## AL runner threatens voters

cast vote for boat symbol, will leave Thakurgoan," she said, adding, "We don't want to see any poster of the symbol of sheaf paddy on street from tomorrow.

She also threw a question towards the crowd as saying, "Can any poster of the sheaf of paddy stay, if any soldier is still alive?"

Mahmuda had been staying Thakurgaon for the last few days to boost up an electoral campaign of Anjuman Ara Begum, a member of the Mohila Awami League central committee, who is contesting for the mayoral post under boat symbol in the municipal polls scheduled to be held today (February 14).

In a separate rally Goalpara area in the town Thursday, Mahmuda said, "What you people, who have love with a sheaf of paddy, will do? You will leave Thakurgaon on February 13. We don't want to see you after the evening of February 13," she said.

On the same, she addressed a separate rally at Shantinagar area where she said, "It there are posters of the sheaf of paddy, I will express my indignation and hate to you and I will assume that no real Awami League man

Multiple videos of her speeches that went viral through social media, sparked panio and fear among people.

"We have become worried following such speech from of senior leader of the ruling party. Now, we are in a dilemma whether we will go to the polling station or not on the voting day," said a resident of Shahapara area in the town seeking anonymity.

Another resident of Munshipara area said, "From our previous experience, we assume that our vote will be cast, even though we do not go to a polling station.

Meanwhile, Awami General Secretary in a press briefing yesterday said, "I have seen her (Mahmuda) speech in a newspaper. I am trying to unearth the truth. We are scrutinizing the video. If such non-political speech was delivered, it is not acceptable. Organizational

action would be taken, if proofs are found."

Amid such a situation, the district's deputy commissioner (DC) Dr. KM Kamruzzaman Selim talked to Mahmuda yesterday over the

"She (Mahmuda) told me that she did not ask general voters to leave the area. Rather, she asked those, who were involved with arson attacks and violence in past, to leave the area for the sake of peaceful voting," the DC told The Daily Star last evening.

Talking to The Daily Star over the phone

last evening, Mahmuda admitted that she asked those, who have 'love' with BNP, to leave the area.

However, the mayoral candidate Anjuman Ara Begum denied it and said Mahmuda Begum did not make such comments.

Talking to The Daily Star, Anjuman claimed that BNP men made the video clips by editing video and audio by misusing technologies to tarnish the image of AL men. Contacted, BNP's Shariful Islam many ruling party leaders Mahmuda Begum had been threatening BNP men to leave

Thakurgaon. Even, police were conducting raids to harass BNP men, alleged Shariful.

"We have filed complaints with returning officer to this matter. But no action is yet to be taken," the BNP's candidate added.

However, the district's superintendent of police (SP) Jahangir Hossain said the law enforcers were trying to create a congenial atmosphere so that voting can be held peacefully.

About BNP's allegations, the police official said they were conducting raids to arrest those, who are accused in criminal cases.

Contacted, the District Election Officer Jilhaj Uddin, who is also returning officer, admitted that he had received some complaints from BNP's candidates and the copies of the complaints were forwarded to executive magistrates for legal actions.

# Many fear irregularities, violence

Islami Andolon.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath said they took all measures to hold the election peacefully.

"Four commissioners have virtual meetings with the top district administration and police officials. The commissioners have asked them to maintain law and order and make sure that the election is held smoothly," he said.

"We are maintaining close communication with DCs and SPs over the polls situation," Ashok said.

A total of 217 candidates are running for mayor at the 55 municipalities. The number of candidates for general councillor posts and those for the reserved seats for women are 2,070 and 618 respectively.

About 16.67 lakh people are enlisted as voters in today's polls.

Ruling AL mayor candidates have clinched sweeping victories in the first, second and third phases. AL contenders achieved success in 18 municipalities out of 24 in the first phase, 45 out 60 municipalities in the second and won 46 out of 63 municipalities in the third phase.

Elections to 31 municipalities will be held in the fifth phase on February 28. EVMs will be used in all the centres then.

At least five people were injured as supporters of AL and BNP mayor candidates clashed and exploded crude bombs in

hanging posters of party candidate Zakirul

Workers Party leaders also alleged that

raised questions over the

also criticised the Election

the state's interference in the election

system is now openly known and people

have lost their confidence in the election

introduction of the EVM system and said

the EVM (electronic voting machine)

system has turned into a nightmare and the

system is being used for irregularities, said

Commission for its failure to hold free

and fair elections and said the future of the

country's democracy will be threatened if

the proper electoral system is not restored,

into the Election Commission's financial

last month, a group of 42 eminent citizens

urged the President to constitute the

Supreme Judicial Council to investigate

irregularities and unethical practices.

