DHAKA SUNDAY NOVEMBER 8, 2026



"We cannot wait to reach a perfect agreement; we hope to reach a good agreement."

Qatar's PM **SHEIKH ABDULRAHMAN AL-THANI** on US strikes on Iran

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Govt eyes a new 'Gram Sarkar' to reshape villages

Greater community role planned in maintaining law and order, arbitration, rural development

BAHARAM KHAN

The government has moved to revive "Gram Sarkar", the lowest tier of local governance first introduced in 1980, to strengthen community participation in maintaining law and order, conducting arbitration, and monitoring the progress of rural development projects.

The new model of the local government body will comprise 17 elected public representatives in each of the 41,112 wards under 4,568 unions across the country, according to a draft of the "Gram Sarkar Act 2026" prepared by the Local Government Division (LGD).

The draft will soon be placed before the cabinet, several senior LGD officials told this newspaper.

They said the proposed law was drafted in light of the 1980 legislation enacted during the presidency of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman and the 2003 law formulated under the Khaleda Zia-led government.

According to the draft, Gram Sarkar will work to build community resistance to crimes, violence against women and terrorism, and help maintain law and order. It will formulate plans for developing village roads and culverts, assist in reviewing the progress of ongoing projects and regularly report to the Union Parishad.

- 17-member body planned for each of 41,112 wards
- Elected UP member to head Gram Sarkar
- It will report regularly to UP
- Draft law to be sent to cabinet soon
- Convicts with certain prison terms may be eligible for membership

A couple of years after its introduction in 1980, Gram Sarkar was scrapped during the tenure of the then president HM Ershad.

Later, an initiative was taken in 2003 to reintroduce the local body with unelected members, but the law was repealed after the High Court declared it unconstitutional.

The defunct law contained provisions for the formation of a 15-member Gram Sarkar in each ward, with all the members nominated by the local administration.

Experts say that if the system is reintroduced simultaneously across the country, it may not yield the desired outcome. They suggested reintroducing it on a pilot basis first and then deciding on the next course of action.

The draft said that each of the nine wards in every union will have a 17-member Gram Sarkar led by the elected UP member of the ward. An elected woman UP member will serve as an adviser.

The remaining 15 members will be elected by at least 10 percent of voters in that ward. During Ziaur Rahman's tenure, Gram Sarkar members were directly nominated by the government, and there was no honorarium for them.

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Prime Minister and BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, flanked by senior party leaders, waves to supporters from a procession marking National Revolution and Solidarity Day yesterday afternoon. The procession began from outside the BNP's central office in Nayapaltan and ended at Manik Mia Avenue. The photo was taken near the Kakrail intersection. More on page 3.

PHOTO: **MEHEDI HASAN**

Govt revises CSA draft, worries stay

TASNEEM TAYEB

Following consultations with civil society, the government has decided to modify provisions of the draft cyber security law and align some offences, such as defamation, with the Penal Code.

The draft Cyber Security (Amendment) Act, 2026 will define "belittling" and introduce safeguards for journalists and news outlets after the earlier draft drew criticism.

These are among 12 revisions to be incorporated, officials said.

The revised draft has yet to be released publicly. Officials earlier said it would be published for further consultation before the amendments are finalised.

The revisions have drawn criticism on several grounds. Critics say journalist safeguards should extend to all citizens, that cancelling an organisation's licence over an individual's offence is disproportionate, and that defamation, rumour and fake news should not be policed through a cyber law at all.

The penalty for spreading rumours has not been reduced, while the draft still leaves investigative powers, including search, seizure and arrest without warrant, unaddressed. The Editors' Council's 12-point recommendations go well beyond the government's proposals.

The earlier draft, made public in September, defined a

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No one will be able to steal people's rights again

Says Tarique at National Revolution and Solidarity Day event

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday called for national unity to ensure that no one can again deprive people of their rights.

"Let this be our main pledge on this November 7 that no one will ever again be able to take away the rights of the country and its people or turn Bangladesh into a subservient state," he said at a special display programme at the Army Stadium marking the National Revolution and Solidarity Day.

The spirit of the November 7 revolution by soldiers and the people must be upheld to maintain national unity, considering Bangladesh's socioeconomic, geographical and political realities.

Referring to the Liberation War of 1971, the November 7 revolution of 1975, the anti-autocracy movement of 1990 and the mass uprising of 2024, Tarique said the younger generation had always stood up for the country.

"Let the voice of the patriotic and democracy-loving people on this historic day of the revolution of soldiers and people be: Bangladesh comes first, not Delhi, not Pindi or any other country."

