



**BSRM**  
building a safer nation

WITH BSRM FASTBUILD  
**YOUR HOME WILL BE BUILT ON TIME  
WITH THE BEST QUALITY RODS**



**DHAKA METRO RAIL**

Proud Construction Partner



## BORO HARVEST Good yields bring joy to haor farmers

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Farmers in Sunamganj are passing busy days harvesting Boro paddy, which is their staple crop.

As there are no forecasts of heavy rainfall and early flash floods this year, the farmers are collecting their paddy in relative comfort. Also, temperature remains low in the Sylhet region compared to other regions of the country.

The harvesting started on Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla new year.

The local agriculture office expects bumper production of Boro paddy this year as the weather was favourable.

Joydul Miah, a farmer of Dekhar Haor in Shantiganj upazila, said, "After so many years, the yield is very good this year. Keeping enough paddy for family consumption, I can sell at least 50 maunds of paddy this year."

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension in Sunamganj, 79.5 percent (1,21,436 hectares) of Boro paddy in the haor areas and 25 percent (11,661 hectares) on the high land has been harvested as of yesterday.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Farmers harvesting Boro paddy in Dekhar Haor of Sunamganj's Shantiganj upazila yesterday morning. Harvesting began in the district on Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla new year.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## BNP expels 73 activists for taking part in UZ polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has expelled 73 leaders and activists for contesting the May 8 upazila polls defying the party's decision.

A notice containing their names was sent to the media yesterday afternoon.

The notice, signed by BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, said they were relieved of all party posts and primary membership as per its constitution.

According to BNP sources, those expelled are vying for upazila parishad chairman, vice-chairman, and female vice-chairman posts.

Among the 73, 28 are running for upazila chairman, 24 for vice-chairman, and 21 for female vice-chairman.

The BNP standing committee, the party's highest policy-making body, in a meeting decided to boycott the upazila polls. Following the decision, various attempts were made to keep the party men away from the elections, to be held in four phases.

The party communicated the decision of the standing committee to the candidates.

Besides, central, divisional, and district-level leaders of the party were tasked with convincing the aspirants not to take part in the elections.

Despite these efforts, many former and current BNP leaders have joined the upazila election race.

Although the BNP decided not to take part in the polls as a political party, many party leaders had favoured allowing its members to contest the polls as independent candidates.

They argued that this would ultimately help boost

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

## Egypt sends delegation to Israel for Gaza talks

51 more Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes as Rafah offensive looms

AGENCIES

An Egyptian delegation met Israeli officials yesterday, looking for a way to restart talks to end the offensive in Gaza and return the remaining Israeli hostages, an official briefed on the meetings said.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Israel had no new proposals to make, although it was willing to consider a limited truce in which 33 hostages would be released, instead of the 40 previously under discussion.

There was no decision on how long any truce would last but if such an exchange were agreed, the pause in fighting would be "definitely less than six weeks," the official said.

The effort comes alongside preparations for a military push against Hamas in southern Gaza's Rafah, and with spillover from the Gaza offensive leading to stepped-up exchanges of fire over Israel's northern border with Lebanon.

Israel's army said yesterday missile fire near the border killed an Israeli civilian.

Qatar, Egypt and the United States have

mediated truce and hostage-release talks, so far without success since a one-week halt to the fighting in November. That truce saw the exchange of 80 Israeli captives in return for 240 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons.

The source told AFP that Egypt's delegation was travelling to Israel "for security coordination".

Several Israeli media outlets, citing unnamed officials, said yesterday that the Israeli war cabinet discussed a new plan for a truce and hostage release, ahead of the Egyptian delegation's visit.

Aid groups warn any Rafah invasion would add to already catastrophic conditions in Gaza where, according to the World Food Programme, famine is "a real and dangerous threat".

Senior Hamas official Ghazi Hamad, meanwhile, told AFP that Israel "will not achieve what it wants" in Rafah.

After mediators failed to secure a truce for the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, which ended early this month, Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani said last week that Qatar was

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

- Israel 'won't achieve' goals in Rafah: Hamas
- Hezbollah, Israel trade cross-border fire
- Death toll in enclave rises to 34,356

## DHAKA-DOHA TIES Mutual interests may lead to strategic partnership

Say experts about Qatar emir's recent visit

PORIMOL PALMA

Amid geopolitical shifts, Bangladesh's emergence as an economic and diplomatic power in the Indo-Pacific region and mutual interests in trade and commerce may lead both Dhaka and Doha to elevate the existing ties into strategic partnership, said experts.

Experts said this after Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani concluded his two-day visit to Bangladesh on Wednesday.

While much of the talks during Al Thani's visit were focused on trade and investment, they say, there is a scope and need to strengthen the bilateral ties.

"In the Middle East, the perception of Bangladesh is changing. Traditionally seen as a supplier of workers, the Middle East is now looking at Bangladesh as an emerging economic and diplomatic power," said Prof Shahab Enam Khan of the International Relations Department at Jahangirnagar University.

Qatar must have studied how Bangladesh, a large market and an investment destination in the Indo-Pacific region, is maintaining a balancing act with global and regional powers like the US, Russia, China and India, he told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh's image as a moderate Muslim country is also a plus point for Qatar, he added.

On the other hand, Qatar also maintains a fine balance in its relationships with the Middle East countries as well as global powers.

With a huge sovereign wealth fund of \$475 billion, the energy-rich country is also focusing on diversifying its trade and investment, Prof Shahab Enam said.

Considering all these issues, there is a mutual interest for both countries to enhance their economic and diplomatic ties, he added.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

## Bangladeshi man shot dead by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead by India's Border Security Force (BSF) near the border in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat early yesterday.

The incident took place near Pillar 848 at Jhalangi Dangarpar border in Srirampur union around 4:00am.

The victim was identified as Abul Kalam, 22, of Jhalangi Dangarpar village in Srirampur union of Patgram upazila, said Abu Saeed Chowdhury, officer-in-charge (OC) of Patgram Police Station.

Abul Kalam was shot by BSF personnel patrolling the Duradabri camp of 169 BSF Battalion in Cooch Behar, confirmed Nayek Subedar Nurul Amin, in-charge of Teesta BGB 61 Battalion's Jhalangi camp.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Displaced Palestinian children wait to fill their water containers amid soaring temperatures at a tent camp in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## US, China should be 'partners, not rivals'

Xi tells Blinken in Beijing

AFP, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday told top US diplomat Antony Blinken that the world's biggest economies should be "partners, not rivals" as the two sides pressed for headway on a range of concerns.

Blinken, in China for the second time in less than a year, pointed to improvements in the relationship but urged greater action from Beijing on areas including curbing support for Russia.

Meeting Blinken in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, Xi said the two countries had "made some positive progress" since he met with US President Joe Biden in November. "The two countries should be partners, not rivals," Xi said.

But he issued a warning over what China considers US pressure to curb its economy, which has included a sweeping ban on semiconductor exports and efforts to wrest blockbuster app TikTok from its Chinese owners.

"We hope the US can also take a positive view of China's development," Xi said. "When this fundamental problem is solved," he said, "relations can truly stabilise, get better and move forward".

Earlier China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi warned Blinken that US pressure could trigger a "downward spiral".

Wang also warned that the question of self-ruled Taiwan was the "first red line" that must not be crossed in China-US relations.

Blinken described his talks with Wang at the Diaoyutai state guesthouse - which lasted more than five and a half hours - "extensive and constructive".

He announced that the two countries will in the coming weeks hold their first formal talks on managing artificial intelligence, a rising area of concern as the technology progresses rapidly.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4