The party also demanded an investigation

In December last year as well as again

secretary Fazley Hossain Badsha.

sources.

They

they added.

Workers Party 'disappointed'

Islam in Charghat Bazar area. Some AL men chased them away, said Officer-in-Charge of Charghat Police Station Zahangir Alam.

Minutes later, Zakirul's supporters regrouped and brought out a procession in the area where AL supporters had already taken position with many armed with locallymade weapons, said police and witnesses.

Both the groups exploded several crude bombs and threw brickbats at each other, reports our staff correspondent in Rajshahi. Police fired teargas, dispersed the crowd and brought the situation under control,

THE REMARKS

On Wednesday, Nur Uddin Chowdhury Nayan, general secretary of Lakshmipur district AL, asked voters to cast ballots in public for the party's mayoral candidate in today's Ramgati municipality polls.

Hossain, president Chuadanga's Alamdanga municipality AL, asked party men to bar voters, who would not cast their ballots for the AL candidate, from going to polling centres.

The AL leader was seen giving the directive to his party men in a video clip that went viral on social media on Tuesday. Besides, Mahila Awami League Generál

Secretary Mahmuda Begum, while campaigning in support of party nominated mayor candidate Anjuman Ara Begum in Thakurgaon municipality, said people who "sheaf of paddy" (electoral symbol of the BNP) do not need to go to polling centres on February 14.

Rajshahi's Charghat yesterday.

Around 11:00am, some BNP men were electoral symbol of the AL, will go to the centres, she added.

allegations of financial irregularities,

corruption, and gross election-related

misconduct against the present Election

also viewed that Awami League has shifted

its position from the 23-point demands on

which the alliance was formed during the

is not sincere in strengthening ties among

the partners of the 14-party alliance and

not willing to sit with alliance partners,

They also alleged that the ruling party has now shifted its earlier stance and

adopted a softer stance towards religious

political parties, rather than its ideological

"Fundamentalist groups became active [in politics] due to Awami League's

compromise to them," a party central

launching a strong movement against

corruption and criminalisation of politics.

The party also stressed the need for

leader told The Daily Star yesterday.

Some leaders alleged that the ruling AL

BNP-led four-party alliance regime.

At the meeting, Workers Party leaders

Commission.

said meeting insiders.

political partners.

## Valentine's Day special

to make sure his wife gets all the care, love, and treatment possible.

engineer by profession, Ahmed has also personally been tending his beloved wife with unfailing love -- feeding, bathing and dressing her, and turning her over regularly to avoid bedsores --

often sacrificing his own sleep. He turned a room in his house in Dhaka into a makeshift ICU unit with all the necessary equipment. Ahmed also took training to ensure he himself could do proper nursing round the clock.

"It has been a daily dose of inspiration for me for the last 14 Ahmed told The Daily Star, as he sits by his wife, lying in absolute stillness, still carrying the hope she will wake from her deep slumber.

The daily regiment includes feeding the recumbent patient intravenously, administering the prescribed medicines, and changing her position every two hours.

Since Farida breathes with the support of a tracheostomy, there is always the risk of saliva blocking the tracheostomy point, leading to suffocation. She needs someone by her round the clock to watch for

The driving force behind Ahmed's struggle was his uncompromising love for Farida.

"She talks to me with her tears. When I say something, she responds with her tears," Ahmed said.

"Love is pristine and people say so. But if you ask me, our love is now only confined to tears," said Ahmed with a crack in his voice. A LONG, ARDUOUS ROAD

Ahmed and Farida tied the knot on April 18, 1986. The couple lived in Rangpur, Dinajpur, and Bogura before finally settling down in Pabna, where Farida was a primary school teacher.

In 2007, Farida was diagnosed with a tumour in her uterus. She came to Dhaka from Pabna on leave to consult a doctor and learned she needed to be operated on soon.

