



Amid nature's colourplay, six friends enjoy a game of cricket on a winter noon in Gaibandha yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

# Some candidates in Dhaka express concern to CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of candidates from Dhaka constituencies, including independents, yesterday told CEC Kazi Habibul Awal that they are afraid they will not be able to campaign properly.

They were also worried about voters facing probable obstructions while casting votes.

The candidates said these while exchanging views with the CEC at the Election Commission.

They also expressed concern that their polling agents might not get entry to the polling centres on voting day.

"Some independents and candidates from smaller parties at the programme expressed concerns on whether they will be able to conduct electioneering properly," said EC Md Alamgir.

The Election Commission assured the candidates of all kinds of cooperation and urged them to inform presiding officers and law enforcers if their polling agents face any problem, he also said.

EC Alamgir said candidates were not worried about BNP's non-cooperation movement. "They gave us confidence and said people have no involvement in this movement," he said.

Among others Awami League candidates Quamrul Islam, Sayeed Khokon, Ferdous Ahmed, Elias Mollah and Jatiya Party candidate Salma Islam attended the meeting.

The EC also held a views exchange meeting with law enforcers yesterday, where they informed the commission of their plans to deal with different challenges ahead of the polls.

"We also gave some advice including increasing intelligence surveillance to prevent any sabotage attempt centring the polls," Alamgir added.

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SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

SABOTAGE PREVENTION BEFORE POLLS

# Security beefed up across country

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and BAIHRAM KHAN

As a measure to prevent sabotage activities ahead of the national election, law enforcers have been instructed to beef up security measures across the country.

The home ministry and the Police Headquarters (PHQ) have been instructed to enhance security, especially on railway tracks and all Key-Point Installations (important establishments), after arsonists set fire to carriages of Mohanganj Express on Tuesday that killed four people.

Additional deployment has already been made in Dhaka Metro Rail (MRT) and Bangladesh Railway tracks, while steps have been taken to deploy around 13,000 Ansar members at KPI, bus, and train stations across the country.

Anwar Hossain, deputy inspector general (operations) of PHQ, said, "We have held a special meeting with the railway police and instructed them to increase vigilance after train carriages were set on fire on Tuesday."

They (saboteurs) are attacking the railway in two ways – either damaging tracks or setting fire to carriages in the guise of passengers, he said.

Sources in the police said instructions have been given to discourage policemen from being on leave from tomorrow (December 23) till the election. They were asked to remain on duty

SECURITY MEASURES

- Railway ministry allocated Tk 9cr
- 13,000 Ansar at KPI, bus, train, and govt offices
- Additional deployment made at MRT
- Cops discouraged to take leave from Dec 23
- Dog squad at Kamalapur station



from their designated workplaces, they said.

Regarding the Ansar deployment, Maj Gen AKM Aminul Haque, director general of Bangladesh Ansar & VDP, said, "We have received approval from the home ministry to deploy 13,000 Ansar members."

Sources in the railway said the Ansar forces will coordinate with the Railway Nirapatta Bahini (RNB) and district administration.

Firoz Khan, assistant commandant of RNB, said they have already increased vigilance and marked out the vulnerable points and gaps where security

deployment is needed. "We will deploy the Ansar members in those gaps," he added.

Md Humayun Kabir, secretary of the railway ministry, told The Daily Star that the ministry has allocated Tk 9 crore for ensuring the security of the railway for the next two months.

"The fund will be expended in phases whenever it's required," he added.

Meanwhile, additional police forces were deployed at the MRT stations in Dhaka yesterday.

Confirming the development, Md Saiful Islam, deputy inspector general of MRT, said, "We have beefed up security measures and increased intelligence vigilance after recent railway fire incidents."

Officials said the MRT police wing will provide security inside the stations, while the Dhaka Metropolitan Police will do so outside.

In this regard, Kh Mahid Uddin, additional commissioner of DMP, said there is no specific threat for MRT but there will be a hand-held detector for checking.

