



**NOT ANOTHER ACTION MOVIE...** The return journey of thousands of devotees attending the Akheri Munajat of the three-day Biswa Jtema was marked by fervour and fanfare. Trains were hopped and overflowed with passengers, while streets were jam-packed. The sheer enthusiasm of the attendees was a sight to behold. The photos were taken at Tongi and Tejgaon rail gate areas.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, RASHED SHUMON

## ABRAR MURDER Accused sent to jail after surrender

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent one of the four absconding accused in Buet student Abrar Fahad killing case to jail after he surrendered before a court, seeking bail.

Metropolitan Magistrate Begum Yasmin Ara sent Morshed Amartya Islam to jail after rejecting his bail petition.

Morshed, an expelled student of mechanical engineering (batch 17), surrendered to the court around 12:30pm and prayed for his bail in the case.

He was a former member of BCL's Buet unit. With him, a total of 22 accused in the case are now in jail.

On January 5, another Dhaka court directed police to publish an advertisement in two national dailies, asking Morshed and three other accused in the case who have been on the run, to appear before the court by today.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## Don't vote for those involved in violence against women

### Mahila Parishad urges all

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad yesterday called upon people not to vote for candidates involved in violence against women, corruption, spending black money and using "muscle power".

In a 45-point recommendation, the rights organisation also urged women councillor candidates to include women-related issues in their manifestos for the upcoming election to Dhaka north and south city corporations. Dr Fauzia Moslem, acting president of the Parishad, made the call at a views-exchange at its Anwara Begum-Munira Khan auditorium in Dhaka.

Urban planners, rights activists and women councillor candidates attended the discussion on "Role of reserved seat women councillors in building a safe and woman-friendly Dhaka".

The Election Commission will have to ensure adequate measures so that women and people with physical disabilities can cast their votes in a free, fair and secured manner, Fauzia said. Besides ongoing development activities, the government should also ensure security for women, she added.

Other than ensuring women's rights to cast votes properly, the EC will have to take appropriate measures so that anti-liberation forces, drug traders and human rights violators cannot contest the polls, Fauzia stressed.

Stressing that equal participation of men and women in running a state and decision-making process is imperative,



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the third day of the city corporation election campaigns yesterday, BNP's mayoral candidate in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Tabith Awal faced obstruction by Awami League supporters while starting his campaign from Mirpur-1 Shah Ali Mazar area at around 11am.

While Tabith and his supporters were shouting slogans seeking votes for their electoral symbol "sheaf of paddy", a group of Awami League supports were already coming from the opposite direction with slogans for "boat" -- the symbol of Awami League.

A scuffle broke out at the time, during which some supporters of Tabith were injured, said Mahmud Hasan, coordinator of the media cell for Tabith's campaign.

The incident was broadcast live from Tabith Awal's Facebook page.

"We would like to abide by the electoral code of conduct. From our side, we do not want any untoward incident to happen. Therefore we are changing our route," Tabith told journalists present there.

He also alleged that law enforcers did not help them during the time.

Asked about the incident, Awami League mayoral candidate for DNCC Atiqul Islam told The Daily Star, "Awami League

is a democratic party, and this kind of incident should not happen. If it did, it's reprehensible."

Earlier in the day, Atiqul started his campaign from Kosai Bari rail gate in Uttara and visited Uttarkhan, Dakkhinkhan, Moynartek, Abdullahpur and Bawnia areas.

Before starting his campaign, he joined the Akheri Munajat at the Biswa Jtema. "For development of new wards, Tk4,200 crore has been approved by Ecne, and if I get elected, I will continue development work of the new wards," he promised while addressing voters during the campaign.

In DSCC, BNP's mayoral candidate Ishraque Hossain started his campaign around noon from the District and Sessions Judge's Court area, and passed through Banglabazar, Shymbazar, Sutrapur and Luxmibazar. Senior BNP leader Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain took part in the campaigning.

Ishraque also alleged that their councillor candidates have been facing obstruction during campaign, adding that they have filed complaints regarding the matter to the Election Commission.

"We heard five Jatiatabadi Swetchhasebak Dal activists were arrested, and then released by police. However, we will continue our campaign and won't back down in the face of any obstacle," said Ishraque while starting his campaign.

Meanwhile, his AL counterpart

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## Border killings still happening: Momen

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said it is unfortunate that border killing continues despite India's commitment to zero deaths at the border.

"Unfortunately, it is still happening. Like you, we are also concerned. We would relay the message to India so that they comply with what they have committed -- 'zero death at the border'," Momen told a press conference at the foreign ministry.

India's Border Security Force (BSF) allegedly killed two Bangladeshis along the border in Thakurgaon and in Lalmonirhat last week. Earlier last week, two other Bangladeshis were allegedly killed by the BSF in Chapainawabganj.

Momen said Bangladesh and India agreed to the point that there would be zero death along Bangladesh-India border. A few days ago, Border Guard Bangladesh and BSF officials discussed the matter and renewed the commitment.

Asked if India-Bangladesh relations are strained, especially as three ministers cancelled their visits in last one month, the minister said, "You [media] say the relationship is cold, but it is actually warm."

"Diplomacy is on a high. It is very good. But media discovers some issues that are actually non-issues," he said. The Observer Research Foundation in collaboration with the India's Ministry of External Affairs is organising the Raisina Dialogue, a global meeting in Delhi beginning on January 14.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam was supposed to attend the event as a speaker, but he cancelled as he is accompanying PM Sheikh Hasina to her UAE visit from January 12-14, a foreign ministry statement said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## 'Culprits of casino, drug trade won't be spared'

### Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan has issued a strong warning against casino masterminds, narcotics traffickers and other criminals yesterday, saying that wrongdoers will be brought to the book.

"People involved in casino and narcotics trade want to survive by contesting in elections... No one will be spared," the minister said, in reply to journalists' query regarding casino and narcotics traffickers who are participating in the upcoming city corporation elections.

The minister was addressing reporters after inaugurating the television commercial (IVC) of Narcotics Information Management System (NIMS) at the Department of Narcotics Control

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

# The gift of a fixed heart

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Due to financial constraints, 18-year-old Anamika had no choice but suffer the effects of ventricular septal defect (VSD) -- a hole in the heart that's present at birth.

For years, she had been ailing without hope at her home in Rajoir upazila under Madaripur district.

Her health would have likely worsened had she not undergone a simple but costly medical procedure -- done free of cost -- at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Disease (NICVD) in Dhaka recently.

Anamika has left the hospital and is now doing well.

"We brought Anamika here [NICVD] around six months ago when doctors suggested this procedure. Anamika's mother did not have the financial resources to afford the expensive treatment. Being advised, we waited for this free of cost operation," Nur Hossain, Anamika's uncle who brought her to NICVD, told The Daily Star recently.

Like Anamika, a total of 100 children and youngsters have undergone the non-invasive procedure from January 4 to 11 -- completely free of cost, thanks to donation from Qatar Red Crescent.

A team of surgeons from NICVD and Qatar has been applying the non-surgical intervention at the paediatric surgery unit of the hospital.

"These children had no option but to undergo this procedure. However, their families are not capable of bearing the medical costs. We selected them through a process," Dr Abdullah Shahriar, head of the paediatric surgery unit of NICVD, told The Daily Star.

This is the fourth charity programme at NICVD funded by the donor agency.

In the three previous instalments, 250 children were served.

"Unless we receive financial aid, we have no capacity to serve these disadvantaged children, and the donors have pledged to continue assistance in future," Dr Shahriar added.

According to the surgeons, each of this non-surgical VSD repair costs around Tk 16 lakh in Bangladesh.

Approximately 75 percent of small VSDs close on their own within the first year or by age 10, and do not require any treatment other than careful monitoring.

Adults with unrepaired VSDs have a higher risk of heart valve inefficiency and infections -- a potentially life-threatening infection of the heart -- according to doctors.

The rate of VSD is 8-11 per thousand live births in Bangladesh while around 25,000 of such children die each year, according to a study by doctors of Combined Military Hospital (CMH).

"Only 30 percent of children with VSD, whose defects are not repaired on their own, can be cured through this technique. Unfortunately, 70 percent of them require open heart surgery," Dr Shahriar said.

VSD repair is done through two methods: open heart surgery and the catheter-based technique, which are done to correct a hole between the left and right ventricles of the heart.

In the catheter-based technique, the interventionist closes the hole by setting up a closure device in the area, which is sent using a long and thin tube.

There is lack of well-equipped infrastructure as well as expert surgeons to apply such non-surgical method in the country, according to Dr Shahriar.

He said the Qatar Red Crescent has assured to provide support to build up a well-equipped VSD intervention facility, a CCU and an ICU at NICVD upon government approval.

"We, on behalf of Qatari people, have come here to serve our Bangladeshi brothers and sisters who are incapable to bear the expenses of such surgery," Dr Khalid A Alemelhoda, medical convoy's coordinator, told The Daily Star.

They would continue such efforts in future, he added.

It should be noted that Qatar Red Crescent has also been running three other medical missions for displaced Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar.

Besides, the organisation conducts charity programmes in Bogura, Rajshahi and Sylhet to help the poor.

## WATER DEVELOPMENT BOARD Lack of coordination, transparency must be addressed: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists and civil society representatives at a seminar yesterday demanded transparency and accountability of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) regarding embankment construction and management in the country's coastal region.

There is a lack of coordination among the activities of BWDB, they said, adding that if the institution is brought under accountability, embankment construction and management will be sustainable and cost-efficient.

They also demanded participation of locals in the process, to maintain transparency.

Coastal Association for Social Transformation (COAST) Trust, a non-government organisation, arranged the seminar on climate resilient embankment management at Cirdap auditorium in the capital.

Presenting a keynote paper on the topic, Arif Dewan, a programme coordinator of COAST Trust, said many people in coastal areas are passing their days in risk, while many were forcibly displaced from their homes due to mismanagement and lack of sufficient embankments.

Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, noted economist and chairman of Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF), said BWDB needs to remain accountable to local governments, such as union and upazila parishad.

Shahid Uddin, chairman of Baraghop Union Parishad under Kutubdia upazila of Cox's Bazar, alleged that BWDB builds embankments only focusing on water flow, not thinking about people's needs.

That is why participation of local people in the coastal embankment construction and management process is imperative, he added.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Colourful blankets with intricate patterns are displayed to potential buyers who are in hopes of snagging a good deal. As the cold waves come and go, getting the right blanket for those especially chilly nights is essential. This photo was taken on Saturday from Purana Paltan.