

Huzaiifa on life support at NINS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nine-year-old girl from Cox's Bazar who was struck by a stray bullet fired from Myanmar on Sunday has been placed on life support at the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospital (NINS) in Dhaka.



She is under observation at the ICU, said Humayun Kabir Himu, an associate professor at NINS, and her uncle, Shawkat Ali.

Huzaiifa Anan, a class 3 student from Teschi Bridge of Whykong union, was shot during clashes between Arakan Army and Rohingya armed groups inside Myanmar.

She was taken to CMCH and later shifted to NINS after doctors failed to remove the bullet lodged in her throat. The bullet remained stuck in her throat, but she suffered a stroke as it damaged the veins that supply blood to the brain. This also increased pressure on her brain, and she was put on mechanical ventilation (life support), said doctors.



Sixty-year-old Rahima Begum sits in a newly planted Boro paddy field under the winter morning sun, shaping lumps of mud to make a stove. The photo was taken recently in Babuganj upazila of Barishal.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Star celebrates Staff Day

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on freedom of expression and the right to question power" and urged journalists to remain courageous while exercising caution.

Kamal Ahmed, consulting editor of The Daily Star, said the spirit of practising journalism without fear or favour will endure as long as the newspaper survives.

Aasha Mehreen Amin, joint editor of the newspaper, said, "Yes, many challenges came our way last year, but there were positive moments too – several of our journalists received awards for investigative and business reporting."

"Over the years, our journalism has improved, but there is always room for growth, and that is what we must strive for in the future," she added.

In a message read out by Aasha Mehreen Amin, Simeen Rahman, director of Mediaworld Limited, said the newspaper remains "a fearless guardian of facts and a pillar of Bangladesh's

democracy".

She praised the Daily for upholding "journalism without fear or favour" since 1991, reflecting the vision of its founding chairman Latifur Rahman.

The event, hosted by Naziba Basher, also featured speeches from Imran Faiz Rahman, director of Mediaworld Limited, among others.

During the programme, 34 journalists and staff members were honoured for outstanding performance.

Mashfiq Mizan and Naimur Rahman won the Best Investigative Reporting-2025 award for their joint investigation by The Daily Star and Tech Global Institute, which revealed how a Dhaka neighbourhood became a hotspot of state-sanctioned killings during the July uprising.

Md Mohiuddin Alamgir was named Best Reporter, while Md Abbas and Sajjad Hossain received the "Special Recognition-2025" award for their outstanding

performance throughout the year.

Osham-ul-Sufian Talukder was awarded "Best Sub-Editor-2025".

Nafis Almas Siam and Subrata Roy won the "Most Promising Sub-Editor - 2025" award.

S Dilip Roy was named Best District Reporter, and Palash Khan won the Best Photographer award.

Other awardees included Tamanna Khan (Best in Editorial & OP-ED-2025), Debashis Kumar Day (Best in Creative Graphics-2025), Prabir Das (Most Talked-About Photo-2025), Mohammad Refayet Ullah Mirdha (Best Business Reporter-2025), Masukuj Jaman Tapader (Best in Star Sports-2025), Prajukta Roy Chowdhury (Best in Digital Desk [English]-2025), SK Abdullah Ibne Karim (Best in Social Media-2025), Abu Talha (Best in Digital Desk [Bangla]-2025), Maisha Tasnim Sreshtha (Best in Arts & Entertainment-2025) and Rahfat Salman Abir (Best in Print Business-2025). Staff members from

other departments were also recognised. They are Md Monsur Ali (Evergreen Employee of the Year-2025), Muhammad Tanjim Ferdous (Best in Development Sector-2025), Rajeeb Ahmed Khan (Best in Marketing-2025), Anowar Hossain (Best in Accounts-2025), Gulam Kibria (Production Person of the Year-2025), Mazidul Mobarok Rayhan (Circulation Person of the Year-2025), Md Istiak Ahmed Bappy (Best in HR & Admin-2025), SM Intisab Shahriyar (Best in Star Lifestyle-2025), Shams Rashid Tomoy (Best in Tech & Startup-2025), Abir Hossain (Best in Campus, Rising Stars & Star Youth-2025), Miftahul Jannat (Best in Slow Reads-2025), Tafsir Ahmed Sagar (Best in Multimedia-2025), Md Imam Hossain Chowdhury (Best in IT-2025) and Md Arif Hossain (Best in Digital Operations-2025).