At the time, the couple's elder daughter had just passed her HSC exams and the younger one was preparing for her SSC exams. "After that [diagnosis], we could

not stay in Pabna, "Ahmed said. Recalling those desperate days, Ahmed said doctors were against an immediate operation as Farida had

breathing difficulties and a cough. "The doctor who would perform the operation sent my wife to a chest specialist, who after performing some tests, said she could be operated on once the

cough disappeared significantly." But a renowned surgeon the family turned to for advice said the cough was a small matter and there was no reason to fear from an immediate operation.

"We all respect doctors. So, after

fearful situation prevailing in

ministers and their followers will

engage in unlawful activities and

whenever someone will write

against those or even draw cartoons

against corruption, the authorities

will apprehend them by using this

Act, the government is introducing

other laws to keep people's mouth

shut so that they don't dare to

government was doing this so

that none could write a sentence

on Facebook, share a line from

a poem or a drama. "If the

government is so powerful, why is

it afraid of a Facebook status? Why

The JU teacher said the

"Alongside the Digital Security

draconian law," he said.

speak, write or listen to.

"It's like the government, its

Bangladesh.



PHOTO: MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

wife Farida Yasmin gets all the care, love, and treatment possible. She slipped into a coma following a surgery on November 16, 2007.

"Farida told me, 'When I return

to my senses, I want to see your face first," Ahmed said.
"During the operation, we heard

screaming inside the operation

doctor said her condition was very serious and she needed to be taken

Farida sadly never regained consciousness.

hospital authorities, they were allowed to shift her to a specialised hospital.

Initially, the on-duty emergency doctors at the specialised hospital refused to admit Farida, saying the

to the ICU, where she remained for three and half months.

family a lot.

"I was not sure whether I would wife. The ICU was very costly, but

"That doctor advised me to create an ICU at home. He also helped me to take training for treating such patients in the facility,

Farida home to a specially-designed room where she has remained ever since.

Two fans run round the clock, getting assurance from the surgeon, even in the winter. The room is Farida decided to go under the connected with various electrical

disruptions, and is equipped with oxygen, a suction machine, and a pulse monitor.

"It has been only two to three times we took her to the hospital with an ambulance for some emergency tests," said Ahmed. As it is a difficult task to care for

such a patient 24/7, Ahmed -- who is still working -- also employed two nurses to constantly tend to his

While he discharged his responsibility, he also made sure their two daughters -- Nusrat Nabi Badhan and Nowrin Nabi Swarna stayed away.

"I made arrangements for their marriages outside the country. Since they will have their own families, they need peace of mind."

As Ahmed was speaking to this correspondent, Farida was lying on the special medical bed. In the room, is another bed where he sleeps at night.

"When she is faced towards the spare bed, she does not sleep. As pray to the Almighty, I find tears rolling down her eyes. She can feel it but can't express it.

"I don't know what to term it. You can call it a silent love," he said. "She is closer to me than ever

At the end of last year, Ahmed was in for another shock. He contracted and subsequently infected his wife as well. Both of them, however, recovered.

While medical science and technology have improved a lot, it is yet to reach that level to cure patients like Farida, he said.

But Ahmed remains as optimistic

"I hope that day will come and she will again see the beautiful world," he said.

"We pray to the Almighty to cure her, at least once, so that she can see we are trying to keep her well. Our daughters want their mother to call them by their names again."

## Journalist Shaheen

FROM PAGE 12

expectations. We hope Shaheen bhai's body will be brought back to Bangladesh under state arrangement,

Shaheen left behind his wife, two sons and a host of relatives and wellwishers to mourn his death.

Born in Magura's Shalikha upazila in 1954, the journalist had been living in Canada for several years.

He was vocal about the trial of war criminals of the Liberation War in 1971. His father Serajuddin Hossain, also an eminent journalist, was one of the intellectuals killed by Al-Badr, an auxiliary force of Pakistani army, at the fag end of the nine-month-long

Shaheen was involved in the activities of Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee since its inception in 1992 under the leadership of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam, seeking trial of war criminals.

He was the former president of Projonmo Ekattor, a platform of the children of Liberation War martyrs.

In 2012, the journalist gave testimony in the International Crimes Tribunal-2 in a war crimes case filed against executed war criminal and Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mojaheed.

directives from their commander, and the plan prepared with the Pakistan army, Mojaheed and Al-Badr men launched their mission to annihilate intellectuals just before Victory Day in 1971, Shaheen had told the tribunal as a prosecution witness. CONDOLENCES

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed profound shock and sorrow at the death of Shaheen, reports BSS.

