

## Khair, Hasanat hug it out, Sadiq still a no-show

10 injured as rival councillor candidates lock horns

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

With senior leaders of Barishal Awami League working to mend internal conflicts ahead of the city polls on June 12, another meeting held yesterday in this regard brought both hope and intrigue.

AL mayoral candidate Abul Khair Abdullah, joined by his brother Hasanat Abdullah, father of the incumbent mayor Sadiq Abdullah, attended the meeting, sharing an emotional hug.

However, the absence of Sadiq, still leaves room for some questions.

During the gathering at Gurnadi upazila auditorium, Khair emphasised the need to forge a new Barishal city, leaving behind all differences.

"This election holds great importance as its outcome will impact neighbouring areas. We seek everyone's cooperation in this endeavor," he said.

Jahangir Kabir Nanak, a member of the AL presidium committee, echoed the sentiment, emphasising the importance of unity and collective effort to ensure the victory of the party's nominated candidate.

Meanwhile, Abdur Rahman, another AL presidium member, said, "If we stand united and wholeheartedly support our mayoral nominee,



there is no way we can lose."

Hasanat Abdullah, also expressed confidence in the power of unity, stating, "Let us all work together in favor of my younger brother."

The selection of Khair as the Awami League's candidate on April 15 has sparked a fierce power struggle in Barishal, with incumbent Mayor Sadiq desperately trying to maintain control while Khair steadily gains support, according to locals and AL insiders.

The escalating tensions have resulted in confrontations, and on the night of May 14, an attack was carried out on Khair's followers. The following day, individuals affiliated with Sadiq were apprehended in connection with the incident.

Compounding the division within the party, neither Khair nor Sadiq attended the initial extended meeting on May 26, which aimed to foster unity and cooperation among their respective factions.

### TENSION SOARS

Amidst the escalating tensions in Barishal, at least 10 people were injured as supporters of two councillor aspirants clashed during a meeting on Friday night.

The clash broke out in the presence of Khair Abdullah.

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BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir addressing the crowd in front of the party's Nayapaltan headquarters yesterday afternoon. BNP held the rally to press home their demand for a polls-time neutral government and withdrawal of all "false cases" against its leaders and activists, among others.

PHOTO: STAR

## Hajj flight from Sylhet starts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has started operating dedicated hajj flights from Sylhet.

The first hajj flight from Sylhet Osmani International Airport left for Madinah with 346 pilgrims at 11:54am yesterday.

This year, Biman will operate five hajj flights on Sylhet-Jeddah route and one on Sylhet-Madinah route, said Tahera Khondoker, general manager, public relations, Biman.

Representatives of Biman, Civil Aviation, Haab and Atabi were present at the event marking the inauguration of the hajj flight from Sylhet.

A total of 1.22 lakh Bangladeshis will perform hajj this year. Of them, Biman will carry 61,000 Bangladeshis while Saudia and Flynas will carry the rest of the pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, said sources at the three airlines.

The three airlines have so far carried around 44,500 hajj pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

Biman has started operating pre-hajj flight from May 21 and it will operate a total of 162 hajj flights till June 22.

Hajj is likely to be held on June 27 depending on the sighting of the moon.

## Three killed in Lalmonirhat road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Three persons were killed and four injured when a truck hit a CNG-run auto-rickshaw on Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway in Kaliganj upazila on Friday night.

The deceased were identified as Rafiqul Islam, 42, Mizanur Rahman, 36, and Munni Begum, 45.

Habibur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Kaliganj Police Station, said the accident took place around 11:00pm in Kakina area when the stone-laden truck hit the Rangpur-bound auto-rickshaw, leaving its three passengers dead on the spot.

The injured were taken to Rangpur Medical College and Hospital.

## Of missing people and stolen fortunes

DB arrests 3 fraudsters for swindling over Tk 1.5cr from people

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The police's Detective Branch recently arrested three members of a gang involved in scams targeting hundreds of people. Led by one Mostafizur Rahman, they embezzled at least Tk 13 lakh from over 350 people in the last six months through a ploy of "staging fake accident dramas".

Additionally, within a span of one year, the fraudsters managed to swindle Tk 1.5 crore from 77 unsuspecting victims in Jamalpur, enticing them with promises of lucrative job opportunities or investment rewards through a fabricated export-import house.

The gang firstly gathered information about missing individuals from newspapers and social media. Utilising the contact details provided in the missing persons' circulars, the gang members would impersonate law enforcement officials or hospital staff.

They would inform the circular givers that the missing person had been located but was in dire need of medical treatment. Then they would request the victims to deposit the money into a mobile financial service (MFS) account.

The detectives arrested Mostafizur, along with his associates Md Mungul and Mashur Rahman, from Dhaka's Bangshal area on June 1, said Mashur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Lalbagh division.

"We have managed to obtain the account statements of the gang members' two MFS accounts and have discovered transactions amounting to Tk 13 lakh in the last six months alone. This gang has been engaged in fraudulent activities since 2014, targeting



The arrestees at DB headquarter.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

and deceiving over a thousand individuals."