The DS Revenue Team received the Team of the Year-2025 award.

Protests, blockades paralyse

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reaching Shahbagh, he got stuck in a severe traffic jam. It took him three hours to travel from Shahbagh to Farmgate, he said.

"With traffic like this, I don't even know if I can earn enough to pay today's CNG deposit," Hamid said.

Jahangir Alam, 55, a resident of Gazipur, spoke to this correspondent at 4:15pm at Farmgate.

He said he had gone to Banglamotor for some work. After finishing, he boarded a bus to return home. However, it took him over half an hour to move just 100 to 150 yards from Banglamotor.

"As I heard that students had blocked roads in the Farmgate area, I got off the bus and walked to Farmgate," he said.

As the students withdrew the blockade around 4:30pm, traffic started moving at a snail's pace.

Meanwhile, students of Dhaka College and Eden Mohila College blocked the Science Lab intersection around 12:30pm, demanding the issuance

of an ordinance for Dhaka Central University. They first gathered on their campuses and later marched towards Science Lab. Vehicular movement in the area came to a halt.

The students withdrew their blockade around 5:45pm. Before leaving the Science Lab area, they held a press conference, where they said they would block the three key points again today.

Students of Government Bangla College blocked the Technical Intersection around 12:00pm with the same demand. They left the area around 3:30pm, according to SM Jakaria, officer-in-charge of Darussalam Police Station.

The traffic situation in the area worsened as a result, he added.

Students of Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College and Kabi Nazrul Government College blocked the Tanti Bazar area around 11:15am, creating a huge tailback.

The students left the area around 2:15pm, said OC Mahfuzul Haque of Bangshal Police Station.

JAMAAT LEADER KILLING

Family alleges political link

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have yet to identify the killers behind the murder of Anwar Ullah, a Jamaat-e-Islami leader, who was killed at his home in the capital's Paschim Rajabazar early Tuesday.

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

His family claimed the killing may be politically motivated, but police suspect it may be linked to theft.

Originally from Cumilla, Anwar had been living in a first-floor flat of a seven-storey building with his wife.

His son-in-law, Md Shamsuddoha, said two masked men entered the flat around 2:00am after cutting the grille.

"During the incident, my mother-in-law begged the assailants to take whatever valuables they wanted but not to harm her husband. After taking the valuables, they made sure to kill him before leaving," he said, adding that he suspected it was a "planned and political" murder.

Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Monirul Islam Monir told The Daily Star they could not arrest anyone yet, adding that the family would come to Dhaka tomorrow and file a case.

He said several teams were investigating the incident.

Meanwhile, local Jamaat leaders and activists held a protest rally in the Farmgate area yesterday evening, demanding immediate arrest of the killers.

They said more than 24 hours had passed, but no visible action had been taken by the police.

A subdued Sakrain

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in dwindling sales and a shift in forms of celebrations.

A Gandaria resident said, "We have been celebrating Sakrain since childhood. It was always the festival of Old Dhaka's people. But now that spirit seems to have been lost."

Jannatul Ferdous Ela, a student from Kaltabazar, recalled how people from different areas once gathered. "That doesn't happen anymore. I fear the festival may slowly disappear." Police, meanwhile, focused on safety. Assistant Commissioner Fazlul Haque of Kotwali zone said kite flying is permitted, but steps were taken to curb fireworks and DJ parties at night.

"We have held several meetings with local representatives, and police patrols remain active to handle any untoward situation," he said.

Bangladesh halts on-arrival visas

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Force (ISF) for Gaza, Touthid said Bangladesh has not yet taken a decision on sending forces.

"It is still at the discussion level. It has not been determined who will be part of this initiative. Most importantly, three conditions have been mentioned clearly. Under no circumstances will Bangladesh join without an environment consistent with those conditions."

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shaful Alam on Monday said the conditions

include that the ISF must be temporary and operate under a clear UN Security Council mandate, there must be a permanent ceasefire and complete withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Gaza, and responsibility for Gaza must be transferred to the Palestinians.

