

# Remain ready to protect independence, sovereignty

## CA asks newly commissioned Armed Forces officers

UNB, Bhatiari, Cg

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday urged the newly commissioned officers of the Armed Forces to uphold image of Bangladesh in the world as a promising, developing and peace-loving country and its internationally-acclaimed role in protecting peace and security across the world.

The head of the caretaker government gave the call while addressing the combined president's parade at the Bangladesh Military Academy Parade ground in the morning to mark the passing out of cadets of army, navy and air force.

Cadets of 59 BMA Long Course, 30 BMA Special Course, Midshipman 2007-Alfa Batch, 58 Flight Cadet Course and Sri Lanka Special Course-4 formally received commission through the President's Combined Parade.

A total of 182 cadets, including 30 women, have been commissioned in the Bangladesh Armed Forces. Of them, 133 cadets are from army, 22 midshipmen from navy and 27 flight cadets from air force.

Besides, 87 cadets who completed Sri Lanka Special Course-4 also took part in the parade.

The chief adviser handed over the coveted sword of honour to battalion senior under officer Mohammad Zunaed Uddin Shah Chowdhury as best all-round cadet in the 59 BMA Long Course in army, sword of honour to midshipman Mehedi Hasan for best performance in all subjects in navy, and sword of honour to flight cadet wing under officer Mohammad Saifur Rahman for best performance in all subjects in air force.

The chief adviser on board a decorated open jeep, flanked by commanders of Bangladesh Military Academy, Naval Academy and Air Force Academy, reviewed the parade.

An impressive march past of the parade gave salute to the chief adviser who took salute from the parade from a decorated podium, flanked by Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed, Naval Chief Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam and Air Force Chief Air Marshall SM Ziaur Rahman.

Chief Adviser's wife, diplomats, senior military and civil officials, local elites and guardians of newly commissioned officers of Armed Forces were present at the event.

Addressing the parade, Fakhruddin also urged the newly commissioned military officers to always remain ready to carry out their responsibilities of protecting the great independence and sovereignty of the motherland.

"The first and main objective of your life will be to safeguard the country's independence, sovereignty and national flag even at the cost of last drop of blood," he told the officers.

Terming the day as very important for the newly commissioned officers, the chief adviser said they are going to enter today as proud officers of Bangladesh Armed Forces through commissioning after hard training for long days.

"This day is important for you because you were being bestowed with the sacred responsibility of protecting the country's independence and sovereignty," he said.

He advised the newly commissioned officers to remember that members of the Armed Forces are an inseparable part of the people of the country. "So, all of you are the equal partners of joys and sorrows of mass people of the country," he said.

He said Bangladesh Armed Forces is vanguard of country's independence and sovereignty. The proud and efficient Armed Forces of the country was born through the bloody liberation war. The unique contribution of patriotic Armed Forces in the independence war will be kept written in golden letters forever in the national history.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed hands over 'Sword of Honour' to the best all round cadet (from left) Battalion Senior Under Officer Mohammad Zunaed Uddin Shah Chowdhury of Army, Midshipman Mehedi Hasan of Navy and Flight Cadet Wing Under Officer Md Saifur Rahman of Air Force at the Combined President Parade at BMA, Chittagong yesterday.

### Travel alert for US citizens

UNB, Dhaka

The US State Department has warned its citizens of the risks of travel to Bangladesh and urged caution while travelling before and after parliament election on December 29.

In its travel alert, the State Department said that with the national election approaching, political parties began to organise large gatherings and election rallies throughout the country.

It said large gatherings in Bangladesh, including those organised for campaigning purposes, in the past have erupted in violence. Several newspapers also have reported terrorist threats focused on the elections.

With these developments in mind, the travel alert notice said the US citizens travelling to or already in Bangladesh were advised to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to review their security awareness.

### Create awareness on HIV/AIDS

METRO DESK

Speakers at a seminar on HIV/AIDS jointly organised by the UNFPA and Primeasia University yesterday on the university campus called for creating mass awareness among people about the fatal disease in the country, says a press release.

Prof Sheikh Firoz Uddin Ahmed, head of Pharmacy Department of the university, presented the keynote paper at the seminar presided over by Dr ANM Meshkat Uddin, dean of School of Business.

Prof Dr Giasuddin Ahmed, vice-chancellor of the university, and Dr Deepak Kumar Biswas, director (programme), HIV/AIDS, STD Alliance Bangladesh, also spoke at the programme.

### UAP Foundation executives

METRO DESK

The 6th annual general meeting of the University of Asia Pacific (UAP) Foundation was held at the Lake Shore Hotel & Apartment at Gulshan in the city on December 21, says a press release.

A A Moniruzzaman was elected chairman of the Foundation. Other office-bearers are Senior Vice-chairman: Qayam Reza Chowdhury, Vice-chairman: Anhar Ahmed Chowdhury and C M Shafi Sami and Treasurer: Ishtiaque Ahmed.

