

জন ও নিরাপদে টেমিটিয়ান্স পাঠান
প্রিয়জনদের প্রয়োজনে...

যেকোনো শাখা থেকে রেমিটিয়ান্স গ্রহণ করলেই
পাবেন সরকার নির্ধারিত ২.৫% প্রমোদনা

সাথে আত্মও আত্মে নিশ্চিত আকর্ষণীয় পুরস্কার

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ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূবালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়

Focus on public issues, not just reforms Tarique urges political parties

UNB, Dhaka

B N P Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday urged political parties to present proposals to the nation to address public issues, rather than focusing only on reforms to the state structure and institutions.

"Instead of merely discussing the caretaker government system, the constitutional framework, and the voting and electoral system, there should be more emphasis on how the problems of people will be resolved," he said.

He made the remarks while virtually joining an iftar party organised by the Nationalist Democratic Movement in the capital.

Tarique said just as there should be discussions

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Participants at a roundtable discussion titled "Accelerating Gender-Inclusive Urban WASH: A Call for Action". The event was jointly organised by The Daily Star and WaterAid at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

JS, constituent assembly polls can be held together Says NCP Convener Nahid Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next national election could be held simultaneously as both legislative and constituent assembly polls, said National Citizen Party (NCP) Convener Nahid Islam yesterday.

Speaking at an iftar event organised by the NCP, he said that the election could pave the way for drafting a new constitution, facilitating a transition towards democracy.

The event, held at the InterContinental Hotel in the capital, was attended by anti-fascist politicians, students, labourers, scholars, activists, professionals, and eminent citizens.

Nahid said the NCP believes the election process can be completed within the timeline set by the government.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has previously said that the elections could take place by December this year or in the first half of next year. However, Nahid emphasised the need to improve law and order before holding the polls.

"For free and fair elections, the army, police, bureaucracy, and media must remain neutral, and their institutional impartiality must be ensured," he added.

He also called for effective government measures to ensure women's safety, combat corruption and extortion, and tackle violence against women.

"Recently, we have observed attempts to portray

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CHILDREN IN ROHINGYA CAMPS Malnutrition reaches alarming levels: Unicef

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Severe acute malnutrition in the Rohingya refugee camps has surged by 27 percent in February this year compared to the same period last year, pushing more children into life-threatening hunger, Unicef said in a statement yesterday.

More than a million Rohingyas, including 5,00,000 children, live in the Cox's Bazar camps, where families now face emergency levels of malnutrition.

Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP) is preparing to cut monthly food rations from US \$12.5 to US \$6 per person starting April 1, following fund cuts from USAID under the Trump administration's new policy.

On March 6, WFP made an urgent appeal for \$15 million for April and \$81 million to sustain aid for the Rohingya refugees until the end of the year.

Unicef said over 15 percent of children in the camps are now malnourished -- the highest level recorded since the 2017 mass displacement of Rohingya refugees.

Last year, Unicef treated nearly 12,000 children under five suffering from severe acute malnutrition, a condition that leaves them dangerously thin, weak, and highly vulnerable to disease.

Of those treated, 92 percent recovered. However, without urgent intervention, this condition can be fatal, said Unicef.

"In 2025, cases of severe acute malnutrition increased by 25 percent in January compared to the same month last year (rising from 819 to 1,021 cases). February saw an even steeper increase of 27 percent (from 836 to 1,062 cases), indicating a dangerous upward trend," it added.

Unicef attributed this surge to multiple factors, including prolonged monsoon rains in 2024, which

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WATER, SANITATION, HYGIENE Ensure gender-inclusive public facilities Speakers tell Star, WaterAid roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gender-inclusive Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) is not just a women's issue but a critical development priority, said speakers at a roundtable discussion yesterday.

They stressed the need for all public zones -- such as marketplaces, kitchen markets, railway stations, and bus terminals -- to construct, operate, and maintain standardised public sanitation facilities.

The roundtable, titled "Accelerating Gender-Inclusive Urban WASH: A Call for Action," was jointly organised by The Daily Star and WaterAid at the The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

Hasin Jahan, country director of WaterAid Bangladesh, said, "The High Court, in a recent verdict, declared that access to clean drinking and usable water is a fundamental right of citizens, emphasising that it is the state's responsibility to ensure this right. However, the right to access sanitation facilities is yet to be guaranteed."

