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## Parties in JS 2nd lowest since 1991

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The number of political parties in parliament since the restoration of democracy in 1991 seems to be shrinking.

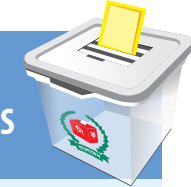
Only five political parties have representation in this 12th parliament, down from the 12 parties in the sixth parliament formed after the 1991 polls and even four from the previous parliament.

Except for the Jatiya Sangsad formed through the controversial election of February 1996, which lasted only 12 days, this parliament has the lowest number of political parties.

After the February 1996 election, members of two parties – the BNP and the Freedom Party – were elected to parliament – the lowest since 1973 when the first general election was held after independence.

After the 1973 election, three political parties had representation in the first parliament. After the 1988 election, four parties made up the Jatiya Sangsad, and following the 2001 election, six parties made up the House.

POLLS YEAR, PARTIES IN JS	Parties
2024	5 parties
2018	9 parties
2014	7 parties
2008	8 parties
2001	8 parties
1996 Feb	2 parties
1996 June	6 parties
1991	12 parties



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People from more than 30 small islands on the Jamuna travel to this place in Phulchhari, Gaibandha, twice every week to sell their produce and buy essentials. They either travel by boats or horse-drawn carts.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABU

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## Govt to keep friendly ties with all countries

Says new foreign minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

On the first day in office yesterday, new Foreign Minister



Hasan Mahmud said Bangladesh will maintain relations with all countries, including those who were critical of the January 7 election, for advancing the country's development.

"The most important thing is countries both from the East and West have expressed their willingness to work with Bangladesh," he said during his first interaction with journalists as foreign minister.

He said ambassadors and high commissioners of the US, UK, EU and other missions were present at the oath-taking ceremony

## Withdraw troops by March 15

The Maldives asks India

REUTERS, Male

The Maldives has called India to withdraw troops from its territory by March 15, an official said yesterday, in a step that will further strain ties between South Asian neighbours.

President Mohamed Muizzu won election last year with a pledge to end the Maldives' "India first" policy, in a region where New Delhi and Beijing compete for influence.

A small contingent of around 80 Indian soldiers are stationed on the Indian Ocean archipelago to provide support for military equipment given to the Maldives by New Delhi and assist in humanitarian activities in the region.

Muizzu proposed their removal in talks at the foreign ministry between senior delegations from both countries.

"In this meeting, on behalf of President Muizzu, the Maldivian delegation proposed the removal of Indian troops by March 15," Ahmed Nazim, Policy Director at the President's Office told reporters.

"This date was proposed in the agenda by the government and specifically the president. These discussions are ongoing."

In his campaign, Muizzu called New Delhi's huge influence a threat to sovereignty and pledged to remove Indian troops.

"The most important point to note here is that Indian troops cannot stay in the Maldives. That's the policy of this government. It is also the president's pledge and what the people of Maldives want," Nazim added.

A spokesperson for India's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request seeking comment.

China and the Maldives upgraded their relationship during Muizzu's first state visit to Beijing last week by agreeing to a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership" that sets the stage for the Asian giant to up its investments in the Maldives.

## CHILD'S DEATH DGHS shuts down United Medical College

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate General of Health Services yesterday put United Medical College Hospital at Satarkul in the capital's Badda under lock and key until further notice for operating without a licence.

The move comes after the death of five-year-old Ayaan.

Ayaan died following a botched surgery by the United Medical College Hospital doctors recently.

On January 10, Shamim Ahmed, father of the boy, filed a complaint with the DGHS, seeking cancellation of the medical college's licence after a proper investigation into his child's death.

That day, a DGHS team inspected the hospital. During the visit, the hospital authorities failed to show its licence.

Upon scrutinising the online database of the hospital and the

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## 7,902 killed on the roads in 2023

Says Jatri Kalyan Samity; BRTA claims 5,024 died

MD ABBAS

Over 7,902 people were killed in 6,261 road accidents last year, said a Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity (BJKS) report released yesterday.

