



PHOTOS: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Politicians, academics, civil society members and others joined The Daily Star in celebrating its 35th anniversary in Khulna yesterday. They included Khulna-4 BNP MP Azizul Bari Helal and Khulna-2 Jamaat MP Sheikh Zahangir Hossain. Celebrations were held in Dhaka on April 24-25 and in Chattogram on May 2. Held at Khulna Press Club, the event featured a documentary and photo exhibition on the December 18, 2025 mob attack on the paper's Dhaka office. Similar programmes will next be held in Barishal, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Rangpur and Mymensingh.

## UPDF member shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A member of Prosit Khisa led United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) was yesterday shot dead in Sajek union of Baghaichhari upazila in Rangamati.

The incident occurred in the Shuknochori area of Sajek, located on the Marishya Dighinala road. The deceased was identified as Hegera Chakma, 49.

"UPDF member Hegera Chakma alias Tarun and two others spent the night at a house in Shuknochori village. When he was leaving for organisational work at around 5:45am today, terrorists of the UPDF (Democratic), who had been lying in wait, opened fire on him. He died on the spot," said UPDF spokesperson Angya Marma in a statement.

Marma blamed the UPDF Democratic Party for the murder.

However, several leaders of the UPDF Democratic Party were contacted regarding the allegations, but no response was received.

Police recovered the body from the scene; the body was sent to Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital for autopsy, Tofazzal Hossain, the officer-in-charge of Sajek Police Station, told The Daily Star.

"No one has filed any complaint with us yet," he said.

Leaders and activists of UPDF and allied organisations staged protest and blocked the road for an hour at Ujobazar demanding a trial of the killers.

They also announced a half-day blockade on the main road of Sajek Tourism on Monday protesting the murder.

## Imports from US double in Jan-Apr

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Malaysia, which had also signed an ART, declared the deal "null and void" on March 16.

Following the ruling, Trump imposed a 10 percent tariff under the Trade Act of 1974, and raised it to 15 percent the next day.

But on May 7, a specialised federal court in New York ruled the law could only be applied if the US faced "large and serious" balance of payments deficits, which it said was not the case.

Under ART, Bangladesh agreed to remove customs, supplementary, and regulatory duties on about 4,500 US products, one of its largest tariff reduction measures in recent years. Duties on another 2,210 items will be phased out gradually.

In return, the US withdrew retaliatory tariffs on 1,638 Bangladeshi products, including fibres, iron, steel, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and apparel made from US cotton. However, most-favoured-nation (MFN) duties averaging 16-17 percent remain.

The USTR also reduced the reciprocal tariff on Bangladeshi exports further

by one percentage point to 19 percent. Initially, in April last year, the US had announced a 37 percent tariff on imports from Bangladesh, citing trade gap.

Legal formalities for ART implementation are still pending, yet the government has begun commercial commitments outlined in the deal.

Last month, Biman signed a \$3.7 billion agreement with Boeing to purchase 14 aircraft.

From what has been disclosed so far, Bangladesh's gains appear limited, while the US stands to benefit much more, Moinul said.

Besides tariff cuts, the agreement included minimum annual import commitments for agricultural goods, fuel, and industrial raw materials.

"As a result, Bangladesh may have to import certain products even when domestic demand is low or prices are higher, suggesting that Bangladesh's interests received less priority in the agreement," he added.

NBR data show 83 percent of Bangladesh's US import expenditure during January-April was concentrated in 10

products worth Tk 15,884 crore: liquefied natural gas (LNG), liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), soybean, wheat, cotton, iron and steel scrap, soybean oilcake and meal, aircraft engines, brewing waste, and liquefied propane.

LNG topped the list at Tk 4,913 crore, purchased by Petrobangla. LPG followed at Tk 3,105 crore, led by Omera Petroleum (Tk 684 crore), Sun Gas (Tk 507 crore) and United Ayzaz LPG (Tk 442 crore).

Bangladesh had not imported any LNG or LPG from the US a year earlier.

