



# LIGHTING UP DHAKA

Exploring Paltan's light and lamp market

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In the capital's Purana Paltan bus stop area, near Paltan Jame Mashjid, there is a wholesale and retail lighting market that will most certainly catch your eye, making you wonder what corner of your home could use such elegant artwork.

Here, you will find almost everything to take care of your lighting needs: chandeliers, table lamps, bedside lamps, wall lamps, hanging lights, fluorescent lamps, entrance bracket lights, gate lights, garden stand lights, street lamps, and what not.

Whether you want fairy lights for your balcony, a warm light for your bathroom, or a simple dim light for your bedroom, this market has you covered. Whatever lighting and decor idea you may have in mind, hold that thought and visit this market. Because here, you will find not only what you are looking for, but something even better that exceeds your imagination and expectations. You can even find shops that customise



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

according to your design for lighting needs, bringing your vision to reality.

Depending on the size, its complexity, and of course your bargaining skills, you will find everything here, from mid-range to high-end prices. For something as simple as a bedside lamp, prices may start from Tk 2,000 and may climb to

Tk 30,000 and even higher. But if you have set your eyes on a royal-looking crystal glass chandelier, the options here can range from Tk 20,000 to a grand Tk 3,00,000.

Whether it be star lights or floral ceiling hangings, each shop here strives to set itself apart and stand out by adding uniqueness to their collection and designs.

One of the first, and arguably the

oldest shops you will find here, is Shwash Crystal Lighting, which started in 1963, offering a range of lighting and design items for both households and luxury hotels. Shwash is one of the oldest in this business and was among the first to lay the brick for this hub, which later turned out to be the largest wholesale and retail lighting market of Dhaka.

Meanwhile, several other lighting shops are leaving customers in awe with their uniquely designed star lights. Many shops, including Power Plus Lighting, are offering tailor-made lighting brackets and lamps customised to each customer's taste and choice. Whereas, Imo Lighting offers a range of underwater lighting instruments that can enhance the charm of your aquariums and indoor or outdoor fountains.

The market has become a hub for local entrepreneurs in the lighting and lamp business, each featuring their own niche and design themes.

The kind of competition you see among the shops is usually good for the customers, as vendors work hard to make their designs and looks more unique and aesthetic, while also giving you more leverage to haggle over price.

## Stay vigilant to foil conspiracies

Tarique tells BNP leaders, activists

UNB, Dhaka

BNP acting Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday asked his party members to stay vigilant until the restoration of democracy, saying the most important task now is to establish democracy by foiling conspiracies against Bangladesh at any cost.

Tarique made the remarks while addressing the biennial council of Thakurgaon district BNP unit at Thakurgaon Boys High School ground through a virtual platform.

He said BNP's movement would continue until the democratic rights of people are restored and Bangladesh returns to the track of democracy.

As the country's largest political party, Tarique said BNP has a "sacred responsibility" to rebuild Bangladesh.

"We have already outlined the framework for this through the 31-point framework we unveiled two and a half years ago," he added.

He urged party leaders and activists to make two pledges from the council: to remain vigilant like sentinels until democracy is restored and to dedicate themselves to fulfilling public aspirations and the party's 31-point reform agenda if BNP assumes office through the people's mandate, even at the cost of their lives.

"As the largest political party in Bangladesh, it is our responsibility to confront any threat to democracy," he said.

Tarique, however, said the movement must refrain from any course of action that disrupts peace and discipline.

Talking about state reforms, the BNP leader said his party unveiled the 31-point reform agenda two and a half years ago and the interim government formed reform commissions where almost all democratic political parties provided their opinions over various issues.

He said it is natural that different political parties and different people will have differences in opinion.

"If you truly have trust and confidence in the people, then leave it to them. Present your policies, ideology and objectives before the people and let people decide."

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir also spoke at the district council held after eight years.



## Sometimes

FROM PAGE 1  
situation may already have deteriorated," he said.

"Wherever there was a delay on our part, it was because we received information late. Sometimes our nearest camp can be 20 kilometres away. We cannot set up camps at every kilometre. We try our utmost, but it is not possible to be at every doorstep," he added.

Col Shafiqul said maintaining law and order was not solely the army's duty. While the force has magistracy powers to arrest, detain and hand suspects to police, it cannot impose judicial punishment.

Referring to a mob attack outside a freedom fighter's home, he said troops were dispatched as soon as the message was received. "No mob or disorder can diminish the dignity of our freedom fighters," he added.

The colonel reaffirmed that the army maintains "zero tolerance" towards mob violence and expressed hope that the number of such incidents will come down in the days ahead.

About misinformation, he said groups with vested interests were spreading "disinformation, falsehoods and propaganda" on social media against the army, which he described as "undesirable and embarrassing".

He urged the media to ensure accurate reporting and resist efforts to undermine public trust in the army.

In reply to a query on the Ducsu election, he reiterated: "The army has no role in this election. Still, some quarters are attempting to spread propaganda linking us with it, but this will not succeed."

Regarding the national polls, he said that although the army has not yet received any formal directive from the Election Commission, preparations are underway. "We will carry out whatever duties we are assigned with the highest professionalism."

Col Shafiqul also dismissed claims that the army was not cooperating with the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances. "Those [officers] who were called have already spoken to the commission and extended full cooperation. If further help is needed, the Bangladesh Army will continue to provide it. Any claim to the contrary is simply rumour," he said.

## Why is 'Gen Z'?

FROM PAGE 1  
create fake IDs and use them to spread hate speech and fake news, commit fraud and other crimes on these platforms.

A government notice directed the regulator, Nepal Telecommunications Authority, to deactivate unregistered social media but gave no details of which platforms faced action. The services will be restored once the platforms comply with its order, the government said.

Local media reported that the banned platforms include Meta's Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, Alphabet's YouTube, China's Tencent and Snapchat, Pinterest and X.

Many people in Nepal think corruption is rampant, and the government of Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli has been criticised by opponents for failing to deliver on its promises to tackle graft or make progress in addressing longstanding economic issues.

## Hopes run high as DU goes to vote today

FROM PAGE 1  
As the epicentre of the uprising, it was where students declared protest programmes, and most of the coordinators of the Students Against Discrimination platform – which led the uprising – were from this campus.

Many of them are now contesting from rival panels for top Ducsu posts.

A record 45 candidates, including five women, are running for vice president. Close contests are expected among Abdul Qader, Umama Fatema, Md Abidul Islam Khan, Md Abu Shadik Kayem and Shameem Hossen.

Nineteen candidates are vying for general secretary. Among them, Abu Baker Mojumder, Sheikh Tanvir Barea Hamim, Meghmalla Bosu and SM Farhad are frontrunners.

For assistant general secretary, 25 contenders are in the race. Names most mentioned by residential students include Ashrefa Khatun, Jahed Ahmed, Tanbir Al Hadi Mayed, Tahmid Al Muddassir Chowdhury and Mohiuddin Khan.

However, non-resident students, who make up about 40 percent of the electorate, will play a decisive role.

The fiercest competition is for the 13 member posts in Ducsu, with 217 candidates. Each of the 12 secretary posts has 11 to 19 contenders.

## 'Open fire or lose jobs'

FROM PAGE 1  
from using his pistol despite repeated threats.

This is the first testimony from a field-level officer, who described police shootings during last year's July uprising.

Ashraf, who led a team of 20 police personnel, said he reached Shahbagh Police Station from Mirpur Police Lines in the early morning on August 5. Four other teams also reached there. He learnt that around 5:00am, then DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman and around 6:00am, then joint commissioner Sudip Kumar Chakraborty instructed senior officers to suppress the day's protests with force.

At 9:00am, ADC Akhtarul, AC Imrul of Ramna Zone, and Inspector Arshad Hossain of Shahbagh Police Station briefed around 100 police personnel. Sixty to 65 policemen were later deployed in the Central Shaheed Minar area, where AC Imrul threw several sound grenades, dispersed the protesters, and detained several on Akhtarul's orders.

Ashraf said he, along with 25-35 officers including AC Imrul and constable Nasirul Islam, was later sent to Chankharpul. There, as students and residents from Bangshal and Chawkbazar attempted to march towards Shahbagh, ADC Akhtarul ordered the use of sound grenades, gas guns, and shotguns.

He said, at one point, he also ordered, "Those of you with pistols and Chinese rifles, fire at the protesters and kill them." When Ashraf and several others refused, the ADC verbally abused and threatened them.

SI Ashraf added that constable Nasirul opened fire with a Chinese rifle, with additional bullets supplied by ADC Akhtarul. The ADC also snatched a rifle from a constable who refused to

Ducsu ballots will have five pages, while hall union ballots will be one page. Voters will use Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) sheets. The election commission said if each voter takes 10 minutes, all ballots can be cast within the allotted time from 8:00am to 4:00pm.

Jagannath Hall has the highest number of male voters with 2,222, while Rokeya Hall accounts for the largest female electorate with 5,641.

For male students, the designated centres are Curzon Hall (for Dr Muhammad Shahidullah Hall, Amar Ekushey Hall, Fazlul Huq Muslim Hall); Physical Education Centre (for Jagannath Hall, Shahid Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall, Salimullah Muslim Hall); Senate Building (for Sir AF Rahman Hall, Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall, Bijoy Ekattor Hall); and Udayan School and College (for Surja Sen Hall, Muktiyoddha Ziaur Rahman Hall, Kabi Jasimuddin Hall, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Hall).

For female students, four centres have been set up: TSC (for Rokeya Hall); Dhaka University Club (for Bangladesh-Kuwait Maitree Hall, Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Hall); Geology Department (for Kabi Sofia Kamal Hall); and University

fire and handed it to constable Sujon Hossain, who continued firing while standing, kneeling, and lying on the street. APBn constable Imaj Hossain Imon also fired shots at protesters.

Ashraf said he saw several demonstrators collapse from bullet injuries while others carried them away. AC Imrul, Inspector Arshad, and five to seven APBn members then entered lanes of Nazimuddin Road and continued the firing.

By around 2:30pm, when the news spread that Sheikh Hasina had fled, police lost control of Chankharpul and retreated to Shahbagh Police Station.

Ashraf said he later questioned constable Nasirul about how he returned all 40 rounds of ammunition issued to him despite firing. Nasirul replied that ADC Akhtarul had supplied him with additional bullets.

The state defence counsel for Hasina and Asaduzzaman will cross-examine him today.

Apart from the police officer, two other prosecution witnesses testified yesterday.

Mohammad Hasan, a second-year political science student at Chattogram College, told the tribunal how Awami League leaders, along with Jubo League, Chhatra League activists, and police, carried out armed attacks on protesters during the July uprising.

He said that on July 16, while heading to Muradpur in Chattogram city with friends, his group came under gunfire from AL leaders Nurul Azim Rony, Helal Akbar Chowdhury Babur, Shaibal Das Suman, former mayor AJM Nasir, and others. According to Hasan, Rony carried a pistol, Babur a shotgun, and the others were armed with locally made weapons.

Hasan recounted that his acquaintance Faisal Ahmed Shanto

Laboratory School and College (for Shamsunnahar Hall).

The DU VC yesterday attended meetings with government high-ups and law enforcers at the secretariat. Later, he said there is nothing to suggest law and order will spiral out of control.

"Those who'll win and those who won't – all have roles in reviving the institution that fosters leadership and democratic practices."

Ducsu, he added, will be a platform that speaks against all forms of injustice.

Chief Returning Officer Prof Mohammad Zashim Uddin said vote counting will be broadcast live on LED screens outside polling stations to ensure transparency. Bags, mobile phones, smartwatches and other electronic devices will not be allowed. A special shuttle service will facilitate voter movement.

DMP Commissioner SM Sazzat Ali said stringent measures are in place, including check-posts at campus gates, regular patrols, CCTV surveillance, SWAT teams, bomb disposal squads, intelligence units, and the presence of RAB and BGB.

"We expect security to be strong tomorrow [today]," he told reporters.

was killed in the attack, Wasim Akram was hacked to death, and a carpenter named Faruk was shot dead.

Two days later, Hasan himself was injured during a protest in the New bridge area when police and AL men opened fire. "I was hit by 11 shotgun pellets in my back. Doctors removed eight," he told the tribunal, showing his wounds.

He alleged that police, hospital authorities, and AL activists obstructed his treatment at Chattogram Medical College Hospital, forcing him to take treatment at a private hospital. Hasan held Hasina, ex-home minister Kamal, former IGP Mamun, and AL leaders responsible for the killings.

Another witness, Mohammad Sohel Mahmud, testified that on August 5 last year he saw policemen, including then Konabari Police Station officer-in-charge Ashraf and Detective Branch AC, detained a young man from a rickshaw garage on Kashimpur road in Gazipur's Konabari.

From his cousin's rooftop, Sohel said, he saw police take the man to a graveyard wall and shoot him dead on the spot. "Later, I learnt his name was Hridoy, and that the constable who pulled the trigger was Akram," he told the tribunal.

State defence counsel for Hasina and Kamal cross-examined the two witnesses, saying the accused he represented were not involved in the incidents.

Meanwhile, the ICT-1 sent Sultan Ahmed, an accused of crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War, to custody after he surrendered before the tribunal. His counsel sought bail on grounds of old age and illness. The tribunal ordered that Sultan remain in custody until September 18, when the bail petition will be heard.

## 19 killed in Nepal

FROM PAGE 1  
and had been driven out by police.

Some of the demonstrators had climbed over the wall into the parliament premises, and its gate was vandalised.

Dr Dipendra Pandey of the National Trauma Centre said that protesters were brought in with critical condition, some with gunshot wounds to the head and chest, reports The Kathmandu Post.

Meanwhile, UN rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani yesterday demanded a swift and transparent investigation into the killings.

"We are shocked by the killings and injury of protesters in Nepal today and urge a prompt and transparent investigation," Ravina Shamdasani said in a statement.

Organisers of the protests, which spread to other cities in the Himalayan country, have called them "demonstrations by Gen Z". They say the protests reflect young people's widespread frustration with the government and anger over its policies.

"We were triggered by the social media ban, but that is not the only reason we are gathered here," said student Yujan Rajbhandari, 24.

"We are protesting against corruption that has been institutionalised in Nepal." Another student, Ikshama Tumrok, 20, said she was protesting against the "authoritarian attitude" of the government.

"We want to see change. Others have endured this, but it has to end with our generation," she told AFP.

A government decision to block access to several social media platforms, including Facebook, last week has fuelled anger among the young. About 90 percent of Nepal's 30 million people use internet.

Officials said they imposed the ban because platforms had failed to register with authorities in a crackdown on misuse, including fake social media accounts used to spread hate speech

## Commission to meet parties

FROM PAGE 1  
Without specifying a date, Professor Riaz indicated that the meetings could take place by the end of this week.

The commission's decision comes at a time of sharp differences among political parties regarding how the July Charter should be implemented.

The BNP favours enacting constitutional proposals, requiring amendments to the charter, within two years of forming the next national parliament. Jamaat-e-Islami supports implementation through a presidential proclamation or referendum, while the National Citizen Party proposes forming a Constituent Assembly to carry out reforms.

At yesterday's meeting, a commission member cautioned that recommending the president to implement constitutional issues through a special order, without consulting political parties, could spark controversy.

Commission sources said the upcoming meetings will brief parties on the experts' recommendations and the reasoning behind them. All proposed methods – both from political parties and experts – will be presented to build consensus on the implementation approach, they added.

There are also plans to include experts in the meetings so they can

and fake news, and commit fraud.

Police had orders to use water cannons, batons and rubber bullets to control the crowd and the army has been deployed in the area of the protests to bolster law enforcement officers, Muktiram Rijal, a spokesperson for the Kathmandu district office, told Reuters.

He said the curfew will remain in force until 10:00pm local time (1615 GMT).

Police said similar protests were also organised in Biratnagar and Bharatpur in the southern plains and in Pokhara in western Nepal.

Thousands of young people, including students, many in their school or college uniforms, joined the protest earlier yesterday.

Many carried the national flag and placards with slogans such as "Shut down corruption and not social media", "Unban social media", and "Youths against corruption", as they marched through Kathmandu.

There have been several corruption cases reported in the last few years involving ministers, former ministers and high-profile officials.

Since the ban, videos contrasting the struggles of ordinary Nepalis with the children of politicians flaunting luxury goods and expensive vacations have gone viral on Tik Tok, which is still operating.

"There have been movements abroad against corruption, and they (the government) are afraid that might happen here as well," said protester Bhumika Bharati.

Nepal's social media shutdown comes as governments worldwide, including the US, EU, Brazil, India, China and Australia, take steps to tighten oversight of social media and Big Tech due to growing concern about issues such as misinformation, data privacy, online harm and national security.

Critics say many of these measures risk stifling free expression, but regulators say stricter controls are needed to protect users and preserve social order.

provide explanations if required.

"Even if consensus is not reached, the commission will recommend an implementation method based on expert opinion," said one commission source.

Of the 84 reform proposals agreed upon through consensus, some will require changes to existing laws and regulations, while others can be implemented through government orders. However, a significant portion of the proposals is constitution-related.

Political experts have opined that many non-constitutional reforms could be implemented through ordinances or executive orders.

The commission had earlier explored the possibility of holding a referendum and suggested seeking an advisory opinion from the Supreme Court under Article 106 to resolve key constitutional questions related to the July Charter. However, that was later set aside due to concerns over timing and the prevailing political climate, commission members said.

The July Charter implementation plan will not include a specific timeframe, but the commission will seek a pledge from political parties to carry it out, The Daily Star has learnt from people with knowledge of the meeting.