



## GAZIPUR CITY POLLS

# AL faction may rally behind Zahangir's mother

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League mayor candidate in the May 25 Gazipur city polls, Azamat Ullah Khan, will not have to face any party rebels as the lone dissident runner withdrew yesterday.

"Abdullah Al Mamun is the only mayor aspirant who has withdrawn his candidature. Besides, 36 councillor hopefuls have also withdrawn," Assistant Returning Officer AHM Kamrul Hasan told reporters on the last day for withdrawing candidature.

Mamun is a former member of the AL's forest and environment affairs sub-committee.

However, suspended Gazipur mayor Zahangir Alam's mother Zaida Khatun is taking part in the mayoral polls as an independent. Zahangir has already started contacting voters seeking their blessings for his mother.

Zaida will have support from a faction of the AL which may make it difficult for Azamat Ullah to win, said some local leaders of the ruling party.

The EC is scheduled to allot the electoral symbols to the candidates today.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday upheld the Election Commission's decision to cancel the nomination of Zahangir.

A total of eight candidates, including a pro-BNP man and three independents, are running.

Besides, 239 candidates will vie for the posts of 57 councillors in as many wards of Gazipur City Corporation. A total of 77 candidates will run for councillor posts reserved for women, the assistant returning officer said yesterday.

At least 136 councillor aspirants are from the AL and 29 leaders of the BNP and its associate bodies are also running ignoring the party's decision of boycotting the polls.

Instead of backing a single candidate in a particular ward, the Gazipur AL has decided to keep the councillor races open for all, Asadur Rahman Kiran, acting mayor of Gazipur and also a former vice president of Gazipur city AL, told The Daily Star.

Sarkar Shahnur Islam, a nephew of BNP central executive committee member Hasan Uddin Sarkar, has already started seeking blessings from city dwellers as an independent mayor candidate.

The BNP, however, decided to go tough against its leaders and activists who are taking part in the city polls violating the party's decision.

Asked about his nephew's participation in the election, Hasan Uddin said, "No one can go against the party's decision."

Speaking to The Daily Star last night, Abdullah Al Mamun said he withdrew considering the interest of the party and the future of his political career.

### HC REJECTS ZAHAGIR'S PETITION

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Muhammad Mahbub UI Islam summarily rejected a writ petition filed by Zahangir challenging the legality of the EC's decision.

Zahangir later told journalists that he would appeal to the Appellate Division.

The HC in the order said Zahangir was a loan defaulter at the time of the submission of his nomination paper.

During the hearing on the writ petition, the HC bench said the aspirant candidates should clear possible issues that may create problems in becoming valid candidates at least three months before the elections.

All candidates know very well what can cause problems, the bench said.

The court made the comments after Zahangir's principal lawyer Fida M Kamal argued that his client was not a loan defaulter as he has paid off his loans.

Our Gazipur correspondent contributed to this report.



Delimbed trees on a road divider in front of Abahani Club in the capital's Dhanmondi. For around a week, the DSCC authorities have been felling trees or cutting off their limbs in areas across Dhaka South for "beautification purposes", despite the environmentalists repeatedly warning of adverse impacts. Earlier in January, the authorities had done the same but stopped after protests ensued. The photo was taken yesterday. Story on page 3.



SAMARESH MAJUMDAR  
1944-2023

## Chronicler of 'the dark times' dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
New Delhi

Eminent Bangla litterateur Samarendra Majumdar, whose popularity transcended the borders of Bangladesh and West Bengal, passed away yesterday at a private hospital in Kolkata in the evening, losing a protracted battle to a severe infection in the lungs and respiratory system.

The 79-year-old author,

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

### BUSINESS

## Forex reserves now \$29.7b

The foreign exchange reserves have fallen to \$29.77 billion as Bangladesh Bank cleared import bills to the tune of \$1.8 billion through the Asian Clearing Union.

The reserves had stood at \$42.20 billion in May last year, meaning it dropped by 29.45 percent over the past year. "We should increase our remittances and exports at any cost to contain the erosion of the reserves," said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank.

STORY ON B1

### 50 YEARS OF BANGLADESH-EU TIES

## EU plans to invest big in Bangladesh

EU ambassador tells The Daily Star

PORIMOL PALMA

The European Union plans to make large investments in infrastructure development and green technology to help Bangladesh's smooth transition from the LDC status.

Traditionally, the EU has been focused on development projects in education, health, food security, and governance. Now, as Bangladesh has grown economically and Bangladesh's position in the world is improving rapidly, EU's relation with Bangladesh is also changing.

