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BORDER FIRING

Foreign ministry summons Myanmar envoy

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The foreign ministry yesterday summoned Myanmar Ambassador to Bangladesh U Kyaw Soe Moe and expressed deep concern at the recent instance of gunfire from Myanmar towards Bangladesh near Whykong Union of Teknaf, Cox's Bazar.

A 12-year-old Bangladeshi girl was injured by a stray bullet during heavy fighting reportedly between the Arakan Army and Rohingya armed groups across the Myanmar border, a foreign ministry statement said.

Besides, another youth named Mohammad Hanif, 28, of Lombabil area under Whykong union was critically injured in a landmine explosion along the Teknaf border.

Bangladesh reminded that the unprovoked firing towards Bangladesh is a blatant violation of international law and a hindrance to neighbourly relationship.

Bangladesh asked Myanmar to take full responsibility and requisite measures to stop such cross-border firing.

Bangladesh also asked the Myanmar envoy to ensure that whatever happens

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Laughter drifts through Pangsha village as two elder sisters gently push their little sister on a swing, enjoying a winter afternoon in Barishal's Babuganj upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Ward-level Jamaat leader killed at Rajabazar home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A leader of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami was killed at his home in Dhaka's Paschim Rajabazar early yesterday.

The deceased -- Anwar Ullah, 65, a homeopathic practitioner -- was vice-president of ward-27 of Dhaka North City Corporation.

His son-in-law, Md Shamsuddoha, said two masked men entered the house around 2:00am after cutting the grille and tortured Anwar, tying his hands.

"My mother-in-law called me around 5:00am and informed me about the incident. I rushed to the house and found him unconscious. A scarf was wrapped around his neck," he told The Daily Star.

The killers took away some valuables and gold jewellery.

Anwar was taken to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead, Shamsuddoha added.

Originally from Cumilla, Anwar Ullah was a teacher and had been living in the first-floor flat with his wife.

Police and members of the Crime Scene Unit of the Criminal Investigation Department rushed there and collected evidence.

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Without accountability, democracy will fail

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Democracy in Bangladesh cannot survive without accountability, said speakers at a dialogue yesterday, warning that promises lose meaning when governments are not answerable to the people.

They stressed the need for internal reforms within political parties, greater transparency, and stronger engagement with civil society to improve governance.

Speakers also highlighted the importance of social protection for women and marginalised groups, addressing economic inequality, and incorporating citizens' voices into policymaking.

The dialogue, titled "Citizen Manifesto 2026: Expectations for National Election and Democratic Transition," was held at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Agargaon. It was organised by Prapti with support from the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury stated that accountability must function both within and outside parliament.

"Without accountability, promises disappear again and again," he said, adding that civil society is a key partner

in governance and that restricting its role signals the rise of authoritarianism.

He also said parliamentary committees must function effectively to ensure oversight.

On the economy, Khosru said it should be democratised so that all citizens benefit, not just a small group.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reform parties for internal democracy

Guarantee security so candidates, voters can participate without fear

Reduce influence of money, muscle power in polls

Strengthen institutions to protect rights, prevent abuse of power

He noted that while governments enjoy an initial "honeymoon period," many fail because they cannot accept criticism despite rising public expectations.

Saiful Alam Khan Milan, a central executive committee member of Jamaat-e-Islami, said security during elections is a major concern.

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Fair polls futile without major reforms

Speakers tell Shujan event, raise alarms about 'security vacuum'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Politicians, academics and civil society members yesterday warned that a fair election alone cannot ensure a democratic transition without major structural reforms.

At a dialogue, they also raised concerns about a "security vacuum" and the risk posed by unrecovered weapons.

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) organised the divisional dialogue titled "Expectation of the July Mass Uprising, Reforms and Election Manifestos" at the CIRDAP Auditorium in the capital.

Presenting the keynote, Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said without far-reaching reforms, any future elected government could again turn authoritarian.

He stressed the need for an active Election Commission, an end to the influence of money in elections, and a neutral media.

Badiul further demanded strict accountability of law enforcement agencies to prevent extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

He said the Anti-Corruption

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BNP alleges bias in postal ballots

Flags 'unfair' placement of party symbol

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday filed a complaint with the Election Commission (EC), alleging that its name and symbol are not clearly visible on postal ballots sent to expatriate voters for the upcoming 13th National Parliamentary Election.

The party claimed that its name and symbol had been positioned in the middle of the postal ballot, while those of several other political parties were deliberately placed in the first row, raising concerns of bias.

Speaking to reporters after meeting the Chief Election Commissioner at the EC headquarters in Agargaon, BNP Standing Committee member Nazrul Islam Khan said the placement was "intentional" and makes it difficult for voters to identify the party when the ballot is folded.

When the ballot is folded, the BNP's name and symbol are not easily visible, he said. He said the EC admitted that it had not paid sufficient attention to the issue.

Nazrul said three major political parties had their names and symbols in the first row of the postal ballot. He added that if the ballot had five or six columns instead of four, such placement would

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FEB 12 REFERENDUM

Campaigning for 'no' vote anti-people: Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party (NCP) Convener Nahid Islam yesterday alleged that a certain political party is using various tactics to campaign for a "no" vote in the referendum scheduled for February 12.

"Those who never wanted reforms are now taking a stand for a 'no' vote. Those who advocate a 'no' vote do not want the welfare of the country," he said while inaugurating the "NCP Caravan" in Dhaka as part of the party's referendum campaign.

Nahid said when the referendum commission was formed, the same party questioned why the interim government was pursuing reforms, arguing that no reforms were needed even after the referendum.

Referring to the referendum, he said supporting a "no" vote would go against the will of the people. "I believe those who oppose the reforms will not be able to win the election. To succeed, they must support a 'yes' vote and stand for reforms," he said.

He also alleged that the said party was promising schemes such as "Family Cards" and

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Include cancellation of Adani power deal in polls manifestos

CAB's youth wing urges parties, candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The youth wing of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) has demanded that political parties and candidates contesting the upcoming national election include the cancellation of the power purchase agreement with Indian company Adani Power in their election manifestos.

They also placed 12 other demands on power and energy issues at a press conference at the auditorium of Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday, calling for commitments from election contestants.

The other demands include postponing an increase in imports of liquefied natural gas for at least the next five years; prohibiting any increase in coal-based power generation; transforming the sector into a service-based one from a profit-driven model; reducing imports of fossil fuels by at least 5 percent within the next five years; increasing solar power generation to 15 percent; ensuring 100 percent onshore gas exploration by state-owned BAPEX; cancelling deals with all furnace-oil-based power plants under the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010; ensuring compensation from those companies; preparing a roadmap for using the explored gas in Bhola and Chatak;

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Holding banners and placards to raise awareness about noise pollution, a group of people stood at the Science Lab intersection in Dhaka yesterday as part of the environment ministry's 10-day campaign across the capital.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

July activists, NCP breakaways to unveil new platform Friday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A new political platform led by demonstrators of the July uprising and breakaways from the National Citizen Party is set to make its debut this Friday.

The platform, ideologically rooted in social democracy, will also be joined by current and former leaders of the left-leaning Bangladesh Chhatra Union, as well as socio-cultural activists who played active roles in the uprising and the movement to topple the Sheikh Hasina government.

The official launch will be announced from the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital on January 16, said founding member Anik Roy, a former joint convener of the NCP.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Anik said, "We want to carry forward the generational fight." He added that the platform's economic framework would be based on the concept of a "democratic economy".

Distinguishing itself from traditional political parties, the organisers plan to introduce a rotating leadership structure to prevent the accumulation of power.

"The leadership structure will be fluid, meaning the chief of the platform will

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