



Police stand guard near the Science Lab area in Dhaka during a clash between HSC students of Dhaka College and Dhanmondi Ideal College yesterday morning. The clash followed a dispute between the two groups and led to chases and counter-chases. Police fired two rounds of teargas to bring the situation under control. Vehicular movement along the Mirpur-to-New Market stretch was completely suspended. The situation returned to normal in the afternoon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

BNP walking a tightrope between rebels and allies

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Despite hectic negotiations, repeated warnings, and expulsions, BNP has failed to persuade its rebel candidates to withdraw from the election race, triggering frustration and anger among its partners.

BNP has allocated 14 seats to its allies, who had earlier joined hands with the party in a simultaneous movement against the fascist regime. However, in 10 of those seats, BNP rebel candidates remain in the race.

Not only that, but more than five dozen BNP rebel candidates are still contesting, weakening the prospects of the party's own nominated candidates, party leaders said.

The deadline for withdrawing nominations expired on Tuesday. Since then, BNP has said it would try to convince rebel candidates to support alliance nominees and has verbally instructed its grassroots leaders to extend full support to party-backed candidates.

Partners said the failure to rein in rebel candidates has exposed internal weaknesses in BNP's election management and strained relations with alliance partners at a critical stage of the campaign.

A partner said, "We believed that after Tarique Rahman's intervention, the rebels would quit the race, but that did not happen. We did not expect this. BNP has failed to honour its seat sharing commitment."

Developments on the ground suggest little progress.

In Dhaka-12, BNP did not field any candidate, as the seat was allocated to Biplobi Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque. Yet, expelled BNP leader Saiful Alam Nirab is contesting as a rebel candidate.

"Even after being expelled, BNP rebel candidates are campaigning using the names of BNP leaders, which is wrong and unlawful. BNP did not show foresight in handling rebel candidates," Saiful Haque said.

In Bogura-2, BNP had earlier announced that the seat would go to Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna. Later, citing complications with

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6



ESSENTIAL DRUGS HC questions legality of 18-member taskforce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court has issued a rule questioning the legality of the health ministry's decision to constitute an 18-member taskforce for preparing the essential drug list and recommending rational drug pricing excluding Ayurvedic, Unani, Homeopathic, Biochemic, Herbal and Veterinary experts.

In the rule, the court asked the respondents to explain within three weeks why the health ministry's notification issued on July 24 last year and their failure to include all stakeholders in the taskforce should not be declared illegal.

The HC also asked the respondents to show cause as to why they should not be directed to include all stakeholders in the taskforce.

Health secretary, senior assistant secretary at the health services division, and director general of the directorate general of drug administration have been made respondents to the rule.

The HC bench of Justice Ahmed Sohel and Justice Fatema Anwar issued the rule on January 19 following a petition filed by two individuals including

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Dhaka-15 voters look beyond slogans to safety, services

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE and SADI
MUHAMMAD ALOK

Rejwana Islam, a resident of Rakin City in Mirpur, has grown up watching the women in her neighbourhood being politically conscious and active, and vocal about local issues.

Now, as the 13th National Parliamentary Election approaches, excitement is building among Rejwana, her relatives, and neighbours.

For the women voters in the area, the true test of any candidate lies not in political speeches, but in addressing everyday problems -- resolving civic issues and ensuring public safety, Rejwana said.

Anjumona Anu, a 35-year-old homemaker from Manipur, echoes this view.

She says insecurity on the streets is a constant cause of anxiety. Following the political change in 2024, she had hoped for more improvements.

As February 12 draws closer, she plans to cast her ballot after careful deliberation.

Dhaka-15, a constituency flanking the iconic Begum Rokeya Sarani -- a major urban thoroughfare named in honour of the pioneer of women's rights, Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain -- encompasses Manipur,

60 Feet Road, Shewrapara, Kazipara, Mirpur-13, and Kafrul.

The constituency has drawn everyone's attention due to the high-stakes battle for this seat between Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman and his primary challenger -- BNP candidate Saiful Islam Milton.

The grievances of the residents are practical and pressing. "The main issue is insecurity. There is a constant fear of mugging, and recently, eve-teasing has surged," said Rizwana.

She also pointed to the lack of parks or playgrounds for children in the vicinity.

Anu adds to the list -- a rise in drug abuse and the perennial curse of waterlogging.

During the monsoon, streets become submerged in filthy water, making the commute a nightmare for students of Manipur School. "Women face many social barriers to moving freely. Overcoming this

fundamental shift in public mindset," she told The Daily Star.

Yesterday, Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman formally launched his campaign at Mirpur Adarsha High School grounds.

Expressing confidence, he said people would vote "Yes" in the

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



Dhaka-15, a constituency flanking the iconic Begum Rokeya Sarani encompasses Manipur, 60 Feet Road, Shewrapara, Kazipara, Mirpur-13, and Kafrul

Constituency has 351,718 voters -- including 179,616 men, 172,098 women, and four hijra voters

NID misuse, poll-time donations punishable offence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The Election Commission yesterday warned that carrying, collecting or transferring another person's National Identity Card, as well as promising donations during election campaigns, are punishable offences under the law.