Asked whether such discussions were appropriate as the interim government's tenure nears its end, Touthid said, "The tenure is ending with the February 12 election, but a government will be there."

He added that the

country's engagement and interests do not change overnight and the government would not act against national interests.

On recent conflicts in Rakhine spilling over into Bangladesh, he said his ministry summoned the Myanmar government envoy and protested the firing incident that injured a child in Teknaf, seeking assurances to prevent any recurrence.

"The Myanmar government does not recognise the rebel group as a legal entity and

Bangladesh cannot formally communicate with it," he said, adding that the conflicts in Rakhine began long ago and are unlikely to end anytime soon.

On reports of Bangladesh and China working towards setting up a military drone factory in Bangladesh, Touthid said the country's military capacity needs to be developed and efforts are underway to do so. "We will not do anything to deteriorate our relations with any country. We'll keep a balance," he said.

BNP slams EC 'silence'

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"But the same standard is not being applied to other parties. Important leaders, even top leaders, are continuing election campaigns openly. No action is being taken," he told reporters at the party's Election Steering Office.

Drawing the EC's attention to what he described as further violations of the electoral code of conduct, Nazrul alleged that leaders and activists of a political party are going door to door of voters from low-income and less educated households to collect their NID numbers, "mobile phone numbers and bKash numbers", with the intention of committing vote fraud.

"We fear they may attempt to create fake NIDs and cast fake votes. They may also use bKash numbers to give money to voters to influence them to vote in their favour. This is not only unethical, it is illegal and a serious barrier to holding a fair election."

Despite these allegations conveyed recently, Nazrul said the EC has yet to take any visible action.

Nazrul also alleged irregularities in the printing and distribution of postal ballots sent to expatriate voters in different countries.

He claimed that the BNP's name and its electoral symbol, the sheaf of paddy, were deliberately placed along the folding line of the postal ballots, making them less visible.

"In the same ballots, the names and symbols of certain other political parties have been placed prominently on the first line, while ours were positioned in the middle, where they become less visible once the paper is folded."

Raising concerns over the distribution of postal ballots abroad, Nazrul said videos circulating on social media show activists of a Jamaat-e-Islami handling large numbers of ballot papers in Bahrain and Oman.

"We again found today that a person was handling a large number of ballot papers on top of cars at a garage in Oman. His name is Humayun Kabir. Local residents there have said he is an activist of Jamaat. These incidents are extremely worrying," Nazrul

said.

He warned that similar incidents could occur in other countries as well, using the same methods.

"We requested the EC to treat this as an illegal act. If swift punitive action is taken against those involved, others may become cautious."

"But if no action is taken and such reports continue to emerge from other countries, the credibility of elections conducted through postal ballots will come under serious question."

Stating that the BNP wants a free and fair election, Nazrul said the party does not want any allegation that the government formed through the election came to power through manipulation.

Nazrul said that at the request of the EC, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman postponed his scheduled tour of the northern region.

"We want the election to be held on time on February 12, and we want all political parties to participate. To avoid any confusion about our conduct, our chairman postponed his programme."

UK gov't retreats on mandatory digital ID to work

AFP, London

The UK no longer plans to make a new digital ID card mandatory to work in Britain, finance minister Rachel Reeves confirmed yesterday, in the latest U-turn by her embattled government.

The climbdown follows an intense backlash to contentious plans to introduce a free digital ID for both nationals and those residing in the country in a bid to curb illegal migration.

After officials briefed British media late Tuesday that the new ID would no longer be mandatory for employment, Reeves insisted the right to work would still become contingent on providing a form of digital verification.

"We are saying that you will need mandatory digital ID to be able to work in the UK," she told the BBC.

"Now the difference is whether that has to be one piece of ID – a digital ID card – or whether it could be an e-visa or an e-passport," Reeves added.

Ziaul charged with over 100 killings

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Ziaul stood up and replied, "Not guilty, sir."

According to the first charge, acting on Ziaul's planning and with his direct participation, one Sajal and three unidentified individuals were shot dead along the Bypass Road in Pubail, Gazipur, on July 11, 2011.

