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Sir Mark Tully
(1935-2026)

A truth teller of 1971

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Veteran British journalist Sir Mark Tully, widely recognised in Bangladesh for his truthful depiction of atrocities during the Liberation War of 1971, passed away at a hospital in India yesterday. He was 90.

Tully, known to millions as the broadcaster's "voice of India", covered defining moments across the subcontinent.

"Sir Mark opened India to the world through his reporting, bringing the vibrancy and diversity of the country to audiences in the UK and around the world," BBC News interim chief Jonathan Munro said in a statement.

In 2012, Bangladesh named him a Foreign Friend of Bangladesh for his role in exposing the true face of the Liberation

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A screengrab from a video obtained by Reuters shows a law enforcement officer pinning down a man identified as Alex Pretti, before he was fatally shot when federal agents were trying to detain him in Minneapolis, Minnesota, US, on Saturday. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: REUTERS

EC ready to deliver free, fair polls

CEC tells diplomats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin yesterday assured Dhaka-based foreign diplomats that transparency would be ensured at all stages of the February 12 general election and referendum.

To that end, the Election Commission (EC) has undertaken comprehensive preparations, he said at a briefing arranged by the commission at a city hotel to apprise diplomats of the overall election readiness.

Heads of 41 diplomatic missions, representatives of 11 UN agencies in Bangladesh, and senior government officials attended the closed-door briefing in the morning.

According to an EC statement, the CEC said all election materials were ready and ballot paper printing was underway. Legal and administrative measures have been put in place to resolve election-related complaints and disputes.

He added that nationwide awareness campaigns were being conducted to boost voter turnout, alongside ongoing training programmes for election officials and staff.

Highlighting the government's

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Three candidates omit UK assets, citizenship in affidavits

ZYMA ISLAM

Several candidates in the upcoming parliamentary election have withheld information about significant overseas assets and, in some cases, foreign citizenship from their mandatory affidavits, official filings and UK corporate records show.

The discrepancies involve BNP and Gono Odhikar Parishad nominees, who are listed as British nationals or directors of UK-based companies in British corporate records, despite declaring otherwise to the Election Commission.

The EC has cleared their candidacies.

A total of 21 candidates disclosed in their affidavits that they had acquired and later renounced foreign citizenship.

Zahidur Rahman, a Gono Odhikar Parishad candidate for Sylhet-6, made no mention in his affidavit of 11 companies in the United Kingdom with which he is associated. Two of these are trusts – Bangladesh Probashi Odhikar Parishad UK Ltd and Haji Aftab Ali Foundation Trust Ltd.

Zahidur holds shares ranging from 12.5 percent to 100 percent in seven of the companies.

In his affidavit, he declared earning Tk 29.7 lakh annually in rent from overseas properties and Tk 1.32 crore from his profession.

He stated that he filed for forfeiture of his British citizenship on December 28, 2025.

"I have absolutely nothing to hide. I did not mention these companies because I have not taken out any dividends from these companies," Rahman told The Daily Star. "Until the money is taken out or paid as dividends, it belongs to the companies."

AKM Quamruzzaman, BNP's candidate for Dinajpur-5, did not disclose a UK-based company where he serves as a director.

The real estate firm, Coombe Hill Development Ltd, appointed Quamruzzaman as a director on February 12, 2021.

The company has total assets worth £1.41 million, and Quamruzzaman is its sole director. It is wholly owned by Avox Ltd, an offshore entity based in the United Arab Emirates.

In his affidavit, Quamruzzaman mentioned only his law chamber in London, valuing it at Tk 50 lakh.

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Bagerhat BCL leader's wife, child laid to rest

ASK says denying him parole a rights violation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The wife of Bangladesh Chhatra League leader and their nine-month-old child were laid to rest in Bagerhat early yesterday.

Following their namaz-e-janaza, the burials took place at her family graveyard in Sabekdanga village of Sadar upazila around 12:00am.

Kaniz Suborna Swarnali, 22, was the wife of Jewel Hasan, alias Saddam, president of the banned student organisation Chhatra League's Bagerhat Sadar upazila unit. Saddam is currently imprisoned at Jashore Central Jail.

Earlier yesterday, Saddam was allowed to see his wife and infant for the last time under police supervision at the jail gate as their bodies were brought there in an ambulance.

