

## DHAKA-ANKARA MoU signed to fight terrorism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh yesterday signed a memorandum of understanding with Turkey on counter-terrorism, security cooperation and prevention of drug trafficking.

It was signed at a meeting between the visiting delegation led by Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu and Bangladesh Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan at the Secretariat yesterday.

Asaduzzaman said, “The Turkish minister said they will further enhance their support after this MoU.

“We talked about training, intelligence sharing, curbing cyber-crime, and enriching our police, coast guard, BGB and Ansar...Turkey will continue to train the Ansar and police at different levels.”

Earlier in the day, Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman visited Ukhia upazila’s Rohingya camp no.9 where he inaugurated a 50-bed field hospital, run by Turkish government organisation AFAD. He went to the camp directly from the Cox’s Bazar airport after landing at 8:00am.

During his visit there, he said his country stands by Bangladesh in dealing with the Rohingya crisis. “Bangladesh is not alone.”



Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu waves to the crowd during his visit to a Rohingya camp. Soylu inaugurated a hospital at a refugee camp in Cox’s Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Hijra individual stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, BENAPOLE

A member of the hijra community was stabbed to death in Jashore yesterday.

The dead was identified as Laboni Akhter, 30.

The incident took place near the Halsa Bridge on Jashore-Chuttipur road around 10:00am, said the victim’s father Karim Mistry.

Eyewitnesses Nazma and Selina, who are also members of the community, said Laboni used to live with them under the supervision of community chief Panjeri in the city’s Dharmatala area.

All three of them later moved after having differences of opinions with the chief.

Since then, they added, Panjeri and her followers Munni, Barsha, and Sonia threatened to kill them on numerous occasions.

“We were heading towards Chhutipur village. When we arrived near the Halsa bridge, two masked men appeared, stabbed Laboni and then fled.”

They rushed Laboni to Jashore General Hospital with the help of locals.

Ahmed Tareq Shams, emergency doctor at the hospital, declared her dead, saying excessive bleeding was the cause.

Tajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said they are trying to identify the killers.

## UP ELECTIONS First, it’s 100pc, then it’s 75pc Vote counting mess raises questions over polls credibility

ASIFUR RAHMAN AND JAHID HASAN

Polling officials made a mess of counting ballots at a voting centre in Shariatpur’s Naria upazila during the fifth phase of the union parishad polls on Wednesday, raising questions about the credibility of the election results.

After counting ballots, the returning officer at Dewjuri Government Primary School polling centre in Dingamanik UP polls announced in the evening that hundred percent votes were cast.

Surprised at the “cent percent turnout”, several defeated UP chairman candidates alleged that irregularities occurred in counting votes.

Later at night, Presiding Officer Md Ramjan Ali declared a revised result of the polling centre. He claimed that they committed a “counting mistake” in the first result.

The revised result showed that around 75 percent of the total 2,226 votes were cast at the centre.

The Daily Star has obtained copies of both the result sheets singed by Upazila Election Officer Md Atiar Rahman.

“In the first count, we mistakenly included all the unused ballots to the tally of cancelled votes and that’s why the result showed a hundred percent turnout,” Ramjan Ali told The Daily Star on Friday.

The defeated chairman candidates alleged that the polling officials did not allow their agents to stay inside the centre during the counting of ballots. They also demanded re-election to the UP.

Shahidul Islam Chowdhury, a defeated chairman candidate, said: “The polling officers misbehaved with our agents from the very beginning of voting. They also drove them out of the polling centre before counting ballots.”

Another chairman hopeful Anwar Hossain Khan, who lost the polls to Abdul Aziz Sardar by 456 votes, alleged that election officials stamped his

legal ballots twice to count those as cancelled.

Both Anwar and Aziz were independent candidates.

The first result sheet showed that 672 ballots were cancelled. In the second result sheet, the figure was 124, the highest among all nine polling centres in the union.

Anwar bagged 505 votes against Aziz’s 902 at Dewjuri Government Primary School polling centre.

Presiding Officer Ramjan said some of the cancelled ballots were found to be torn and some were stamped twice.

He denied the allegation of stamping ballots twice themselves.

Five chairman candidates, including four independents – all local leaders of ruling Awami League – ran for chairman of Dingamanik Union Parishad.

The AL did not nominate anyone for chairman there.

The fifth phase of the ongoing UP polls was held in 708 unions across the country on Wednesday.