The second charge alleges that between 2010 and 2013, at least 50 people, including former BDR member Nazrul Islam Mallik and Alkas Mallik, were shot dead at the confluence of the Baleswar River in Barguna, and their bodies were dumped into the river on Ziaul's instruction.

The third charge states that between 2010 and 2013, Ziaul was involved in the killing of another 50 people in Barguna and the Sundarbans in Bagerhat, among other places, under the guise of anti-forest bandit operations.

Earlier, on January 8, Ziaul's defence counsel,

Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury, sought his client's discharge, claiming his client was innocent. He argued that none of the three charges was supported by evidence and that the allegations were unfounded.

The prosecution opposed the plea, saying it had established a prima facie case and urged the tribunal to frame charges. After hearing both sides, the tribunal fixed yesterday to deliver its order.

Earlier on December 17, the prosecution brought formal charges accusing Ziaul of orchestrating a systematic campaign of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

It alleged that while serving in key intelligence and operational roles in Rab, Ziaul directly participated in and commanded operations in which detainees were abducted, tortured, and killed, and their bodies were disposed of to conceal evidence.

The former director

general of the National Telecommunication Monitoring Centre faces charges of murder, abduction, torture, enforced disappearance, and other crimes against humanity, including complicity in and failure to prevent crimes under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

Meanwhile, upon a plea by a member of Ziaul's defence team and his sister, Nazneen Nahar, the tribunal directed jail authorities to allow the defence to play a piece of video evidence for the accused in jail.

In a separate development, the tribunal granted a plea filed by Md Tabarak Hossain Bhuiyan, a defence counsel representing seven former Rab officials accused in another case of crimes against humanity, to visit the alleged crime scene related to enforced disappearance, confinement and torture at the Task Force Interrogation (TFI) cell, accompanied by a prosecution team.

The defence also sought a tribunal order directing the Rab chief to provide official documents, including Rab's organogram and Charter of Duties, to prepare defence materials. The prosecution opposed the request, saying it would communicate and try to provide authenticated copies.

Prosecutor Abdus Sattar Palwan told the tribunal the defence was filing petitions to "kill time", prompting Tribunal chair Justice Md Golam Mortuza Mozumder to caution him, saying that the defence has the right to defend.

Defence lawyer Tabarak also filed a petition seeking bail for one of the accused, Brig Gen Md Jahangir Alam, citing his heart ailment. He argued that Jahangir surrendered while commanding a brigade, despite having the opportunity to flee, and would not abscond if granted bail. The tribunal kept the petition on record for consideration.

No reconciliation

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by the Awami League of its crimes.

"So far, there is no remorse, no repentance. Instead, they claim that the young people killed during the July uprising were killed by terrorists. There are stacks and stacks of evidence of their crimes – absolutely barbaric crimes – yet they remain in complete denial."

At the hour-long meeting with Albert Gombis, a former acting Under Secretary of State, and Morse Tan, a former ambassador-at-large, Yunus reaffirmed his

government's commitment to hold the polls on February 12 and hand over power to a democratically elected government once the results are announced.

"No matter who says what, elections will be held on February 12 – not a day before, not a day after," he said, adding that the vote would be free, fair and peaceful, and held in a festive atmosphere.

The interim government would remain completely neutral during the elections, ensuring an unbiased administration and a level playing field for all political parties.

The AL supporters are spreading fake news and misinformation in an attempt to create confusion about the elections, he said.

"But people are alert. Increasingly, they can detect AI-generated misinformation videos," he said.

Gombis agreed that fake news had emerged as "one of the main enemies" of democracy worldwide and stressed the need for greater efforts to combat the threat.

During the hour-long meeting, Yunus and the visiting diplomats discussed a wide range of

issues, including the July uprising and its aftermath, the rise of young protesters, the July Charter and the referendum and the Rohingya crisis.

Yunus said his government was campaigning for a "Yes" vote in the referendum, noting that the July Charter – set to be endorsed by the people – would usher in a new era of democratic governance and leave no room for future autocracy.

SDG Coordinator and Senior Secretary Lamiya Morshed was also present at the meeting.