



A bee collects nectar from a field of blooming yellow mustard flowers on a sunny afternoon in the Mongolkot area of Keshabpur, Jashore. As bees move from flower to flower in search of nectar and pollen, they support honey production and help boost crop yields through pollination. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Asif Mahmud to run for Dhaka-10 as independent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain has announced that he will contest the upcoming 13th National Parliamentary Election as an independent candidate from the Dhaka-10 constituency.

He made the announcement in a post on his verified Facebook page yesterday.

After the announcement, he sought everyone's cooperation and support in a video message, saying, "I do not have the backing of any major political party, numerous dedicated activists, or the financial resources required by this conventional system. I am only relying on your cooperation and support."

He also called for "yes" votes in the referendum, describing it as an opportunity for national reforms.

However, before this announcement, the inclusion of Asif and Mahfuj Alam in the NCP was almost confirmed until Thursday night, according to NCP sources.

Top NCP leaders said Asif had sought a significant role within the central executive committee, a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

From hope to horror

The dark reality of illegal migration to Europe

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Akbar Samrat, a 25-year-old electrician from Chandpur, sold all his property and took loans with the hope of securing a high-paying job in Greece.

But his dream soon descended into a nightmare when he fell victim to a human trafficking network.

It began when Mohammad Sharif, a man from his neighbourhood, promised him a lucrative job abroad. Sharif and his accomplice, Nazir Hossain, convinced Akbar to pay Tk 15 lakh for the opportunity.

Trusting them, Akbar handed over his passport and paid Tk 8 lakh upfront.

In July, Sharif arranged for Akbar to stay in Dhaka for 14 days before sending him to Dubai. From there, the journey continued through Egypt and eventually to Libya.

Once they arrived in Libya, the situation took a dark turn.

He was handed over to armed mafia members who seized his belongings and subjected him to severe torture. Akbar was held in a bunker with five others for three days without food or water.

The traffickers later moved them to a prison-like facility and demanded a large ransom, warning they would not be released otherwise. Meanwhile, Nazir kept in contact with Akbar's family in Bangladesh through WhatsApp.

Desperate for his release, Akbar's family sold property, borrowed more money, and managed to raise an additional Tk 11 lakh to pay the ransom. Even

after the payment, Akbar and the others were not freed immediately but were instead handed over to Libyan police.

After spending 45 days in captivity, Akbar and the others were rescued with support from the International Organization for

AT A GLANCE

» Bangladeshis top the list of people entering Europe illegally via the Mediterranean

» 18,034 Bangladeshis reached Italy by sea until October this year, higher than previous years

» Most trafficking victims come from three regions: Madaripur-Shariatpur, Sylhet-Sunamganj, and Narsingdi-Bhairab

» Libya remains a major transit point where migrants are detained and tortured for ransom

EXPERTS CALL FOR

» Targeted awareness in identified high-risk regions

» Investigations to dismantle entire trafficking networks

» Coordinated action against syndicate members operating abroad

» Expand safe, legal migration pathways

Migration (IOM) and returned to Bangladesh in mid-October.

"We paid instalments, then interest, and now we're drowned in debt. People are threatening us for money. We can't tolerate this anymore," Akbar told The Daily Star yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Why is dengue still prevalent in winter?

HELEMUL ALAM

Dengue, once thought to be confined to the monsoon season, now continues to pose a significant health threat throughout the winter months.

According to data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) over the last five years, 4,685 dengue cases were reported in the first 10 days of December this year alone. In comparison, December 2024 saw 9,745 cases, November 2023 had 9,288, and December 2022 recorded 5,024 cases. The numbers were notably lower in previous years – 1,207 in 2021 and just 231 in December 2020.

Experts stress the importance of four key factors – scientific mosquito control, public citizen responsibility, and administrative action – in the fight against dengue.

"Typically, when temperatures fall from mid-November to February, Aedes mosquito breeding declines, leading to a



REASONS

Warmer temperatures

Climate change

Breeding in unexpected spots

Inadequate cleaning

Delayed rainy season

RECOMMENDATIONS

Targeted fogging

Intensive cleanup campaigns

Community involvement

Regular monitoring

Proper waste disposal

awareness, coordinated sewage lines, and even building basements.

Bashar further stated that the Breteau Index – an indicator of Aedes mosquito density – remains above 20 in many areas, which is extremely concerning. When this index exceeds 20, the risk of both dengue

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Country's situation doesn't reflect July spirit

Prof Anu Muhammad tells rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The current national situation does not reflect the July spirit, as people's expectations are being broken and discriminatory groups are becoming active, said Prof Anu Muhammad, a member of the Democratic Rights Committee, yesterday.

He was addressing a rally titled "Resistance March", organised by 80 organisations at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Prof Anu Muhammad said the interim government also does not represent the spirit of the uprising, accusing it of supporting religious fascism and signing agreements that serve corporate and imperial interests.

About the arrest of Baul Abul Sarkar, he said the charges against him are false and unjust.

He condemned the shooting of Osman Hadi and attack on Dhaka University Prof Akam Jamal Uddin.

The gathering began at 4:00pm with a one-minute silence marking the 145th birth anniversary of Maulana Bhashani.

At the event, organisers presented nine demands, including the release of Abul Sarkar, withdrawal

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

It's a path towards truth, accountability

Says UN expert on exhumation, forensic analysis of July martyrs

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The scientific exhumation and forensic analysis of 114 unidentified bodies of people killed during the July uprising marks a key step in helping families of the missing access truth, justice, and accountability, a UN expert said yesterday.

"This is the first large-scale forensic recovery, analysis, and identification operation carried out in Bangladesh according to international human rights and forensic standards," said Morris Tidball-Binz, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions.

The forensic examination is being conducted on site in a temporary mortuary set up by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), following international forensic and human rights standards, says a statement from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The process, expected to take several days, includes DNA analysis to identify the deceased scientifically.

In July 2025, Tidball-Binz, also a forensic doctor, visited Dhaka with support from the OHCHR to provide technical advice on forensic investigations to the authorities, including CID and medico-legal services.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

CID partners with foreign firm to recover MTFE scammed funds

TOUSIF KAIUM and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) is preparing to repatriate a portion of the money laundered through MTFE, a Canada-based trading platform that scammed thousands of Bangladeshi investors with promises of high returns from cryptocurrency and forex trading.

CID officials say this will be the first time laundered funds held abroad are being returned to Bangladesh. An agreement has already been signed with Asset Reality Limited, a global firm that manages seized digital and crypto assets, to recover the money.

"We have made significant progress. We completed everything from our side. Hopefully, we can recover the money very soon," said CID Chief Md Sibgat Ullah.

HOW THE SCAM OPERATED

MTFE, or Metaverse Foreign Exchange, expanded rapidly in Bangladesh through a multi-level marketing (MLM) system.

Local "team leaders" recruited thousands of investors – many of

whom were educated and tech-savvy – encouraging them to deposit savings or borrow money to invest.

The platform opened locally around June 2022 and saw major growth in early 2023. Users created virtual trading accounts and deposited virtual dollars.

MTFE manipulated the system to fabricate profits and losses, giving investors the impression that real trading was taking place. Initially, it paid high returns to build trust.

By mid-2023, MTFE abruptly blocked withdrawals and disappeared.

Investigators later confirmed that the virtual currency displayed in users' accounts was entirely fake. Investors' money was funneled into MTFE-linked wallets, then transferred to MTFE's central accounts and moved onward to various crypto wallets, including on the exchange OKX.

According to CID and newspaper reports, around Tk 11,000 crore was siphoned off, most of it from Bangladeshi users.

The agency estimates that around

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Candidates glance through their notes before entering the exam hall as the MBBS and BDS admission tests for 2025-26 session were held yesterday. The photo was taken at the Residential Model School and College centre in Mohammadpur, Dhaka.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS