



A colossal hoarding collapses on several vehicles in front of Dhaka Club in the capital during the nor'wester that wreaked havoc in the metropolis yesterday evening. It fell on a minibus, left, a police pickup, and the sport utility vehicle, right bottom, of Awami League lawmaker Haji Salim. Two rickshaw pullers were injured in the incident.

## N'GANJ TRAWLER CAPSIZE Five more bodies recovered

Death toll now 16  
OUR CORRESPONDENT

Five more bodies were recovered from the Buriganga river yesterday, raising the death toll to 16 in the Narayanganj trawler capsized. Of the dead, two were identified as Abdus Samad, 35, son of late Wahed Ali; and Habib, 12, son of Abdul Aziz of Shaheed Nagar in Dhaka's Lalbagh area. The other three, aged between 20 and 25, could not be identified immediately. The diving team of Fire Service and Civil Defence recovered the bodies between 7:00am and 9:00am yesterday, reports our Narayanganj correspondent. The rescue operation is still going on. The Dhaka-bound trawler with some 70 to 80 passengers on board capsized in the river after being hit by a sand-laden bulkhead under Fatullah upazila in Narayanganj on Thursday afternoon. Till Friday evening, 11 bodies were recovered from the Buriganga.

## No luck in appeal

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On April 1, the DNCC returning officer rejected his nomination papers as the BNP heavyweight had picked an unqualified voter to support his candidacy. Under the election law, a DNCC voter has to propose one's candidacy and another has to second it. Abdur Razzaque, who supported Mintoo's nomination, was a voter of Uttara-13 under Harirampur union parishad which is outside the DNCC area. On April 2, Mintoo filed an appeal with the Dhaka Divisional Commissioner, challenging the decision. BNP insiders said the party high-ups were optimistic about the outcome of the appeal. Party chief Khaleda Zia herself intervened and directed senior BNP leaders with legal background to help Mintoo get back in the race. Accordingly, BNP standing committee members Moudud Ahmed and Jamiruddin Sircar along with some other leaders fought for Mintoo during the appeal hearing yesterday. They argued that Abdur Razzaque pays tax to the DNCC and thus he is a voter of the city corporation. So, Mintoo made no mistake by picking Razzaque for seconding his candidacy proposal; rather, it was a fault in the voter list prepared by the Election Commission, they claimed. After the appeal was rejected, Mintoo's lawyer Mahbub Uddin Khokon told the press that they did not get justice and they would appeal to the HC against the decision. Many other leaders of the party seemed frustrated. "We have been dealt a major blow at the beginning of the battle of ballots," a senior BNP leader told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity. The BNP is relatively in a comfortable situation in DSCC as three mayoral candidates it had, including heavyweight Mirza Abbas, were declared eligible to contest the polls scheduled for April 28. After a meeting with BNP chief Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office, pro-BNP educationist Prof Emajuddin Ahmed last night said Mirza Abbas has been finalised as the BNP-backed mayoral candidate in the DSCC polls. The BNP is yet to decide whom to support in the DNCC polls if all efforts to keep Mintoo in the race failed. Some BNP leaders are in favour of supporting Mahi B Chowdhury, son of former president AQM Badruddozza Chowdhury. Others want to extend the party blessings to Mintoo's son Tabith Awal, who had filed his nomination along with his father's and was declared eligible to contest the polls. However, Tabith's fate also appears uncertain since a Bangladesh Bank

