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CHILD DIES AFTER CIRCUMCISION

Case filed, probe body formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A case was filed yesterday against two doctors, unnamed directors, employees, and staff of the United Hospital and United Medical College Hospital over the death of five-year-old Ayaan Ahmed, who allegedly died following a circumcision procedure.

Ayaan's father Md Shamim Ahmed filed the case with Badda Police Station.

Mohammad Yeasin Gazi, officer-in-charge of the police station, confirmed it.

The two accused doctors are Saeed Sabbir Ahmed, an anesthesia specialist, and Tasnuva Mahzabeen, a surgeon, of the hospital.

Ayaan was taken to the operation room of the hospital on December 31 last year. The two doctors

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

HC directs EC not to issue gazette for Dhaka-4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the Election Commission not to issue any gazette notification on election result for Dhaka-4 over allegations of irregularities including vote rigging at 18 centres in the constituency during the national polls held on January 7.

According to the unofficial result of the election, independent aspirant Md Awlad Hossain defeated Awami League candidate Sanjida Khanam in Dhaka-4.

In response to a petition, the HC yesterday also ordered the Chief Election Commissioner to constitute a committee to investigate and dispose of the allegations of irregularities in 10 days.

The EC has been asked to settle the complaints, lodged by Sanjida Khanam regarding polls

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



An earthen stove inside a house in a Mirpur slum.



A woman buying firewood near a slum in Mirpur. She said she buys per kilogramme of firewood for Tk 15.

Desperate, they opt FOR FIREWOOD

Many forced to search for alternatives due to high price of LPG

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Khadiza Begum, a resident of Mirpur's Jheepar slum, has been struggling to cope up with expenses amid persistent inflation.

While it was already difficult for her husband, a rickshaw-puller and the lone earning member, to ensure two square meals for their four-member family, the steady hike in LPG price has compelled the couple to switch to cooking with firewood about six months ago.

It made them save Tk 1,000 monthly, she said. "We used to buy a 12-kg LPG cylinder every month which cost Tk 1,300-1,600, and the price kept getting higher. But now, we have set up an earthen stove and only need firewood worth around Tk 500," said Khadiza.

The situation was similar in almost all other households in the slum.

During recent visits, the correspondents found similar scenarios at other slums and low-end restaurants in the capital.

High inflation last year hit the low- and middle-income groups the hardest. Notable, last October saw food inflation reaching a record high of 12.56 percent.

While the authorities concerned have fixed the price of 12kg cylinders at Tk 1,433 including VAT, many said retailers have been charging them higher than the amount.

HEALTH HAZARDS

Exposure to firewood fumes may lead to the development of ischemic heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, and strokes. Additionally, it can result in acute lower respiratory infections among children, according to World Health Organization.

Nevertheless, saving money appears more urgent than addressing health hazards, according to Khairunnesa, a 33-year-old resident of South Bhasantek slum in Mirpur-13.

She has to pay Tk 2,500 as rent and with the prices of essentials like rice, edible oil, and vegetables soaring, it is nearly impossible for her to afford LPG cylinders for Tk 1,600 a month.

"The smoke irritates my eyes as we have to use cheap construction wood. The cooking time is also higher compared to a gas stove," she said.

Alifa, a garment worker living in Hazaribag's Jhaochar area, echoed her.

Abul Kalam, a restaurant owner in Savar's Shyampur Bazar, said they have started using firewood from September.

"We have to keep the stove running from 4:00am to 11:30pm everyday and that would cost cylinders worth Tk 30,000 a month. Switching to firewood, the cost was reduced to Tk 11,000-12,000, thereby saving nearly Tk 20,000 a month," said Kalam.

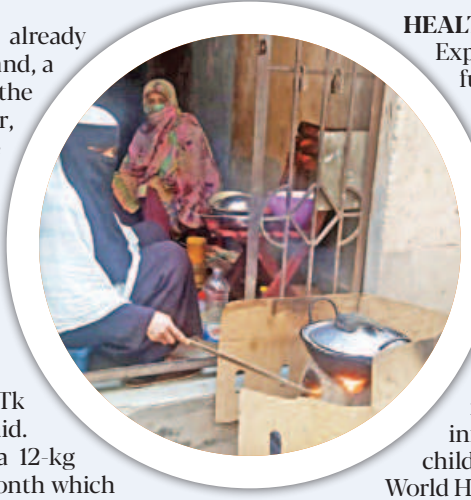
Md Shamim, a hotel owner in Mohammadpur's Bihari camp area, shared a similar experience.

