



A high-level delegation from Unesco visits The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka yesterday to express solidarity with the newspaper following the December 19 mob attacks and arson at its headquarters. Officials from Unesco headquarters in Paris and its Dhaka office toured the fire-damaged sections on the first and second floors.

Security, stability top voter concerns in Dhaka-10

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE and SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK



Voters want more than a power shift; they want an end to corruption, extortion and misrule.

MD JASHIM UDDIN SARKER
Jamaat candidate

If corruption, land grabbing, or extortion occurs, I ask the people to contact me directly.



SHEIKH RABIUL ALAM
BNP candidate

regarded as one of the capital's most "elite" constituencies.

The constituency encompasses vital landmarks, including Dhanmondi Lake, New Market, Jigatola, Tannery Mor, Sat Masjid Road, Green Road, Abahani Grounds, Square Hospital, Shukrabad, Sobhanbagh, Dhaka City College, and Dhaka College.

Despite the modern roads and high-

rises, Dhanmondi and Kalabagan frequently witness incidents of mugging and extortion.

Meanwhile, densely populated areas such as Hazaribagh, Jigatola and Kamrangirchar suffer from chronic waterlogging, gas shortages, and a lack of playgrounds.

Mohammad Kabir, who has been running a tea stall in different parts of Dhanmondi for nearly 30 years, said he has faced repeated evictions despite assurances from politicians about permanent space.

Driven by the need for a livelihood, he has set up his stall once again. Now a voter of Dhaka-10, his perspective is grounded in survival.

"The country has many problems, but I believe unemployment is the foremost," Kabir told The Daily Star. "Unemployment fuels crime, theft, mugging and drug abuse. The new government's top priority should be top priority."

The New Market area, a major commercial and educational hub, continues to face traffic congestion,

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Partho calls for unity, peaceful campaign

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Barishal



Bangladesh Jatiya Party Chairman Andaleeve Rahman Partho yesterday received a warm and enthusiastic welcome as he returned to his hometown Bhola for a public outreach programme after eight years.

Partho arrived in Barishal by road from Dhaka before travelling to Bhola by speedboat from Laharhat.

People lined the riverbank, roadsides and even rooftops to see and greet the Bhola-born leader.

Addressing the

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Plots afoot to undermine July uprising Says Mamunul

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Pirojpur



Chief of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Mamunul Haque yesterday alleged that a conspiracy is gradually taking shape to undermine the July uprising, which he said was achieved through the collective participation of students and general people.

He made the remarks while addressing an election rally of Jamaat-e-Islami at Pirojpur-2 constituency at Government Swarupkathi Model Secondary School field in Nesarabad upazila

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Professor Salimullah Khan speaks at the ninth episode of Itihas Adda, titled "Abu Mohamed Habibullah's Itihas Chorcha," held at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

ABM Habibullah redefined how Bengal's history is read

Say speakers at Star Itihas Adda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For decades, history in this region focused on dynasties, wars and imperial courts, but Professor ABM Habibullah shifted attention to trade, culture and the social lives of ordinary people in Bengal, said speakers at an event yesterday.

Academics and journalists made the remarks at the ninth episode of Itihas Adda, titled "Abu Mohamed Habibullah's Itihas Chorcha," held at The Daily Star Centre.

They said Habibullah's work challenged colonial interpretations of history and traced the independent roots of Bangalee Muslim identity.

Professor Salimullah Khan described Habibullah as a lone figure in the intellectual landscape of East Bengal, noting that he stood outside the dominant historical traditions centred on Calcutta or Aligarh.

He said Habibullah's scholarship directly countered the views of colonial-era historians, including Sir Jadunath Sarkar.

"Jadunath Sarkar believed that any significant achievement of the Muslim community in India took place only during the Mughal period," Salimullah said.

"Habibullah Sir rejected that idea. He argued that the Turko-Afghan period, or the Sultanate era, laid the real foundation of Muslim rule and civilisation in the subcontinent," he added.

Salimullah also explained Habibullah's reading of Bengal's long political independence from Delhi during the Sultanate period.

According to Habibullah, Bengal remained independent for more than two centuries because of its control over maritime trade routes dominated by Arab merchants.

"As long as the Arabs controlled the Indian Ocean, Bengal

maintained an independent connection with the wider world," Salimullah said.

"When the Portuguese defeated the Arabs and took control of the sea routes, that link was broken. Bengal was then forced to look inward towards Delhi and eventually lost its sovereignty to the Mughals," he added.

Salimullah further said Habibullah's method could be used to question later historical interpretations, including those of historian Richard Eaton on mass conversion in Bengal.

He said Islam in Bengal evolved from an urban, merchant-based religion into a rural social force during the independent Sultanate period, driven mainly by Sufis and missionaries rather than imperial authority.

Md Anisur Rahman, a researcher and teacher at Jagannath

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Dialogue key to navigating bilateral challenges

Says Fouzul at India's Republic Day event

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The challenges of the bilateral relationship between Bangladesh and India should be approached as opportunities for renewed dialogue, said Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Adviser Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan yesterday.

"Like any neighbour, our bilateral relations do have challenges, but our shared experience shows that we have overcome challenges in the past and renewed our partnership for the greater good of the people," he said at India's Republic Day event organised by the Indian High Commission at a city hotel.

The event was attended by politicians, diplomats, journalists, academics, business leaders and civil society members.

"Guided by goodwill, mutual trust and respect, Bangladesh aims to foster strong relations with its neighbouring countries, including India, and expects those relations to be based on fairness, mutual dignity and equity," Fouzul said.

"We are committed to advancing this relationship through a people-centric approach. Placing the welfare of our people at its core, I am confident that our ties will continue to grow," he said.

"Our shared geography reminds us that what unites us -- the rivers, the forests, the mountains, the music, the writings and the dreams of our people -- is more powerful than what divides us," he said.

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China-backed hospital to boost healthcare in north

TOHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

The government is set to build a 1,000-bed hospital in Nilphamari at a cost of Tk 2,459 crore, with most of the funds supposed to be coming from China, to improve access to modern healthcare in the northern region.

Officials said a project to establish the "Bangladesh China Friendship Hospital" is expected to be placed before the ECNEC meeting today.

The project, titled "Establishment of a 1,000-bed Bangladesh-China Friendship General Hospital to provide advanced medical services to the people of the northern region and neighbouring countries," is scheduled to be implemented from January this year to December 2029.

Of the total cost, China is supposed to contribute Tk 2,280 crore as investment and grant, while the government will fund the remaining amount.

Once completed, the facility will be the first 1,000-bed hospital located at a district headquarters, as all existing hospitals of similar

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Hindus will no longer have to live in fear: Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon



BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said that the party will ensure peace and security for all citizens if it is voted to power.

Fakhrul, also BNP's candidate from Thakurgaon-1 constituency, was addressing an election rally in Auliapur union of Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

He said the foremost responsibility of a BNP government would be to ensure peace and security for all.

Claiming that the BNP always stands with the Hindu community, he said there is fear and anxiety among Hindu voters, as many believe that if they vote for someone else, they may be harmed.

"Our Hindu brothers and sisters will no longer have to live in fear. This country is yours. You have the same rights as Muslims. It must be remembered that we are all equal citizens of the same country," he also said.

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