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appeal to world**



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fend for  
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dry spell**

HEALTH SERVICES

# Absent doctors a headache

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

A doctor of a government hospital in Gopalganj has been absent from work since March 16, 2020.

The authorities of Chest Disease Clinic in the southern district reported it to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) six months later, even though such an incident should have been reported within 60 days as per service rules.

The DGHS then stopped paying him, and the civil surgeon of Gopalganj sent another doctor to work at the facility. But officials concerned at the directorate say they still do not know the first doctor's whereabouts.

After joining government service in August 2014, the doctor went on a two-year study leave on March 1, 2017. Upon return, he worked at the DGHS office in the capital's Mohakhali for eight months before being transferred to Gopalganj in 2020.

"The medical officers had been irregular at work from the beginning. When we asked him to be regular, he simply left. Patients were deprived of services for months until we sent another physician

to the clinic," said Niaz Mahmud, civil surgeon of Gopalganj.

The official contact number of the doctor was found switched off.

According to DGHS officials, many doctors remain absent without leave and continue to be paid by the government. And, thousands of patients get deprived of health care.

Samiul Islam, director (administration) at the DGHS, said "Absence without permission badly hampers hospital operations."

When doctors remain absent, the authorities in most cases take three to six months to replace them.

On many occasions, the healthcare facilities take months to report the absentee.

There are around 25,000 physicians engaged in hospital service under the health directorate.

But there is no data on the exact number of such absentee doctors. Samiul said listing errant doctors was a "continuous process".

According to data from a section at the DGHS, the authorities stopped paying

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**Wading through knee-deep water, SSC examinees struggle to reach their centre at Boyra Haji Foyez Uddin Girls High School in Khulna city yesterday -- the first day of the exams. Downpour throughout the night before has inundated different parts of the city, causing city dwellers to suffer.**

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## EC doctored parties' stance on EVM

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

According to the Election Commission, 17 parties during their talks with the EC opined in favour of using EVMs in the next national polls but The Daily Star found that at least four of them actually spoke against using EVMs.

The parties are: Zaker Party, Bangladesh Islami Front, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, and Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish.

Leaders of the parties were surprised to see that the EC put them on a list that favours the use of EVMs in the next polls.

They said there was no reason for the EC to be confused about their stance on EVMs.

Workers Party gave conditions for using EVMs in the next polls but the commission did not meet the conditions and said the party was in favour of EVMs.

The Workers Party recommended adding voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT).

MA Matin, chairman of Bangladesh Islami Front, told The Daily Star that they

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## Only a level-playing field can make difference: TIB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ensuring that the upcoming parliamentary polls are free, fair and inclusive is a challenge in pursuit of good governance and a functioning democracy, Transparency International Bangladesh has observed.

It also said initiatives like using EVMs and a voter list with photographs would be meaningless if an atmosphere for fair and inclusive polls could not be created for all political parties.

The anti-graft watchdog came up with the observations at a virtual press conference on "Inclusive Polls: Doable to Overcome Challenges of Democratic Good Governance" marking the International Day of Democracy yesterday.

Addressing the conference, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said it was possible to hold free, fair, and inclusive polls under a partisan government if an ideal atmosphere could be ensured.

"The role of the [polls-time] government has to be within a lawfully determined limited framework," he said.

He said the provision that allows ministers and lawmakers to run for parliament without quitting their positions has to be repealed.

Currently, it is constitutionally not possible to have a polls-time "caretaker" government, which had served the country before, Iftekharuzzaman added.

In a keynote paper on the issue, Rafiqul Hasan, director of research and policy at the TIB, said different institutions responsible for upholding democracy had gradually weakened since 2013.

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## AL REBELS A problem party can't solve

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and  
ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

Mohiuddin Maharaj, organising secretary of Pirojpur district Awami League, is contesting the chairman's post in the upcoming zila parishad elections as a rebel candidate for the second consecutive time.

Maharaj, who won the chairmanship in the first zila parishad polls in 2016 as an AL dissident, also sought the party nomination this time.

Along with his party nomination paper, Maharaj submitted signatures of 704 elected representatives out of 747 in the district, supporting him.

But the ruling party nominated local AL leader Salma Rahman Happy, the party's lone female chairperson candidate out of its 61 district chairperson candidates.

Salma will now have to face challenges from Maharaj and four others.

Not only Salma, 41 other AL-nominated candidates will have to face party dissidents as the party failed to deter rebels, like it failed in the previous local body elections. The other 19 candidates were elected unopposed.

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DEMO OVER PRICE HIKE

## 20 hurt as BNP, AL men clash

Shops, vehicles vandalised in city's  
Mirpur; police fire teargas shells

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 20 people were injured as leaders and activists of the BNP and ruling Awami League locked into clashes across the capital's Mirpur over a pre-scheduled rally of the opposition party yesterday.

Police dispersed the two sides by firing teargas shells, while both parties claimed several of their activists were injured in the clashes.

Parvej Islam, officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station, confirmed that 20 people, including 10 police personnel, were injured in the clashes.

The BNP had a rally scheduled to start around 1:30pm on Mukul Fouz Field in Mirpur 6.

But before the rally could start, AL leaders and activists, wielding sticks, took out a procession around the venue. They then tried to chase away the opposition men, who retaliated with throwing brick chips, said witnesses.

The ruling party men also vandalised the stage, motorcycles and nearby shops.

BNP alleged that on duty policemen were doing nothing at the time.

The clash later spread to Mirpur 2, 10, and 11. Enraged by the sudden attack, the BNP leaders and activists gathered at the Mirpur 6 Indoor Stadium around 2:30pm and took out a procession,

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## Federer calls it quits

REUTERS

Roger Federer broke the news fans across the world have long been fearing when he announced on Thursday he will retire from competitive tennis after next week's Laver Cup in London.

The 41-year-old Swiss, who has won 20 Grand Slam titles and is regarded by many as the best player ever to wield a racket, has not played a match since last year's Wimbledon.

"As many of you know, the past three years have presented me with challenges in the form of injuries and surgeries," Federer said in a post on Instagram.

"I've worked hard to return to full competitive form. But I also know my body's capacities and limits, and my message to me lately has been clear. I am 41 years old."

"I have played more than 1,500 matches over 24 years. Tennis has treated me more generously than I ever would have dreamt, and now I must recognize when it's time to end my competitive career. The Laver Cup next week in

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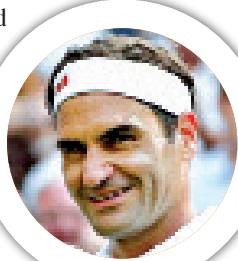


PHOTO: COLLECTED

**A snapshot of a clash between leaders and activists of the BNP and the ruling Awami League in the capital's Mirpur over a rally of the opposition party yesterday. Police dispersed them by firing teargas shells. At least 20 people, including 10 police personnel, were injured.**

## Developed nations doing little to help

**Says UN special envoy on  
climate change impacts  
on Bangladesh**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is facing massive losses and damages due to climate change, but the industrialised countries are doing little to help the country address its needs, said Ian Fry, UN special rapporteur on human rights and climate change.

At the regional level, upstream countries also appear to be unresponsive to Bangladesh's concerns about flooding and droughts -- both affecting millions every year, he said.

Fry made the comments at a virtual press conference yesterday upon conclusion of his September 4-15 visit to Bangladesh. He visited coastal Khulna and low-lying Sylhet regions and also spoke to government officials in Dhaka during the tour.

This is the first official visit to Bangladesh by the UN expert since he took office on May 1. He will present a report on his tour to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in June next year.

Fry said 10 million people live on

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