## Govt to issue circular AL focuses on polls, tackling demos

FROM PAGE 1  
after a meeting with NTAC today.

“We will sit with the national technical advisory committee [NTAC] on Covid-19 tomorrow. We will discuss the overall situation and make a decision,” she said while talking to journalists at the secretariat.

She also said that they assumed coronavirus infection would surge in March but it started to increase in early January. “So, we need to make some adjustments to our plans.”

The minister said, “We do not want to close the educational institutions. Rather, we want students to go there after taking vaccines. But it will become a problem for those aged below 12 years.”

The ministers came up with the statements at a time when another case of Omicron variant of coronavirus was detected in the country, raising the total number of Omicron cases to 21.

The new Omicron infected patient was a 22-year-old male from Dhaka, according to the data published on the global database GISAID last night.

His sample was collected for genome sequencing on December 28 by the Child Health Research Foundation.

The positivity rate of Covid-19 has also continued to rise as the health directorate reported 5.79 percent positive cases against 19,275 tests in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

The positivity rate was 5.67 percent the previous day.

For the previous three and a half month since September 21, the positivity rate was below five percent – a parameter that suggests control over virus transmission.

Yesterday, the total number of new cases was 1,116, decreased from 1,146 on the previous day.

On Friday night, the NTAC recommended engaging law enforcement agencies, including operating mobile court drives, so that health guidelines are strictly followed to curb the spread of Covid-19.

At the 50th meeting, the committee came up with four recommendations including strict implementation of health guidelines, bringing all the students under the vaccination programme, ensuring screening at all entry points, and ensuring quarantine and isolation, and preparing adequate general beds and ICU facilities in all Covid-19 designated hospitals and ample oxygen supplies.

## Omicron spread due to mix of factors: WHO

AFP, GENEVA

The World Health Organization said Friday that the spread of Omicron was down to a combination of factors including the make-up of the Covid-19 variant and increased social mixing.

FROM PAGE 1

aspect of the growing feud was that the party candidates’ performance worsened with every election phase, which highlights a decline in the party’s popularity.

Party leaders also think expulsion of a huge number of leaders and activists at the local level for supporting the rebels has weakened the strength at the grassroots.

In this situation, the party will send teams to different parts of the country throughout the year to find out the reasons behind the internal feuds. The teams will also suggest ways to solve them.

AL Organising Secretary

Sakhawat Hossain Shafiq told The Daily Star, “Our political activities almost came to a halt due to the pandemic. The ongoing polls also unfortunately exposed feud and indiscipline within the party.”

About the next course of action, he said, “We have already formed investigation committees to find out the reasons behind the infighting. Those who patronised the rebel candidates have already been identified.

“We will decide the next step based on the committee report.”

He also said they would hold fully-fledged council sessions for grassroots and

arrange “organisational tours” after the celebration of Homecoming Day of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on January 10.

“Creating new leaders in the party through the councils, we will rejuvenate it for the upcoming general elections,” he added.

The AL will also hold talks with like-minded leftist and some moderate Islamist parties as it plans to expand its electoral alliance, said its leaders.

It had formed a 14-party alliance in 2005 and won the national election in 2008. The AL-led alliance also won the next two elections in 2014 and 2018.

devise,” he said.

As part of the party revamping process, the BNP has already started dissolving existing committees in many districts and forming new ones. It plans to complete the process by June, said party sources.

The party is looking for new leaders in grassroots, they said.

BNP leader Tabith Awal said the main target for 2022 is to unite people behind the demand for a fair election under a non-partisan government.

“We have already started our activities to reach out to the people and other political parties as well as other stakeholders,” said Tabith, an ex-mayoral candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation.

Apart from these, the

But the partners of the coalition, termed an “ideological alliance” by the ruling party, are apparently not happy as a distance has developed within the alliance after 2018, according to the insiders, who said it happened after the AL formed the cabinet without anyone from its alliance partners.

The insiders also said that the party would now focus on cementing relations with its ideological partners.

The party also might conduct surveys by different organisations on probable MP candidates for the 300 parliamentary constituencies, the insiders added.

## Covid eating away

FROM PAGE 1  
For instance, the under-five mortality was nearly 60 per 1,000 live births in Sylhet, while it is just above 30 per 1,000 live births in Khulna.

About 67 per cent of the rural households do not have access to the internet, but the corresponding figure for urban areas is 47 percent.