Highlighting the presence of over 5,000 slums in the capital,

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Hasin Jahan
Country Director, WaterAid

which is home to 4 million residents -- half of whom are women -- she noted, "Dhaka Wasa provides legal water connections through its low-income communities unit. However, the process is highly bureaucratic, limiting access primarily to areas where NGOs operate, resulting in lost government revenue."

"Sanitation services remain inadequate, with NGOs constructing community-managed

sanitation blocks that include bathing and menstrual hygiene facilities. However, the reach of international NGOs is very limited," she added.

Md Fazlul Hoque, deputy chief executive officer of Sajida Foundation, said the responsibility to ensure public access to toilets must be clearly defined, and accountability must be established.

Emphasising the need for gender-sensitive WASH facilities, Md Moanir Hossain, additional director of the Department of Women Affairs, highlighted the critical role of water, sanitation, and hygiene.

He noted that inadequate facilities hinder women's education, health, and safety.

Calling the mention of gender equality in the constitution "laughable," he pointed out the severe shortage of public sanitation and urged a public-private partnership to ensure this right.

Peter Maes, chief of WASH at Unicef Bangladesh, highlighted the challenges of climate migration, economic distress, and unplanned urbanisation in Dhaka.

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EC weighs three voting methods for expatriates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is considering three alternative voting methods, including a proxy voting system, to ensure Bangladeshi expatriates can exercise their franchise in the national election.

A workshop with experts is scheduled for early April, followed by consultations with political parties and stakeholders. The final decision will depend on stakeholder consensus.

The proposed methods include a postal ballot system with a specified timeframe, an online voting system, and a proxy voting system, according to the EC.

If all processes are completed, proxy voting could be implemented on a broader scale, while postal and online voting may be introduced on a trial basis in the upcoming 13th national parliamentary election.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) Abul Fazl Md Sanaullah shared the information with reporters at the EC building yesterday.

"Among the three proposed methods -- postal, online, and proxy voting -- the commission will first seek expert opinions on proxy voting. If agreed upon and technically feasible, it may be introduced on a limited scale," he said.

"Proxy voting allows a designated voter in Bangladesh to cast a vote on behalf of an expatriate," he explained, adding that identity verification, security, and reliability are key concerns here.

The EC's committee on expatriate voting rights has suggested a roadmap, which the commission approved yesterday, said the commissioner.

The committee recommended trial runs for postal and online voting to assess feasibility, he added.

Sanaullah pointed out that proxy voting is used in the UK and Australia, while India permits it only for armed forces personnel.

China supports growth of Bangladesh Says Chinese ambassador

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

China wants to see stability, unity, and democracy flourish in Bangladesh under Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' leadership, said Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen yesterday.

Yao Wen also emphasised that China stands with Bangladesh and its people, not any particular government.

"Regardless of changes in the international or domestic landscape, China remains Bangladesh's partner. Our cooperation benefits both nations," he said.

He was speaking at a seminar titled "National Image of China in Bangladesh" organised by the Center for Alternatives (CA) at a hotel in the capital.

Regarding the chief adviser's visit to China from March 26-29, Wen said China invites all heads of government but could not comment on visit priorities.

At the programme, CA Executive Director Prof Imtiaz Ahmed presented a

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SAUDI ARABIA Complex attestation rule reduces worker deployment: BAIRA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies have claimed that complications in attesting demand letters for recruitment are causing a decline in the deployment of workers to Saudi Arabia.

To address the issue, BAIRA representatives met yesterday with Prof Asif Nazrul, adviser to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

Following the meeting, they told journalists that the adviser would hold discussions today with all relevant stakeholders to determine necessary actions. However, no ministry officials spoke to the media.

Demand letters for worker recruitment from Saudi Arabia are verified and attested by the Bangladesh Embassy in Riyadh.

BAIRA leader Khandaker Abu Ashfaq said that if a demand letter is for a single worker, embassy attestation is not required.

"However, if there is more than one worker in a demand letter, attestation is mandatory. This has led to delays, preventing the timely deployment of workers. Previously, attestation was not required for up to 24 demand letters. However, on December 22 last year, the government introduced a new rule requiring attestation in all cases. Business owners are now demanding a return to the previous rule," he said.

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Students from various colleges in the capital gathered at Shahbagh yesterday to protest the recent surge in rape and violence against women. They demanded immediate action from the interim government and swift justice for the perpetrators. Similar protests have been spreading across the country over the past week.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN