



"I'm stunned by this action and by its rapidity... This is politics with the gloves off and it bodes ill for our democracy."

Sr Congress MP Shashi Tharoor slams Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as MP



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## SHANKHARI BAZAR CARNAGE '71

# DEATH KNOCKED

on their doors at sundown



NANDA DULAL



GAUR SUR



SADANANDA NAG

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Shankhari Bazar is a neighbourhood in the old part of Dhaka, largely inhabited by the Hindus.

The area is named after the Shankhari community whose ancestral profession is to produce hand-crafted conch shell bangles known as shankha, and various other types of jewellery mostly worn by Hindu women and used for decorating the statues of their deities.

On the night of March 25, 1971, the Pakistan army launched Operation Searchlight and attacked areas deemed as the centres of the Bangalee nationalist movement.

The Hindu-dominated

neighbourhoods of Old Dhaka were particularly targeted by the occupation force as they were considered pro-Awami League bastions.

Nanda Dulal Brahmachari, locally known as Dulal Sadhu, was then 19. He is one of the survivors of the massacre that befell Shankhari Bazar.

"In the election of 1970, we the inhabitants of Shankhari Bazar unanimously voted for the Awami League," recalled Dulal.

"It was one of the major reasons why Syed Khwaja Khairuddin of Dhaka's Nawab family got defeated in the election. So, he branded all of us as anti-Pakistan and invited the army to take retaliatory measures against us."

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PM, PRESIDENT ON GENOCIDE DAY - PAGE 2



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN  
The Radhagobinda temple lies in ruins and abandoned in Shankhari Bazar of Old Dhaka. It was demolished by the Pakistan army on March 26, 1971.



Most streets in the capital become almost empty ahead of iftar, but Chawkbazar gets really busy with people gathering there for the tantalising mix of dishes that are a tradition of Old Dhaka. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## TALKS ON NAT'L POLLS BNP doubts EC's intention Analysts say the EC move aimed at improving image

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

BNP leaders think there is an ulterior motive behind the Election Commission's sudden invitation to the party for talks about the next general election.

Senior party leaders said that the invite could be an attempt to mislead the BNP's movement for an election-time government while political experts said that the commission wants to make it seem like it genuinely wants to hold a free and fair election.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal in a demi-official letter invited BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir on Thursday night to discuss the coming national election.

Soon after receiving the letter, Fakhru said talks with the EC will be meaningless as the commission does not have the authority to discuss the election-time government that BNP has been demanding.

"The BNP is demonstrating to a caretaker government. The issue of an election-time government is very much political. The Election commission has nothing to do with the election-time government. That's why, the BNP has a reason not to join the talk," Prof Al Masud Hasanuzzaman of government and politics at Jahangirnagar University, told The Daily Star.

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## Improve safety at 2,000 level crossings

Suggests BR-LGED survey to prevent accidents

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

With more than two-thirds of the 3,111 level crossings in the country considered unsafe, a government survey has recommended improving safety features of around 2,000 rail crossings.

It also recommended building overpasses or underpasses at 47 level crossings, and introducing an automated system at 194 unmanned crossings so that a warning bell goes off when a train approaches.

Other recommendations include setting up gate barriers, putting in place electricity and telephone lines and other basic facilities at 1,436 more crossings.

The survey, jointly conducted by Bangladesh Railway (BR) and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) last year, also suggested shutting down 62 crossings located close to one another.

They surveyed 2,083 level crossings, of which 1,080 were unauthorised, BR sources said.

It recommended recruiting 5,772 people to ensure safety at level crossings, where many accidents occur.

After receiving the survey results, BR sent it to the railways ministry recently to take the necessary steps.

The development came as accidents at unmanned level crossings continue to claim lives, with around 70 percent of the crossings under the country's 3,093km railway network being either unauthorised or without

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|                                 |
|---------------------------------|
| Total number of level crossings |
| <b>3,111</b>                    |
| Authorised                      |
| <b>1,886</b>                    |
| Unauthorised and unmanned       |
| <b>1,225</b>                    |
| Authorised but unmanned         |
| <b>948</b>                      |

ARAV KHAN

## Dhaka wants cancellation of his Indian passport

Interpol issues red notice against him

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is in talks with India to get fugitive accused Rabiul Islam's Indian passport cancelled, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said yesterday.

Rabiul, better known as Arav Khan, is an accused in a case filed over the murder of a police inspector in July 2018. He is currently living in Dubai.

"To bring him back, his Indian passport has to be cancelled. We have discussed the matter with India and work to that end is going on," the home minister told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Interpol issued a red notice for Rabiul early yesterday.

He is the 63rd Bangladeshi to be in the international police organisation's wanted list.

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Farmers are not getting irrigation water supply as the Katakhal canal has dried up. Locals say they won't face water crisis in the dry season if the canal is re-excavated and freed from encroachers. The photo was taken in Ghatail village of Khulna's Dakope upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## DEFAMATION CONVICTION Rahul Gandhi loses MP status Congress party members stage protests

AGENCIES

India's opposition Congress party suffered a major blow yesterday when parliament disqualified its leader, Rahul Gandhi, a day after

a court convicted him of defamation for comments that many deemed insulting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Gandhi "stands disqualified from the membership of Lok Sabha from the date of his conviction", the lower house of parliament said in a notice, using its Indian name.

Gandhi, 52, was convicted and sentenced to prison for two years in the western state of Gujarat on Thursday after he was found guilty of defamation in connection with a 2019 speech in which he referred to thieves as having the surname Modi.

He is due to appeal against the verdict in a district court in Gujarat, also Modi's home state.

"I am fighting for the voice of India, I am ready to pay any cost," Gandhi

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