

# Tarique slams 'ticket to heaven' pledge

FROM PAGE 2

Taking the stage at 12:28pm, the BNP chief spoke for 23 minutes, addressing a range of issues, including the oppression and torture of his party's leaders and activists during the Awami League's 16 years in power, enforced disappearances, the country's fragile economy, looting, and the need to reform the state structure.

He also outlined future plans, including the introduction of family, farmers' and health cards; large-scale canal excavation, with 20,000 kilometres to be dug nationwide; employment generation; and measures prioritising farmers, women, and environmental protection.

Tarique said that if the party is voted to power, the country would be governed in accordance with the righteousness of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Referring to the enforced disappearance of BNP leader Ilias Ali and the deaths of 13 people in Sylhet during the July uprising, he said, "Through the sacrifice of these lives, we began the journey to claim our rights, but a vested group has already started conspiring against it, and the conspiracy has not stopped inside the country either."

"On August 5, 2024, the people of Bangladesh proved that if they remain united, they can resist any conspiracy."

At one point during his speech, he called a person from the crowd onto the stage and asked, "What do you all believe? Who is the owner of the Holy Kaaba? Who is the owner of the world? Who owns the heaven? Who owns the sun and the stars?"

To each question, the man responded with "Allah".

Tarique then continued, "You all bore witness that the owner of hell is Allah, the owner of heaven is Allah, the owner of the world is Allah, the owner of the Kaaba is Allah. Brother, does anyone else have the power to give away what is owned by Allah? No one does. So, before the election, one party is telling you 'We'll give you this, we'll give you that, we'll give you a ticket' ... is that not so?"

"If they speak of things that are

not owned by humans -- isn't that shirk?"

Tarique further said the country was liberated in 1971 at the cost of millions of lives, and the people know who played what role during the Liberation War.

"We saw who played a role in the martyrdom of hundreds and thousands of our brothers, in destroying the honour of hundreds of thousands of our mothers and sisters. The people of Bangladesh already know them."

"Brothers and sisters, [we must unite and stand] against such Kufri [acts or beliefs] considered disbelief in Islam, such thoughtlessness and such lies. We need to stay with our 'take back Bangladesh'!"

He said the people have freed the country from autocracy and the next task is to establish the people's rights. "Not just the right to vote or speak, but the right to self-reliance. Our goal is to ensure that every person can feed and clothe themselves, so that everyone can move safely -- that is how we will 'take back Bangladesh'."

He added that the BNP does not only want voting rights or freedom of speech, but also aims to make people economically self-reliant.

Tarique spoke at the second rally at Aipnur playground in Moulvibazar's Sherpur at 3:00pm.

Once again, without naming Jamaat, he reiterated his accusation against a certain party of misleading voters. "They are now going to the homes of innocent mothers and sisters and selling 'tickets to Jannah'."

At a rally in Habiganj, he said, "Let me share another update about the conspiracy to engineer the election -- their people are going door to door, collecting NID and mobile numbers. Have you heard about this?"

"They say they will establish the rule of honest people. They are collecting bKash numbers and phone numbers, saying they will send money -- this is their plan."

Addressing a Brahmanbaria rally at 10:30pm, Tarique urged voters to wake up early, attend Fajr prayers and go to the nearest polling stations.

He began his address at

Kishoreganj's Bhairab rally around 12:15am today. Urging votes for the BNP, he warned the people to stay vigilant against those who halted the voting process for the past 15 years.

## THE PROMISES MADE

In his Moulvibazar speech, the BNP chairman said employment opportunities would increase across the country if his party was voted to power. "Training and language education would be provided to help young people become skilled and secure better jobs."

He added that in the around 130 tea gardens in the district, the workers, particularly women, are living in difficult conditions and earning inadequate wages. "We want to provide family cards to these workers. Through the cards, we will offer either food assistance or cash support so that they can manage their households properly."

He added that besides tea workers, families of day labourers and farmers would also receive family cards.

Tarique also said farmers, through the "farmers' card", would be provided with necessary facilities, while also mentioning plans to introduce honorariums for imams and muezzins.

He said Moulvibazar stands as clear evidence of official neglect, as the previous government failed to ensure even basic healthcare facilities in the region. "Residents are still forced to travel to Sylhet or Dhaka for treatment, risking time, money and lives."

"Medical colleges and healthcare institutions will be established on a priority basis in neglected areas."

In his speech in Brahmanbaria, he said his party will prioritise road construction, the development of educational institutions and employment.

As of the filing of this report at 1:00am, Tarique was scheduled for two more rallies -- one in Narsingdi and another in Narayanganj.

He is scheduled to address a rally at the capital's Bhasantek BRP field at 6:00pm today, marking the second day of his election campaign.

(Our Sylhet correspondents Dwoha Chowdhury and Mintu Deshvara contributed to this report.)

discrimination will be accepted," he said, adding that they were focusing on the election.

"Do not force us to wage a movement," he warned.

Nahid said, "After the mass uprising, we entered politics with hope and aspirations to build a new Bangladesh. In that process, we have largely failed and many tasks remain unfinished. Insha'Allah, in this election, the 10-party alliance will win by a large margin and complete those unfinished tasks."

Without naming the BNP, he added, "We hear about family cards, farmer cards. Cards should be given to people benefit. But will these cards really reach the intended recipients? Will people not have to pay a bribe of Tk 1,000 to receive a Tk 2,000 card?"

At the end of the rally, the Jamaat ameer handed out balance scale symbols to party candidates and presented a balance scale bearing a water-lily emblem to Nahid Islam.

Many greeted Faizul and

## Israel strikes four Syria-Lebanon border crossings

REUTERS

Israel launched strikes on four border crossings on the Syria-Lebanon border on Wednesday evening, saying "they were used by the Iran-backed group Hezbollah to smuggle weapons".

Israel and Lebanon agreed to a US-brokered ceasefire in 2024, ending more than a year of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah that culminated in Israeli strikes that severely weakened the group. Since then, both sides have traded accusations of violations.

Lebanon has faced growing pressure from the US and Israel to disarm Hezbollah, and its leaders fear that Israel could dramatically escalate strikes across the battered country to push Lebanon's leaders to confiscate Hezbollah's arsenal more quickly.

Another Israeli strike on the southern Lebanese village of Qennarit wounded 19 people, the Lebanese health ministry said.

The Israeli military had issued a warning on Wednesday to residents of certain buildings in the southern Lebanese villages of Qennarit, Kfour and Jarjoua ahead of planned strikes on what was described as Hezbollah infrastructure.

Mustafizur was left out by Indian

Adviser also criticised the ICC for overlooking this incident in their communications with BCB and also pointed out the lack of communication from India's end.

"ICC made no attempts to convince us about this. Rather than speaking

# Sharmin Academy founding principal, manager sued

FROM PAGE 2

Earlier, police said they had spoken to the child's family, who initially did not agree to file a case, citing security concerns.

The CCTV footage, dated January 18 at 12:51pm, shows a woman dragging a child dressed in a school uniform into an office room. She first slaps the child. A man who was already present in the room then joins in, grabbing the child by the throat at times and pressing his mouth shut at others.

The man is seen holding a stapler. The child is sometimes crying and at other times writhing in distress. The woman holds the child by the hands to restrain him. At one point, when the child spits on the woman's sari, the man presses the child's head against the spot and shakes it several times.

While the child is seen crying in fear, the woman is seen smiling and laughing.

The footage, which went viral on Wednesday, was shared on Facebook by Advocate Saleh Uddin, who described it as a "sample" of



how children are punished at the institution.

Saleh later filed another case with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Ripon Hossain against Sharmin and Pabitra under Section 323 of the Penal Code, said Rifat Rahman, a lawyer for the

complainant.

Speaking to the daily Prothom Alo yesterday at the Paltan Police Station, the boy's mother said, "My child is still traumatised. Even in sleep, he suddenly screams, 'Don't stitch my mouth shut.' He also keeps saying, 'I won't go to school anymore.' He is so afraid that we might send him back to school that he doesn't even want to stay with us. He has gone to his maternal grandparents' home."

The child's father said that within just one week of enrolling in the school's pre-play class, his son became a victim of such inhumane abuse. After watching the video, they were left stunned. Their son repeatedly said, "The uncle said if I tell at home, he will slit my throat. He will stitch my mouth shut."

According to a 2011 Supreme Court judgment, corporal punishment in schools violates children's constitutional rights. A Ministry of Education circular banned corporal punishment in schools that year.

# Record crore-rich candidates in race

FROM PAGE 1

Speaking to this newspaper, Tauhidul, who also led the research team, said their findings are based on the analysis of affidavits submitted by 2,288 candidates who were initially declared valid by the Election Commission.

With many of them later pulling out, a total of 1,981 candidates now remain in the race.

The watchdog reported that 1,696 candidates are contesting a national election for the first time.

Of the valid candidates, 560 declared movable or liquid assets worth Tk 1 crore or more. The number was 273 in the 2008 election and has steadily risen to 547 by 2024.

Seven of the 10 candidates with the highest movable assets are from the BNP, while three are independents.