Bangladesh also imported American wheat worth Tk 1,797 crore in the four-month period after no purchase of the grain from the US a year earlier. The DG Food accounted for Tk 1,670 crore of the wheat import.

Imports of US cotton, vital for the garment sector, increased by 44.6 percent year-on-year to Tk 1,080 crore.

Aircraft engine imports also saw one of the sharpest jumps, from Tk 137 crore to Tk 1,852 crore.

However, some major products saw declines.

Soybean oil imports from the US fell to Tk 3,240 crore from Tk 3,329 crore,

while iron and steel scrap imports dropped to Tk 704 crore from Tk 1,462 crore.

Sonargaon Seeds Crushing Mills imported soybean and soybean seeds worth Tk 1,036 crore. Delta Agrofood Industries' imports stood at Tk 867 crore and Jamuna Spacetech Joint Venture Tk 811 crore.

M Masrur Reaz, chairman and CEO of a private think tank Policy Exchange, said, "The US had used higher tariffs as leverage to push countries into trade agreements aimed at increasing American exports."

"As the US is Bangladesh's largest export destination, Dhaka had to assure Washington that those commitments would be implemented, leading to higher imports by both government and private sector entities."

He noted that most imported products were essential commodities, including fuel, wheat, soybean, and aircraft parts. "We previously sourced many of these items from other countries but are now importing them from the US. So, there is undoubtedly an impact of the agreement," he added.

## Volcanic eruption kills three hikers in Indonesia

AFP, North Halmahera

Three hikers — two Singaporeans and a local — died in an eruption Friday of Indonesia's Mount Dukono volcano where they found themselves in a no-go zone, officials said.

The eruption on Halmahera island sent an ash cloud about 10 kilometres (6.2 miles) into the air, with no towns or villages near enough to face any immediate threat.

Twenty hikers were on the slopes when disaster struck, North Halmahera police chief Erlichson Pasariub told reporters at a volcano monitoring station in Mamuya village.

He said nine were from Singapore and the rest Indonesian.

As of Friday evening, 17 climbers — seven of them foreigners — have been found alive, according to the head of local rescue agency Iwan Ramdani.

Rescue efforts have been paused and will resume Saturday, he said.

Tour guide Alex Djangu, who was on the slopes when the eruption happened, said he arrived with a tour group on Thursday and found the volcano acting "a bit strange".

## 2 killed in BSF firing

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Battalion intercepted the group. A scuffle reportedly broke out before BSF personnel fired two rounds of shotgun pellets, the press release said.

The injured were taken to the Bishalgarh hospital in Tripura, India, where they died while undergoing treatment, the BGF said, citing BSF authorities.

Their bodies were handed over to the BGF following a battalion-level flag meeting at the Khimal border area of Kasba in the afternoon.

Lt Col SM Shariful Islam, confirmed the matter, saying the BGF lodged a protest with the BSF over the incident. At Morsalin's home in Dhaj Nagar, his father Hebu Miya said local youths had called his son out on Friday night.

"I demand a proper investigation and justice for my son's killing. He was a college student and was

supposed to sit for his HSC exams this year."

Speaking through tears, Morsalin's mother pleaded for the return of his body.

In Madhupur village, Nobir Hossain's son Tapan said, "My father had been away from home since Friday evening. Later we learnt that he had been killed in BSF firing."

According to rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra, at least 34 Bangladeshis were killed by the BSF in 2025, including 24 in shootings and 10 allegedly due to physical torture. At least 38 others were also injured.

This year, at least five Bangladeshis have been killed by the BSF till yesterday, including three in shootings and two allegedly due to physical torture, while four others were injured.

On April 8, Ali Hossain, 49, was killed in BSF firing along the Dhabalguri border in Patgram, Lalmonirhat.

A day earlier, the BSF had

expressed regret over the shooting and injuring of another Bangladeshi youth, Mizan, in the same border area.

On April 28, Zahed Ur Rahman, the prime minister's information and broadcasting adviser, said border killings have fallen by 75 percent and that the government wants to bring it down to zero, which is possible through diplomatic efforts with neighbouring countries.

On March 1, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said Bangladesh did not want any killings along the border and that India had also expressed sincerity on the issue after the outgoing Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma met him at his office.

Border killings were also among the key issues discussed during Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman's visit to New Delhi last month.

## Iran casts doubt on US peace efforts

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To suspicions about the motivation and seriousness of the American side in the path of diplomacy," he said, according to an Iranian account of the call published by the ISNA news agency.

In an incident on Friday, a US fighter jet fired on and disabled two Iranian-flagged tankers that Washington accused of challenging its naval blockade of Iran's ports.

An Iranian military official told local media the country's navy had responded "to American terrorism with strikes" and that "the clashes have now ceased".

The latest incident came after a previous flare-up overnight Thursday to Friday in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital international sea lane that Iran is seeking to control to extract tolls from foreign vessels and wield economic

leverage over the US and its allies.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio reiterated on Friday that it was "unacceptable" for Tehran to control the key oil route.

Washington has sent Iran, via Pakistani mediators, a proposal to extend the truce in the Gulf to allow for talks on a final settlement of the conflict launched 10 weeks ago with US Israeli strikes on Iran.

## World Cup for the super rich

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fulfilled a lifelong dream by attending four matches live at the venue. He watched Brazil face Switzerland, Spain take on Japan, Argentina's clash against Australia, and Spain's knockout meeting with Morocco.

For the then 42-year-old banker, it was an unforgettable experience. He had bought the four tickets for roughly Tk 1 lakh.

Partha had purchased the tickets through FIFA's online portal and spent 12 days in Doha, staying at a friend's home and relying mostly on public transport, which came free with the Hayya Card — a World Cup document that doubled as an entry permit and provided complimentary access to Qatar's metro and bus services. The card also offered free entry into the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Oman.

Although Partha did not make use of those additional travel opportunities, the World Cup itself proved deeply fulfilling.

"It was a smooth experience, and a gratifying one for me because it was my first time watching World Cup matches live at the venue," Partha fondly reminisced to The Daily Star.

Ever since, Partha, a passionate football fan and travel enthusiast, had eagerly awaited the FIFA World Cup 2026 in the United States, Canada and Mexico — the biggest and supposedly the most inclusive World Cup in history.

Yet, long before the tournament has even kicked off, it has already begun to feel anything but inclusive for ordinary supporters like him.

**LIMITED TICKETS, SOARING PRICES**  
FIFA began selling tickets for

the 104-match tournament through phased online releases from September last year. Demand, however, has vastly outstripped supply, with an estimated 60 million requests expected for around six million tickets.

Like all member associations, the Bangladesh Football Federation received a limited allocation from FIFA — only 330 tickets in total. Bangladesh received a relatively larger share for the group stage and progressively fewer for the knockout rounds, including just 10 tickets for the final.

Ticket prices allocated through BFF ranged from approximately Tk 29,000 to Tk 11.4 lakh, depending on the ticket category. Applications were accepted during a five-day window in January and, according to federation officials, requests were submitted for 498 tickets before 330 allocations were finalised by mid-April.

Partha, however, opted not to apply through the BFF, anticipating a scenario of low supply and high demand. Instead, he once again turned to FIFA's online portal, securing a ticket as early as September last year for the group stage match between Curacao and Ivory Coast, scheduled for June 25 in Philadelphia. The reason Partha chose this match is that it is one of the lower-demand fixtures of the tournament, costing USD 150 (approx. Tk 18,000). His plan was simple: travel to the United States and try to purchase tickets for bigger matches from resellers, regardless of how expensive they became.

But those plans soon unravelled.

**NO VISA GUARANTEE FOR TICKET HOLDERS**

"All my excitement and anticipation turned into disappointment when I was rejected a visa for the USA. I have been to quite a few countries and I couldn't wrap my head around the fact that I was denied a visa for the World Cup, despite having secured a match ticket," the 46-year-old said.

Unlike the Hayya Card system used during Qatar 2022, tickets for the 2026 World Cup do not function as entry permits. At best, they serve only as supporting documents in visa applications.