“Even though Bangladesh has made tremendous human development progress over the years, there are still areas of deprivations.”

As Bangladesh moves along the path of human development, the issues of inequalities, climate change, youth

employment, teenagers’ dreams and peace, and security would be critical.

Subsequently, the report recommended a five-point action plan including pursuing a human development-led growth strategy, closing the gender gap, a national human security strategy, improving governance and institutions, and promoting a youth employment plan.

The country’s institutions and governance are yet to reach their zenith. Basic human values like tolerance, mutual respect, and basic rights need to be strengthened, the report added.

## Man dies in police custody

FROM PAGE 1  
“It’s mandatory for places like the interrogation cells and the armouries to have working CCTV cameras.”

She added that a three-member team has been formed to find out why the cameras were not working.

Police took Himanshu’s body to Hatibandha Upazila Health Complex around 4:00pm on Friday. It was kept in their custody till late Friday night until when no relatives and journalists were allowed to see it.

As the news spread, locals started crowding the hospital as well as the police station.

Himanshu’s father Bisheshwar Barman was also brought to the police station for questioning on Friday. He was released around noon, said the law enforcers.

Bisheshwar’s brother Digendra Nath Roy said Himanshu was completely

healthy when he was taken to the police station and that he was not somebody to ever consider suicide.

“I am also not finding my brother,” Digendra told The Daily Star.

Hirambar Roy, resident medical officer of Hatibandha Upazila Health Complex, told our Lalmonirhat correspondent that bruises were found on Himanshu’s neck, but the cause of death would be determined only after an autopsy.

A statement by Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation, signed by eminent human rights activist Sultana Kamal, said the police explanation is “not in any way believable”.

“We demand an impartial investigation into the incident. Swift steps should be taken against those involved,” said the statement, circulated to the media.

## Bus crushes 2 on Hanif flyover 3 more killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Two pedestrians were killed and at least five others injured after a speedy bus ran over them near the toll plaza of Mayor Hanif Flyover in the capital’s Gulistan yesterday morning.

The dead are Sheikh Farid, 28, a fish trader of Kanchpur and Md Badshah, 32, a tailor of Kajla.

They were walking near the ramp of the flyover after coming down from buses when the speedy bus knocked them down, said Rajib Chandra Sarker, sub-inspector of Wari Police Station.

The incident took place around 9:30am when a bus of Meghla Paribahan lost control of the vehicle while coming down from the flyover, leaving the two pedestrians dead, the SI said, adding that the bus also broke the nearby railing.

Later, Rab-3 detained Rakib, the driver of the bus, in the capital’s Wari area, said ANM Imran Khan, assistant director (media wing) of the force.

Five injured were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Some passengers on the bus also received injuries.

Quoting doctor, Bachchu Mia, in-charge of the DMCH police outpost, said the injured were out of danger.

Meanwhile, a madrasa teacher was killed while crossing the Dhaka-Sylhet highway yesterday morning.

The dead Delowar Hossain, 45, was a teacher of Islamic History at Darkhar Alia Madrasa.

Police and local people said he was going to college by foot as the passenger vehicles were not plying on the streets due to 144 imposed centring the BNP’s rally. A speedy goods-laden covered van ran over him while crossing the road.

Shahjalal Alam, officer-in-charge of Khatibah Highway Police Station in Sarail, said they could not apprehend the truck. They filed a case regarding the matter.

THREE MORE DIED

In Joypurhat, two persons were killed while two others injured after a covered van hit them in Akkelpu upazila yesterday afternoon.

The deceased are Suzan Hossain, 40, a van puller, and Sabbir Hossain, 20. Sabbir’s mother and sister were also injured in the incident.

Saidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Akkelpur Police Station, said Sabbir along with her mother and sister came to Akkelpur Technical School and College to finalise her sister’s admission.

As they were returning home riding a van, a speedy covered van hit the vehicle, leaving the van puller and Sabbir dead on the spot.

Sabbir’s mother and sister were taken Joypurhat Modern Hospital with severe injuries, said the OC.

Meanwhile, an 11-year-old madrasa student named Abu Bakkar was killed when a garbage truck hit him while he was crossing the road at Karnafuli in Chittagong around 11:30am yesterday, said Dulal Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Karnafuli Police Station.

Police seized the vehicle and arrested the driver, the OC added.