



PHOTO: TITU DAS, HABIBUR RAHMAN, KONGKON KARMAKER

Clockwise from left, the demolished residence of former Barishal City Corporation mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah on Kali Bari Road in the city after it was torn apart by locals on Thursday night. The remains of a bungalow located on Sheikh Hasina's ancestral property in the Nagar Ghat area of Khulna's Dighalia upazila, by the banks of the Bhairab river. Locals at Dinajpur town dismantled the residence of M Iqbalur Rahim, former Awami League lawmaker of Dinajpur-3. The photos were taken yesterday.

TIB and BLAST condemn arson, vandalism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) yesterday expressed deep concern over the recent incidents of vandalism and violence across the country, including at Dhanmondi-32.

In a statement, TIB described the acts of violence as "unusual" and criticised the government for not preventing such incidents.

The anti-corruption watchdog warned that the emerging situation poses risks to democratic transition, good governance, and state stability. They urged the government to play an active role in controlling and preventing further unrest rather than merely issuing statements.

Calling for respect for the rule of law and an end to destructive activities, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said, "There is no way to deny that dictator Sheikh Hasina, accused of committing mass killing, and her aides did the most irreplaceable damage to Bangabandhu, the Liberation War, and the spirit of the Liberation War during authoritarian rule driven by endless lust for partisanship and dynasticism."

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EKUSHEY BOI MELA A fun-filled day for little ones



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Excited to discover something magical within the pages of a book, a girl calls out to her mother, eager to share the joy of reading together.

HASAN MEER

The Ekushey Boi Mela at Suhrawardy Udyan was alive with energy yesterday, as families flocked to the book fair, eager to soak in the festive atmosphere.

The air was filled with the joyful laughter of children, their excitement contagious as they darted from one bookstall to another, their eyes wide with wonder.

Parents watched over them with a mix of amusement and attentiveness, ensuring their little ones were safe while relishing the vibrant surroundings themselves.

The Boi Mela opened its gates at 11:00am yesterday and continued till 9:00pm.

The children's corner was bustling with activity, packed with eager young readers flipping through colourful pages, absorbed in the magic of stories.

Some pointed excitedly at books featuring their favourite characters, tugging at their parents' hands and pleading to buy those.

Others sat cross-legged on the floor, lost in the pages of adventure and fantasy, oblivious to the crowd around them.

Afruz Akter, a mother of two, stood smiling

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MANDATORY BACHELOR'S DEGREE FOR UPPER HOUSE

It contradicts spirit of constitution, uprising

Says political analysts

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Political analysts have opposed the Electoral Reform Commission's recommendation of making a bachelor's degree mandatory to become a member of the upper house in the proposed bicameral legislature.

They argue that setting such a minimum educational qualification contradicts the spirit of the constitution, which guarantees every citizen the right to form associations or unions.

"This is an illogical provision. On one hand, you say everyone has the right to participate in politics, but on the other hand, you impose a requirement that a graduation degree is necessary to become a member of the upper house," said Professor Nizam Ahmed, an expert on parliamentary affairs.

"There are many people who do not have a graduation degree but possess vast knowledge of political matters and people's needs through their experience. Conversely, many may have a graduation degree but lack knowledge of realpolitik," added Nizam, who is also a Public Administration teacher at Chittagong University.

The Electoral Reform Commission, in its report submitted to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in mid-January, recommended that members of the upper house should be at least 35 years old, with a minimum educational qualification of a bachelor's degree.

The Constitutional Reform Commission also proposed a bicameral legislature but did not impose any minimum educational qualification or age cap as a prerequisite for membership for the upper house.

According to the constitution, a citizen of Bangladesh who is at least 25 years old is eligible to run for a seat in parliament. Moreover, there is currently no minimum educational

mass uprising was against such discrimination," he said.

A political scientist, speaking on condition of anonymity, described the move to impose a minimum educational qualification as "undemocratic," arguing that every citizen should have the right to run for elections and that education cannot be a barrier.