To make matters worse, the travel restrictions introduced by the Donald Trump administration have added fresh anxiety for supporters from several participating nations. Fans from Ivory Coast, Haiti, Iran and Senegal now face severe restrictions on travelling to the United States unless they already possess valid visas.

For many supporters around the world, the dream of attending football's greatest spectacle increasingly appears dependent not only on luck in the ticket lottery, but also on wealth, nationality and access.

**FIFA'S NEW BUSINESS MODEL**

FIFA is projected to earn around three billion dollars from ticket sales and hospitality during the 2026 World Cup — more than triple the revenue generated from the previous tournament.

While the expanded format partly explains the increase, a major factor has been the introduction of dynamic pricing and an official resale market, both being used in a World Cup for

the first time.

Dynamic pricing, common in North American sports and entertainment, allows ticket prices to fluctuate according to demand. FIFA's official resale platform, meanwhile, permits supporters to sell tickets at prices of their choosing, with FIFA reportedly pocketing 30 percent of every transaction.

The policy has sparked widespread backlash following reports of tickets for the final match being listed on resale sites for USD 2.3 million (approx. Tk 28 crore). This represents a staggering surge from the initial USD 8,680 (Tk 10.6 lakh) price point when sales launched last December. At that time, the lowest category seats were priced at just USD 140 (Tk 17,000).

According to an analysis by The Guardian, even the cheapest seats for this World Cup are roughly six times more expensive than the average lowest-priced tickets at tournaments staged between 2006 and 2022.

Amid severe criticism, FIFA president Gianni Infantino recently defended the pricing model, saying: "We have to look at the market. We are in the market in which entertainment is the most developed in the world. So we have to apply market rates."

Those are not the words football lovers would expect from the head of a non-profit governing body that claims to reinvest its revenues into the development of world football.

And it is not just ticket prices that have spiralled. Reports suggest transport costs around host cities have also surged dramatically. In some cases, round-trip travel to stadiums is expected to

exceed 150 dollars — more than 10 times the usual rates.


In its attempt to establish the World Cup as a premium entertainment product in the American market, FIFA appears to have embraced the harshest realities of the free-market economy, pushing ordinary supporters further away from the game they love.

Yet dissenting voices continue to grow louder. Ex-Liverpool CEO Peter Moore, a man deeply familiar with football's commercial landscape, recently told Al Jazeera: "It's the world's game, but who is this World Cup for if the world can't get in?"

Even Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola lamented the changing nature of football's greatest event.

"Before I remember the World Cup — years, years ago — was like a celebration of the joy of football for the nations going there," Guardiola said recently. "Everyone travelled all around the globe to see your country play. And it was affordable. Now, it's so expensive."

There are increasing fears that the demographic makeup of crowds — particularly in the United States, where 78 of the tournament's 104 matches will be held — could become more corporate and far less socio-economically diverse.



SHAHJALAL ISLAMI BANK PLC.

**SECURED AA+ & ST-1**

Credit Rating-2025	
Long Term Rating	AA+
Short Term Rating	ST-1 (The Highest Rating)
Outlook	Stable

Shahjalal Islami Bank PLC. is pleased to announce that Emerging Credit Rating Ltd. (ECRL) has upgraded the Bank's short-term credit rating to "ST-1" (the highest category) from "ST-2".

The rating was conducted based on audited financial statements up to 31 December 2025 and other relevant information.

The "ST-1" rating signifies the strongest capacity to meet short-term financial obligations in a timely manner, with the lowest expectation of default risk, reflecting the Bank's enhanced liquidity position and financial resilience.

ECRL has also affirmed the Bank's long-term credit rating at "AA+" (Double A Plus) for the fourth consecutive year, denoting a very strong capacity to meet financial commitments with good track record and have no readily apparent weakness. This recognition underscores the Bank's robust financial fundamentals, stable operational performance, and prudent risk management practices.

The upgrade in short-term rating, alongside the continued high long-term rating, highlights the Bank's sustained financial strength, improved liquidity management, and consistent operational excellence.

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