"We are becoming a lot more focused on political issues, regional issues, and issues of mutual interests. We are also deepening cooperation in practical terms on the issues like ocean governance, climate change and renewable energy," EU Ambassador Charles Whiteley said in an interview with The Daily Star on Sunday, ahead of the 50 years of diplomatic relations being celebrated today.

Under the Global Gateway Initiative, EU's new approach of international corporation, Bangladesh is one of only a handful of countries that will have flagship projects on renewable energy.

Through this, the EU will be able to blend its development assistance with large loans from the European Investment Bank. "We hope to leverage in terms of grants and loans -- around 400 million euros -- to support the development of wind and solar energy in Bangladesh. We expect the signing to happen very soon," said the diplomat.

This will also support Bangladesh's goal of having 40 percent renewable energy by 2041 from only six percent now. The EU is also

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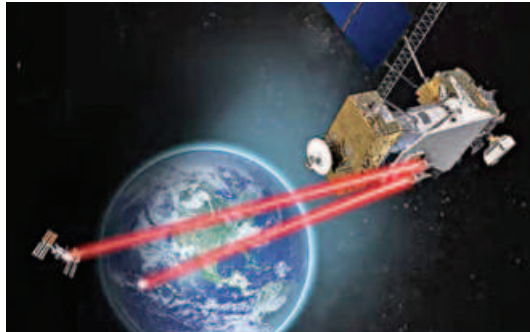
Charles Whiteley

## Artemis II mission to stream hi-res videos from Moon

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa is planning to use lasers to develop a new high-quality communication system for its Artemis II crewed mission around the Moon.

The new Optical Communications System (O2O) is expected to help send high-resolution images and video to Earth from the Moon as part of the Artemis II mission, the American space agency noted in a video last month.



This new laser technology will enable an unprecedented access to high-quality images and video from the Moon in real time, Space.com first reported.

Nasa has traditionally used radio frequency systems to communicate with astronauts and spacecraft. However, as space missions generate and collect tonnes of data, the need for enhanced communications capabilities has increased.

In contrast to radio wave systems, scientists said laser communication provides missions with increased data rates, meaning they can send and receive more information in a single transmission.

## BARISHAL CITY

# AL candidate's supporters get 'death threats' from BCL men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Some Chhatra League activists allegedly threatened supporters of Awami League mayor candidate in Barishal city polls Abul Khair Abdullah with life.

On Saturday, Md Sohag, a supporter of Abdullah, filed a general diary with Kaunia Police Station seeking security, said Abdur Rahman Mukur, OC of the station.

According to the complaint, Rois Ahmed alias Manna, convener of the Barishal city unit BCL, and his associates threatened to kill some supporters of the mayor candidate around 1:00am on Saturday.

The complainant named 17 people, including Manna and his brother Risad Ahmed, and 20-25 unidentified ones.

In the GD, Sohag, also a BCL activist, said he along with Sajibur Rahman Sajib and Sohel Hawlader were returning home after campaigning for Abdullah. When they reached near Bhuiyan house in Januking Singh Road area, Rois and his associates intercepted them.

Pointing a sharp weapon and a firearm at them, Rois and his associates threatened to kill them, Sohag said in the GD.

Contacted yesterday, Rois denied the allegation.



Traders have set up illegal makeshift shops along the rail lines in the capital's Malibagh bazar level crossing area. This exposes people, vehicles and trains to risks. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Cyclone Mocha likely to hit Bangladesh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Cyclonic storm Mocha is likely to change its course and make landfall on the Bangladesh-Myanmar coasts on May 15, the Indian Meteorological Department said yesterday.

IMD Director General Mrutunjay Mohapatra told the media that the cyclonic circulation turned into a low-pressure area over the Southeast Bay of Bengal and the adjoining South Andaman Sea at around 8:30am.

The low pressure will rapidly intensify into a depression this evening and consolidate into a cyclonic storm tomorrow with the peak intensification indicated as a very severe cyclonic storm, according to the IMD's latest update on the trajectory of the system.

The cyclone is likely to move initially north-northwestward till May 11, and gradually change its course and recurve north-northeastwards towards Bangladesh-Myanmar coasts with the land crossing indicated on May 15, the update said.

The met office in its forecast said squally winds over the southeast Bay of Bengal and the south Andaman Sea may reach 50-60km per hour with wind gusts reaching up to 70km/h.