In his condolence message, the president also prayed for eternal peace of his departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family. The premier in her message said,

His contributions to implement the

spirit of the Liberation War and to the mass movement demanding trial of war criminals will be remembered with due honour." Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul

Committee and Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader also expressed shock at the death of the journalist.

#### Govt mulling

FROM PAGE 12

With this, the total number of people registered rose to 1,492,345. The mass inoculation campaign

began on February 7. Since then, the number of people showing up at the centres, especially

those in Dhaka, to take the first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has increased. The government launched the accination campaign with 70 lakh

doses in hand. It is expected to get the

second installment of 50 lakh shots from Serum Institute of India (SII) later this month. Around the same time, another 1.31 lakh doses under the COVAX

programme are scheduled to arrive The government has purchased

three crore doses of the vaccine from

#### "TRANSMISSION NOW LIMITED IN CLUSTER"

Experts, meanwhile, said that coronavirus transmission has slowed down to "cluster transmission" from "community transmission" as the positivity rate was below five percent for 24th consecutive day yesterday since January 20.

Against a total of 12,871 tests in the oast 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, the positivity rate was 2.26 percent while the overall positivity rate was 14.09 percent. "We can say the community

transmission of novel coronavirus has stopped nowadays. The transmission is limited in clusters," Mushtuq Hussain, consultant of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) told The Daily Star yesterday.

In the same 24 hours, 13 people died from Covid-19, according to a press release issued by the DGHS.

With this, the total number of deaths reached 8,266 and the death rate was 1.53 percent.

With 291 new infections yesterday, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 540,266.

At least 374 Covid-19 patients have recovered during the same 24 hours. With this, the total number of recoveries rose to 486,767, and the recovery rate at 90.10 percent.

Among the five deceased, seven were males.

One of them was aged between 21 and 30 years, one between 31 and 40, one between 41 and 50, four were between 51 and 60, and six were above 60 years, added the release.

# Coca-Cola trials first paper bottle

a year ago, glimmers of

hope flickered as an AFP

database showed the rate

of new Covid-19 infections

FROM PAGE 12

seasonal flu.

Centre

Cola, for example, has set a goal of producing zero waste by 2030. Coca-Cola was ranked the

world's number one plastic polluter

"So we should be

prepared that it will

to Ammon, head of the

Stockholm-based European

After the latest harsh

started in China more than

for

Prevention and Control.

Coronavirus will remain

remain with us," according has slowed by 44.5 percent

Covid-19.

Disease

by charity group Break Free From Plastic last year, closely followed by other drink-producers Pepsi and by fizzy drinks - such as cola and Nestle.

Al Hajj Lt. Col Hesamuddin Ahmed, psc (Retd). served as a Secretary to

the Government of Bangladesh in various ministries. He was the Adminis trator of the Dhaka Municipality, Chairman of RAJUK and other important Being the Founder President of the National Shooting Federation Bangla-desh, the Founder Member and Founding Vice Chairman RAOWA, his contributions will always be remembered. He was associated with UCEP Bangladesh, SAHIC and various sports and

9th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

social welfare organizations. In recognition of his remarkable contributions in the field of Sports development and social welfare he was awarded the National Sports Award (2003), Atish Dipannkar Gold Medal, Poet Sarojini Naidu Gold Medal, C R Das Gold Medal etc. -Dearly Missed & Always Cherished by-

Wife, Son, Daughter, Daughter in Law, Son in Law & Granddaughters

বীমা উন্নয়ন ও নিয়ন্ত্রন কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক নিয়োগ প্রাপ্ত প্রশাসক হিসেবে ভেল্টা লাইফের দায়িত্ব নিলেন জনাব সুলতান-উল-আবেদীন মোল্লা, এফসিএস



সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের জ্ঞাতার্থে জানানো যাচেছ যে, বীমা উন্নয়ন ও নিয়ন্ত্রণ কর্তৃপক্ষের স্মারক নং-৫৩.০৩.০০০০.০৩৬.০১.০৩৪.২১.১৪৫, তারিখঃ ১১/০২/২০২১ খ্রিঃ অনুযায়ী বীমা আইন ২০১০ এর ৯৫ ধারা অনুযায়ী ডেল্টা লাইফ ইনসিওরেন্স কোম্পানীর বর্তমান পরিচালনা পর্যদকে সাসপেড করে জনাব সুলতান-উল-আবেদীন মোল্লা, এফসিএস, প্রাক্তন সদস্য, বীমা উন্নয়ন ও নিয়ন্ত্রণ কর্তৃপক্ষ-কে কোম্পানীতে প্রশাসক হিসেবে নিয়োগ দিয়েছেন।

