

## US federal agents shoot two in Portland

AFP, Los Angeles

US federal agents shot and wounded two people in the western city of Portland, Oregon on Thursday, local police said.

The shooting came the day after a masked Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent shot and killed a woman in Minneapolis, sparking widespread anger over the increasingly militarized presence of federal agents on US streets.

"Two people are in the hospital following a shooting involving federal agents," a statement from Portland Police said.

The local police force -- which stressed its officers were not involved in the shooting -- said they had received calls for help mid afternoon.

"Officers responded and found a male and female with apparent gunshot wounds. Officers applied a tourniquet and summoned emergency medical personnel," the statement said.

The patients were transported to the hospital. Their conditions are unknown. Officers have determined the two people were injured in the shooting involving federal agents."

## Young voters poised to shape next election

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their choice could also shape the outcome of a referendum on constitutional matters under the July charter, born of the recent mass uprising.

The numbers tell a story of scale. In the 2008 election, Bangladesh had 8,10,87,003 registered voters. By November 18, 2025, that figure had grown to 12,76,95,183, including 6,28,79,042 women -- an increase of 4,66,08,180 voters over 17 years.

Electoral Commission data show that as of January 5, 2026, some 5,56,53,176 voters are aged between 18 and 37, accounting for 43.56 percent of the electorate. While definitions of "youth" vary internationally, Bangladesh's National Youth Policy 2017 classifies those aged 18-35 as young.

"And this huge percentage is a major factor. Because in Bangladesh, whenever you see a truly competitive election between two parties, with fierce rivalry, you'll notice that sometimes a candidate wins by just a few hundred votes, sometimes even fewer," said election analyst Abdul Alim.

"Whichever side the majority of these young voters support, that candidate's chances of winning will be significantly higher," he added.

Both Alim and Majumdar noted that many new voters were effectively denied ballots in the past three disputed elections. "Many tried to vote but were unable to," Majumdar said.

"They are a decisive factor in the national election to be held on February 12. For a referendum, they would be an even greater deciding factor," said Majumdar, who is also secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagarik.

The political backdrop has sharpened these stakes. In July 2024, a youth-led uprising culminated in regime change the following month and the installation of an interim government. Although elections are typically held every five years, the upcoming polls came just two years after the January 2024 vote, following the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina government.

Most of these young voters, Majumdar said, were not mere observers. "Many of them witnessed their friends and



Firefighters extinguish flames from a bus that overturned after colliding with a battery-run autorickshaw and a motorcycle on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Cumilla's Baniapara area yesterday afternoon. The blaze claimed the lives of four people, including two children, and injured at least 30 others.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Total voters (till Nov 18, 2025)	<b>12,76,95,183</b>
Female voters	<b>6,28,79,042</b>
Total voters in 2008	<b>8,10,87,003</b>
Number of voters increased by	<b>4,66,08,180</b>
since 2008	

18-35, found that 97 percent intend to vote.

Asked to name priorities for the next five years, 67 percent cited eliminating corruption, 56 percent addressing unemployment, 24 percent safety and security, and 14 percent the protection of democratic rights.

A separate poll by the US-based International Republican Institute, conducted among 4,985 respondents -- including 2,518 youths -- and released in early December, found that 89 percent were likely or somewhat likely to vote. While 80 percent expressed optimism that the upcoming polls would be free and fair, 67 percent said past elections had been rigged.

Abdul Alim, the frustration of being excluded before has turned many young voters into first-timers determined to participate. "That's why they are eager to vote. They will go to the polling centres," he said.

Disillusioned, Adnan stayed away from the January 2024 polls.

In all three elections, the Awami League-led alliance went on to secure two-thirds majorities.

parties after their demand for a nonpartisan caretaker government was rejected. As a result, 153 MPs were elected unopposed, and turnout stood at 40.04 percent.

The opposition returned to the fray in December 2018, but the vote was marred by allegations of overnight ballot-box stuffing. Opposition parties claimed that 30 to 60 percent of votes had been cast before polling day. A study by Transparency International Bangladesh found evidence of such practices in 33 of the 50 constituencies it surveyed. Official turnout was reported at 80 percent.

In the January 7, 2024 election, turnout fell to 41.80 percent as opposition parties again stayed away, refusing to contest polls held under Hasina's leadership. The ruling Awami League fielded independents -- widely labelled "dummy candidates" -- to maintain the appearance of competition.

For many young voters, these episodes remain fresh in memory. Some were prevented outright from voting; others faced intimidation at polling centres. Many ultimately chose not to cast a ballot.

Adnan Ahmed, a private service holder who first became a voter in 2018, recalls his experience clearly. After verification, he was given a voter serial number, beneath which an instruction was written: "Vote for Boat".

"When I proceeded to the voting booth, I found the so-called 'secret chamber' wasn't that secret. The booth was completely open, with several Chhatra League goons standing around it," he said.

"They were watching everyone cast their votes and instructing them to 'stamp on the Boat.' Intimidated, many were complying."

Adnan objected.

"I asked, 'Who are you? This is supposed to be a secret booth with screens around it. Why are you breaching our privacy?'"

The confrontation escalated, and the men were on the verge of attacking him before a colleague of his father, serving as a polling officer, stepped in.

Disillusioned, Adnan stayed away from the January 2024 polls.

In all three elections, the Awami League-led alliance went on to secure two-thirds majorities.

Party leaders said the decision was taken to avoid controversy and to ensure the BNP is not accused of violating the code of conduct.

Fakhrul told reporters that the tour had been intended to pay respects to Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Basani and the martyrs of the July uprising, including Abu Sayed, and to attend to family matters.

"Following the Election Commission's request, the BNP chairman's trip has been postponed," he said.

**CONCERN OVER KILLINGS**

Fakhrul also warned that continuing violence could undermine the election environment.

The election is scheduled for February 12, but certain groups are plotting in various ways to cast doubt on the polls and sabotage the process," he said.

Referring to recent incidents, he added, "Osman Hadi was shot dead. Several political leaders, particularly from the BNP, have been shot. Saeed Chhatra Dal leader Musabir was also killed. We have demanded the immediate arrest of those responsible and their prosecution under the law."

Addressing the interim government and the Election Commission, Fakhrul cautioned that if such killings continue, the country's electoral atmosphere would be gravely affected.

"We once again urge the government and the Election Commission to take all necessary measures so that the election environment is preserved and not allowed to deteriorate," he said.

Questions had arisen over whether the visit, planned ahead of the election campaign, might breach the election code of conduct.

## 80 health facilities lie idle

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NON-FUNCTIONAL HOSPITALS

Residents of Talia and four nearby villages in Gazipur's Kaliganj upazila were supposed to receive healthcare at the Talia hospital from 2021 when the structure was handed over to the health authorities.

Muktar Hossain, whose family donated two acres of land for the hospital, said, "What was the point of donating the land? The hospital has been built, but it has not been made operational. People are not getting any medical services."

When asked, Gazipur Civil Surgeon Mamunur Rahman said, "The authorities have neither assigned health workers nor made allocations for medicines."

But the three-storey facility has remained idle since then, as the authorities are yet to create posts for health workers to run the facility, said one of the officials.

A recent visit to the centre revealed that electrical sockets and equipment had been taken away from the control room.

When contacted, Madaripur Acting Civil Surgeon Sardar Mohammad Khaliluzzaman declined to comment.

In Savar, the government constructed four buildings, including a 12-storey one, for the Bangladesh Institute of Health Management (BIHM) in 2023, primarily to train doctors. But they remain unused as the authorities have yet to prepare an organogram for the institute.



The 20-bed hospital in Gazipur's Talia village.

PHOTO: STAR



The unused Bangladesh Institute of Health Management in Savar.

PHOTO: STAR

## Bangabandhu's Homecoming Day

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arrested him from his Dhammandi residence and sent him to a West Pakistani jail the following day.

In the jail, he had been counting days to the execution of the death sentence he was handed down in a farcical trial.

"I was a prisoner in the condemned cell awaiting hanging. Since the day I went to jail, I didn't know whether I would be alive or not. I was mentally ready to die, but I knew Bangladesh would be liberated," Mujib spoke emotionally about his ordeal in Pakistani prison at a news conference in London.

On arrival at Dhaka (Tejgaon) airport in the afternoon of January 10, Bangabandhu was greeted by tens of thousands of jubilant people who had been eagerly waiting to see their beloved leader since the victory on December 16.

From the airport, he was escorted to the Racecourse Maidan (now Suhrawardy Udayan) where he addressed a mammoth gathering.

Two days later, he took the oath of office as the country's prime minister on January 12.

## Iran 'won't back down' in face of 'saboteurs'

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and the aftermath of last year's war with Israel and the United States.

Khamenei yesterday insisted that the Islamic republic would "not back down" in the face of protesters who he called "vandals" and "saboteurs", in a speech broadcast on state TV.

Speaking to supporters in his first comments on the escalating protests since January 3, Khamenei said, US President Donald Trump's hands "are stained with the blood of more than a thousand Iranians" and predicted the "arrogant" US leader would be "overthrown" like the imperial dynasty that ruled Iran up to the 1979 revolution.

Iranian protesters on Thursday night stepped up their challenge to the clerical leadership with the biggest protests yet of nearly two weeks of rallies, as authorities cut internet access and the death toll from the crackdown mounted to 45.

The internet blackout has sharply reduced the amount of information getting out. Phone calls into Iran were not getting through. At least 17 flights between Dubai and Iran were cancelled, Dubai Airport's website showed.

Trump meanwhile threatened on Thursday to take severe action against Iran if its authorities "start killing people", warning Washington would "hit them very hard".

Reza Pahlavi, exiled son of the late Shah, told Iranians in a social media post: "The eyes of the world are upon you. Take to the streets."

However, the extent of support inside Iran for the monarchy or for the MKO, the most vocal of émigré opposition groups, is disputed.

Trump said yesterday he would not meet Pahlavi and was "not sure that it would be appropriate" to support him.

On Thursday, the Norway-based NGO Iran Human Rights said Wednesday was the bloodiest day of demonstrations, with 13 protesters confirmed to have been killed.

Iranian media and official statements have reported at least 21 people, including security forces, killed since the unrest began, according to an AFP tally.

A former senior official from the establishment's reformist wing said the Islamic Republic's core ideological pillars -- from enforced dress codes to foreign policy choices -- did not resonate with those under 30 -- nearly half the population, reports Reuters. "The younger generation no longer believes in revolutionary slogans -- it wants to live freely," he said.