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## Prime suspect in Banasree murder arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab has arrested the prime suspect in the murder of school student Fatema Akter Nili, who was found dead at her home in Dhaka's Banasree area.

The arrestee, Md Milon Mallick, 28, an employee at a hotel owned by Nili's father, allegedly killed the 18-year-old for rejecting his advances.

Lt Col Fayezul Arefin, commanding officer of Rab-3, shared the developments at a press briefing at the Rab Media Centre in Karwan Bazar yesterday.

Milon was arrested from Baro Singa in Bagerhat Sadar on Sunday night, he said.

Nili was murdered at her home, Pritom Villa, on January 10.

According to Rab, her parents and brother were away in Habiganj, leaving Milon responsible for delivering food. CCTV footage shows him entering the house at 1:36pm, leaving briefly with Nili's sister, who went to the gym, then re-entering alone at 2:25pm and departing at 2:43pm.

Regarding the motive, the Rab official said Milon had been making advances on the victim for some time. The night before the murder, he made a similar proposal while delivering dinner, when Nili scolded him.

Milon went to the house the next day, carrying a nylon rope. "When Nili refused his advances once again, he tried to strangle her with the rope. During the struggle, as Nili tried to scream, Milon grabbed a kitchen machete [boti] and slit her throat."

Milon would be handed over to the police, said Rab. Nili's father, Md Sajib, has filed a murder case with Khilgaon Police Station.



A myna dips its beak into the cut part of a date palm tree to sip sap on a cold Poush morning. The photo was taken in Patang village of Barishal Sadar upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Law and order yet to reach satisfactory level

Says Mirza Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the government has failed to recover looted arms and that the law and order situation has not improved to a satisfactory level.

He made the remarks while talking to journalists at his residence in the Kalibari area of Thakurgaon town, responding to a question about countrywide violence, killings, and the recovery of looted weapons.

"We are deeply concerned about the issue. We consider it a failure of the government that it has not been able to recover the arms. And so far, I do not think the law and order situation has improved in any significant way," he said.

On Bangladesh's decision not to go to India to participate in the T20 World Cup, Fakhrul said, "International politics is involved with cricket, and the dignity of our country is also related. India has undoubtedly humiliated one of our cricketers. We agree with the decision taken by the board."



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## REACHING OUT TO FEMALE VOTERS BNP pledges 'Family Card' and jobs to empower women

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

With the general election knocking at the door, the BNP is seeking to attract female voters by pledging to introduce a "Family Card" that would provide women with cash assistance and essential items.

If elected, the party also plans to create more jobs for women, improve safety in public transport, and expand access to maternal and neonatal healthcare.

Senior BNP leaders said the commitments are part of the party's election manifesto and its 31-point reform outline, which places women's empowerment at the centre of governance and development.

According to Election Commission data, of the total 12,76,95,183 voters, 6,28,79,042 are women.



Senior leaders also acknowledged that outreach to female voters at the grassroots had been weak in the past, prompting the party to take new initiatives ahead of the election.

Under the proposed Family Card scheme, women cardholders would receive monthly financial assistance of Tk 2,000-2,500 or essential food items such as rice, pulses, cooking oil and salt.

The programme would initially

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## Newly-appointed US envoy in city

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed US Ambassador-designate to Bangladesh Brent Christensen said he looks forward to strengthening ties between the United States and Bangladesh to promote peace and prosperity in the region.

The comment came shortly after he and his wife, Deanne Dao, arrived in Dhaka yesterday evening. Officials from the foreign ministry and the US Embassy welcomed them at Dhaka airport.

"It is an honor for me to serve the United States as the 19th Ambassador to Bangladesh. I look forward to strengthening the ties between our two countries to advance peace and prosperity in the region. My wife and I are thrilled to return to a country that holds many fond memories for us," Ambassador Brent T Christensen said, according to a statement of the US Embassy Dhaka.

Diplomatic sources said Christensen will present his credentials to President Mohammed Shahabuddin on January 15, after which he will formally assume office.

The post of US ambassador to Bangladesh had remained vacant for more than one and a half years following the resignation of former ambassador Peter Haas in mid-June 2024.



Waste removed from a drain lies piled on a footpath beside the Bijoy Sarani-Tejgaon link road in Dhaka, while the concrete slabs meant to cover the sewer remain open. The situation has persisted for over a week, forcing pedestrians onto the road and posing a constant risk of falling into the drain. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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## 13TH NATIONAL ELECTION

# 'Only 4.24% of candidates women'

Women's Political Rights Forum says parties must be held accountable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties must be held accountable for failing to nominate at least five percent women candidates in the upcoming national election despite pledging to do so under the July National Charter, said the Women's Political Rights Forum (FWPR) yesterday.

Of the 2,568 candidates contesting the election, only 109 are women – just 4.24 percent of the total. Among them, 72 women were nominated by political parties, while 37 are running as independents, the rights organisation said at a press briefing at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

The forum noted that no political party nominated more

Only 109 women contesting out of 2,568 candidates

Parties nominated 72 women; 37 independents

No party nominated more than 10 women candidates

30 of 51 parties did not nominate single woman

BNP nominated 10 women out of 328

Jamaat nominated no women out of 276

NCP nominated 3 women out of 44

than 10 women candidates, highlighting the largely symbolic nature of gender

inclusion in electoral politics.

"Even parties born out of mass uprisings, where women played a strong role, have shown a frustrating example of including women," said Sadaf Saaz of Naripokkho.

The forum urged political parties to treat women's nomination as a constitutional obligation rather than a token gesture and called for structural reforms to integrate women into leadership roles and ensure a gender-responsive political system.

It said women's political participation remains heavily dependent on reserved seats, limiting their legitimacy, leadership opportunities and influence in decision-making.

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## Charges framed against Salman and Anisul

Trial starts Feb 10

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-I yesterday set February 10 for the start of the trial in a crimes against humanity case against deposed prime minister's adviser Salman F Rahman and former law minister Anisul Huq.

The three-member tribunal fixed the date after framing five charges against the two.

The tribunal, headed by Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder, framed the charges after rejecting discharge petitions filed by the defence. Tribunal member Justice Shofiqul Alam Mahmood read out the charges.

While framing the charges, the tribunal said it found sufficient grounds to proceed against the accused after examining the formal charge and the evidence on record.

CHARGES

According to Charge 1, Salman and Anisul, acting through the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina, the former home minister and leaders of the 14-party alliance, ordered, abetted and incited crimes against humanity during the July uprising.

Charge 2 alleges that the accused conspired to suppress the protests by imposing curfews and

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## Over 5 lakh Ansar-VDP members to be deployed for polls

Says home adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret'd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday advised members of Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP) to discharge their duties with honesty, sincerity and professionalism to ensure that the 13th national election is held in a free, fair and peaceful manner.

He made the remarks as the chief guest at the passing-out parade of the 41st BCS (Ansar) cadre officers, upazila Ansar-VDP trainers and trainers-in-training, and the 26th and 27th batches of Ansar Battalion trainees at the Bangladesh Ansar and VDP Academy in Shafipur, Gazipur.

The home adviser said 5,55,958 Ansar-VDP members would be deployed at 42,766 polling centres across the country, with 13 members assigned to each centre.

Of the 13, each centre will have three armed members, six unarmed male members and four unarmed female members, he said.

As part of additional security arrangements, one of the three armed members at each centre will remain on duty round the clock with the presiding officer during the election period, he added.