However, according to Bangladesh

Road Transport Authority's report on the same matter, 5,024 people were killed in 5,425 road accidents – 2,878 deaths lower – representing a huge discrepancy with the data presented by Jatri Kalyan Samity, a passengers welfare platform.

The BRTA termed the Samity report "made up", stating that the data is not authentic and cannot present the exact picture of the country's road accidents.

Nur Mohammad Majumder, joint secretary of the Road Transport and Highways Division (RTHD), said, "It is

a made-up report. The organisation has no manpower to collect all the information on accidents across the country. As their report is based on media reports, there might be a huge information overlap."

On the other hand, he claimed that the BRTA data is "100 percent authentic" and that it was based on information collected on accidents from every corner of the country.

"We asked the Jatri Kalyan Samity to provide authentic data regarding accidents if they have any, but they failed to do so."

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of Jatri Kalyan Samity, however, affirmed the accuracy of their report, stating that the BRTA habitually dismissed their findings as fabricated.

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**According to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority's report, 5,024 people were killed in 5,425 road accidents, representing a huge discrepancy with the data presented by Jatri Kalyan Samity.**

## T rex's older relative found in New Mexico

CNN ONLINE

A formerly unknown relative of the most iconic of all dinosaurs, Tyrannosaurus rex, has been newly identified, according to a study.

The revelation adds a new clue that could help paleontologists unravel another step in the evolutionary chain that ended with the massive predatory tyrannosaur, T rex.



Called Tyrannosaurus mcraeensis, the creature likely roamed Earth up to 7 million years before T rex emerged.

The bones have been dated to 72 million to 73 million years old during the late Campanian-early Maastrichtian Period.

But Tyrannosaurus mcraeensis' bones were discovered decades before the creature officially got its scientific name. About one quarter

of its fossilized skull was found over the course of the 1980s and early '90s in an area now known as Elephant Butte, New Mexico.

Because of the size of the specimens, the bones were originally categorised by the New Mexico Museum of Natural History & Science as T rex, which grew up to 39 feet (12 metres) long and 10 tonnes in weight.

There were two big differences between T rex and T mcraeensis. "The lower jaw in a Tyrannosaurus rex is actually quite robust," said Anthony R. Fiorillo, co-author of the study published Thursday in the journal Scientific Reports.

## Plunderers, corrupt causing sufferings

Says Rizvi

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday alleged that ordinary citizens of the country are suffering in the face of high inflation caused by the "corruption, plunder and foul play" by the government and pro-regime business syndicate.

Speaking at a press briefing at BNP's Navapaltan central office, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi also alleged that Awami League remains in power by relying on foreigners after committing election crimes.

"The prime minister of the illegitimate government said prices have marked a rise due to the Russia-Ukraine war and Israel's attack on Palestine...I would like to say that prices in other countries of the world did not rise for any reason, including the war in Ukraine," he said.

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Lorries and trucks parked on the street between Saat Rasta and Tejgaon level-crossing have left little room for traffic to move. At peak hours, the illegal parking causes long tailbacks and makes commuters suffer.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## 'GENOCIDE BY ISRAEL' Bangladesh backs South Africa in ICJ

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has expended its support to South Africa's application against Israel before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concerning Israel's violation of the Genocide Convention regarding the Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip.

The country also supports South Africa's request for provisional measures, including requests for suspending all military operations in and against Gaza and allowing safe, adequate, and unimpeded humanitarian aid in all of Gaza.

"The provisional measures requested are both necessary and concrete steps required to end the humanitarian catastrophe that has unfolded in Gaza," said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement yesterday.

In this context, the statement said that Bangladesh welcomes the opportunity to file a declaration of intervention in the proceedings in due course.

On December 29, 2023, South Africa filed the case with the World Court, alleging that Israel is violating the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

The ongoing attacks by Israeli Defense Forces have claimed the lives of thousands of innocent Palestinians, the majority of whom are women and children. Bangladesh considers these deliberate acts of aggression a blatant disregard for and violation of international law,

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