> ডেল্টা লাইফ ইনসিওরেন্স কোম্পানী লিমিটেড এর পক্ষ থেকে সম্মানিত সকল বীমা গ্রাহক, শেয়ারহোল্ডারবৃন্দ ও শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের প্রাপ্য সুবিধাসমূহ ও স্বাভাবিক কার্যক্রম চলমান থাকবে এ মর্মে আশ্বস্ত ও নিশ্চিত করা যাচেছ।



**८**७ल्**छी लाँ**श्रेक शैत्रिं**८त्निक रकाम्भाती लिंसि८**छेँ७

#### For 14 years, Munshi Nurunnabi Ahmed has been making sure his support so that there were no power knife," he said.

The last words the duo exchanged were when Farida was being taken to the operation theatre.

room. I wanted to go inside but they did not allow me.
"At one stage, I entered and the

to the ICU," Ahmed recalled. While the doctors reactivated her heart function using CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation),

After repeated requests to the

patient was almost dead. Upon request, the doctors admitted her and Farida was taken

At that hospital, Ahmed came across a doctor who helped the

see such a great human being in the world. He tried his best to cure my he charged the minimum cost. He also personally helped us," Ahmed said.

although outsiders were strictly prohibited," he said. In March 2008, Ahmed brought

Protesters liken DSA a line of a poem or a drama shakes have been filed against Rita on

> human beings are not robots, the government wants them "to be robots" so that people speak in their way. He said the introduction of the DSA reflected that the government is afraid. "People in the government

the government?

say law takes its own course. But it is not like that. It's governed by power," Anu Muhammad said. At the programme, folk singer Rita Dewan, who was arrested

in a case filed under the DSA, performed baul songs. "If I live in an independent

bird?" the singer questioned. accused of "hurting the religious

country, why can't I sing like a Rita and her daughters were

similar grounds. She is now out of Anu Muhammad said although jail on bail. In May last year, police

detained cartoonist Kishore and writer Mushtaq from their Dhaka homes under the DSA. They were accusing of "spreading rumours and misinformation on Facebook about the coronavirus situation' and "undermining the image of the Father of the Nation", and the 'national anthem".

Police recently pressed charges against photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol, cartoonist Kishore, writer Mushtaq and Rashtrochinta activist Didarul Islam Bhuiyan in different cases filed under the DSA last year.

At the rally yesterday, protesters demanded immediate and unconditional release of Kishore sentiment". A total of four cases and Mushtaq from jail.

scheduled to stage demonstrations

(Jamuka) at a meeting on Tuesday

discussed the ways to revoke the

gallantry title of Ziaur Rahman for "violating" the constitution and "abetting" the self-proclaimed

killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh

Mujibur Rahman in escaping the

repeal the then state-given awards

beer - which are bottled under

The meeting also agreed to

The Jatiya Muktijoddha Council

across the country today.

country.

#### Police, BNP men clash at press club sources at the hospital said. BNP's all-district units are also

blamed police for the clash.

charged baton on them.

Many BNP protestors, including some central leaders, took shelter inside Jatiya Press Club during the clash. They left the spot after the situation returned to normalcy around 1:00pm.

Mamunur Rashid, officer-incharge of Shahbagh Police Station, said so far they have detained 18 people from in front of Press Club and nearby areas after the clash.

At Dhaka Medical College

Hospital, a policeman and at

least 12 BNP men took treatment,

attack on BNP's peaceful rally was pre-planned. The police behaved desperately and acted like criminal cadres, he said at a press conference later in the day.

Meanwhile, BNP Senior Joint

He alleged that police members'

Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi

Earlier, on Thursday, the party announced a two-day demonstration programme protesting what it said an "evil effort" to repeal party founder Ziaur Rahman's Bir Uttam gallantry title.

to Bangabandhu's four convicted

Part of the challenge has been pressure.

worldwide over the past More than 107 million people have been infected worldwide and nearly 2.4 wave of a pandemic that million have died from

"Time Heals Everything, But from Sunrise to Sunset, The Wound in Our