

## ‘Pray for Khaleda’s early recovery’ Fakhrul urges nation on Victory Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia remains in critical condition in the intensive care unit of Evercare Hospital in Dhaka, where she has been receiving treatment for the last 23 days.



The former prime minister has been placed on elective ventilator support to rest her lungs and other organs, her doctors said.

The BNP Media Cell last night said her condition remains unchanged.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday sought prayers for Khaleda’s recovery, describing her as the first female freedom fighter and a tireless guardian of democracy who has fought relentlessly for independence and sovereignty.

He said the BNP chief is now seriously ill and urged people to pray for her recovery.

Khaleda has developed several additional complications, including ineffective endocarditis, acute pancreatitis and severe bacterial and fungal infections.



Indigenous farmers of Bandarban are seen processing a paddy variety locally known as “Lakcha”. An integral part of the social life and cultural heritage of indigenous communities in the region, villagers work together by exchanging labour, with no financial motive, to preserve the paddy. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

## EU to deploy observers for national polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union has announced that it will deploy an EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) to monitor Bangladesh’s parliamentary elections scheduled for February 12, 2026.



The decision was declared by High Representative of the European Commission Kaja Kallas, following a formal invitation from Bangladeshi authorities.

The High Representative has appointed Member of the European Parliament Ivars Ijabs as chief observer.

In a statement, Chief Observer Ijabs said he was honoured to lead the mission, which will provide an independent and impartial assessment of the electoral process.

“This mission is a tangible example of the EU support to the people of Bangladesh and their aspiration for stronger democratic institutions, rule of law and human rights,” he said.

## A new system

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Shafiqur said the struggle would continue until a youth-led new Bangladesh is realised.

“No matter how many obstacles or threats come, we will not stop. We will build a new Bangladesh in line with the nation’s aspirations,” he said.

The marathon began around 8:00am at Suhrawardy Uddyan and ended at Manik Mia Avenue near the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, passing through Shahbagh and Science Lab. Participants carried national flags and colourful banners and wore caps, reports UNB.

Referring to the upcoming election, the Jamaat chief warned against manipulation.

“We do not seek any favour from the Election Commission, but any bias will not be tolerated,” he said, adding that attempts to buy votes with black money would fail as people are now more aware.

He also said that the people of the then East Pakistan revolted in 1971 against injustice and discrimination by the Pakistani ruling elite.

Shafiqur said the nation rose against the Awami League’s 15-year-long rule last year because of the party’s widespread oppression.

He further alleged that the party is now targeting youths and revolutionaries, citing an attempt on the life of Osman Hadi, a key leader of the July movement.

“If anything happens to Osman Hadi, the revolutionaries will not remain silent,” the Jamaat chief said.

He added that eliminating a few leaders would not weaken the movement. “The number of revolutionaries will only continue to grow,” he said.

## ‘Enemies of independence’

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“That is why this day is extremely important for us and for the BNP,” he said.

On behalf of the party, its Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Acting Chairman Tarique Rahman paid respect and gratitude to the martyrs of the Liberation War, he said.

Talking to reporters, Fakhrul said Tarique is still living abroad in exile, but the party hopes he will return home on December 25.

“We are working so that his return further strengthens the struggle for democracy,” he said.

Earlier in the morning, BNP leaders and activists, led by Mirza Abbas, paid tributes to the martyrs by placing wreaths at the National Memorial in Savar.

Talking to reporters, Abbas questioned the glorification of former Jamaat-e-Islami ameer Ghulam Azam and his associates, saying such narratives insult the country’s freedom fighters.

“If Ghulam Azam and his associates are regarded as the best sons of the nation, then the brave freedom fighters are being insulted,” he said, asking where the freedom fighters’ position then stands.

“I would like to know this from them,” he added.

Referring to Jamaat, Abbas said the party has never wished peace for the country since 1947.

“From 1947 to 1971, they did not want the country’s independence, and they still do not want Bangladesh to be independent. They want the country to fall into crisis, to deteriorate, and to remain in turmoil,” he said.

BNP Standing Committee members Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Nazrul Islam Khan and Salahuddin Ahmed, among others, were present.

BNP and its associate bodies held programmes in different parts of the country to mark the day.

