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Credible polls key for democracy

Says UK minister for Indo-Pacific

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Credible elections are key to protecting constitutional democracy and human rights, said UK Minister for the Indo-Pacific Anne-Marie Trevelyan yesterday.

She stressed on the importance of stability and inclusive policies for Bangladesh's long-term development, and said building confidence and trust among political parties can help avoid violence in elections. She added that avoiding political cases and arrests can help build the trust needed.

The international community too can help by offering election observers, she mentioned.

"I laud the prime minister's commitment to fair and credible elections," she said while addressing a seminar on "UK-Bangladesh Partnership in the Context of Indo-Pacific" at the capital's Foreign Service Academy.

Trevelyan started her three-day visit to Bangladesh on Friday. Yesterday, she called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Gono Bhaban and Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at the foreign ministry. She also visited the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

She said bilateral trade, cooperation in the areas of climate change, and addressing the Rohingya crisis are some of the major areas where the two countries are working together closely.

She said the UK is holding Myanmar accountable at the UN Security Council, as well as supporting Bangladesh in terms of humanitarian assistance. The ultimate solution to the crisis is safe and sustainable repatriation.

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PATHWAY TO PERIL... Dhaka North City Corporation has made this footpath by demolishing parts of the ground floor of a dilapidated school building. The haphazard construction has created a dangerous situation for students. Demolished walls and makeshift columns leave the building vulnerable to collapse, putting innocent lives at risk. This photo was taken from East Basabo area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Attacks on Ahmadiyya orchestrated' Fakhrul alleges govt did it to gain political mileage

UNB, Dhaka

Saying communal attacks on the Ahmadiyya community in Panchagarh are premeditated, BNP yesterday alleged that the government orchestrated them for political gain by putting the blame on the opposition.

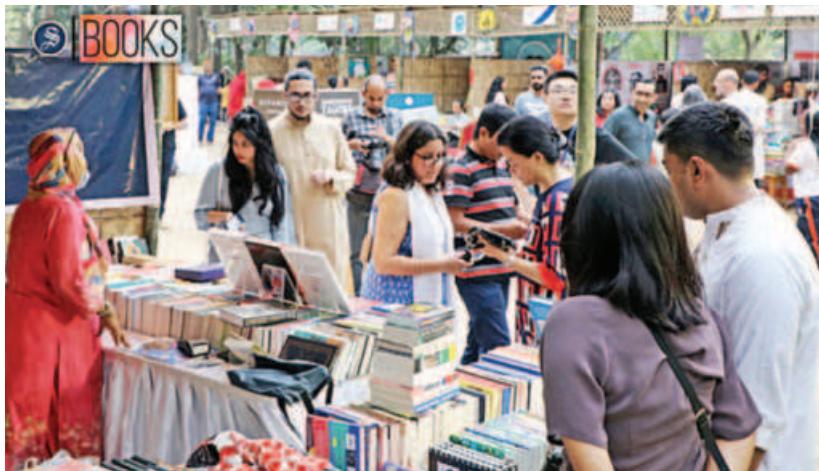
Speaking at a press conference, the party's secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the government mainly tried to weaken BNP's ongoing movement for restoring democracy and tarnish the party's image both at home and abroad by implicating it with communal violence.

The conference was held at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office in the capital to present the report prepared by the party's committee members who investigated the communal incident.

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The pleasure of knowing your neighbourhood



SARAH ANJUM BARI

Safe, vibrant public spaces are so rare in Dhaka that the months from January to early March feel like a gift from the universe when the Bangla Academy comes alive with the Dhaka Lit Fest, followed by the Dhaka Art Summit and the February extravaganza of the Ekushey Boi Mela. Since 2020, the Gulshan Book Fair has added to the series of treats for those of us who crave creative festivals in this city.

I sit writing this article in front of another recent gift to book lovers -- the newly opened branch of the popular bookstore, Bookworm Bangladesh, which since February, resides inside the Shahabuddin Park in Gulshan 2. And I sit writing this in a hurry, because I'm about to head to Gulshan Society Lake Park just a two minutes' walk away, where the Gulshan Book Fair 3 is celebrating its last day of festivities for this year.

These initiatives are special because they bring a marked difference from having to sit indoors and pay for food and drinks if one wants some recreation.

