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## Star celebrates Staff Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star celebrated its Staff Day yesterday with a renewed pledge to uphold the highest standards of journalism.

The daylong programme was held on the rooftop of The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

The event began with a “Pitha Utsab” and cultural performances.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said the newspaper had previously faced pressure from the government; it now faces challenges from social media, often characterised by false and baseless claims.

He said the newspaper will continue to do bold, ethical, and responsible journalism, always holding the power accountable.

Simeen Rahman, a director of Mediaworld Limited, the owner company of The Daily Star, congratulated the newspaper’s staff for their dedication and integrity.

“Throughout our

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PHOTO: STAR

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, along with journalists and employees of the newspaper, celebrated Staff Day with much enthusiasm yesterday. On the occasion, many were recognised for their outstanding performance in 2024.

## Scaling peaks and breaking barriers

### Bangladeshi women conquer three peaks in Nepal

STAR REPORT

The first Bangladeshi all-women winter expedition to Nepal’s Langtang region concluded on January 11, marking a significant step for gender equality in adventure sports.

The team of five mountaineers—Nishat Mazumder, Yasim Lisa, Arpita Debnath, Mousumi Akthar, and Tahura Sultana Rekha—scaled three peaks under the banner ‘Sultana’s Dream Unbound’, reports The Kathmandu Post.

Inspired by Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain’s seminal feminist text Sultana’s Dream (1905), the expedition symbolised empowerment and breaking societal barriers.

The mountaineers initially aimed to summit Yala Peak (5,500m), Baden Powell Peak (5,857m), and Naya Kanga (5,844m). While they successfully scaled Yala Peak, hazardous winter conditions forced them to abandon plans for Baden Powell Peak and Naya Kanga. Instead, they summited Surya Peak (5,145m) and Gosaikunda Peak (4,380m).

“This expedition tested every aspect of our mountaineering skills,” Lisa said. “Inspired by Begum Rokeya’s teachings, I learned

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## ZIA ORPHANAGE SC verdict on Khaleda’s appeals today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court will deliver its verdict today on the appeals of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia challenging the High Court judgement that on October 30, 2018, enhanced the five years’ imprisonment handed to her by the trial court to 10 years in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed yesterday fixed the date for the delivery of the judgement after conducting hearing on the appeals.

The apex court also will deliver its verdict today on the appeals filed by former BNP lawmaker Qazi Saleemul

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## Election timelines a decision for govt, parties

Says UNRC Gwyn Lewis; UNDP delegation arrives in Dhaka

**We’re in the initial days and trying to understand what the needs of the Election Commission are and how the commission would like to run the elections. There are already works ongoing in terms of updating the electoral rolls.**

GWYN LEWIS

UN Resident Coordinator in Bangladesh

STAR REPORT

A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) team from New York began assessing the Election Commission’s (EC) requirements yesterday as part of preparations for the next parliamentary elections.

The UNDP delegation is visiting Bangladesh at the request of the EC.

The delegation, accompanied by a needs assessment team, first met Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin, four election commissioners, and EC

officials at the Nirbachan Bhaban in the capital.

Later, the team held a meeting with Foreign Secretary Jashim Uddin at the foreign ministry.

Talking to journalists after the meetings, UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) in Bangladesh Gwyn Lewis said the EC requested technical support for different aspects of the works, reports UNB.

The works encompass IT capacity development, combating misinformation and disinformation, and addressing various issues related to transport,

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## No more party symbols in local govt polls

### Says reform commission chief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Local elections will no longer be held using party symbols, said Local Government Reform Commission Chief Professor Tofail Ahmed yesterday.

“Local government reforms will include proposals related to laws, structures, and service activities,” he said during a meeting on the topic at the Singair Upazila Parishad conference room in Manikganj.

“We are engaging with stakeholders and gathering their suggestions. Based on these inputs, we will implement positive changes across all areas of the local government system,” he added.

The meeting, chaired

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## It contradicts with July uprising’s spirit

### Chhatra Maitri on removal of ‘Adivasi’ from textbooks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biplobi Chhatra Maitri yesterday condemned the removal of the graffiti containing the word “Adivasi” from a textbook for ninth and tenth grades.

The decision, which came following demands by ultra-nationalist groups, is contrary to the aspirations of the July uprising, it added.

The objections raised by Students for Sovereignty were not limited to the issue of indigenous people but also extended to religious content in the textbook, it said in a statement signed by the organisation’s President Dilip Roy and General Secretary Jabir Ahmed Jubel.

“The decision is a grave insult to indigenous and religious minority communities. It also proves that the interim government’s rhetoric about an ‘inclusive Bangladesh’ is as hollow as the claims of the fascist Awami government about building a so-called secular Bangladesh,” it said.

“There have been similar instances of the interim government making undemocratic decisions under pressure from such groups, such as dissolving the Curriculum and Textbook Revision Coordination Committee following objections raised by some religion-based organisations last September,” the statement read.

“Succumbing to pressure from certain groups reflects the government’s submissive policies,” it said, calling for a united resistance against extremist control over the education system.

## No tension at border now

### Says home adviser

BSS, Dhaka

Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said yesterday that the situation at the border is almost normal as the construction of barbed wire fencing has already been stopped.

“There is no tension at the border now,” he said while responding to a question after attending a views exchange meeting with divisional officers in Mymensingh.

He also mentioned that a director general-level meeting between the two frontier forces of Bangladesh and India will be held next month.

Jahangir added that some unbalanced agreements have been signed between the two neighbouring countries.

He said a letter has already been sent in this regard and that discussions will focus on how the problems arising from these unequal agreements can be resolved.

## AL orchestrated BDR massacre

### Says Shahidul Alam

UNB, Dhaka

The ousted Awami League government orchestrated the BDR massacre to weaken Bangladesh’s paramilitary force for political gain, said renowned photographer Shahidul Alam yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference at the National Press Club, he claimed the incident was staged to harm the country and benefit neighbouring interests.

“The government sacrificed innocent members of the BDR for its own political gain,” he said.

The event, organised by families of imprisoned BDR personnel alongside the BDR Welfare Council, called for the cancellation of Section (e) of the Re-Investigation Commission’s notification in the Pilkhana Murder Case, a fair investigation, and the reinstatement of dismissed BDR members.

“These individuals have suffered years of wrongful imprisonment, with evidence suppressed and misinformation spread,” Alam said, demanding a credible investigation. “We must ensure justice for those who have been unjustly punished.”

Critics argue that Section (e), which allows new suspects to be added while retaining existing charges, enables further injustice. Families allege it has led to wrongful imprisonment and torture of innocent BDR members.

Shahidul accused former Dhaka South mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh and the then home minister of complicity in the killings.

John Biswas sets up his assortment of books around the trunk of a tree near Saint Joseph School in Mohammadpur recently. Unlike the average makeshift stall in Dhaka that occupies portions of a footpath, his pop-up store is pedestrian-friendly. Biswas has been selling books for over 35 years and originally sold them directly to schools. However, in his old age, he can no longer do so and now relies on pop-up stores like this for his survival.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS