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## THIRD PHASE UZ ELECTION Polls-day fervour hardly seen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The third phase of upazila elections also saw a low turnout yesterday.

The usual election-day fervour was hardly found in and around the polling centres. Many of them looked deserted. After voting ended, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday said elections to 87 upazilas were conducted in a free and fair manner, with a few instances of untoward incidents.

He said that the turnout would be around 35 percent. He added that 30 people were detained for attempting to cast fake votes and two others were sentenced to jail. Six people also were injured in clashes, a presiding officer died of natural causes, and one assistant presiding officer was arrested for ballot box stuffing, he added.

If the CEC's estimate is proven to be correct, this would be the lowest turnout in upazila polls since 2009, said EC sources.

The turnout was 36 percent in the first phase of upazila elections held on May 8 and 38 percent in the second phase on May 21.

The figure was 70.57 percent in the 2009 upazila polls, which dropped to 61.23 percent in 2014. On average, it stood at 40 percent in the 2019 upazila polls conducted in five phases.

In the January 7 national election, the turnout was 42 percent.

The BNP and many other political parties are staying off the upazila polls, like they did during the January 7 national election saying that the EC is "not capable of holding the elections in a free and fair manner".

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With no voters around, security personnel sit idle at the Araisidha Kamil Madrasa polling centre in Brahmanbaria's Ashuganj during the upazila polls. A total of 87 upazilas went to polls in the third phase of the elections yesterday.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDOY



## Zia's 43rd death anniversary today

STAR REPORT

Today is the 43rd death anniversary of BNP founder and former president Ziaur Rahman.

The party and its associated bodies have drawn up a 15-day programme to observe the death anniversary.

The programmes began on Tuesday through a discussion meeting at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the capital, reports UNB.

Ziaur Rahman, who founded the BNP in 1978, was assassinated by a group of army officers at the Chittagong Circuit House on May 30, 1981.

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## CHANDANAISH UZ POLLS Loan defaulter elected chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A listed loan defaulter who owes Tk 118 crore to two banks was unofficially elected chairman of Chandanaish upazila parishad in Chattogram yesterday.

Jasim Uddin, chairman of Jasika Group, took the loans from Padma Bank and Sonali Bank, and owes the former Tk 93.82 crore.

Campaigning with the motorcycle as an election symbol, he bagged 71.3 percent of the votes cast in the election, with 7,310 people voting for him.

Earlier, Padma Bank (previously the scam-ridden Farmer's Bank) had requested the Chattogram district administration to cancel Jasim's candidature for defaulting on loans.

In a letter to the Chattogram deputy commissioner on Monday, the bank sought the DC's intervention in this regard.

It also notified the Election Commission, which refused to cancel the candidature, said the bank's head of law Abdullah Al Harun.

The letter sent to the DC said, "Jasim Uddin, managing director of Jasika Trade International Ltd, is a willful defaulter of Padma Bank's Khatunganj branch. He took Tk 60 crore from Padma Bank on September 6, 2016.

"Because he failed to make regular payments, the loan became non-performing and was classified in March 2024, and this was reported to the Credit Information Bureau. Along with interest, the bank is owed Tk 93.82 crore."

It further said that since the borrower did not come forward to settle his liabilities, two cases were filed

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## Wasa raises water prices by 10pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) has decided to raise the price of water by 10 percent from July 1 to "adjust for inflation".

The price of water has been fixed at Tk 16.70 per 1,000 litres for homes and Tk 46.20 per 1,000 litres for commercial use, Wasa said in a notification yesterday.

The previous prices were Tk 15.18 and Tk 42 respectively.

"Dhaka Wasa's respected customers are hereby being informed that the prices will be adjusted due to inflation," the notification read.

Wasa said the decision will also be effective for unmetered holdings, deep tube wells, under-construction buildings, minimum bills, and all types of water and sewage charges.

Wasa last raised the price of water by 5 percent in July 2022.

## MP AZIM MURDER Mastermind, hired gun are relatives

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and RASHIDUL HASAN

Suspects Aktaruzzaman and Amanullah in the lawmaker Anwarul Azim Anar murder case are relatives.

