, marking his first official trip since assuming office. He arrived on May 5.

During the meeting, the two sides held in depth discussions on bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest, reached broad consensus, and reaffirmed their firm commitment to supporting each other's core interests and addressing major concerns.

Family Card to cost Tk 1,34,000cr over four years

Govt plans to include 2cr families

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The social welfare ministry has drawn up an ambitious plan to implement the Family Card programme, a major electoral pledge of the new government, involving an outlay of Tk 1,34,000 crore over four years.

As per the plan, 2 crore families would be brought under the Family Card scheme within four years by surveying 4.1 crore households. To run the programme, the ministry has proposed recruiting 4,061 additional staff and appointing two social workers in each union.

For fiscal 2026-27, the ministry plans to distribute 41 lakh Family Cards and has sought Tk 13,740 crore.

At a meeting chaired by the finance minister on April 28, concerns were raised about distributing 41 lakh Family Cards in the upcoming fiscal year before preparations are complete.

Pilot testing of 35,000 cardholders revealed anomalies of up to 18.1 percent. Beneficiaries of TCB smart cards, the Food-Friendly programme, or the Vulnerable Women Benefit scheme are not eligible for Family Cards, yet some were found among pilot beneficiaries.

Feedback on the social welfare ministry's plan is expected in today's meeting of the cabinet committee on social safety net.

The committee will also decide whether to include five other electoral pledges – monthly honorariums for families of martyrs and the injured in the July uprising, Farmers' Card, allowances for mosque and other religious institution workers, canal excavation, and tree plantation programmes – in social safety net programmes.

However, questions have been raised about whether canal excavation and tree plantation, both development projects, should fall under social security.

Currently, the social security budget covers 95 programmes, of which 39 are identified as pro-poor, benefiting nearly 8 crore people.

About Tk 117,000 crore has been allocated for social net programmes this fiscal year.

Questions remain over whether certain programmes should be included in the safety net budget, with issues such as non-poor beneficiaries and mistargeting persisting.

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New cyber law remains repressive

Say speakers at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The recently passed cyber security bill is still a repressive and vague one, and its use to arrest for social media content is a matter of concern, speakers said yesterday.

A sharp divide exists between the legislative intent of the new cyber law and its practical application by law enforcement, paving the way for widespread abuse, they told a discussion on "Cyber Security Legislation, Freedom of Expression, and Platform

government.

During the discussion, Supreme Court lawyer Priya Ahsan Chowdhury criticised the law for retaining vague provisions such as "spreading chaos" and "spreading anxiety", which are subjectively interpreted and frequently abused.

She pointed out that while non-consensual sharing of intimate images is criminalised under the act, police often discourage or refuse to record complaints from female victims, yet eagerly file random defamation cases.

During the discussion, Supreme Court lawyer Priya Ahsan Chowdhury criticised the law for retaining vague provisions such as "spreading chaos" and "spreading anxiety", which are subjectively interpreted and frequently abused.

Governance in Bangladesh".

The programme was jointly organised by Drik, Nagorik Coalition, and Unesco at Gulshan's Lakeshore Hotel.

Nabila Idris, a member of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, said seven people – ranging from a 16-year-old student to a 35-year-old housewife – were picked up across the country in just 29 days over social media posts.

She noted that while the sections of the law might seem fine on paper, their application is highly problematic, with people being arrested merely for making "distasteful remarks".

The cyber security bill was passed by parliament on April 10, adopting an ordinance issued by the interim

Fahim Mashroor, co-coordinator of the Nagorik Coalition, mentioned that the initial draft of the cyber security ordinance was "very draconian", but it was softened to a "less draconian one" following repeated objections from civil society.

However, Rehan Asif Asad, the prime minister's adviser on posts, telecommunications, and information technology, said that despite reviewing the ordinance multiple times, the government passed it in parliament without changing a single word.

Highlighting the country's cybersecurity landscape, the adviser revealed that during the election period, 60 to 70 percent of total online social traffic in Bangladesh is bot-generated,

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Teacher accused of child rape sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

The madrasa teacher accused in a case for raping and impregnating an 11-year-old girl was sent to jail in Madan Upazila yesterday.

Earlier in the day, a Rapid Action Battalion-14 team detained the accused, Amanullah Mahmudi Sagor, who had been absconding, from Mymensingh's Gouripur.



He was handed over to Madan Police Station in Netrokona in the afternoon. After completing necessary legal procedures, police produced him before the Senior Judicial Magistrate Court in the evening.

The court then rejected his bail petition and ordered that he be sent to jail.

Confirming the matter, Mohammad Tarik Islam, officer-in-charge of Madan Police Station, said, "We have applied for a seven-day remand of the accused. However, the remand

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Urban primary healthcare moves to DGHS

192 facilities to transfer from LGD

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

In a major policy shift, the government has decided to take primary healthcare services in 12 city corporations and 23 municipalities from the Local Government Division and give them to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

While the health ministry is responsible for primary healthcare nationwide, the LGD has been providing the services in the city corporations and the municipalities under the Urban Primary Healthcare Services Delivery Project (UPHCSDP) since 1998.

One of the major challenges in our health service delivery, particularly in urban health, has been governance. The health ministry oversees almost everything except urban health. Bringing this under the ministry would improve coordination and implementation."

Aminul Hasan, member secretary of the UHC Forum

The project was initiated to improve the delivery structure of essential primary healthcare services for urban residents, particularly women, newborns, and children, and to ensure access for the poor.

In a meeting on April 22, the Cabinet Division decided to transfer 192 urban primary healthcare centres under the areas to the health department to enhance coordination and service delivery, according to official documents.

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