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**Election to be tough for BNP, bigger test if voted to power**  
**Says Tarique**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next national election will be tough for the BNP, but the bigger test will come for the party if it is voted into power, said BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday.

"We strongly believe that, with people's support, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party will be able to form the government. The problem comes after that, the danger comes after that... The path ahead is extremely, extremely hard," he said at an event organised by the London Chapter BNP on the occasion of Victory Day.

The programme turned into a farewell event ahead of his return to Bangladesh.

At the event, Tarique confirmed  
SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



**Cases against its candidates a concern for BNP**

**Party warns them against filing inaccurate info**

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has alerted its election candidates that their nomination may get cancelled if they file inaccurate information regarding cases filed against them in the affidavits submitted with their nomination papers.

The party has asked nominees to seek assistance from its legal team while filling out the forms, amid concerns that many are entangled in cases filed during the Awami League's rule.

The guidance came at a six-hour meeting yesterday with about 100 BNP candidates, including 24 first-time contenders, at the party chairperson's Gulshan office. BNP leaders estimate that around 70 of the 100 candidates face multiple cases.

The session, chaired by BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, focused on nomination procedures, campaign strategy, the electoral code of conduct and managing internal dissent.

Under the constitution, individuals convicted of criminal offences involving moral turpitude and sentenced to at least two years in prison are barred from contesting elections unless five years have passed since their release.

In addition, the Representation of the People Order empowers the Election Commission to act against



Protesters try to breach police barricades in the capital's Badda as they march towards the Indian High Commission yesterday afternoon. They eventually sat on the road and chanted slogans in favour of their demands, including the extradition of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and others who fled there during and after last year's July uprising. Story on page 3.

**CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY**  
**3 charges brought against ex-NTMC chief Ziaul Ahsan**  
**ICT takes cognisance**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution yesterday brought formal charges on three counts against Maj Gen (relieved) Ziaul Ahsan for allegedly committing crimes against humanity, accusing him of orchestrating a systematic campaign of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

Reading out the charges before International Crimes Tribunal-1, the prosecution said Ziaul's actions allegedly claimed the lives of more than 100 people during the Awami League regime.

According to the prosecution, Ziaul, while serving in key intelligence and operational roles in the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), directly participated in and commanded operations in which detainees were abducted, tortured, killed, and their bodies disposed of to conceal evidence.

The former director general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre faces charges of murder, abduction, torture, enforced disappearance,

Systematic campaign of killings, enforced disappearances

Complicit in over 100 killings during AL rule

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

**TK 2,032CR GRAFT**  
ACC files case against S Alam and 35 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ACC yesterday filed a case against S Alam Group Managing Director Mohammad Saiful Alam and 35 others on charges of loan irregularities and embezzlement involving Tk 2,032 crore from Janata Bank. The case was lodged with the Chattogram District Integrated Office.

The accused abused their power, in collusion with senior and relevant bank officials, to siphon off huge sums of money through irregular approval, renewal and top-up of loans in favour of S Alam Refined Sugar Industries between 2009 and 2025 from Janata's Agrabad Corporate branch in Chattogram, according to the case statement.

Other than Saiful Alam, the accused include Mohammad Abdullah Hasan, director of S Alam Refined Sugar Industries; directors of several S Alam Group affiliated companies; and former chairman, directors, managing director, general managers, and deputy general managers of Janata Bank.

## BANGLADESHI MIGRANT WORKERS

# Still plagued by high costs, low safeguards

Experts warn labour export model remains fragile

MD ABBAS

After sending over a million workers overseas this year, experts warn Bangladesh remains locked in a fragile, low-

712,044 workers -- more than half of the total. Experts say such concentration leaves Bangladesh dangerously exposed to policy shifts in the kingdom.

Most recently, Overseas Employment Platform data shows that 56,292 women migrated between January 1 and December 6, 2025 -- a drop of about 47 percent

## INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY



### KEY ISSUES

- High cost, unregulated middlemen
- Stuck in low-skilled labour export
- Unregulated sub-agents
- Inadequate embassy support
- Shrinking market

skilled labour-export model dependent on one market, exorbitant recruitment costs, and inadequate protection for migrant workers.

According to data from the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), 10,71,570 Bangladeshi travelled abroad for work so far this year, with Saudi Arabia alone absorbing

BMET data shows that 105,466 Bangladeshi women migrated for overseas employment in 2022, marking a recovery from the pandemic downturn of 2020. While annual figures exceeded 100,000 before Covid-19, female migration has declined steadily since then.

By 2024, the number fell to just over 60,000.

from 2022 -- with no clear strategy to reverse the trend or ensure safer, skilled overseas placements.

Budgetary commitment has weakened further, as the expatriate welfare ministry's allocation fell from Tk 1,217 crore to Tk 855 crore, averaging just 0.08 percent of national expenditure over five years.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

**SECRETARIAT PROTEST**  
**Govt suspends 14 arrested employees**

BAHARAM KHAN and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

The government has suspended 14 employees from four ministries and the Cabinet Division after police arrested and sued them under the Anti-Terrorism Act for protests at the Secretariat.

The 14 employees, including four leaders of Bangladesh Secretariat Officers and Employees Unity Council, were arrested on December 11 afternoon while protesting for the second consecutive day, demanding a 20 percent Secretariat allowance.

According to the ministry notifications, the suspension orders took effect from December 12, the day the case was filed.

Of the 14, the public administration ministry suspended personal officer Badul Kabir and office assistants Kamal Hossain, Mohammad Alimuzaman and Nazrul Islam, citing their arrest in a criminal case.

Health ministry administrative officers Roman Gazi, Golam Rabbani Shahin and Bikash Chandra Roy; personal officers Islamul Haque, Mohsin Ali and Taiful Islam; and office assistant Abu Belal; finance ministry office assistant Bipul Rana Biplob, information ministry office assistant Mizanur Rahman Sumon and Cabinet Division office assistant Nasirul Haque Nasir are among the suspended.

According to the case documents,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5

**More than 100 buildings collapse in Gaza storms**

AGENCIES

Palestinian Civil Defence spokesperson Mahmoud Basal said yesterday at least 17 residential buildings have completely and 90 partially collapsed since the heavy rains and high winds lashed the enclave.

Winter rains also flooded 90 percent of tents in the war-torn enclave, leaving thousands of families without shelter, the spokesperson said in a statement.

Civil Defence teams received more than 5,000 calls for help from citizens since the storms began affecting the Gaza Strip last week, reports Al Jazeera online.

At least 17 people died from the cold, including four children, while dozens of others died as a result of buildings collapsing, he said.

The UK-based humanitarian organisation Save the Children said it has not been able to bring its own aid supplies into Gaza since March, when Israel imposed a total blockade on the Strip.

Despite a ceasefire having entered into effect on October 10, Israel has largely continued to block aid, including tents, blankets and other shelter supplies, as storms ravage the enclave.

In the occupied West Bank, Israeli forces conducted raids and arrested at least 40 Palestinians, according to the Palestinian Prisoner's Society.

Among those arrested were a child and former prisoners, the advocacy group added. The raids took place in the governorates of Salfit, Jenin, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus, Tulkarem, and Hebron.



Displaced Palestinians gather to receive donated food portions at a charity kitchen in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

**Ekushey book fair begins February 20**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amar Ekushey Book Fair 2026 will begin on February 20 and continue till March 15.

The decision was made at a meeting held yesterday afternoon at the Shaheed Munir Chowdhury Auditorium of Bangla Academy, said Bangla Academy's Public Relations Department.

On September 18, the authorities announced that the 2026 edition of the fair would be held from December 17 this year to January 17, 2026. However, following protests from publishers and writers, the decision was withdrawn on September 28.

The meeting was attended by Cultural Affairs Secretary Md Mofidur Rahman, Bangla Academy Director General Prof Mohammad Azam, Dhaka University Proctor Prof Saifuddin Ahmed, and directors of Bangla Academy.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5