

**PHOTO OF THE DAY**

ANISUR RAHMAN



**A MASS DISPLAY OF RECKLESSNESS...** Despite spacious platforms being available on both sides of the rail lines and an over-bridge to cross over, people board off trains in the capital's Biman Bandar station on the tracks every day, with zero regards for safety. Men or women, old or young, sharply-dressed or shabby -- when it comes to being irresponsible, it seems we are all more alike than it appears.

**DHAKA CITY POLLS**

**BNP demands reelection**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday demanded reelections to Dhaka south and north city corporations scrapping Saturday's voting, as the party said people's verdict was not reflected in the polls.

"People's opinion was not reflected in the city polls as they could not cast their votes. So, we call for cancelling the results of those elections and holding fresh election to the two city corporations," Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the party, said while speaking at a post-election press conference at a hotel in the capital.

He claimed that only 7-9 percent votes were cast in the city polls, held on February 1.

BNP's mayoral candidates Tabith Awal and Ishraque Hossain arranged the press conference to give their formal reactions to Dhaka north and south city corporation's polls.

Fakhru alleged that voter presence in the elections was very low, as people have no confidence in the government and the Election Commission.

Tabith Awal, who contested as BNP's mayoral runner in Dhaka North City Corporation, demanded that the EC transparently presents all the information about the results of the city elections.

He also said voters were not allowed to enter polling stations at the behest of senior Awami League leaders.

"Attempts to control the voting centers were made by creating false voter lines and

keeping ruling party activists there. The ruling party didn't allow voters to come to polling stations in a planned way, to rig votes."

"The results were fabricated. Those in power did not let voters come to the centres. We had to wait till 4am to get the results, but the Awami League-backed candidates met the prime minister at 9pm and announced themselves as mayors," he said.

"It proves that a free and fair election can never be held under the present government and the Election Commission," said Tabith, who lost the contest by 183,050 votes to AL mayor candidate Atiqul Islam.

"If someone can be put behind bars for beating up police, then why are perpetrators behind attacks on journalists on the loose?"

The elections failed badly due to EVMs (electronic voting machines), the "sheaf of paddy" symbol was not even included in many of the machines, alleged Ishraque Hossain, who contested for the mayor post of Dhaka South City Corporation.

He apologised for failing to keep his promise of ensuring a safe environment for voters. "Voters were unjustly treated. Instead of arranging a fair election for the people, they [the government] disappointed us by rigging votes," he said.

"I expected that they [AL] would read the pulse of the people. Considering the future, they would take initiative to hold a free and fair election and attempt to restore democracy, but they pushed the country into darkness."

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**'Zero tolerance for extremism'**

Ambassador Rabab Fatima at UN, on Bangladesh's stance

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh maintains a "zero tolerance" policy towards terrorism and violent extremism, said Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Rabab Fatima yesterday.

"While adopting a 'whole-of-society' approach in our efforts, we have also included de-radicalisation and counter-terrorism issues in school curriculum," she said while speaking as a panelist at a side-event in the UN Headquarters in New York.

As a part of observance of the Inter-Faith Harmony Week, the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect organised the event, titled "Addressing hate speech and preventing incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence: Synergies within the UN systems".

Bangladesh, Morocco and Italy co-sponsored it.

In her remarks, Ambassador Fatima quoted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's statement -- "religion is one's own; but festivals are for everyone" -- and shared how in Bangladesh the Muslims, Hindus,

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**'Every criminal must face justice'**

PM tells House in scripted reply

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told the House that all criminals must face trial and punishment if they are found guilty, no matter how powerful they are.

"Criminals have no party. Their identity is that they are criminals and they must be tried no matter how powerful they are," the premier, who is now in on a four-day state visit in Italy, told the parliament in a scripted reply to a tabled question from Awami League lawmaker Gloria Jharna Sarker.

The prime minister said the judiciary is carrying out its trial proceedings independently and without any influence during the Awami League government.

The judiciary has gained public trust and confidence through establishing the rule of law and justice, she said in her answer.

Sheikh Hasina mentioned court verdicts and trial progress in various sensational cases including killing of Feni madrasa student Nusrat Jahan Rafi, Buet student Abrar Fahad, Rifat of Barguna and Narayanganj seven murder.

"These killing incidents are not merely much-talked ones, it is tantamount to social and moral degradation of the people. But we've been able to complete the trial of these killings speedily through the judiciary. So, relief was restored among people," she said.

In reply to another starred question from AL MP Shafiqul Islam Shimul (Natore-2), the PM placed her government's 25-point plan for the development of the healthcare services in the country.