Mahid suggested the MRT authorities install luggage scanners and an archway.

Talking to The Daily Star, police officials working in three districts also said they have taken all-out measures to ensure a violence-free election.

"The district police went on alert during the ongoing campaigning as clashes often

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

# Boycott one-sided polls: Rizvi

## BNP distributes leaflets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP and its allies have started distributing leaflets asking people to boycott the January 7 national polls.

BNP's senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi along with some 10-12 party men distributed leaflets among pedestrians yesterday morning in the capital's Elephant Road and Bailey Road areas.

"The way the prime minister issued threats in Sylhet during electioneering for the dummy election is the language of terrorists. Despite such threats, people won't go to the polling stations on January 7 and won't cast their votes," Rizvi said.

On Wednesday, the BNP announced a "non-cooperation movement" against the government, urging everyone to boycott the polls, and announced mass campaigns on December 21, 22, and 23 to gain public support for the movement.

Meanwhile, Ganosamhati Andolon held a rally in front of Jatiya Press Club, calling for election boycotts.



# People will start non-cooperation against BNP

## Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said people will start non-cooperation against BNP as the party is carrying out anti-election activities and arson attacks.

He said this at a press conference at AL president's Dhanmondi political office.

Quader said BNP has called for a non-cooperation movement but non-cooperation has begun against BNP Jamaat who are out to foil the polls.

He claimed that people did not respond to the BNP's call before and will do the same in the future. Pointing out that the AL president has set an example of abiding by the electoral code of conduct, he said she went to Sylhet on Wednesday like an ordinary passenger by air.

"She did not take air fare from the public exchequer. Those who accompanied her also went to Sylhet at their own expense," Quader said.



# SC upholds HC order for hearing Fakhru's petitions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court chamber judge yesterday upheld a High Court order that on Monday directed the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka to accept, hear and dispose the bail petitions of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir in nine cases.

Justice M Enayetur Rahim passed the order. He sent the petition to its full bench and fixed January 15 to hear the matter.

The cases were filed over violence centring the BNP rally in the capital on October 28.

The next day, Fakhru was arrested in the case filed with Ramna Police Station over the attack on the residence of the chief justice during a clash with police on October 28.



MOHANGANJ EXPRESS FIRE

# Law enforcers 'identify arsonists'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers yesterday claimed to have identified the arsonists who set fire to three carriages of Mohanganj Express, that killed four people, including a child.

They said at least two of the suspects were hired and had no involvement with any political groups.

Rab 3 and the police's Detective Branch, who are conducting a shadow investigation, disclosed the findings to The Daily Star yesterday.

However, the law enforcers are yet to make any arrests.

Mentionable, Bangladesh Railway Police are investigating the incident.

Around 4:55am on Tuesday, the train attendants of Mohanganj Express spotted a fire when it reached near Cantonment station on the way to Kamalapur.

After the fire was doused around 6:30am near Tejgaon railway station, firefighters recovered the bodies of four people, including a three-year-old boy, from one of the three burnt carriages of the train.

"We have got identity and pictures of four suspects," Lt Col Arif Mohiuddin Ahmed, commanding officer of Rab 3, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"These suspects are now under surveillance. We may arrest them or take

necessary actions against them after verifying their role behind the sabotage," he said.

Asked about their identities, Mohiuddin said they found that two of the suspects were vagabonds, suggesting that they might have worked for money.

The details of the other two will be revealed after further investigation, he added.



A burnt carriage of Mohanganj Express.

Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (detective branch) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, also claimed to have got the names of the responsible arsonists behind the train fire. "We are hopeful to arrest the culprits soon," he said.

Harun said police are now analysing the CCTV footage. "We will let you know about the details after their arrest."



People, mostly child patients and their guardians, struggle to walk on the footpath in front of the Shishu Hospital as a significant part of it remains occupied by makeshift stalls and hawkers. The photo was taken at Sher-E-Bangla Nagar yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN