



"We are at a critical moment. It's not yet there. So what we have just done is a pause."

Qatari PM Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani on Gaza truce

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Seat-sharing snub riles BNP allies

Party fields 272 candidates; no seats allotted to partners yet

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Discontent runs deep among BNP's partners as the party has announced 272 candidates, leaving allies in the dark about how many seats might be left for them.

With only days to go before the election schedule is likely to be unveiled, BNP has yet to hold any formal talks with them on seat-sharing. Party insiders suggest it may ultimately keep around 15 of the 28 remaining vacant seats for its partners, far fewer than they had hoped for.

The fate of the remaining 13 seats is still undecided: no aspirants were announced for six due to fears of internal conflicts; three remain vacant as the party has yet to find strong, reliable candidates; and four are empty due to unresolved constituency boundary-related issues.

Senior BNP leaders said the party does not want to risk losing seats by nominating partners, mainly due to the recent amendment to the Representation of the People Order 1972. The amendment has made it mandatory for candidates in an alliance to use their own electoral symbol

"Whether these [vacant] seats will be given to the allies will be decided and announced later. I still don't know who is expressing anger over the seat-sharing issue."



BNP Standing Committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain

instead of the coalition leader's symbol.

Nearly two dozen leaders from like-minded parties that joined the simultaneous movement with BNP have expressed resentment, saying the party has sidelined them and broken its word.

On behalf of the 12-Party Alliance, its coordinator Syed Ehsanul Huda, in a press release yesterday, said that allied leaders were "surprised and upset."

BNP nominated its own candidate in the Kishoreganj-5 seat, which Huda had been campaigning for.

Saiful Haque, general secretary of the Biplobi Workers Party and coordinator of Ganatantra Mancha, said, "Is BNP now walking on the Awami League's old path? Awami League used to do this, leaving some seats and not giving any to others. Now a distance has been created [between the allies and BNP]."

Saiful, who is the Mancha's candidate for Dhaka-8, said BNP had announced its own candidate there in the first round of declarations. "In

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PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Illegal brick kilns have invaded Ghumai Beel in Chattogram, Bangladesh's second-largest wetland and one of the key granaries in the district. Fertile topsoil from paddy fields is being stripped for brick-making, while industrial waste dumped into the beel is eroding the land's productivity. Although the law prohibits kilns near farmland and water bodies, the practice persists.

Those who pressed for election now want to delay it
Islamist party leaders tell Sylhet rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Leaders of Islamist parties said yesterday that those who were once adamant in their demand for the national election are now conspiring to delay it.

"Those who were all about the election have now started speaking

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'Khaleda not fit to fly at this moment'

Decision after 48hr observation ends tonight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia remains under close observation at Evercare Hospital, and her travel to London for advanced treatment will be delayed until doctors declare her fit to fly by air ambulance.

BNP first scheduled Khaleda's flight for Friday, then rescheduled it to today, but both

attempts fell through as her health

slightly worsened, and the air ambulance had not arrived.

Khaleda's medical board met at the hospital last night to review her test reports. Dr Zubaida Rahman, wife of BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman and a member of the board, attended the meeting.

The medical board said Khaleda's travel will be delayed as she is not

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The development Bangladesh has seen in recent decades has not been inclusive, leaving poorer segments of society behind.

Shafiq Nahin Shimul, a professor at the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University

Child deaths higher among the poor, little care for mothers

Nationwide survey shows how inequality is deepening health disparities among households

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Inequality is delivering a dual blow to Bangladesh's poorest families: children are nearly twice as likely to die before age five, while their mothers are three times less likely to receive adequate healthcare compared to the wealthy.

These disparities are laid bare in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2025, which surveyed 63,000 households. The findings reveal that economic and educational gaps are actively driving life-and-death outcomes for the country's most vulnerable.

According to the data, under-five mortality stands at 39 per 1,000 live births among the poorest population, compared to just 22 per 1,000 in the richest group.

The child mortality rate climbs to 48 per 1,000 live births among mothers with no education or only pre-primary schooling, dropping to 22 per 1,000 among those with higher education.

The survival of the child is inextricably linked to the care of the mother. The survey, conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

(BBS) with UNICEF support, highlights a massive gap in antenatal care (ANC).

While 99 percent of pregnant women in wealthy households received ANC at least once, the rate

children from the less educated and poorer groups lag behind in almost all indicators," said Shafiq Nahin Shimul, a professor at the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University. "But the trend is not unusual."

Explaining the reasons, he said the development Bangladesh has seen in recent decades has not been inclusive, leaving poorer segments of society behind.

The government's contribution to health and nutrition services remains small, forcing people to rely heavily on private healthcare. Poorer communities have limited access to private healthcare, he added.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic, the economy still faces multiple challenges, including high inflation and soaring food prices -- which have hit low-income households the hardest, particularly in terms of nutrition, he said.

"All these factors likely contributed to the disparities," he told The Daily Star on November 26.

Apart from efforts to improve the macroeconomy, the government

drops to 84 percent among the poorest women. The gap widens for quality care: 68 percent of women in the richest group received the recommended four or more visits, compared to only 23 percent in the poorest group.

"It is alarming that women and

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Hasina's stay in India is her call
Says Jaishankar



DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's stay in India is her personal decision, influenced by the circumstances that led her to the country, said Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

He made the comment during an interview at the Hindustan Times Leadership Summit yesterday.

Asked if Hasina was welcome to stay in India for as long as she wants, Jaishankar said she went to India under certain circumstances, which were clearly a factor in what happens to her.

"But again, that is something in which she has to make up her mind."

Hasina fled to India in August last year following the mass uprising that led to the end of her 15-year rule.

Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal gave her death sentence in absentia for "crimes against humanity."

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INDICATOR	NAT'L AVERAGE	POOREST HOUSEHOLDS	RICHEST HOUSEHOLDS
Child mortality (under 5)	33 per 1,000	39 per 1,000	22 per 1,000
Stunting	24%	32%	16%
Wasting	13%	15%	10%
C-section	52%	34%	68%
Total Fertility Rate	2.4%	2.8%	2.2%

The development Bangladesh has seen in recent decades has not been inclusive, leaving poorer segments of society behind.

Shafiq Nahin Shimul, a professor at the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University

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