**A case for pretty pavilions**

SHOAB AHMED SAYAM

Avid readers steadily filled up Ekushey book fair premises on its fourth day, some tagging along with their friends, while others brought their little ones.

While Bangla Academy premises saw a number of people going through the stalls, Suhrawardy Udyan is where all the excitement is at, possibly because all big players in the publishing industry put up their pavilions there.

With so many books and stalls to peruse over, attracting visitors is imperative for publications. For that reason, big publications usually come up with distinct ways to entice readers.

One of those ways is to design unique and novel pavilions. Pathak Shamabesh, for instance, did just that.

Rasel Ahmed, a representative working there, said the design of the pavilion does affect reader interaction.

"Our design philosophy is to make readers as comfortable as possible. They can come inside, go through our shelves, pick a book of their choice, sit down and have a relaxing read before deciding to buy something," he said.

Pathak Shamabesh's pavilion at this year's fair is akin to a small cosy library. With a warmly lit room where

rays of sunlight seep through, books are organised in shelves unlike other pavilions, and small plants are placed, giving everything a natural feel. The best feature, however, are the sofas, which are placed in a tiny corner.

"With so many books on offer, it's hard to pick the right one for yourself. It takes time to decide which one to buy among the many books staring at you. If you look around, you'll see everyone standing for long periods with books in their hands.

That is exhausting and annoying, which led to us accommodating seating at our pavilion," he added.

Throughout the hours, people kept going in and out of the pavilion, some taking their time to look at the whole collection, while others were zooming through.

Another pavilion which is visually appealing is that of Anyapokash. They have set up a castle-like pavilion which visitors surrounded from all four sides at all times.

But is it all about the looks?

"I don't think the design of the pavilion matters that much when it comes to actual sales. We're seeing that readers are approaching our pavilion

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**Bangabandhu's March 7 speech should be in textbooks: HC**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman should be included in textbooks so that youths can know about its significance.

On March 7, 1971, Bangabandhu in his fiery speech -- at the Race-course Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udyan) -- called on the freedom-loving Bangalees to wage a decisive struggle against the Pakistani oppressors.

The speech set the tone for the War of Liberation that would officially begin later that month on March 26.

Yesterday, while hearing a pending rule, the HC observed that steps should be taken so that the current generation hear the speech as they do not know about it very well.

The court also expressed dissatisfaction as the Shishu Park was not relocated from Suhrawardy Udyan.

The Shishu Park was established at Suhrawardy Udyan in order to damage the memories of Bangabandhu. The present government, which backs the independence of the country, has been in power for a long time, but why the Shishu Park is still there, questioned the HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader.

The HC asked the cabinet secretary to submit a report by February 11 in this regard and also set the same date for further hearing.

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**Timely and proper diagnosis must for TB control: experts**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has made significant progress in tuberculosis (TB) control over the last few decades, but still a large number of TB patients remain undiagnosed due to lack of awareness, doctors and health experts said yesterday.

They suggested that people undergo diagnosis immediately when they find the symptoms of TB, like long-term cough, chest pain and fever. Otherwise, they will not only intensify their sickness but also spread the deadly disease among those nearby.

The experts made the remarks at a roundtable on the challenges of TB

control, jointly organised by National Tuberculosis Control Program (NTP), Brac and The Daily Star at the newspaper's office in the capital.

Speaking at the event, Asif Mujtaba Mahmud, secretary general of Bangladesh Lung Foundation, said, "Prevention is a major part of TB control. To do so, we need to diagnose patients properly. Otherwise, the transmission chain cannot be broken," he said.

He also urged people to give up the habit of spitting here and there, as it is the easiest way to transmit the disease.

Prof Shahedur Rahman Khan, director of National Institute of Diseases of the

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**'Neo-JMB leader' held in capital**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Counter-terrorism officials yesterday claimed to have arrested chief of the female wing of militant group "neo-JMB" from the city's Kamalapur area on Tuesday afternoon.

Arrestee Asmani Khatun alias Asma (28) communicated with fellow militants online using different pseudonyms like Bandi Jibona and Nikhoj Alo, said SK Imran Hossain, assistant commissioner of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

The CTTC official said Asma had been secretly recruiting female members online for a long time. Many operatives who left home for so-called jihad in her persuasion were arrested earlier, the official said.

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Speakers at the roundtable at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Pathak Shamabesh's pavilion at this year's book fair is akin to a cosy library where one can pick a book, sit down and read, before deciding to buy one.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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