



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

- Bangladeshi top the list of people entering Europe illegally via the Mediterranean
- 18,034 Bangladeshi 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.

"I have two sons -- one is four and the other is one year old. I don't know how to overcome this crisis."

At least 18 others, like Akbar, were deceived by Nazir's trafficking network within a year, according to officials from the Trafficking in Human Being (THB) Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

The syndicate collected an estimated Tk 3.5 crore from hopeful migrants, said Mostafizur Rahman, additional superintendent of police at the THB unit.

The updates came following the arrest of Nazir, 55, near Dhaka airport on Wednesday.

Mostafizur said Nazir and his associates trafficked people by promising jobs in Greece and sending them through Dubai, Egypt, and Libya, only to trap them in a cycle of abuse and extortion.

Nazir is accused in at least two human trafficking cases.

Investigators found that the traffickers gave victims' families several bank account numbers to deposit the ransom. "The syndicate has members in Libya and Greece. A member based in Greece would lure victims by convincing them that he was living a luxurious lifestyle there," said Mostafizur.

He said the suspect's father even received Tk 8 lakh from one victim's family. Police are now trying to arrest other members of the network, he added.

Investigators said after collecting ransom from fortune seekers detained in Libya, traffickers sent them on dangerous

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

drop in dengue transmission. But the situation in 2025 is different," said entomologist Professor Kabirul Bashar.

Bashar explained that global climate change is disrupting normal temperature patterns. Winter temperatures are now warmer, which allows the Aedes mosquito's life cycle to continue without interruption.

"Aedes mosquitoes thrive at temperatures between 25°C and 30°C. Even in winter, temperatures in Bangladesh often remain within this range," he added.

Climate change is also impacting Aedes breeding behaviour. Years of research indicate that the mosquitoes are now breeding not only in small outdoor containers but also in drains, clogged 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

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

This is the first large-scale forensic recovery, analysis, and identification operation carried out in Bangladesh according to international human rights and forensic standards.

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,

according to 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

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

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

CID officials say this will be the first time laundered funds held abroad are being returned to Bangladesh.

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 --



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