According to detectives, Aktaruzzaman hired Amanullah alias Shimul Bhuiyan to have the Jhenaidah-4 MP killed.

They said Amanullah was a leader of the Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) and Mizanur Rahman Tutul was a leader higher up in the party's pecking order.

Tutul, also a cousin of Aktaruzzaman, married Amanullah's sister, they added.

Tutul was killed in a "crossfire" with law enforcers in 2008.

Sources said as they were relatives, Aktaruzzaman and Amanullah knew each other for a long time, and it made Aktaruzzaman hiring Amanullah for Tk 5 crore easier.

Aktaruzzaman's brother Shahiduzzaman, mayor of Kotchandpur Municipality, said Tutul was their cousin.

"Due to the relations, Amanullah had communications with us," he said.

Azim went to Kolkata on May 12 and spent the night at his friend's home. He left the home the next day saying he had a doctor's appointment. On May 22, India and Bangladesh police said the MP was murdered



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## Take united action over Israel's offensive in Gaza Erdogan calls on 'Islamic world'; Israeli tanks conduct a second day of probing attacks across Rafah

AGENCIES

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday hit out at the United Nations and called on the "Islamic world" to take united action following the latest Israeli strikes on Gaza.

"The UN cannot even protect its own staff. What are you waiting for to act? The spirit of the United Nations is dead in Gaza," Erdogan told lawmakers from his AKP party.

Erdogan's comments came as the UN Security Council met to discuss a deadly Israeli attack on a displacement camp west of Rafah on Tuesday that killed 21 people.

The Turkish leader also hit out at fellow Muslim-majority countries for failing to take common action over the Israeli strike, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, Israel sent tanks on raids into Rafah yesterday and said its war on

Hamas in Gaza would likely continue all year, after Washington said the Rafah assault did not amount to a major ground operation that would trigger a change in US policy.

Israeli tanks advanced to the heart of Rafah for the first time on Tuesday after a night of heavy bombardment, defying

an appeal from the International Court of Justice to end its attack on the city, one of the last places of refuge in Gaza.

The United States, Israel's closest ally, reiterated its opposition to a major Israeli ground offensive in Rafah but said on Tuesday it did not believe such an operation was under way.

Unlike tactics used in Israel's ground offensive in the rest of the enclave, Rafah residents said Israeli tanks mounted raids into Tel Al-Sultan in western Rafah and Yibna and near Shaboura in the centre before retreating to positions near the border

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- » Rafah offensive not a major ground incursion: US
- » Hamas confronts Israeli forces with anti-tank rockets
- » Death toll in Gaza rises to 36,171

## Former UP chairman shot dead in Narsingdi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Criminals shot dead an Awami League leader and former union parishad chairman in Narsingdi early yesterday.

Two of his associates were also injured in the incident that occurred around 12:15am in Meherpara union, said police.

Mahbubul Hasan, 52, former chairman of the union and general secretary of the union AL, was returning home from the party office, said Md Kamruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Madhabdi Police Station.

When Mahbubul and his associates reached Shahi Eidgah, a group of assailants opened fire and stabbed Mahbubul, said the OC, quoting locals.

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Palestinian women mourn relatives killed in Israeli bombardment as they sit by their displacement tent in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Japanese researchers build world's first wooden satellite

AFP, Tokyo

The world's first wooden satellite has been built by Japanese researchers who said their tiny cuboid craft will be blasted off on a SpaceX rocket in September.

Each side of the experimental satellite developed by scientists at Kyoto University and logging company Sumitomo Forestry measures just 10 centimetres (four inches).

The creators expect the wooden material will burn up completely when the device re-enters the atmosphere — potentially providing a way to avoid the generation of metal particles when a retired satellite returns to Earth.

These metal particles could have a negative impact on the environment and telecommunications, the developers said as they announced the satellite's completion on Tuesday. "Satellites that are not made of metal should become mainstream," Takao Doi, an astronaut and special professor at Kyoto University, told a press conference.