According to jail authorities, six family members were permitted to be present at the jail gate area during the brief farewell, which took place around 7:30pm.

Family members said they had applied for his release on parole but then had to arrange for the bodies to be taken to the

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MANIFESTO EXPECTATIONS

With the national election just 17 days away, political parties are finalising their manifestos. The Daily Star spoke to serving and ex-civil servants to identify the pressing issues that should top the agenda for parties.

End partisan influence in bureaucracy

BAHARAM KHAN


In their election manifestos, political parties should clearly commit to reforming public administration, leaving no scope for partisan loyalty in the bureaucracy, say former and serving government officials.

The parties should also outline how they will overhaul the recruitment process and implement a merit-based pay structure if they are voted to power. Efficiency and integrity should be the main criteria for promotion and posting, they say.


"Qualified and competent people must be appointed at all levels. Honesty and efficiency, not partisan loyalty, should be the criteria for appointing secretaries and heads of agencies as well as officials in the Public Service Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the Election Commission," said former secretary Abdul Awal Mazumder.

Terming the current state of the civil service deplorable, he said no other civil service in Asia is performing so poorly. Political parties have the most important


SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT GOVT




Overhaul recruitment process to ensure merit-based entry




Make efficiency, integrity basis for postings, promotions




Appoint qualified, competent people to top positions



Address the weak, corruption-prone legal framework



Enforce zero tolerance for corruption, disorder in admin



Strike a balance of power between MPs, upazila chairmen

role in overcoming this situation, and in their election manifestos, they should make commitments to play their due part.

Mazumder, also former rector of Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre, said that training institutions require major restructuring, and officers with a strong interest in training should be given priority for leadership roles.

Stressing the need for legal reforms, writer and former additional secretary Firoz Mia said this is the first requirement for restoring transparency

and accountability in public administration.

The legal framework for public administration was inherently weak and was further undermined during the tenure of the previous government. If the next government wants to restore discipline in the administration, it must start with legal reform, he noted.

The existing Government Service Act and related rules leave ample scope for corruption. At present, many officials do not think twice before indulging in corruption, knowing that their jobs won't be

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JULY UPRISING

Noab did not provide journo with protective gear: Shafiqul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) did not provide protective gear to journalists during the July uprising, claimed Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam yesterday.

"Six journalists lost their lives during the 2024 mass uprising. They were brutally killed. This happened because not a single journalist was provided with protective equipment," he said at a programme at the Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) in the capital.

He claimed that those reporting from the frontlines had no helmets, vests or goggles and were left exposed to heavy tear gas.

"Noab often makes big statements but does not provide [protective] equipment for even a single journalist. A few days ago, they organised a big convention, yet no one spoke about protective equipment for journalists."

He urged journalists to hold their employers accountable, saying those who assign reporters to cover hostile events bear significant responsibility.

"The government fails in many areas, and the media rightly reports that. But employers also have responsibilities, and journalists should speak out about how much those responsibilities are being fulfilled."

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PHOTO: SAFF

40 hurt in pre-polls violence

Supporters of BNP, rebel, Jamaat candidates involved

STAR REPORT

At least 40 people were injured yesterday in clashes involving activists of BNP, its rebel candidates, and Jamaat-e-Islami over election campaigning in Mymensingh, Lalmonirhat, and Chuadanga.

In Mymensingh, around 20 people were injured as supporters of BNP and rebel candidates clashed in Bhaluka (Mymensingh-11).

According to police, tensions escalated in the evening when Mohammad Morshed Alam, an expelled BNP joint convener and independent candidate, went door-to-door campaigning in the Batajhor area. At one point, his supporters clashed with those of BNP nominee Fakhar Uddin Ahmed.

Quoting locals, Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun, additional superintendent of Mymensingh police (admin), said chases and counter-chases quickly turned into violent clashes. Several offices belonging to both groups were vandalised.

Later, the BNP upazila office in the bus stand area of Bhaluka municipality was attacked, and several motorcycles were damaged. The office of Adi Khan (Shakil), member secretary of the municipal unit Chhatra Dal, and a Jubo Dal office were attacked and set on fire. Morshed Alam's office was also torched, locals said.

At least seven injured people were hospitalised.

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