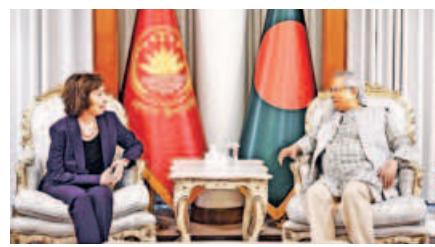


DHAKA

Yunus vows free, fair and peaceful polls



US Chargé d'Affaires Tracey Ann Jacobson pays a farewell call on Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

PHOTO: PID

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has reaffirmed his government's commitment to holding "free, fair and peaceful" elections, saying full preparations are underway to ensure the success of both the parliamentary elections and the referendum.

"We are fully prepared," Prof Yunus said, adding that any attempts to disrupt peace ahead of the elections would be dealt with firmly.

He made the remarks when Chargé d'Affaires of the United States to Bangladesh, Ambassador Tracey Ann Jacobson, paid a farewell call on him yesterday at the state guest house Jamuna.

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First-ever JnU student union polls today

RAKIB MADBER

The first-ever Jagannath University Central Students' Union (JnUCSU) election is all set to take place today, amid heightened security and growing voter enthusiasm on campus.

A total of 157 candidates are contesting the 21 posts of the central students' union, while 33 candidates are vying for 13 hall union posts.

Voting is taking place at 39 polling centres with 178 polling booths.

According to the university election commission, a total of 16,649 students are registered to vote in the election. Of them, 8,479 are women, and 8,170 are men.

With female students making up more than half of the electorate, they are expected to play a decisive role in determining the outcome.

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Although male students have traditionally been more visible in campus politics, female voters have become increasingly prominent in this election, said students and candidates.

Issues such as accommodation shortages, safety in halls and on campus, hygienic food, transportation facilities and the prevention of sexual harassment are expected to strongly influence women voters' choices, students and analysts said.

Several female students told The Daily Star that they are prioritising realistic and implementable commitments over organisational or ideological affiliations.

Adiba Naomi, a student of Mass Communication and Journalism, said, "Security and accommodation are the most urgent issues for us. We will vote for the panel that appears capable of addressing these problems in practice."

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Workers Party, JASAD opt out of Feb polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JASAD) and the Workers Party of Bangladesh, two partners of the 14-party alliance of the now activities-banned Awami League, yesterday announced that they will not take part in the upcoming 13th national parliamentary election and the referendum.

The decision was taken as participation of all political parties has not been ensured, the two parties said in separate statements issued yesterday.

Both parties were part of the Awami League-led 14-party alliance from 2008 until August 2024, before the government was toppled from power.

JASAD President Hasanul Haq Inu and Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon were ministers in the previous government.

In a statement signed by JASAD office secretary Sazzad Hossain, the party said the February election

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'Extortionists', traders clash at Karwan Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A chase and counter-chase took place between traders and a group of alleged extortionists at Karwan Bazar yesterday, raising tensions in the area.

According to traders and witnesses, the attackers, armed with sticks, swooped on traders who were holding a human chain programme protesting alleged extortion around 11:00am in front of the kitchen market, leaving several traders and market employees injured.

The traders alleged that Abdur Rahman, an expelled member secretary of the Tejgaon unit of Juba Dal, along with some local BNP men, carried out the attack. Rahman denied both the allegations of extortion and involvement in the violence.

According to traders, following the August 5 changeover, leaders and activists of the Awami League who were on the kitchen market committee fled, leading to the formation of a subcommittee, with Rahman placed in charge.

"There was no extortion for a couple of months, but Rahman later began collecting money from traders, claiming he was providing security," they said.

They further alleged that Rahman set up makeshift shops on the footpath in front of the market and collected money from those operating there, and charged traders for keeping goods in open areas.

"Over time, he turned into an extortionist," they alleged.

Traders said repeated attempts to stop the practice

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Inqilab Moncho continued its blockade at Shahbagh for the fourth consecutive day yesterday, pressing for the trial of those accused in the killing of July frontliner and Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Bin Hadi. The blockade began on Friday, with protesters occupying the busy intersection overnight despite a cold wave. Since then, the programme has been held daily from 2:00pm, drawing participants from diverse backgrounds.

PHOTO: STAR

Country saw 412 dengue deaths, over 1 lakh cases this year

Experts urge early action to prevent similar situation in 2026

HELEMUL ALAM

Although dengue cases have declined significantly due to the current cold weather, the country has already recorded 412 deaths and 1,02,673 cases as of December 29 this year.

