



Farmers drying freshly harvested paddy under an overcast sky in Kishoreganj's Itna upazila yesterday, racing to preserve their crops before the rain returns. After weeks of continuous downpour, they have been working relentlessly to protect their golden harvest, battling both nature and time. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

UK PM defiant amid growing calls to quit

More than 80 MPs call for Starmer to go, over 100 lawmakers back PM; 4 junior ministers resign

AGENCIES

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer battled to remain in his job yesterday, as four junior ministers resigned their posts and dozens of lawmakers called for him to step down in the wake of heavy defeats in local and regional elections.

The results capped a miserable few months for Starmer, who has been under pressure for failing to spur promised economic growth to help Britons suffering with the cost of living.

Criticism of policy U-turns has also been compounded by scandal over his appointment, then sacking, of Peter Mandelson, a former friend of US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, as ambassador to Washington.

But yesterday, more than 100 Labour members of parliament signed a statement backing their leader, highlighting the deep divisions within the beleaguered ruling party.

Several senior ministers also rallied around him after he told them in a crunch meeting that he was getting on with governing the country and dared any leadership hopefuls to challenge him.

As of 6:00pm (1700 GMT), no senior member of Starmer's top team had gone public to demand that the premier quit.

"The Labour Party has a process for challenging a leader and that has not been triggered," Starmer told ministers.

"The country expects us to get on with governing. That is what I am doing and what we must do as a cabinet," he added.

More than 80 of Labour's 403 members of parliament have now called for Starmer to quit immediately or to set out a timetable for his departure.

Miatta Fahnbulleh yesterday became the first junior minister to



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Cops shedding 'muscle force' image: IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police Ali Hossain Fakir has said the police service, once used as a "muscle force" during the Awami League regime, has now managed to restore its own image.

"After 17 long years of being used as a muscle force, the police had become isolated from the public. But we have now managed to regain our image and are gradually restoring discipline within the force," the police chief added.

He made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at the IG's badge, shield parade, and arms and narcotics recovery award ceremony at the Rajarbagh Police Lines ground yesterday on the third day of Police Week 2026.

Regarding the narcotics trade, the IGP described drugs as a major threat to the country's youth and future generations. While the Bangladesh Police is working with "sincerity and professionalism" to tackle the challenge, Fakir issued a stern warning to members of the force over internal complicity.

He made it clear that no member of the force would be spared if found involved in drug consumption or trafficking.

"If allegations of involvement in drug consumption or trade are proven

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ROOPPUR NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Fuel loading done ahead of schedule

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The nuclear fuel loading at unit-1 of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) has been successfully completed.

Rosatom, the main contractor of the plant, confirmed the development via an official press release last night.

According to the statement, 163 fuel assemblies were loaded into the reactor core of unit-1. This is considered one of the most critical stages before the unit begins generating electricity.

The fuel loading process officially began on April 28 and was completed within two weeks.

Alexey Deriy, vice president of Atomstroyexport (the construction authority for RNPP and a subsidiary of Rosatom), said the work was carried out in full compliance with the initial core loading programme, operational regulations, and international nuclear safety standards.

"The next stage includes the installation of the upper reactor unit and the integration of all required in-core instrumentation systems," Deriy said. "Hundreds of additional tests will then be conducted to ensure the reliable and safe operation of all process systems."

According to Deriy, the reactor will soon be brought to its minimum controllable power level, followed by a gradual increase in capacity. These procedures will pave the way for the power startup and trial commercial operation of unit-1.

Soikat Ahmed, the media focal point officer for the plant, noted that while the loading process was originally expected to take one month, its early completion has accelerated the timeline. "If everything proceeds as planned, we expect to generate electricity from the unit by late July or early August."

The plant, Bangladesh's first nuclear facility, is being built with Russian technical and financial assistance. The project features two VVER-1200 reactors with a combined capacity of 2,400MW.



Ataur Rahman (1941-2026)

A towering thespian takes his final bow

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Ataur Rahman, one of the most influential figures in Bangladesh's theatre movement, passed away at the age of 84 following complications from multiple organ failure after a recent fall. He breathed his last at around 11:50 pm on Monday while undergoing treatment at a hospital in the capital. He is survived by his wife Shahida Rahman, daughter Sharmistha Rahman and son Shashwata Rahman.

The news of his passing cast a deep shadow over the country's theatre community. For decades, he was not only regarded as a pioneering force of the stage but also as a quiet mentor whose presence and practice helped shape the artistic imagination of generations of theatre lovers.

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78TH CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

Bangladesh's absence jarring

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ, from Cannes

During a reception at her residence in Dhaka last year, French Ambassador to Bangladesh Marie Masdupuy said, "I hope to see Bangladeshi films here every single year."

The event celebrated Adnan Al Rajeev's Ali being selected for the Short Film Competition at the 78th Cannes Film Festival. While the team tempered expectations, Marie described the nomination itself as a victory.

When "Ali" received a Special Mention, it marked a breakthrough for Bangladeshi cinema. At Cannes, the honour signifies that a film has survived one of the world's toughest selection processes and come within touching distance of the top prize. More importantly, it proved Bangladeshi filmmakers could compete on cinema's biggest stage.

Yet, standing on the Croisette yesterday for the opening of the 79th Cannes Film Festival, that optimism was difficult to sustain. Rather than building on last year's momentum, Bangladesh arrived with almost no institutional presence.

The absence feels particularly striking because this year's Cannes offers a rare opening for emerging film industries. With several major American studios scaling back their traditional footprint, attention has shifted further toward international and independent cinema. Japan, this year's Country of Honour, has become a major focal point, while Asian cinema more broadly occupies an increasingly central place in the global conversation.

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A photograph taken from the southern area of Tyre shows smoke rising from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the area of Ras Al-Ain in Lebanon yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Suspect joined the search for murdered child

Following arrest, he confessed to attempted rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The man arrested on suspicion of murdering a four-year-old girl from a neighbouring family during attempted rape on May 6 in Sylhet joined locals searching for the child, police have said.

The suspect, Zakir Hossain, 30, was seen among the locals during the search after the girl had gone missing that day, Sylhet Metropolitan Police's (SMP) Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Saiful Islam said at a press conference yesterday.

Police arrested him on Monday night after the girl's body was found in a pond in the neighbourhood of Sonatola village of Sylhet Sadar upazila on May 8. Agitated locals later vandalised his house.

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