official yesterday filed a petition against his candidature alleging that he is a loan defaulter, said sources at the divisional commissioner's office. Hearing on the appeal may be held on April 7, according to sources. The divisional commissioner also rejected a petition of ex-BNP MP Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu, challenging the cancellation of his nomination in the DSCC mayoral election. However, the appeal of mayoral aspirant Rezaul Karim Chowdhury in the DSCC was upheld. His nomination paper had been cancelled by the RO. Nominations of five mayoral and 203 councillor aspirants were cancelled on different grounds like hiding information, loan default and procedural flaws. All five mayor aspirants and 163 councillor hopefuls appealed against the decisions. The divisional commissioner disposed of appeals by three mayor and 17 councillor aspirants. Three of the councillor hopefuls won the appeal. Meanwhile, election manifestos are being prepared for the mayor candidates backed by the ruling Awami League in the two city corporations in Dhaka. Issues like water-logging, traffic congestion, and public toilets would be the main focus in the election pledges of AL-backed mayor candidate Sayeed Khokon in the DSCC polls, said party sources. The party is making the manifesto. In Dhaka North, Annisul Huq himself was preparing the manifesto but he would have it approved by the AL high-command, they said. The manifestos would be made public soon after campaigns start on April 7. The AL is also working to come up with separate election slogans for two city corporations, according to sources. Contacted, Prof Emajuddin said BNP's decisions, including that of electoral pledges, would be settled after April 7. The former DU VC also said the name of a platform has been finalised as "Adarsha Dhaka Gorar Andolan" and it would support the BNP-backed mayor candidates in Dhaka city corporations with the slogan "Nirapad Dhaka Chai, Parichhanya Dhaka Chai" (we want a safe and clean Dhaka). On Thursday, pro-BNP professionals, with the directive of Khaleda, formed a platform headed by Prof Emajuddin with the slogan "Bash Joggya Dhaka Chai" (We want a liveable Dhaka). However, CPB and Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal yesterday at a press conference alleged that the BNP hijacked their name and slogan which is "Sobar Janno Bash Joggya Dhaka Andolan". BNP insiders said their platform would start preparing manifestos soon.

## Fourteen killed in nor'wester

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in many areas across the country. Transport movement on different highways was disrupted due to trees felled in storms. Meteorologist Bazlur Rashid told The Daily Star last night that the nor'wester was already forecast and there is a possibility of another today. He said there were several such storms earlier in this season, but yesterday's had the highest velocity. The ferry services in the Padma remained suspended for at least an hour -- from 7:45pm on the Mawa-Kaorakandi route and from 6:30pm on Paturia-Daulatdia. A ferry carrying around 200 passengers ran aground in a Padma char on Mawa-Kaorakandi route during the storm and remained stuck there for over three hours. In Keraniganj, on the outskirts of the capital, Hanif Sheikh, 45, a boatman, was fatally injured when he was sandwiched between two launches that lost control in the high wind. He was declared dead when brought to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. According to the Met office, the storm hit the capital twice -- first around 7:15pm and then 9:15pm.

Two rickshaw pullers were hurt as a cluster of billboards and tree branches fell on them near Shishu Park around 7:15pm. They were rushed to the DMCH. The car of lawmaker Haji Selim, a police van, three minibuses and several rickshaws were hit by the fallen billboards, said Shibli Noman, assistant commissioner (Ramna zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police. The MP, who was inside the car, was unhurt, said the AC. Fire service and police teams later conducted a rescue operation there. A youth was injured as a tin sheet fell on him at Nilkhet in the capital. He was identified as Jakaria, 28. At Dholaipar, auto-rickshaw driver Abu Hossain, 50, was hit by bricks from a nearby under-construction building. Both of them were whisked off to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. During the storm, tree branches also fell on roads at Nabisco, near Banani Rail Station and Kakrail, according to fire service sources. Duty officer Azizul Haque of Dhaka Railway Police Station said schedules in different regions were hampered due to slowing down of trains on dif-

ferent routes and late departure from stations amid storms. In Bogra, the storm lasted 15 minutes from around 6:00pm. Hasiran Begum, 35, got killed and 10/12 people were injured as a boundary wall collapsed at Nataipara area in the town. An eight-year-old boy from the same area was also killed but his identity or how he was killed could not be known immediately. Thanda Mia, 35, of Radhanagar village under Shahjahanpur upazila in the district was killed when a tree fell on him. Rabeya Bewa, aged over 60, of Hasira village in the same upazila was killed as her house collapsed. In Sariakandi upazila, Sujana Mia, 30, of Hatfulbari was electrocuted when a tree fell on his tea stall. In Bagha upazila of Rajshahi, Imajuddin Majhi, 50, died when a portion of the Padma River bank collapsed on his boat. Another person on the boat was injured and he was admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. Jahanara Begum, 60, of Pakuria village of the same upazila was killed being knocked by a falling tree. Abdul Hakim, 40, of Bargachi vil-

lage in Poba upazila was killed in lightning. In Godagari upazila, Monowara Begum, 65, of Ashariadaha village was killed when their mud wall collapsed on her. In Pabna town, Jamuddin Baks, 65, was seriously injured when a tree fell on his tea stall around 8:00pm. Doctors at Pabna Sadar Hospital declared him dead around 9:00pm. In Natore, a farmer was killed by lightning at Charpipla village under Gurudaspur upazila while returning home from field last night. The deceased was identified as Khokon Hossain, 30, son of Maker Ali of village Charpipla village under Gurudaspur upazila. The storm also damaged at least 150 houses in 20 villages, including Sonapatil, Tegharia, Bashila and Halti, in the district. In Kazipur of Sirajganj, one Mozammel Hossain drowned as a boat sank in the Jamuna with 20/25 people on board around 8:00pm. The rest managed to swim ashore. In Naogaon, Shahnaaj Begum, 35, of Mahanagar village at Manda upazila was crushed to death by a collapsed mud wall. More than 50 houses of the district were ravaged.



BNP activists break the lock at the gate of their central party office in Naya Paltan with hacksaws yesterday and TV cameras and photojournalists rush. Police had locked the office 90 days ago. Photos of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman, Chairperson Khaleda Zia, and Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Raman are being cleaned, inset, after the activists got in the office.



## Khaleda going to court, finally

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said, "She [Khaleda] can contest the cases if she surrenders before the court in future." If she does so, this will be the first time Khaleda surrenders to a court in her political career of more than three decades. Khaleda has been staying at her Gulshan office since January 3, and giving instructions to her party leaders on the anti-government agitation. The BNP-led alliance enforced a non-stop nationwide blockade from January 6, and observed a series of shutdowns to force the government to call fresh polls. Meanwhile, police last evening allowed BNP men to enter the party's

central office in Nayapaltan after three months. On Friday night, law enforcers, who had kept the BNP central office locked since January 3, were withdrawn from in front of it. They were stationed there for more than three months to prevent BNP men from entering the office. The development came after the BNP made major changes in its strategy. The party shifted its focus to city corporation elections from street agitation. BNP-backed aspirants filed nomination papers to contest mayoral polls in the three city corporations slated for April 28. A senior BNP leader told this corre-

spondent that the changes would give the party scope for reassessing its strategy to strengthen anti-government agitation. "We are considering the city polls a battle to prove that people have rejected the government. Khaleda Zia will carry out extensive election campaigns for the party-backed mayoral candidates," said the senior BNP leader. This would boost the morale of the party's grassroots leaders, he added. Political analysts observe that Khaleda's surrender to the court would save the government from embarrassment to some extent. The government has refrained from executing the arrest warrants to avert

further political unrest, they say. As government policymakers remain divided over her arrest, police officials keep claiming that the warrants haven't reached the Gulshan Police Station even in 39 days. Khaleda's lawyer Sanullah, also her adviser, yesterday urged the government to ensure adequate security for the former prime minister on her way to and from the court. Talking to reporters, he called upon the government to take necessary measures so that no untoward incident takes place again. When Khaleda last appeared before the court on December 24, Bangladesh Chhatra League activists swooped on BNP men, who had gathered in the

Bakshibazar area. THE CASES According to the charge sheet of the Zia Orphanage case, Khaleda, Tarique and four others embezzled Tk 2.1 crore by forming the charity that exists only on paper. The statement of the other case say the BNP chief and three others abused power to collect Tk 6.19 crore for Zia Charitable Trust during the BNP-led government's tenure between 1991 and 1996. The Anti-Corruption Commission filed both the cases. Khaleda has been irregular in attending case proceedings. She has refrained from appearing before the

court on 56 out of 63 dates for hearing in the two cases. BNP OFFICE OPENS BNP men were allowed to enter party's Nayapaltan office yesterday evening, three months after it was locked by law enforcers on January 3. No police or Rab personnel were seen in front of the office. Asked, BNP Assistant Office Secretary Asadul Karim Shahin said they cut the lock in the collapsible gate, as someone had changed the lock. Entering the office, the party men found that there was no electricity or water. Asadul, however, couldn't say whether the power and water lines were cut off.

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