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## 7 MURDERS ON VESSEL Families of the slain crew demand justice

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Family members yesterday demanded justice for the killing of seven crew members who were killed in a brutal attack aboard a bulk carrier in the Meghna in Chandpur on Monday.

They gathered at the 250-bed Chandpur General Hospital where the bodies of seven crew members were kept for autopsy.

Since early morning, the family members and relatives of the seven victims were seen rushing to the hospital to claim the bodies.

Dr Farid Ahmed Akhand, the hospital's residential medical officer, said, "The bodies were brought in last night (Monday), and we completed the preliminary examinations. They were sent to the morgue for autopsy around 9:30am."

Following autopsies and legal procedures, the bodies were handed over to the families in the afternoon at the morgue located beside the city's Swarnakhola Road, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, the district administration has formed a probe committee headed by Additional District Magistrate (ADM)

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Women labourers drying recently harvested Aman paddy in Ghona Madardanga area of Khulna's Dumuria upazila. After harvest, farmers sell the paddy for Tk 1,100-1,300 to traders, who process it by drying and then send it to different parts of the country. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Student protesters entered Somoy TV owner's offices, journo sacked

AFP, Dhaka

A gang of Bangladesh student protesters entered the offices of the investor of a television station, accusing it of "propaganda", protesters said yesterday, with at least five journalists subsequently fired.

The students had taken part in the August revolution that toppled prime minister Sheikh Hasina, whose tenure was marked as one of the worst periods for media freedom.

Hasnat Abdullah, convener of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement, led around 15 to 20 students on December 17 to the offices of City Group, which invests in Somoy Television.

"Somoy Television was spreading propaganda, twisting my comments, and accommodating the views of a fallen political party," Hasnat told AFP.

"We are staunch supporters of press freedom, but the press must remain unbiased," Hasnat said, adding that he saw no issue in making demands – but rejecting reports that the students had handed over a list of those they wanted to be fired.

The managing director of the business conglomerate that funds the television

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## Reforms should be left to an elected govt Says BNP leader Khasru, underscores need for nat'l election at the earliest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reforms should be implemented through an elected parliament, who, once in power, could swiftly address the economic, social, political and foreign challenges the country is currently facing, BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said yesterday.

Stressing the need for polls at the earliest, he also said the reports by the reform commissions formed by the interim government should be discussed in parliament.

The BNP leader made the remarks while speaking to reporters after a meeting with some other political parties at the party chairperson's Gulshan office.

At the meeting, leaders of Gono Odhikar Parishad (Rashed); Gono Forum, Bam Gonotantrik Oikya; Bangladesh Sadharon Chhatra Odhikar Songrokkhon Parishad; Peoples Party; and National Awami Party (Bhashani) – parties that previously organised joint movements with BNP against the former Awami League government – expressed their dissatisfaction with the interim government's performance so far.

They urged the interim government to hold discussions with political parties and announce an election date, adding that reforms should be carried out through an elected parliament after the polls.

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## Impatience over polls hurting reforms Says Asif Mahmud

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Impatience of political parties regarding elections is hurting the reform

government's efforts, said Adviser Asif Mahmud Sojib Bhuiyan yesterday.

"We call on political parties to support the reform process, as it is inclusive and aims to build a more equitable and democratic system," he said while speaking as the chief guest at a winter clothing distribution event in Kaharol, Dinaipur.

He said elections will be held according to the government's timeline, between late 2025 and mid-2026, after the completion of reforms.

"The reform commissions have been actively working for the past three months. Once their reports are published, the interim government

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## LAST 3 NATIONAL POLLS Cops say they were used by higher authorities

Group of field-level, sr officials sit with polls reform commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of police officials admitted yesterday that they were under pressure from higher authorities while performing duties during the last three national elections, which were marred by controversies.

They also alleged that there were "financial transactions" during the 2014, 2018, and 2024 parliamentary polls.