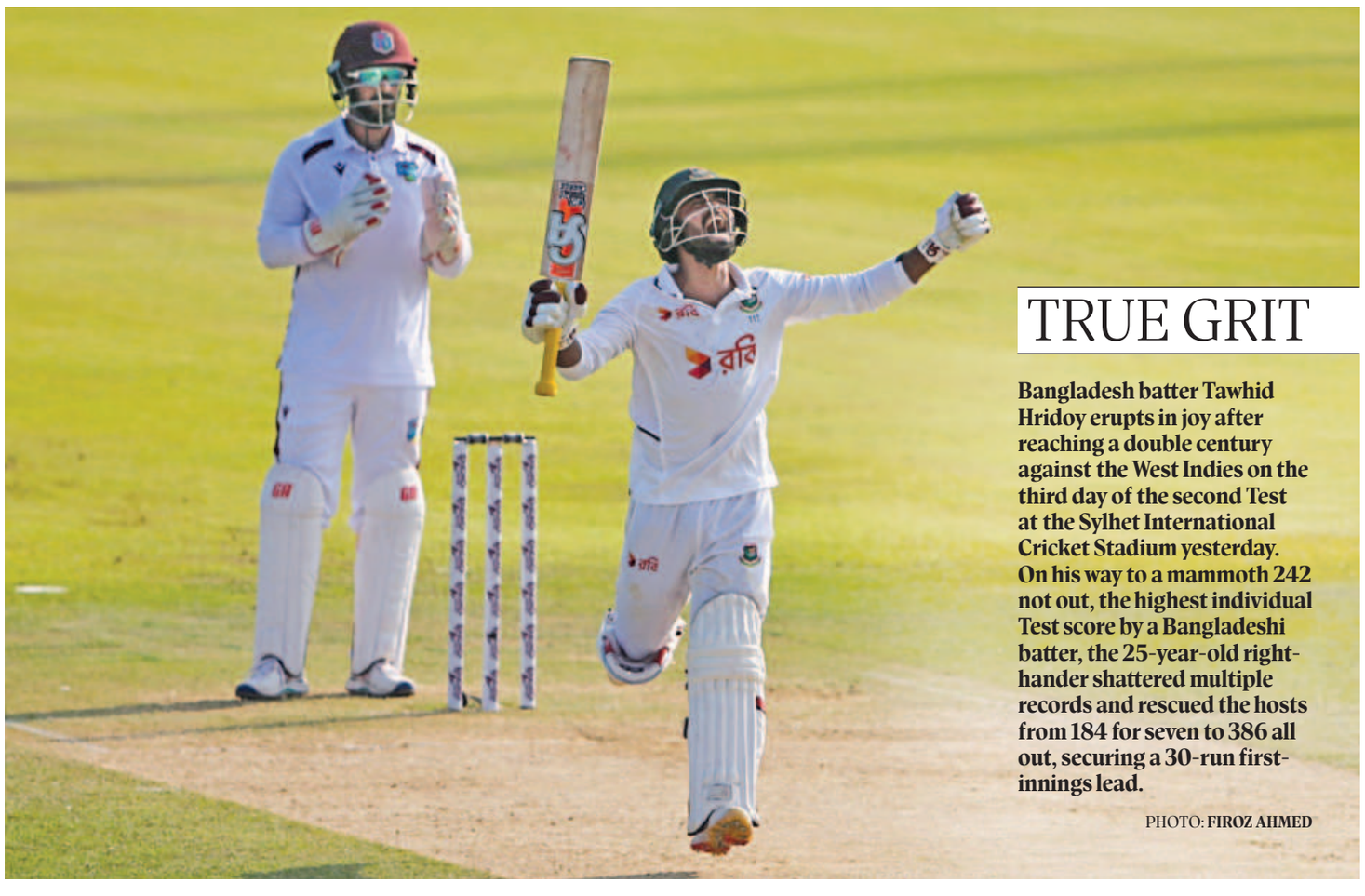
Prime Minister **Tarique Rahman**

Achieving independence was a matter of historic pride, but preserving its honour and making it meaningful is every generation's responsibility, especially the younger generation's.

"History bears witness that whenever there has been a conspiracy against Bangladesh or its

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TRUE GRIT

Bangladesh batter Tawhid Hridoy erupts in joy after reaching a double century against the West Indies on the third day of the second Test at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday. On his way to a mammoth 242 not out, the highest individual Test score by a Bangladeshi batter, the 25-year-old right-hander shattered multiple records and rescued the hosts from 184 for seven to 386 all out, securing a 30-run first-innings lead.

PHOTO: **FIROZ AHMED**

NEWS IN FOCUS

7 Bangladeshis killed in Saudi road crash

6 more hurt as vehicle overturns on Jeddah-Madina Highway; victims include six of two families

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven Bangladeshis, including six members of two families, were killed and six others injured when a vehicle carrying them overturned in Saudi Arabia early yesterday while they were returning to Jeddah from Madina.

The accident occurred around 2:00am in the Al-Himna area, according to a preliminary report prepared by the Bangladesh Consulate General in Jeddah.

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment disclosed the updated information last night.

All 13 passengers, including members of three families, hailed from Cox's Bazar district.

According to the report, the vehicle, driven by a Pakistani national, was travelling at an estimated speed of 160 km per hour when the accident occurred.

Officials at the Kholais Traffic Office initially suspected that the driver lost control due to excessive speed, causing the vehicle to overturn.

However, the driver claimed that the accident occurred after one of the vehicle's tyres burst.

The consulate said the actual cause of the accident would be known after an investigation and the submission of a final report by the Saudi authorities.

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