BNP's candidate from Chapainawabganj-2, Aminul Islam, declared the highest movable assets, totalling Tk 599 crore.

Twenty-seven candidates reported movable and immovable assets worth Tk 100 crore or more, including 18 from the BNP and nine independents.

A total of 891 MP aspirants declared movable and immovable assets worth Tk 1 crore or more.

TIB found that 76 percent of candidates hold at least an undergraduate degree -- the highest share to date.

Although the number of candidates who identify as businesspeople fell slightly, they still make up almost half (48 percent) of those in the race, while career politicians account for less than two percent.

Iftekharuzzaman said this fact is a reflection of money's role in politics.

Islamist party nominees now account for over one-third of the valid candidates, marking their strongest presence since 2008, when it stood at 72.

Replying to a question, Iftekharuzzaman said he hopes that the Election Commission, Anti Corruption Commission and National Board of Revenue will find discrepancies in the affidavits of the candidates and take action accordingly.

The watchdog noted that while indebted candidates are at their lowest share in five elections, 25 percent still carry loans or liabilities totalling Tk 18,868 crore -- the highest to date.

A total of 59.41 percent of BNP candidates have loans, while the figures stand at 32.79 percent for independents, 26.97 percent for the Jatiya Party, 25 percent for the Communist Party of Bangladesh, and 22.26 percent for Jamaat-e-Islami.

Several MP aspirants possess more than 50 acres of land, in violation of existing law. A total of 530 candidates, or 22.66 percent, currently face lawsuits. The average age of candidates is 51 years -- the lowest since 2008, when it stood at 72.

He further said one candidate failed to declare any personal assets abroad, despite his wife owning a flat in Dubai.

Another candidate disclosed ownership of three flats abroad, while the actual number is at least three times higher.

TIB also found that a candidate who did not disclose ownership of any foreign business enterprises was linked to 11 companies abroad.

In addition, although information about one candidate having company registrations in tax havens has long been publicly available, no such declaration was found in the candidate's affidavit, Iftekharuzzaman said.

exchanged views with him, while party activists sought prayers and support.

Campaign activities were also conducted in different areas of the city, including Sadar Road and the Launch Ghat areas.

According to party sources, Islami Andolan Bangladesh has fielded

# IAB promises justice, equal opportunities

FROM PAGE 2

the campaign, carrying the party's electoral symbol, the hand fan.

During the campaign, leaflets were distributed among the public, and the candidate interacted with people from different walks of life.

Many greeted Faizul and

candidates in 259 constituencies across the country. Of the 21 seats in the Barishal division, the party is contesting 20.

In the Barishal-5 constituency, Jamaat-e-Islami has extended its support to the Islami Andolan candidate.

According to party sources, Islami Andolan Bangladesh has fielded

21 candidates in 259 constituencies across the country. Of the 21 seats in the Barishal division, the party is contesting 20.

In the Barishal-5 constituency, Jamaat-e-Islami has extended its support to the Islami Andolan candidate.

According to party sources, Islami Andolan Bangladesh has fielded

21 candidates in 259 constituencies across the country. Of the 21 seats in the Barishal division, the party is contesting 20.

In the Barishal-5 constituency, Jamaat-e-Islami has extended its support to the Islami Andolan candidate.

According to party sources, Islami Andolan Bangladesh has fielded

21 candidates in 259 constituencies across the country. Of the 21 seats in the Barishal division, the party is contesting 20.

In the Barishal-5 constituency, Jamaat-e-Islami has extended its support to the Islami Andolan candidate.

According to party sources, Islami Andolan Bangladesh has fielded

21 candidates in 259 constituencies across the country. Of the 21 seats in the Barishal division, the party is contesting 20.

In the Barishal-5 constituency, Jamaat-e-Islami has extended its support to the Islami Andolan candidate.

According to party sources, Islami Andolan Bangladesh has fielded

21 candidates in 259 constituencies across the country. Of the 21 seats in the Barishal division, the party is contesting 20.

In the Barishal-5 constituency, Jamaat-e-Islami has extended its support to the Islami Andolan candidate.

According to party sources, Islami Andolan Bangladesh has fielded

21 candidates in 259 constituencies across the country. Of the 21 seats in the Barishal division, the party is contesting 20.

In the Barishal-5 constituency, Jamaat-e-Islami has extended its support to the Islami Andolan candidate.

According to party sources, Islami Andolan Bangladesh has fielded

21 candidates in 259 constituencies across the country. Of the 21 seats in the Barishal division, the party is contesting 20.

In the Barishal-5 constituency, Jamaat-e-Islami has extended its support to the Islami Andolan candidate.

According to party sources,