Mostafizur had previously been arrested in 2014 for similar offenses and had served a three-month jail sentence. However, upon securing bail, he resumed his fraudulent ways.

Mostafizur, who claimed to have previously worked as a garment worker in Chattogram, narrated his introduction to the world of scams to police.

"I met a person named Monir in 2014 after sustaining a back injury while working. It was he who taught and trained me in these fraudulent practices," he told the police.

To ensure their schemes appeared plausible, the gang deliberately avoided requesting round figures as payment.

"We would always ask for odd amounts, such as Tk 8,470 or Tk 9,350, under the guise of medicine

or hospital costs," Mostafizur explained.

Mostafizur kept 50 percent of the ill-gotten gains, while Mungul and Mashur each received 25 percent.

Mostafizur had even manufactured a couple of fake National ID cards, which he used to acquire SIM cards for making fraudulent calls and opening MFS accounts. During the arrests, the detectives seized 10 cell phones and 14 SIM cards from Mostafizur's possession.

In early 2022, Mostafizur encountered one Abdul Gani, a returnee from Dubai. Together, they established a fictitious import-export company named "Ayat-Jannat Import Export" and operated from a rented office in Jamalpur.

"They would demand varying amounts from unsuspected

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Demanding immediate release of Khadizatul Kubra, a student of Jagannath University, who has been languishing in jail in a DSA case, Bangladesh Chhatra Odhikar Parishad formed a human chain at Dhaka University yesterday. They also called for abolition of the act.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Japan eyes broader ties with Bangladesh

Says envoy Kiminori

UNB, Dhaka

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Iwama Kiminori yesterday expressed his country's willingness to enhance the bilateral relationship with Dhaka over the next 50 years in line with their "strategic partnership" focusing on trade, investment, people to people exchanges and security cooperation.

He emphasised on implementing a variety of practical cooperation in promising sectors and explored the possibility of a trilateral platform among Japan, Bangladesh and India.

He identified three major areas of cooperation as part of strategic partnership between Bangladesh and Japan.

These are cooperation for peace and stability in the region and beyond, deepening economic cooperation for mutual benefit, regional prosperity and expansion of cultural cooperation, and people to people exchange.

He said these while speaking at Cosmos Dialogue in Dhaka.

Kiminori delivered the keynote speech at the symposium titled "Bangladesh-Japan Relations: Prognosis for the Future" organised by the Cosmos Foundation as part of the Ambassadors' Lecture Series.

The discussion was chaired and conducted by Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, president of Cosmos Foundation.

## 141 more hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 141 dengue patients were hospitalised across the country in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the new ones, the total number of dengue patients this year rose to 2,279, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

A total of 13 dengue patients have died so far this year.

The total number of deaths in dengue was 281 last year while the total number of cases was 62,382.

## RAJSHAHI CITY POLLS

### Old wine, new bottle

Liton announces manifesto with previous pledges that mostly remained unfulfilled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, the mayoral candidate of the ruling Awami League in the Rajshahi City Corporation polls, announced his election manifesto at an event held at the Rajshahi Medical College auditorium yesterday.

The manifesto mostly contained his previous pledges, which remained unfulfilled during his three terms in office.

However, the incumbent mayor announced some new pledges in his 105 point manifesto published in a 16-page booklet, that are beyond the jurisdiction of a city corporation mayor.



More than half the points of my manifesto are beyond the jurisdiction of a mayor. But I believe I will be able to convince the government and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to achieve those goals.

However, replying to questions from journalists at the event, Liton said he would be able to keep those promises by using his portfolio as a presidium member of the ruling party.

"More than half the points of my manifesto are beyond the jurisdiction of a mayor. But I believe I will be able to convince the government and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to achieve those goals," said Liton.

About the repetition of pledges, Liton said the Covid-19 pandemic delayed many of his development projects.

Liton pledged that he will generate jobs for at least 30,000 people by expanding industries, establishing new industrial zones, setting up universities and promoting entrepreneurs if he is re-elected. Liton also highlighted his achievements of winning national prizes for tree plantation, waste management, and infrastructural development.

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## ROAD SAFETY

### Jica-DMP pilot project underway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Japan International Cooperation Agency and Dhaka Metropolitan Police are jointly piloting the Dhaka Road Traffic Safety Project to increase awareness among the city dwellers and strengthen DMP's traffic management capacity.

As part of it, a "children's traffic park" would be established where they can learn about relevant rules at an early age.

Besides, road crossing for the general public, boarding a bus for drivers and passengers, and improvement in the traffic accidents response capacity through police boxes and DMP officers are included in the initiative. The project was designed following Tokyo's traffic management model.

Transport planner Tetsushi Irie, social and environmental specialist Nao Tsujimura from the Jica expert team, and DMP additional deputy commissioner (media) KN Roy Niyati briefed the journalists at DMP Media Centre yesterday.

The three-year project will be implemented by 2025.