Thirty field-level and senior officials of police, BGB, and Ansar met the Electoral Reform Commission at the parliament complex yesterday.

Most of them were tasked with maintaining law and order during the polls, said the commission members after the meeting.

"Some of them admitted that they had been used during the past elections, and there were incidents of financial transactions," Badiul Alam Majumdar, chief of the Electoral Reform Commission, told The Daily Star.

He said law enforcers expressed the desire that "such use of police" would stop for the sake of the country, future generations.

Badiul added that law enforcers' had a positive attitude, and were determined to avoid repeating past mistakes.

According to meeting sources, several members of the police said they had "no option but to obey the orders of the higher authorities during elections or any other time".

"If you don't follow even their wrong instructions, you have to face harassment in

many ways," a police official was quoted by a meeting source.

Some accused the returning officers and assistant returning officers of irregularities during the last three elections.

An official said members of law enforcement agencies and election officials were "given money during the elections".

Asked who distributed the money, police

"Some of them [cops] admitted that they had been used during elections in the past. And there were incidents of financial transactions."

BADIUL ALAM MAJUMDAR

Chief of Electoral Reform Commission

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## GRAFT ALLEGATIONS ACC seeks info on Hasina, family from CA's office, govt agencies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday sent letters to the Chief Adviser's Office (CAO), Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), Election Commission, and the Department of Immigration and Passports seeking information about deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her family members to conduct investigations into corruption allegations.

This development follows the ACC's December 17 decision to investigate Hasina over corruption involving Tk 21,000 crore in eight projects.

The ACC has requested details from the CAO about the eight projects, financial transaction records from the BFIU, and personal information from the EC and the passport department, according to officials.

"Our investigation teams routinely reach out to various departments for information on individuals in question under investigation for corruption allegations. This case is no different," Akhtar Hossain, director general (prevention) of the ACC, told reporters yesterday.

The eight projects include Mirsarai Economic Zone, Khurushkul Special Shelter Project, Ashrayan-2 project, Mirsarai BEPZA Economic Zone, installation of a water treatment plant and deep tube wells at Bangabandhu Sheikh

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## 2 dead, 500 houses gutted in Rohingya camp fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Two people were burnt to death and many injured in a devastating fire that broke out at a Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya yesterday.

Over 500 shanties were burnt down in the fire that broke out at C block of Camp-1 west (Lambasia) around 12:35pm, said Additional Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Md Shamsud Douza.

The charred bodies of two people, including a child, were recovered from the burnt shanties but their identities could not be confirmed yet, the additional RRRC said.

"The blaze has been brought under control completely and we are estimating the damages," he told The Daily Star around 4:00pm.

The cause behind the fire is yet to be known, he said.

"We received information about the fire around 12:35pm and moved to the spot. Around 3:00pm, firefighters brought the fire under control completely," said Shafiqul Islam, an officer of the Ukhiya Fire Service Unit.

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A Palestinian woman is helped out of an ambulance after she was wounded during Israeli strikes in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

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## Five held over humiliation of freedom fighter Main culprit still at large

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Five people were arrested yesterday in connection with the assault on freedom fighter Abdul Hai Kanu in Cumilla's Chaudagram upazila.

They are Ismail Hossain Majumder, 43, Jamal Uddin Majumder, 58, Ilias Bhuiyan, 58, Abul Kalam Azad, 48, and Imtiaz Abdullah Sajjad, 19.

Arafatul Islam, additional superintendent of police in Cumilla, said, "We have arrested five men in connection to the assault of a freedom fighter. They will be produced before a court tomorrow [today]."

Contacted, Abdul Hai Kanu told The Daily Star, "I have urged the government to ensure justice. If they don't take any steps, they will have to answer for it in due time."

On Sunday evening, a video went viral on social media in which a group of people ordered Kanu to leave the area by nightfall. They were seen putting on a garland of shoes around his neck.

Kanu said he was on his way to buy medicine around 11:30am when one Hashem obstructed him and took him to Kuliara Primary School.