To prevent a similar situation next year, entomologists and medical professionals emphasised that preventive measures to control Aedes mosquitoes must begin in January.

They stressed the need to fully adopt an Integrated Mosquito Management System, establish a dedicated mosquito-control authority, and implement coordinated programmes.

Entomologist Prof Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said dengue prevention requires target specific control from the very beginning.

"Aedes mosquitoes must be targeted specifically, not all mosquitoes," he said, adding that Aedes breed in particular locations in Dhaka and selected areas nationwide.

He emphasised that regular surveillance should come first, followed by targeted control measures based on surveillance data.

Bashar said the failure to treat

dengue as a separate programme -- not only this year but in previous years -- has undermined control efforts.

He also noted weaknesses in the local government administrative



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Begin Aedes mosquito control from January
- Set up dedicated mosquito-control authority
- Adopt integrated management system
- Ensure coordinated dengue prevention strategy
- Improve early case detection, timely reporting

structure this year and expressed hope that an elected government would strengthen it effectively in the coming year.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman of National University

said the main failure lies in the absence of a responsible authority for mosquito control.

"There must be a consistent surveillance system followed by a continuous control mechanism," he said, noting that under Integrated Vector Management, source reduction, insecticide use and public participation are discussed but not implemented consistently.

"Also, we cannot have one dengue prevention system in Dhaka North, another in Dhaka South, and a different one in Chattogram. There must be one top authority issuing unified instructions nationwide," he said.

Saifur also said effective insecticides are currently unavailable, while fogging practices are outdated and often applied unnecessarily.

"Urban authorities must decide scientifically which insecticide to use, where fogging is needed and when. Fogging should not be routine," he said.

Late case reporting is another critical issue, he said.

"If cases are detected early and information is shared promptly, early control measures can prevent explosive outbreaks and epidemics," he explained.

"We always act after widespread transmission begins. This must

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35,000 BGB members to be deployed for polls Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Adviser Lt Gen (retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said around 35,000 Border Guard Bangladesh members will be deployed during the upcoming national election.

He said this while speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the BGB Day programme at Pilkhana.

Jahangir said the home ministry has taken "all kinds of preparations" for the election and that BGB is also taking all necessary steps in this regard.

About Meghalaya Police's claim that it had not arrested anyone in the killing of Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Bin Hadi, Jahangir said an overnight statement addressed the matter and urged reporters to read it.

Regarding the Keraniganj madrasa blast, the home adviser said the person behind the act was on the run, while an accomplice had been arrested. The suspect's wife was also taken into custody.

BGB Day 2025 was observed at Pilkhana headquarters, where Jahangir conferred medals on 72 members for meritorious service. This year, 12 members received the Border Guard Bangladesh Medal (BGBM), 24 received the President's Border Guard Medal (PBGM), 12 received the BGBM Service, and 24 received the PBGM Service.

BRACU launches semiconductor research centre

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Centre of Research Excellence in Semiconductor Technology (CREST) was inaugurated at BRAC University yesterday, marking a significant step towards becoming a "nation of innovation" and a credible participant in the global semiconductor ecosystem.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the broader Silicon River Ecosystem, Bangladesh's national framework designed to integrate Biotech, Electronics, AI and Robotics (BEAR), at BRAC University in Merul Badda in the capital.

Welcoming the initiative, BRAC University Vice Chancellor Prof Syed Ferhat Anwar emphasised the university's commitment to advancing frontier research, nurturing innovation-driven talent and supporting national priorities in science and technology.

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Make the Pilkhana probe report public Demand dismissed BDR members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BDR Kalyan Parishad, an association of dismissed members of the then Bangladesh Rifles (now Border Guard Bangladesh), yesterday expressed frustration over the delay in making public the inquiry commission's report on the 2009 Pilkhana carnage.

Although a month has passed since the submission of the report, the organisation said it has yet to be released.

They demanded immediate publication of the full report, trial of the real culprits and reinstatement of dismissed "innocent" BDR members with compensation.

The demands were made at a press conference at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) in the capital yesterday.

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A group of people armed with sticks attacked a human chain organised by traders at Karwan Bazar in the capital yesterday morning, as they were protesting alleged extortion in the market area. According to the traders, the programme began around 11:00am in front of the kitchen market to protest what they said was the resumption of extortion over the past couple of months. About half an hour into the protest, the attackers swooped on the demonstrators, triggering a chase and counter-chase, witnesses said.

PHOTO: STAR