With the rise in demand, firewood is now being sold at Tk 480-500 per maund in Dhaka and adjacent areas, rising from Tk 200-300, said Insar Ali, a trader near Hemayetpur bus stand.

According to the Statistical Yearbook 2022, around 77.2 percent of households, including 60 percent in rural areas, still use firewood to cook. It was 87 percent in 2011.

Prof Ahmad Kamruzzaman Majumder of the environmental science department at Stamford University Bangladesh said the increased use of firewood is harmful to both health and environment.

"Humic substances are abundant in our country's firewood, which produces dark smoke that pollutes indoor air. The smoke causes breathing problems and respiratory diseases if inhaled. It is also detrimental to our forests," he added.



19 women triumph with higher turnout

Number was 22 in 2018, highest till now

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Nineteen women candidates emerged victorious in the 12th parliamentary election. Ten of them were incumbents.

The number was 22 in 2018, which is the highest till now.

In at least 11 of the constituencies where female candidates won, the voter turnout exceeded 43 percent, surpassing the national average of 41.8 percent, according to the Election Commission data.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina won Gopalganj-3 which saw the highest voter turnout of 87.24 percent.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury was re-elected from Rangpur-6 with a substantial margin, where voter turnout exceeded 48 percent. Notable Awami League figures, including Habibun Nahar (Bagerhat-3), Matia Chowdhury (Sherpur-2), and Shahin Akter (Cox's Bazar-4), clinched victories where voter turnouts were 58 percent, 56.65 percent, and 48.98 percent, respectively.

Other re-elected MPs from AL include Education Minister Dipu

Moni (Chandpur-3), Syeda Zakia Noor (Kishoreganj-1), Sagufta Yasmin (Munshiganj-2), and Umme Kulsum Smrity (Gaibandha-3).

Jannat Ara Henry from Sirajganj-2 and Sultana Nadira from Barguna-2, both elected with AL nominations, secured victory with voter turnouts of 48.84 percent and 49.86 percent, respectively.

AL candidates Sahadara Mannan (Bogura-1), Rumana Ali (Gazipur-3), Simon Hossain Rimi (Gazipur-4), and Khadizatul Anwar (Chattogram-2) also emerged victorious.

As many as 96 women candidates participated in the election this time, marking the highest number to date. Of them, AL initially nominated 24, although they withdrew two before the polls. Fifteen of them won.

Besides, four women running as independent candidates have emerged victorious in different constituencies.

Jaya Sen Gupta, previously an AL supported MP, contested and won as an independent candidate in Sunamganj-2. The voter turnout there was 47 percent.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Wrapping her arms around, a mother shelters her son from cold breezes as they ride a rickshaw-van. The photo was taken recently at the capital's Banglamotor intersection.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Jatiyo Party's another U-turn

Says MPs-elect won't take oath today, changes decision afterwards

RASHIDUL HASAN



It was business as usual for the Jatiyo Party yesterday, a party widely criticised for saying one thing in the morning and changing it by the evening.

Yesterday morning, a senior leader closely associated with JP Chairman GM Quader said the party's MPs-elect will not take oath today.

Needless to say, the party did not stay true to this statement by evening.

JP insiders said the JP chairman staged this "predictable" drama to bargain with the government to ensure the post of opposition leader of the parliament.

As the unofficial results of the 12th national polls surfaced, a pressing question emerged about the opposition in parliament, with 62 independent candidates securing victory in the January 7 election.

The Election Commission revealed unofficial results for 298 constituencies on Monday, showing the Awami League winning 222 seats, while JP secured only 11 seats.

Notably, most of the independent winners are also AL leaders.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

No comments

Says EC Alamgir about statements from US, UK on national polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Md Alamgir yesterday said they would refrain from making any comment regarding the statements from the international community, including the US and the UK, on the January 7 national elections.

"Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal has already commented about the election. We don't have anything to say in this regard," he told reporters at his EC office when his attention was drawn to the statements of the US and the UK regarding the polls.

The CEC on January 7 said the election was held in a free, fair and impartial manner with the concerted efforts of all.

Later yesterday, US State Department's spokesperson Matthew Miller in a statement said, "The United States shares the view with other observers that these elections were not free or fair and we regret that not all parties participated."

The US had long been calling for a free, fair and peaceful election. The Biden-led administration also imposed sanctions on Rab and seven of its members in December 2021, and then announced that those undermining democratic elections in Bangladesh will face visa restrictions.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2