## No one can stop our democratic progress

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ousted power is desperately trying to rehabilitate itself before the polls with the support of a “friend.”

“As long as their friends stand with them, they will continue to dream. Once the election is over, their friends will find it difficult to provide support. That is why there is such haste. They want to ensure their return before the election,” he said.

He also assured the nation that the government is doing everything possible to support the treatment of three-time former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, adding that she has been declared a VVIP in recognition of her unwavering commitment and contribution to democracy.

Touching on the government’s performance, Yunus said it has set three priorities – accountability for the July uprising killings, fundamental reforms of the state structure to ensure an effective and accountable democratic transition, and a fair election.

He said an International Crimes Tribunal, through an independent, transparent and evidence-based judicial process, has sentenced deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina to death as the principal instigator of the indiscriminate killings of students, workers and the

general public.

He added that the government has formally requested India to return Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan, who fled after the uprising.

On reforms, Yunus said several institutional and structural changes have already been completed, with dozens of old laws amended and a number of new ones enacted. He described the July National Charter as the biggest reform, issued as an order to ensure fundamental constitutional changes.

He said a separate secretariat has been created for the judiciary to ensure administrative independence, and the Police Commission Ordinance 2025 has been adopted to restore public confidence.

He also said that the interim government has promulgated the National Human Rights Commission Ordinance 2025 to revive the body, which had remained dormant under fascist rule.

Yunus said holding the referendum on the July charter alongside the parliamentary election would be a historic moment in determining the country’s future roadmap.

“What kind of state we expect will depend on the outcome of the referendum. Through this vote, the character, structure and pace of

progress of the new Bangladesh will be decided,” he said.

He informed the nation that all preparations for the twin vote on February 12 have been finalised and that the government is providing full cooperation to the Election Commission.

“We want this election to be truly festive, participatory, peaceful and, above all, fair. We are committed to taking all necessary measures to organise an acceptable election,” he said.

He called on leaders of all political parties to act responsibly and view one another as competitors, not enemies.

“Create such a fair, acceptable and peaceful electoral environment that the people gain greater confidence in the democratic process,” he said.

Urging citizens to remain vigilant, Yunus said, “If anyone creates obstruction, resist them in a disciplined manner and seek the assistance of law enforcement agencies.”

He concluded by reminding people that the ownership of the country lies in their hands and that “your vote is the signature of that ownership.”

“Your vote will determine which path the state will take, how the administration will be reorganised and what form the new Bangladesh will assume,” he added.

## Three security force members killed in southern Iran

AFP, Tehran

Overnight clashes in Iran’s southern province of Kerman killed at least three security personnel and a civilian, state media reported yesterday.

“Three security officers and one citizen were martyred in the area of Fahraj checkpoint located in the east of Kerman province,” the Revolutionary Guards said, in a

statement carried by the official IRNA news agency.

“The incident happened last night during clashes between terrorist elements and forces stationed at the checkpoint,” the Kerman police said in a separate statement posted by IRNA.

The statement promised “intelligence and operational measures to identify and decisively deal with the perpetrators of this crime”.

## ‘I Will Go’

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Sector II and later worked with allied forces, carrying out reconnaissance, serving as an interpreter, and taking part in direct combat.

But his most defining moment came at Kamalpur.

“Kamalpur, a heavily fortified Pakistani base, was known as the gateway to Dhaka from the northern region. Capturing it was a major objective for the Mukti Bahini.

“In the last week of November, freedom fighters surrounded Kamalpur. Pakistani soldiers remained besieged for 11 consecutive days. Gradually, food and ammunition ran out. Eventually, only one option remained – surrender.”

But the Pakistani forces were unwilling. “It was then decided that a letter would be sent to the Pakistani troops, urging them to surrender.”

On December 3, Brigadier Hardev Singh Clare then lined up the fighters and asked, “Who will go to enter the camp with the letter?”

Hundreds of fighters were present but none spoke, until the teenager volunteered.

With a white flag in one hand and the letter in the other, Bashir walked towards the Kamalpur camp. An open field lay ahead, reeking of death and gunpowder.

For nearly half an hour, he called out,

but no Pakistani soldier came forward. Instead, they gestured for him to enter the camp.

Proving his resolve yet again, he walked ahead.

To his surprise, he was not killed immediately. A Pakistani officer approached him and said, “Mukti... tumi



Bashir Ahmed Bir Protik

mat ghabrao.” (Freedom fighter, do not be afraid.) Bashir was given food and protection.

Meanwhile, assuming he had been killed, the freedom fighters launched air strikes, and another teenage fighter, Anisul Haque Sanju, went to the camp with a second letter just hours later.

The pressure intensified before Pakistani morale collapsed – Captain Ahsan Malik agreed to surrender.

Thus, by that evening, came the first surrender of Pakistani forces in the Mymensingh region, as over 150 soldiers and collaborators laid down their arms.

Since then, December 4 is now observed as “Kamalpur Mukti Dibosh” (Kamalpur Freedom Day).

Recalling Bashir’s courage, Bakshiganj Upazila Freedom Fighters’ Commander Naoshed Ali said, “Bashir Ahmed was the bravest among us. When no one dared to carry the letter, he alone volunteered and took it to the camp.”

On Victory Day, Bir Protik Bashir Ahmed said, “In the narrative being created now, with the movement of 24 highlighted above all else, those of us who took part in the Liberation War – we seem to no longer exist.

“The aspirations with which we fought don’t seem to exist either. We wanted a free country, where we could move freely, speak freely, and eradicate hunger – but none of these have happened.”

With a heavy heart but spirit of ‘71 still intact, he said, “We freed this country through immense suffering so it could become hunger-free and poverty-free – I hope the new generation carries the same aspirations. This is my call to them.”

entrenched,” he said.

He said the mass uprising and revolution of 2024 were organised against that fascism, and that his party sees itself as the successor to the historic struggles of the Bengali people from 1947 to 1971 and from 1971 to 2024.

“We want to build the future Bangladesh by embracing that struggle,” he said.

Nahid further alleged that “fallen and fascist forces” are trying to destabilise the country and sabotage the elections.

He also criticised the authorities for failing to arrest those involved in the attempted killing of Sharif Osman Hadi, saying those who opened fire have yet to be brought to justice.

## BNP Nganj-5 nominee

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concerns”. “Because of recent incidents and the current situation around us, my family members are very upset and scared. There are also some other security issues, but I do not want to say them in detail. The overall environment is unfavourable. This is not the party’s decision; it is mine,” he told a press conference at the Narayanganj Press Club.

Masud added that he decided to withdraw from the race as his family members had been worried about his security since the announcement of his candidacy. “After Osman Hadi was shot in Dhaka, they became even more terrified.”

On December 12, Sharif Osman Hadi, an aspirant for Dhaka-8 and spokesperson for Inqilab Moncho, was shot in the capital’s Paltan area. He is now receiving treatment in Singapore.

At the conference, Masud said he tried but failed to contact BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman to inform him of his decision, adding that he would explain the matter to the party later.

On November 3, BNP named Masud, who formally joined the party on September 22 this year, as its candidate.

Masud, a former ward committee president of Narayanganj city unit Jubo Dal, had also served as president of the Narayanganj Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

After the July uprising, he started preparing to contest the upcoming national polls in the Narayanganj-5 (Sadar-Bandar) constituency.

Masud’s sudden withdrawal from the electoral race, however, appeared to have taken many of his supporters by surprise, with several expressing anger at the conference.

Regarding the withdrawal, Nurul Haque Chowdhury, ex-joint general secretary of Narayanganj city unit BNP, said they did not accept this decision.

BNP activist Nayem Khandaker said, “We are surprised by this decision. We knew nothing about it.”

When asked, Narayanganj city unit BNP Convener Shakhawat Hossain Khan, who is seeking nomination from the same seat, claimed that there had been complexity over Masuduzzaman’s candidacy from the beginning.



Masuduzzaman

“After Masuduzzaman was nominated for the Narayanganj-5 constituency, he failed to demonstrate the expected level of grassroots engagement.

“Several complaints were lodged against him at the central level, and we also raised our concerns.”

Considering all these issues, the party summoned him Monday and asked him to withdraw his candidacy, Shakhawat said.

“Now he is citing security concerns as an excuse. The party, in fact, has rejected him.”

The party has yet to decide on a new candidate for the constituency, he added.

However, Masud said the information that the party cancelled his nomination was not correct. “I am stepping back for personal and family reasons.”