DHAKA THURSDAY OCTOBER 15, 2026



"Waving the Tricolour at Jantar Mantar in a peaceful protest is not a crime. Jailing youth for it is an act of cowardice."

RAHUL GANDHI
on jailing of CJP leaders

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Locomotive bet falters

Ill-equipped BR struggling to mend, maintain 30 new engines; 18 break down in 4yrs

SIFAYET ULLAH, *Ctg*

Eighteen of the 30 locomotives purchased by Bangladesh Railway from South Korean company Hyundai Rotem for about Tk 972 crore became inoperative within four years of entering service, hampering both container and passenger train services on the Dhaka-Chattogram route.

According to BR's Mechanical Engineering Department, the locomotives entered operation in 2022 and were expected to have a service life of 20 years. However, one of those became inoperative in 2023 and four more the following year. The number rose to 10 in 2025 and reached 18 by June this year.

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- BR bought 30 locomotives under 2 deals involving Tk 971.72cr
- Locomotive shortages cut container train trips by 49% in 3yrs
- 5 passenger trains suspended since March 2025
- BR seeks Tk 680cr deal to maintain the locomotives



Smoke billows from Drug International's pharmaceutical factory in Cherag Ali, Tongi, Gazipur, after a fire broke out yesterday morning. The blaze was brought under control after firefighters, BGB and army personnel battled it for more than three hours. PHOTO: STAR

Subsidy, spending cuts should power pay scale bump

Commission recommended in its proposal

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The National Pay Commission recommended reducing subsidies, phasing out export cash incentives and cutting government expenditure to ease the cost of implementing the new pay scale for government employees.

It also recommended merging or reducing departments under ministries, cutting allocations for poorly performing development projects and reforming the tax system to boost revenue.

Headed by former finance secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, the commission submitted the report to the then interim government in January this year. Although the commission's proposed salary structure became public at the time, the full report was not published.

The current BNP government has started implementing the new pay scale in phases over the current and next fiscal years.

According to finance ministry estimates following cabinet approval of the pay scale with minor adjustments in August, the new salaries and allowances for nearly 23 lakh employees of defence and government services, and nine lakh pensioners will cost additional Tk 1,05,580 crore.

The commission estimated the additional cost at Tk 1,06,307 crore,

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20 out of 30 Bangladeshis trafficked to Russia killed

Says SRB; 17 died on their first day on the frontline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 30 Bangladeshis were trafficked to Russia with promises of high-paying jobs, only to be forced to join the Russian military and sent to the front lines of the Russia-Ukraine war after just 21 days of training, the Special Response Battalion (SRB) said yesterday.

Of them, 20 have reportedly died, including 17 in drone strikes on their first day of deployment. The victims were allegedly used as "bait" to reveal enemy positions, the battalion said.

At a press conference at the SRB Media Centre in Dhaka's Karwan Bazar, SRB-10 Commander Additional DIG Md Asaduzzaman said two men, including Mizanur Rahman, the alleged mastermind of the trafficking ring, were arrested on October 13.

The other arrestee was identified as Abu Taher Lentu.

According to the SRB, the syndicate lured the victims to Russia with promises of construction jobs before handing them over to the Russian military.

The 30 Bangladeshis travelled to Russia on May 7 this year through three recruiting agencies: Jabal-e-Noor, RS International and TS Group. Each reportedly paid an average of Tk 10 lakh for the promised jobs.

Upon arrival, however, they were denied the jobs and handed over to the military. After just 21 days of training, they were deployed to the battlefield, the SRB said.

"Those taken from Bangladesh were not qualified for combat. They had no physical preparation, military training or tactical skills. So why were they sent to the battlefield after just 21 days of training?" Asaduzzaman said.

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Garment workers block part of the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in the capital's Uttara yesterday, demanding a wage hike. Over 1,000 workers took to the streets in the Rajlokkhi area around 10:30am, causing severe traffic congestion. Story on page 3. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

INTERVIEW

Bangladesh's permanent representative to the United Nations, ***Irene Khan,*** *speaks to* ***The Daily Star*** *about Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's first visit to the global forum's general assembly.*

Tarique seized networking, showcased Bangladesh

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's visit to the UN General Assembly was an opportunity for him to introduce himself to the world, talk about his plans for the country and reaffirm Bangladesh's commitment to multilateralism, said Irene Khan, Bangladesh's permanent representative to the UN.



"There was a warm welcome as this was [Tarique's] first time at this high-level event", which took place at a time when powerful states were "openly defying international law, challenging international consensus, challenging the UN".

She said the UN's annual event in New York was a good networking opportunity that Tarique fully leveraged, showcasing Bangladesh's potential and possibilities while at the same time pledging certain commitments at the global stage by presenting his plans.

Irene believed it was a good debut for Bangladesh's relatively newly elected PM on the global stage, considering how he was received by different delegations in New York.

Tarique had about 30 meetings, including 10 with UN agencies, one on the Rohingya issue, two on climate change and a major meeting with investors. "It is remarkable because he was [in New York] from Monday evening until Friday evening. So there were just four days in which he had all these meetings."

Reflecting on the meetings, Irene said, "They were open to him, and they listened, eager to know how Bangladesh is doing, what his vision is. They wanted to understand where Bangladesh is going."

The PM's message, in turn, was that Bangladesh seeks international cooperation and is willing to "work with all but being beholden to none", she said.

"And at the same time, we are open for business. We are

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