



First city polls under new AL govt today

Cumilla to see race between AL MP's daughter, 2 expelled BNP leaders; 2 AL loyalists to fight it out in Mymensingh

STAR REPORT

Mymensingh and Cumilla cities go to polls today to pick their mayors and councillors, just two months after the Awami League formed a new government.

As the ruling party is not officially participating in the elections, six of its leaders -- two in Cumilla and four in Mymensingh -- are running for mayor as independents. The BNP boycotted the polls and two of its expelled leaders are running for mayor in Cumilla.

There are over 5.66 lakh voters in the two cities where polling begins at 8:00am and closes at 4:00pm. Electronic Voting Machines will be used in both cities.

CUMILLA
The main competition is between Tahsin Bahar Suchona, daughter of AL lawmaker A K M Bahauddin Bahar, and Monirul Haque Sakku, an expelled BNP leader who was elected mayor twice before.

As several clashes took place in the run up to the polls, teams of police, Rab and the Border Guard Bangladesh were deployed.

Since Suchona's father Bahar is a four-time lawmaker who has substantial

MYMENSINGH
Voters: 3,36,490
Mayoral candidate: 5
Polling Centres: 128
CUMILLA
Voters: 229,920
Mayoral candidate: 4
Polling Centres: 105

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The Shitalakkhya water remains very dark and smells foul in Pagla area of Narayanganj mainly due to discharge from different types of factories. The water quality improves in monsoon.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Jan 7 election didn't meet some int'l standards

Says EU polls expert mission

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Election Commission complied with minimum legal requirements in the January 7 national polls, but the election failed to meet some key international standards for democratic elections, said the European Union Election Expert Mission.

"Civil and political rights, including the freedoms of assembly, association, movement, and speech essential for inclusive and competitive elections,

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PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES

Uniform ticketing on cards

Govt moves to enact law to rope in pvt companies as well

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government is going to enact a law to introduce a uniform ticketing system for all public transport services including metro rail, buses, trains and launches.

Dhaka Transport Coordinator Authority (DTCA) has already prepared a preliminary draft of the act, aiming to implement a "One Card for All Transport" system.

The system, called Rapid Pass Card, will be hassle free and save people's time and money, two officials involved with the process said. It will be introduced across the country.

A committee which was formed last month by the Road Transport and Highways Division for

enacting the law will hold a meeting on March 13 to scrutinise the draft, they said.

DTCA's Executive Director Shabiha Pervin, the convener of the committee, will preside over the meeting, they said.

Currently, Dhaka dwellers are using two types of cards -- MRT (Mass Rapid Transit) Pass and Rapid Pass -- to avail metro rail services.

Launched under the supervision of DTCA in 2018, Rapid Pass is meant to eventually serve all forms of transport services but currently can be used only to pay the fare for metro rail, and some specific buses.

On the other hand, Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTCL), the operating agency

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Women, men must work together for nation's dev: PM



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked women to work together with men to contribute equally to society and help build the nation.

"Today, we must progress economically, and men and women can build a country equally through their work," she stated.

The premier was addressing a discussion and Joyeeta Award-giving ceremony arranged in Dhaka city yesterday to mark International Women's Day 2024.

The Women and Children Affairs Ministry organised the programme at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

The premier said that if women, who make up half of society, do not step forward and work in it, society will never develop and cannot be a pioneer.

"We can move forward only if women and men work together. We are moving forward today because we have ensured women's participation," she said.

Hasina expressed her optimism on International Women's Day that Bangladeshi women will never be left behind.

Noting that the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, ensured that women's constitutional rights were granted, Hasina stated that her party, the Awami League, is the only political party in the country to include equal rights for men and women in its charter and election manifesto.

"Not just in words, but Awami League has shown it when it came to power," she added.

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Crew members of a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight pose for a photo at the Biman Operation Building in the capital's Uttara yesterday. On the occasion of International Women's Day, Biman for the first time in its history operated a flight staffed entirely by women. The flight left Dhaka for Dammam yesterday afternoon. PHOTO: BIMAN

Biman runs its first all-women flight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday marked the International Women's Day by operating an international flight staffed entirely by women for the first time in its history.

The pilot, first officer, cabin crew, and even all the ground staff engaged in the flight were women, said sources at the national flag carrier.

The crew were also briefed by female officers of Biman.

The flight, BG-349, on the Dhaka-Dammam route left the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 2:30pm, Biman Managing Director and CEO Shafiqul Azim told The Daily Star.

Captain Alia Mannan was the pilot in command while Fariha Tabassum was the first officer, said Biman sources.

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BANGLADESH-INDIA BORDER Zero death pledge rings hollow

31 killed in BSF shootings last year, says ASK

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Killing along the Bangladesh-India border marked a gradual rise over the last three years despite repeated state-level commitments to bring such killings down to zero.

The trend continues this year as a Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) member and another Bangladeshi were killed allegedly in BSF firings along the Jashore and Lalmonirhat borders in January.

Last year, 31 people were killed in BSF shootings, the highest since 2020 when 47 Bangladeshis were killed along the border, according to Ain O Shalish Kendra data compiled based on media reports.

The killing of BGB Sepoy Mohammad Roisuddin on January 22 this year sparked condemnation and protests across the border.

"This incident once again demonstrates the trigger-happy characteristics of the border guards of India; the BSF. The BSF authority

cannot be given the right to behave as the executioner," said Kirit Roy, Secretary of Banglar Manabdhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM), a rights organisation based in West Bengal.

In a statement issued three days after Roisuddin's killing, MASUM demanded a joint probe by the Indian and Bangladeshi human rights commissions, and called on the international rights organisations to raise voice against the "systematic killings" by BSF.

Dhaka is now hosting a five-day 54th director general (DG)-level border conference between Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) to discuss a range of border security issues. The talks end today.

Bangladesh shares a 4,096km long border with India, the fifth-longest land border in the world. A large part of the border remains unfenced, while some border points are known for illegal entry and smuggling of various items, including drugs and cattle.

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