In a press release signed by EC Director (Public Relations) Ruhul Amin Mollik, the EC said it has learned that ahead of the national polls, some individuals are collecting voters' personal information and NID details.

The commission said no one is allowed to carry, collect or hand over another person's NID.

It also said no political party, candidate or anyone acting on their behalf may provide or pledge to provide any subscription, donation or gift to individuals, groups or institutions within an electoral area.

Meanwhile, on January 18, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir accused the EC of questionable conduct in several areas. He alleged that Jamaat-e-Islami activists were violating the electoral code by collecting copies of national ID cards, mobile numbers and bKash details from households, calling it a "criminal offence".

On January 21, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair denied the allegation after receiving the party's electoral symbol.

"This is completely false information," he said. "From the very beginning, Jamaat-e-Islami has played the most responsible role in adhering to the electoral code of conduct."



A farmer walks through a vibrant yellow mustard field in the Joyka area of Karimganj upazila. Due to good market prices, mustard cultivation in Kishoreganj increased this year compared to previous years. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: TAFSILUL AZIZ

DNCC backtracks on rent guidelines

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid widespread criticism, the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) has revised its recently issued house rent guideline, clarifying that rent determination will be based on negotiation and existing laws.

Earlier, the guideline proposed a standard for fair rent, stating that annual rent should not exceed 15 percent of a house's market value. The guideline, issued on January 20, drew criticism over its legal basis and implementation.

Contacted, DNCC Administrator Mohammad Azaz said the guideline was revised due to misinformation.

"Newspapers published calculations suggesting how much flat owners should charge. However, government valuation is based on the mouza (official land rate) rates, which are much lower than the actual current market value," he said.

Regarding legality, Azaz said DNCC has received a large public response.

"This is becoming a matter of voluntary compliance, as landlords want to rent out properties and tenants want to rent them. Many landlords have already said that since there is now a guideline, they will follow it," he said.

He acknowledged that a formal legal basis would strengthen the process.

"Local government has the authority

to issue such directions and can play a role in dispute negotiations. At the ward level, we can help resolve disputes," he said.

Azaz said the guideline allows landlords or tenants to seek arbitration or mediation from DNCC offices if disputes arise. "If a

AT A GLANCE

- Rent to be determined thru negotiation, not fixed formula
- Earlier proposal capped rent at 15% of market value
- DNCC says guideline meant for voluntary compliance
- Legal experts warn existing rent law is poorly enforced
- Tenants hope guideline offers channel for dispute resolution

legal framework becomes necessary, DNCC will be able to play a more supportive role," he added.

"That would make the process even stronger. So we are waiting positively," he said.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

'Irresponsible and utterly unfounded' China fires back at US envoy's remarks

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

China has urged the US to be more aware of its responsibilities and focus on actions conducive to Bangladesh's stability as well as development and cooperation in the region.

The Chinese embassy in Dhaka said this in a statement yesterday, responding to remarks made by newly appointed US Ambassador Brent Christensen.

During a media interaction in Dhaka on Wednesday, Christensen expressed concerns about China's broader influence in South Asia and said he was committed to clearly articulating the risks of involvement with China in certain areas should Bangladesh choose that path.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

Expat ministry's statement and our reply

The expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry has issued a statement regarding The Daily Star's report titled "Overseas manpower recruitment: Approval for 252 agencies raises red flags" published on January 19, 2026.

The ministry states that the approval of 252 new overseas recruiting agencies followed scrutiny of applications that had been pending since 2023. According to it, during the 16 years of the previous regime, many entrepreneurs, businesspeople, civil society members, and organisations were deprived of licences for political reasons, despite their intention to conduct legitimate business.

The statement says that these pending applications were assessed under six criteria in line with the existing manpower export laws and the Overseas Employment and Migrants (Recruiting Agent License and Sub-Agent Registration and

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

JULY ATROCITIES ICT-2 frames charges against Quader, 6 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A tribunal yesterday charged Obaidul Quader and six other leaders of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations with crimes against humanity over atrocities during the July 1971 uprising.

Quader, also a former minister for road transport and bridges, was charged on three counts, while the six others face one count each. All the accused are absconding.

The three-member International Crimes Tribunal 2, headed by Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury, framed the charges under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

The other accused are Awami League Joint General Secretary AFM Bahaudin Nasim; former state minister for information Mohammad Ali Arifat; Jubo League Chairman Sheikh Fazle Shams Parash and its General Secretary Moiul Hossain Khan Nikhil; and Chhatra League President Saddam Hussain and General Secretary Sheikh Wali Asif Enan.

According to the prosecution, Quader, as AL general secretary and a cabinet minister, exercised command and control over law enforcement agencies and armed cadres of the AL, Jubo League and Chhatra League to violently suppress the quota reform movement that began on July 1, 2024.

Count 1 alleged that between July

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1