



## SC to probe allegations of graft within

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday formed a two-member committee to look into allegations of corruption and irregularities in its Appellate and High Court divisions.

The move came four days after Hasan Foez Siddique, the new chief justice, said he would fight corruption and irregularities in judiciary.

The two members of the committee are, Additional Registrar Md Abdur Rahman and Deputy Registrar Md Mizanur Rahman of the HC Division, said SC spokesperson Saifur Rahman.

He said the committee was formed under the directive from the chief justice and it will conduct a preliminary inquiry into the allegations of irregularities and corruption in the SC divisions.

On December 2, the chief justice said, "Corruption is a cancer. I will take action against all sorts of graft and irregularities. I will not make compromises".

Speaking at a felicitation programme accorded to him by the attorney general's office and the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) at the chief justice's courtroom in the SC, Foez promised to identify and eradicate every problem that can obstruct dispensation of justice.

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STAR HEALTH DESK

Holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*), popularly known as "tulsi", is one of the most used medicinal herbs in Bangladesh.

It has been revered since ancient times in the Indian sub-continent as an herb that can promote good health.

Modern science has shown that holy basil provides favorable clinical effects for immunity and infections, inflammation, and metabolic disorders including diabetes.

Traditional uses of holy basil include treating

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Maria, 13, working at a brick-breaking yard in Shyampur of Dhaka. She was born with an intellectual disability and so, her mother could not leave her home alone during work. As Maria was reluctant to attend school, her mother, who also works in the yard, started bringing her to work to contribute to family earnings. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

### UP POLLS RESULTS

## Independents outdo AL men

Member candidate killed in post-polls violence

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Independents winning the post of union parishad chairman have outnumbered those who won with an Awami League nomination.

In the elections held on Wednesday, independents won in 346 UPs and AL nominees in 341, according to Election Commission data unveiled last night.

Ruling party insiders said more than 150 of the winning independents were disgruntled AL leaders who ran as independents after failing to get the party's nomination.

The AL nominees' performance is in a gradual decline in the staggered UP polls, according to the unofficial results announced by the EC.

In the fourth phase of the polls held on December 26, 2021, AL chairman nominees won 49.74 percent of the posts while independents won 49 percent.

On Wednesday, polls were held in 707 UPs. The EC announced unofficial results of 692 as of yesterday.

According to the latest EC data, in at least 48 UPs, AL nominees were the only ones running for chairman. They were announced as the winners. The party did not nominate anyone for chairman in 32 UPs.

Two nominees each from the Jatiya Party and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam and one candidate from Bangladesh Jatiya Party also won in Wednesday's polls.

The EC has so far announced unofficial results of 3,677 UPs in five phases. The AL chairman nominees won in 2,015 UPs and independents in 1,597. Most of the independents are disgruntled AL men, said party insiders.

Polls to 219 UPs will be held in the sixth phase on January 31.

**POST POLLS VIOLENCE KILLS MAN** Abdul Malek Malot, 55, a defeated member candidate in Noapara Union Parishad was beaten to death allegedly by another defeated member candidate in Naria, Shariatpur, yesterday, reports our correspondent in the district.

Locals said he was beaten up by his nephew Delwar Hossain Malot, 52, and his supporters around 11:00am during a clash.

Locals took him to Munshiganj General Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Aboni Shangkor Kor, officer-in-charge of Naria Police Station, said police are looking for the suspects.

At least 15 others were injured in a clash between two local AL groups in Assasuni, Satkhira, yesterday. Ten of them were shot.

## Woman found dead, husband goes missing

Locals in Bandarban allege it was Mogh Party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

A woman was found dead in her house and her husband missing in Bandarban's Rajbila area early yesterday.

Jerin Akhter, Bandarban's superintendent of police, said that yesterday morning, police heard from locals of Thongzoma Para village that Singamu Marma, 28, was stabbed dead and her husband, Rethoai Marma, 46, was abducted.

Singamu's body, covered in stab wounds, was recovered in the afternoon and sent to Bandarban Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, while a drive was launched to search for her missing husband, said police sources.

Quoting locals, Kya Aung Prue Marma, chairman of Rajbila area, said, "A group of around six criminals broke into Rethoai's house in Thongzoma Para of Rajbila union to abduct him. When his wife Singamu tried to stand in their way to protect him, they stabbed her to death around 3:00am."

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify this information.

Soichasing Marma, a ward member of the Thongzoma Para, said he got a phone call from Rethoai around that time. "The phone call lasted 10-12 seconds. He was only able to say, 'they are taking me away

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## Edible oil prices are not going up now

Says commerce ministry, despite refiners' proposal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Edible oil prices will not be increased now, as the government yesterday decided to review the refiners' proposal to hike prices of vegetable oil by Tk eight per litre from January 8, said a senior commerce ministry official yesterday.

This development will likely reduce some financial stress on consumers, who are already battered by the rising inflation on daily necessities.

Commerce ministry officials made the disclosure after a meeting with importers, refiners, wholesalers and price-fixing experts at the ministry yesterday.

"We will further review the proposed price hike of edible oil," said AHM Shafiquzzaman, additional secretary to the commerce ministry.

Edible oil refiners and importers on January 2 informed the government about their decision to hike prices to Tk 168 per litre, effective from January 8.

Shafiquzzaman said the ministry has also been reviewing the price-fixing methods of other basic imported commodities so that consumers can purchase them at affordable prices.

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### ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

## Myanmar now proposes new joint committee

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Myanmar has proposed to form a new joint committee with Bangladesh to settle the Rohingya verification issues, nearly three years after the two countries held a bilateral meeting on Rohingya repatriation.

The proposal of forming the committee, comprised of officials from both the countries, came in late December, said a foreign ministry official, seeking anonymity.

Talking to The Daily Star, the official on Tuesday said, "They proposed the idea and we received it positively."

Earlier, multiple repatriation attempts fell flat as the Rohingyas denied returning to their homeland arguing their demands for guaranteed safety, basic rights and citizenship.

Around 750,000 Rohingyas entered Bangladesh in August 2017 following a brutal military crackdown on the Rakhine State of Myanmar.

Meanwhile, on New Year eve, Myanmar Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin sent greetings and gifts to Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen through the Myanmar embassy in Dhaka.

"Those are good news. They [Myanmar] are showing warm gestures," Momen told The Daily Star at his ministry office on Monday.

Asked about a meeting that Myanmar proposed, the foreign minister said it might happen at any moment. "It will depend on them. We are always ready."

He also said the topmost priority for Bangladesh was the Rohingya repatriation and it was proved to be a big challenge.

## Omicron may be less severe, but not 'mild': WHO

AGENCIES

The more infectious Omicron variant of Covid-19 appears to produce less severe disease than the globally dominant Delta strain, but it should not be categorised as "mild", the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said yesterday.

While Omicron has spread rapidly worldwide and triggered containment measures, rates of deaths and hospitalizations have been lower across the world. Numbers of new deaths have remained largely flat, likely due in part to vaccine availability.

Speaking at a media briefing, director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned against any complacency. He also repeated his call for greater global equity in the distribution of and access to coronavirus vaccines.

He warned that based on the current rate of vaccine rollout, 109 countries will miss the WHO's target for 70 percent of the world's population to be fully vaccinated by July. That aim is seen as helping end the acute phase of the pandemic.

Omicron surge, halted polls rallies in India, a day after authorities cancelled Grammys and Sundance.