Even with books and merchandise on sale, bookstores (in parks) and



community book fairs allow for the rare pleasure of walking around in an open space, interacting with nature, taking your pets on walks, perusing through texts and artwork, whether you want to buy it or not.

Even more integral are the conversations. As a millennial, I've grown up listening to parents and aunts speak nostalgically about the heyday of community interaction in Dhaka -- when neighbours knew each other, frequently got together so that generations of families were friends.

Street festivals such as the "Gulshan Paara Utshab" and the Book Fair are finally showing us a glimpse of such community interaction, where families, their friends and their pets collectively help put together artwork, food stalls, workshops, and storytelling sessions.

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BRTA to set up 12 more vehicle tracking stations

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority is set to increase its capacity to track stolen vehicles and monitor traffic movement by setting up 12 additional radio-frequency identification (RFID) stations at the capital's entry and exit points over the next 12 months.

The move comes amid criticism that vehicle owners barely benefit from the services, despite paying for them, due to the limited number of RFID checkpoints, said BRTA officials.

Following BRTA's request, Dhaka Metropolitan Police has identified 36 spots for setting up the RFID stations, and BRTA has called a stakeholder meeting today to determine the 12 new locations among those. Representatives from police, Roads and Highways Department, Dhaka city corporations, and vendors are expected to attend the meeting.

Since introducing digital number plates with RFID tags in 2012, BRTA has aimed to track vehicles used in criminal activities and tax evasion.

Motorcycle or three-wheeler owners pay Tk 2,260 and four-wheeler owners Tk 4,628 for the mandatory plates and RFID tags.

However, owners have reportedly been unable to enjoy the benefits due to the lack of check-posts to read the tags and the absence of dedicated personnel to monitor the system.

When a vehicle passes through an RFID reader, the latter can retrieve its registration information, fitness certificate status, and tax owed if any.

Besides, a recent survey by BRTA found that many of the tags are not functional.

"So, we are replacing those when a vehicle is brought to BRTA for fitness clearance," Sitangshu said.

The tag reading stations send the data to the BRTA database. The police or the vehicle owners, upon filing a case or general diary, can obtain information from there.

Sitangshu Shekhar Biswas, director (engineering) of BRTA, said the existing 12 stations are not enough to track vehicles, so they are going to add 12 more, mainly at entry and exit points of the capital.

"We hope to complete setting up the stations within the next six months," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

When a vehicle passes through an RFID reader, the latter can retrieve its registration information, fitness certificate status, and tax owed if any. The tag reading stations send the data to the BRTA database. The police or the vehicle owners, upon filing a case or general diary, can obtain information from there.

However, many people, even after giving money for the RFID tags, do not install them in their vehicle, leading BRTA, on many occasions, to publish advertisements asking motorists to take the plates and RFID tags or face legal action.

Besides, a recent survey by BRTA found that many of the tags are not functional.

"So, we are replacing those when a vehicle is brought to BRTA for fitness clearance," Sitangshu said.

Tk 50,000 for migrant workers returning jobless

Government upgrades insurance scheme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Under insurance coverage, the government will provide Tk 50,000 to each migrant worker who will return home jobless within six months of their migration.

"We want to call this [situation] 'failed migration,'" said Sarwoer Alam, senior assistant secretary of expatriates' welfare ministry, while elaborating the insurance scheme at an event yesterday.

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'Optimistic about participatory polls' Says Australian envoy on Bangladesh's nat'l polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Australian High Commissioner Jeremy Bruer yesterday said his country is optimistic that Bangladesh's next general election will be participatory.

Bruer, while meeting Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal, also asked whether the EC would take any step to create a consensus among political parties.

"In reply, we said the matter of creating consensus does not fall under our jurisdiction,"

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Star, DBL Ceramics sign MoU

STAR REPORT

The Daily Star and DBL Ceramics have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) at the corporate office of DBL Group, said a press release.

Under the MoU, the newspaper and DBL will jointly initiate Archidea, a programme for undergraduate architecture students.

Archidea will commence within the upcoming weeks and launch officially across different architecture schools. It will launch with the registration guidelines. Students from architecture schools can register in teams and get started

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The Daily Star and DBL Ceramics signed a memorandum of understanding at the corporate office of DBL Group in Dhaka yesterday. Under the MoU, the newspaper and DBL will jointly initiate Archidea, a programme for undergraduate architecture students.

PHOTO: STAR