# Call to vote out war criminals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Samajik Protirodh Committee at a press conference yesterday called on the voters to abstain from voting for war criminals and collaborators in the 9th parliamentary elections.

The committee, a platform of 49 non-government organisations, organised the programme at the Sufia Kamal auditorium in the city.

The speakers at the press conference called on the countrymen to remain alert so that the scheduled elections do not go in vain.

They also urged the voters to help women candidates win the polls for their increased representation in the parliament so that they can contribute to the policymaking procedures.

Presenting a keynote paper, Shirin Banu Mithila, a representative from Prep Trust, said the committee fears of insecurity for women and minority people before, during and after the elections.

She urged the administration to ensure women-friendly electoral environment during the periods.

The speakers placed a set of demands, including taking necessary steps to ensure security for citizens irrespective of their gender, religion and language so that they can vote in a secured environment, increasing number of booths for women voters and vigilance of the administration and law enforcement agencies.

Chandan Kumar Lahiri

from Steps Towards Development, advocate Masuda Rehana Begum of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Prof Momtaj Begum of Bangladesh Mahila Samiti and Nazma Akter of Awaz Foundation spoke at the press conference.

### Five bombs recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered five home-made bombs from a rickshaw garage in front of Shakh Ali Police Station at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a Rab team led by Captain Moshir Alam of Rab-4 conducted a raid on the garage at around 7:30pm and recovered the bombs wrapped with red tape.

### Prof Nooruddin accreditation board chair

METRO DESK

Prof Dr Nooruddin Ahmed, former vice-chancellor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), has been appointed as chairman of the Bangladesh Accreditation Board for the next three years, says a press release.

### ELECTION SYMBOL

## EC turns down application of BNP candidate Shahjahan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday refused to receive an application of Md Shahjahan, a BNP candidate for Chandpur-4 constituency, seeking allocation of electoral symbol 'Sheaf of paddy' for him.

Earlier, the High Court (HC) also refused to entertain his application seeking a directive for the EC to allocate the 'Sheaf of paddy' for him. The EC had allocated this symbol for Harun-ur Rashid, another BNP candidate from the same constituency.

After a hearing on the application, the HC vacation bench of Justice Moeenul Islam Chowdhury sent back the application to the petitioner, saying that the court cannot direct the EC in this regard, as it is the duty of the commission to decide on such issue.

Shahjahan told The Daily Star yesterday that the EC conspiratorially refused to receive his application, although the HC had declared him a valid candidate.

He also said that the EC authorities and the returning officer of Chandpur did not inform him as of yesterday what symbol they have allocated for him.

### Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sakina Begum, youngest daughter of late Alhaj Abdur Rahman Hanafi, founder of the Sonakanda Darbar Sharif and Kamil Madrasa in Comilla, passed away at 6:00am (BST) yesterday in Makkah, Saudi Arabia at the age of 65, says a press release.

She left behind her six sons, three daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn her death.

She was buried in Makkah after Asr prayers yesterday.



### Research report

Centre for Administrative Research and Innovation will release the report of the study on Bangladesh police, its image and service delivery. Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity. Time: 10:30am.

### Exhibition

Shilpangan arranges a special print makers' exhibition. Venue: Shilpangan Gallery. Time: 5:00pm.



(Left) Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at an electoral rally of the grand alliance candidate Iqbalur Rahman in Dinajpur town yesterday. (Right) BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia introduces 4-party candidates - VP Joinal and Mosharrat Hossain - at an electoral meeting at Feni Government Pilot High School ground in Feni yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

# AI urges political parties to desist from violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International (AI) believes the December 29 parliamentary election offers a unique opportunity for improving the human rights situation in Bangladesh, but says the political parties must show a more robust commitment to it.

It called on the major actors on the political scene to do their part to protect and respect the right of all to participate, without discrimination, in the conduct of public affairs.

"Amnesty International urges all political parties to desist from violence and to commit themselves to the protection of human rights, including of minority groups, now and in future, whether in government or opposition," says an AI release titled "Bangladesh: Elections present risks and opportunities for human rights."

Welcoming the withdrawal of the state of emergency, the international human rights watchdog said both the government and the political parties have the responsibility to ensure that there is no recurrence of political violence that characterised previous elections and preceded the declaration of emergency.

It observes that the caretaker government has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that elections proceed properly and serve to register the genuine wishes of the people.

"The government's efforts should now be directed at upholding the newly restored freedoms during the coming election," it added.

For proper conduct of the upcoming elections and the formation of a new government, AI identifies the issues of intimidation and violence against voters, restrictions on freedom of assembly, restrictions on freedom of expression and attacks against minorities as important factors.

It urges the candidates and political parties to pledge to promote and respect the right to freedom of expression, assembly and association during and after the elections, including by their opponents and minority groups to hold and express different opinions, organise rallies and campaign for elections, without being attacked violently.

### US envoy hopes polls to be free, fair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador James F Moriarty yesterday hoped that the upcoming parliamentary elections in Bangladesh would be fair, peaceful and free from intimidation.

During a visit to the capital's Dhakeshwari Temple in the afternoon, Moriarty reiterated USA's commitment to religious freedom that has been enshrined in the Bangladesh constitution.

He also held a meeting with the leaders of Hindu community and applauded them for playing a key role in maintaining communal harmony in Bangladesh.

The Hindu leaders narrated to him their bitter experience before and after the 2001 elections.

"Eyes of the world are around Bangladesh as the country's general election is going to be held on December 29," he said.

Asked about the security situation ahead of the polls, he told journalists that the overall situation in the country 'seems to be very good' at present.

"The government has been successful in handling the situation neutrally," the US ambassador said, adding, "Despite existence of undemocratic forces still in Bangladesh, it is encouraging that the government was able to arrest the suspected militants."

Underscoring the importance of religious tolerance and communal harmony, the US envoy said it is important that all communities have access to their basic rights.

Bangladesh Puja Ujjapan Parishad President Prof Dr Neem Chandra Bhowmik, Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee President Kajol Debnath and vice president Sabitri Saha, among others, were present.

### Some presiding officers are partisan: AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League yesterday alleged that some 50 leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP are going to discharge election duties as presiding and assistant presiding officers in the December 29 elections.

At a press briefing at AL media centre in the city, AL Election Conducting Committee co-chairman HT Imam also alleged that some top government officials, who have already been identified for their activities in favour of BNP-Jamaat alliance, are violating election code of conduct and attacking the candidates of grand alliance.

According to Imam, the top officials include Jute Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarker, Water Resources Secretary Dr M Ayub Miah and Land Secretary M Moniruzzaman Khan.

"The purpose of their visit is 'nothing but an attempt to influence' the junior officers who have been appointed as returning and assistant returning officers," Imam said. He urged the caretaker government to take necessary actions against these high officials.

Imam alleged that Jamaat's



(Left) Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at an electoral rally of the grand alliance candidate Iqbalur Rahman in Dinajpur town yesterday. (Right) BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia introduces 4-party candidates - VP Joinal and Mosharrat Hossain - at an electoral meeting at Feni Government Pilot High School ground in Feni yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

### Make sure candidates vow to save Buriganga

#### Bapa urges voters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) at a rally yesterday called on the voters to make sure that the candidates are committed to saving the Buriganga, the lifeline of green Dhaka.

Addressing the rally on the second Buriganga river, Bapa leaders said people should cast their votes for the candidate who will take a vow to save it.

Due to negligence, indiscipline, corruption, weakness and lack of coordination in the government for the last few decades, rivers across the country have been facing the threats of ruin and gradual decay, they added.

The leaders said though Buriganga is also being encroached and polluted, but the government is not taking proper steps to save it.

Several drives were conducted against the encroachers, but those were not completed due to unknown reasons.

A total of 4000 illegal structures were built on the river, but only half of them were removed during the drives, they added.

They placed a set of demands including evicting illegal encroachers from the rivers Buriganga, Shitalakkhya, Balu and Turag and their demarcations, compelling owners of different factories and industries to use effluent treatment plant, stopping dumping untreated waste of Wasa and implementing wetland protection act 2000 strictly.

Bapa Joint Secretary Mihir Biswas presided over the rally, while co-coordinator of Green Voice conducted the programme.

Dr Md Nuruddin, Md Hafizur Rahman of Khilgaon Samajik Sangstha, Ifma Islam of Peace, journalist Shaiful Islam and Ashraf Amir Ullah of Paribesh Annayan Forum of old Dhaka addressed the rally.

### Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the 12th death anniversary of Prof Dr Sofia Hasna Jahan Ali, former teacher of Dhaka University and social worker, says a press release.

### Badaruddin Chowdhury

METRO DESK

Today is the 21st death anniversary of Badaruddin Chowdhury, father of Mahbubuddin Chowdhury, secretary general of the Unesco Club, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence (17, Hari Charan Roy Road, Faridabad) in the city after Zohr prayers.

### Qulkhwani

METRO DESK

Qulkhwani of AFM Fazlul Karim, former customs official, will be held after Asr prayers today at old DOHS Community Centre in the city, says a press release.

### Tahurunnessa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qulkhwani of Tahurunnessa, a wife of late Alhaj Kalai Hossain, former chairman of Hajiganj Union Council in Narayanganj, will be held today, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at her house in Narayanganj after Asr prayers.



### Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the country during midnight until morning.

Slight fall in night temperature is expected over Rajshahi division and may remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 27.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 13.2 degrees Celsius at Srimongal and Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:19pm today and rises at 6:39am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	24.3	17.4	81	72
Chittagong	24.8	16.0	91	72
Rajshahi	24.1	15.4	84	92
Khulna	25.0	16.0	78	69
Barisal	25.7	14.5	96	90
Sylhet	25.8	15.3	100	86
Cox's Bazar	27.2	17.5	80	72