"We have seen many political figures without a bachelor's degree who have made significant contributions to the nation. Such leaders are still active in politics," he added.

BNP Standing Committee Member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku said his party would issue an official response to the various proposals of the reform commission at a later date.

However, another BNP Standing Committee Member commented that for a policymaker, educational qualifications are irrelevant; what truly matters is their capability to govern effectively.

Electoral Reform Commission member Abdul Alim said they proposed a bachelor's degree as the minimum educational qualification to ensure better decision-making in the upper house.

He said the recommendation was based on the majority opinion during stakeholder consultations. According to him, many people who submitted proposals through emails, websites, and social media supported the educational qualification requirement.

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According to the constitution, a citizen of Bangladesh who is at least 25 years old is eligible to run for a seat in parliament. Moreover, there is currently no minimum educational qualification for the positions of president, prime minister, or even members of local government bodies.

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Professor Sabbir Ahmed of Dhaka University's Political Science department said there is no educational qualification requirement for becoming the president or the PM.

"Setting a bachelor's degree requirement is a form of discrimination, and the latest

CANCELLED TEACHER APPOINTMENTS

Police use water cannons, charge batons to foil demo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday charged batons and used water cannons to disperse protesting candidates who were demonstrating against a High Court verdict that cancelled their appointments as assistant teachers in government primary schools.

The law enforcers took action around 3:00pm when the protesters gathered near the chief adviser's residence, Jamuna.

Witnesses said the demonstrators first assembled in front of the Jatiya Press Club before marching towards Jamuna, demanding the cancellation of the HC verdict and the announcement of their joining date.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

As they reached near Kakrail Mosque, police intercepted them. However, the protesters broke through several barricades and advanced towards Jamuna.

At that point, police used batons and water cannons to disperse them, our staff photographer reported from the scene.

Protesters claimed several of their colleagues were injured in the police action.

"We qualified through exams. Why are we being denied our jobs? Why are the police beating us?" asked Taslima Begum, one of the demonstrators.

The protesters argued that all recruitment procedures had been completed and that the only step remaining was their joining.

"Our appointments were cancelled before we even received our joining letters. The verdict must

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ROHINGYA NID SCAM

Five years on, probe still incomplete

ACC likely to take over case

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Police have yet to conclude their investigation and submit a charge sheet to the court in the case filed over the Bangladeshi NID scam for Rohingyas, even after five years.

Investigation into the case, filed with Kotwali Police Station in Chattogram in 2019, reportedly stalled after the involvement of senior Election Commission (EC) officials surfaced during the probe.

The case is now likely to be transferred to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

In 2019, an ACC team first discovered that Rohingyas had been added to the Bangladeshi NID database using NID forms and EC laptops. The ACC also found that several laptops used for entering NID information had been missing for years.

Currently, the Criminal Investigation Department of Chattogram is handling the case after it was transferred from the Counter-Terrorism (CT) Division of Chattogram Metropolitan Police on February 12, 2023, following an order from Police Headquarters.

"The case will be handed over to ACC as some sensitive information and names of EC officials have emerged during the investigation. As per the law, ACC now has jurisdiction over it. When the court orders us to transfer the case, we will comply,"

said Shahnewaz Khaled, superintendent of police, Chattogram CID.

He declined to elaborate further.

Meanwhile, another case related to the NID scam has recently been transferred to the ACC.

Investigators said more than 20 EC officials, from directors to office assistants, were involved in a syndicate that issued Bangladeshi NID cards to Rohingyas directly from the NID servers.



Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent could not determine how many times police sought time extensions from the court to finish the investigation.

"If someone is named in a criminal's statement, it does not automatically prove their guilt. A proper investigation and solid evidence are required to establish involvement," said a police official, requesting anonymity.

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Farmers transport Aman paddy straw in trawlers to sell as fodder to cattle traders from various farms at a rate of Tk 70 per pack. The photo was recently taken at Charbaria in Barishal's Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: TITU DAS