



They [Russia] still aim to destroy our state and inflict maximum pain on our people.  
Volodymyr Zelensky  
Ukrainian president



**Bangladesh holds only 0.01% of global potato market**

B1



**UN chief slams 'relentless' Israeli expansion in West Bank**

P5



**The Police Commission Ordinance is an eyewash at best**

P6



**11-team Women's Football League from Dec 29**

P13

## Shooting spate raises concerns ahead of polls

Experts, politicians call for preventive measures

TOUSIF KAUM and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Concerns over public safety and law and order are mounting ahead of the February 12 national election, following a series of broad-daylight killings in recent months.

Friday's attempt on the life of Dhaka-8 aspirant Sharif Osman Hadi has further raised alarm, with experts and politicians calling for preventive government action and coordinated intelligence operations.

In recent weeks, several killings involving underground gangs have made headlines.

On November 30, two men linked to organised crime were shot dead outside the Khulna Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court.

Earlier that month, top-listed criminal Tariq Saif

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

**"Despite all the limitations, the police force is confident that it will be able to play its due role in ensuring a free, fair, and credible election."**

IGP BAHARUL ALAM



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus consoling the family members of Sharif Osman Hadi, spokesperson for Inqilab Moncho and a potential candidate for the Dhaka-8 constituency for the upcoming polls. Hadi was shot in broad daylight in the capital's Paltan on Friday. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

## Hadi's condition critical, police identify suspect

Tk 50 lakh bounty announced

MUNTAKIM SAAD and TOUSIF KAUM

Police have identified a suspect in the shooting of Sharif Osman Hadi, an independent MP aspirant for Dhaka-8 and spokesperson for Inqilab Moncho, who is currently fighting for his life at Evercare Hospital.

Hadi was shot in broad daylight in the capital's Paltan area on Friday, leaving him critically injured, a day after the Election Commission announced the schedule for the 13th national election.

After analysing CCTV footage, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) released a photograph of the suspect and said operations are underway to arrest those involved. Police requested that anyone with information come forward.

Meanwhile, the government has offered a Tk 50 lakh reward for information leading to the arrest of those responsible, Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury announced at the Secretariat yesterday.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

## Parties vow unity against plots to derail Feb election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three major political parties yesterday vowed to stand united against any plot to undermine the spirit of the July uprising or derail the upcoming election.

They made the commitment during a meeting with Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus at the state guesthouse Jamuna in the wake of the shooting of Sharif Osman Hadi, independent MP aspirant for Dhaka-8 and spokesperson of Inqilab Moncho.

At the meeting, leaders of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and National Citizen Party urged the government to take a tougher stance to ensure the safety of citizens and their property. They stressed that public trust in the Election Commission hinges on an environment where everyone feels secure.

The chief adviser said the attack on Hadi was a deliberate attempt to disrupt the polls, according to a press release from the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

"The conspirators seek to stop the election from taking place. This attack is highly symbolic. They want to

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

## ATTACK ON UN BASE

# 6 Bangladeshi peacekeepers killed in Sudan

'Drone attack' injures 8 more

STAR REPORT

At least six Bangladeshi peacekeepers were killed and eight others injured in an attack on a United Nations base in Sudan's Southern Kordofan region, the Bangladesh Army said yesterday.

In a statement issued last night, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the attack took place in Abyei, a disputed border area between Sudan and South Sudan.

"The situation in the area remains unstable, and clashes with terrorists are ongoing," the statement said, adding that authorities were doing their best to provide medical treatment and carry out rescue operations for the injured.

The ISPR did not provide further details about the incident as of 1:30am, when this report was filed.

AFP, quoting witnesses, reported that the casualties occurred when a drone struck the UN compound in the state capital, Kadugli.

"Six people were killed in a bombing of the UN headquarters while they were inside the building," a medical source at the city's hospital told the news agency.

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus expressed deep sorrow over the casualties and strongly condemned the attack.

In a statement last night, he said, "I am deeply saddened by the news that six of our brave peacekeepers have embraced martyrdom and eight others have been injured while carrying out the noble duty of establishing peace and stability."

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

## MARTYRED INTELLECTUALS DAY

### Nation pays homage today

BSS, Dhaka

The nation today observes Martyred Intellectuals Day, recalling the ultimate sacrifice of the leading intellectuals killed systematically by the Pakistan occupation army and their local collaborators at the fag end of the country's Liberation War in 1971.

The day marks one of the most tragic days in the country's history, when renowned academics, doctors, engineers, journalists, artists, and other eminent personalities were dragged out of their homes in the capital and killed in cold blood.

Sensing the imminent defeat, the Pakistani occupying army and their local collaborators abducted the luminaries

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

*Fifty-three years after independence, many stories of the Liberation War remain untold. The Daily Star, in the 8th instalment of this 12-part series, turns to Saidpur, where Pakistani forces, aided by local collaborators, systematically abducted, tortured, and killed the town's leading intellectuals in March-June 1971 — months before the December 14 massacre.*

## Horrors of Saidpur's intellectual massacre

AHMAD ISTIAK

Around 10:00pm on March 25, 1971, Dr Zikrul Haque had just sat down to eat when one of his sons suddenly announced that the military had surrounded their house in Nilphamari's Saidpur. While panic spread through the family, Zikrul remained calm, as though prepared for what was to come.

"When he was told he had to go with them, he quietly left. That was the last time I saw him," his son Mujibul Haque recalled.

"As they were putting my father



TALES OF FREEDOM

into the jeep, I saw Bihari leader Yusuf Butt sitting in the back. There was no doubt left as to who had brought the Pakistanis."

That night, Pakistani soldiers, aided by non-Bangalee Biharis, abducted Dr Zikrul, a member of the Provincial Assembly and convener of the

All-Party Resistance Committee.

He was not the only one.

The same night, Saidpur Thana Awami League vice-president Dr Badiuzzaman, philanthropist businessman Tulsiram Agarwala, and his son Rameshwar Lal Agarwala were

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

## Strengthen security at all polls offices

EC tells police

AHMED DEEPTO

The Election Commission last night instructed the police to strengthen security at all of its field-level offices.

In a letter sent to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday, it also requested enhanced security for the Chief Election Commissioner, the four election commissioners, and the EC secretary.

The instructions came hours after miscreants set fire to the Lakshimpur District Election Office.

Around 4:00pm on Friday, a masked youth climbed over the boundary wall and entered the office from the west side, set fire to the ground-floor storeroom and then fled through the same path, leaving documents and equipment damaged, according to CCTV footage, police and polls officials.

District Election Officer

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Workers unloading stored mustard at a godown in Baneshwar of Rajshahi's Puthia upazila on Friday, as prices continue to rise ahead of the new harvest. Traders are accused of releasing old stocks to the market and selling at higher rates, even as mustard flowers blanket fields across the region with the season underway. Mustard oil, which sold for Tk 180-190 per kg a few months ago, is now priced above Tk 200, while mustard is being traded at Tk 3,500-3,700 per maund, up from 2,400-2,500.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## POLLS CANDIDATES

# EC circular omits ICT charge-based disqualification

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

A recent Election Commission circular regarding candidate disqualifications for the next polls has omitted a provision that bars anyone from contesting if a formal charge has been filed against them at the International Crimes Tribunals.

Expressing surprise, election experts said the EC must officially include this bar to avoid confusion among many, including candidates.

Article 66 of the constitution sets out the rules for qualifications and disqualifications for candidates in parliamentary elections. Clause 66(g) specifies that a person shall be disqualified from election if barred by or under any law.

The circular, issued late Thursday following the announcement of the election schedule, includes a gazette notification of the schedule, appointment of returning officers and assistant returning officers, and other polls-related issues.

It cites candidate qualifications and disqualifications as laid out in article 66 of the constitution and article 12 of the Representation of the People Order, 1972.

However, it did not mention section 20(C) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, which says that if a formal charge is filed against someone under section



SEE PAGE 2 COL 1