



ELECTION EXPENSES Affidavits say Tk 396cr, but is that the real cost?

Experts question credibility of disclosures, cite clash with ground reality

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

All 1,981 candidates contesting the upcoming February 12 polls have declared their election expenditures in their affidavits, bringing the combined total to a little under Tk 400 crore.

Experts, however, say the figure is far from realistic and does not reflect the true costs of poll campaigns.

According to Transparency International Bangladesh's (TIB) "Know Your Candidate" portal, BNP candidates plan to largely meet their expenses from personal funds, 56 percent coming from their own pockets.

In contrast, Jamaat-e-Islami reported that 58 percent of its campaign budget will be financed through grants and donations, including party funds. The National Citizen Party stated that 62 percent of its election spending will rely on grants and donations.

Across all parties, the total expenditure amounts to Tk 396 crore.

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PARTY-WISE BREAKDOWN

| | |
|--|------------|
| BNP | Tk 115.4cr |
| Jamaat | Tk 66.3cr |
| Jatiya Party | Tk 30.7cr |
| Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) | Tk 29cr |
| Gono Adhikar Parishad (GAP) | Tk 12.3cr |
| National Citizen Party (NCP) | Tk 11.7cr |
| Independent candidates will spend a total of | Tk 53cr |



SOURCES OF FUND

- Grant or donation
- Loan
- Personal fund
- Party fund

NUMBER OF CANDIDATES

| | |
|--------|-----|
| BNP | 288 |
| Jamaat | 224 |
| JP | 192 |
| IAB | 253 |
| GAP | 90 |
| NCP | 32 |



"They are just mocking us.... We all know that even securing a nomination requires crores."

Badiul Alam Majumder, chief of the now-defunct Electoral Reform Commission.

Under the RPD, a candidate is allowed to spend Tk 10 per voter or up to Tk 25 lakh in total.

Candidates are required to submit a detailed return of the election expenses to the Returning Officer within 30 days of the polls.

According to a TIB study on the 2024 polls, the average expenditure of each candidate was Tk 1.57 crore -- six times higher than the EC's authorised limit.



In the run-up to February 12 polls, Shakeel Anwar visits outlying constituencies to hear directly from voters about their hopes, demands and expectations.



Sharsha: waiting for the border to breathe again

SHAKEEL ANWAR, from Sharsha, Jashore

As part of my series on voices from the ground ahead of the February 12 elections, I travelled to Sharsha, a remote frontier constituency in Jashore district, where politics is measured less in slogans than in prices, volumes and the daily pulse of the border, on Sunday.

Relations between Bangladesh and India have been in free fall since the collapse of the Hasina government in August 2024.

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MORE CAMPAIGN COVERAGE ON PAGE 2

A party is now echoing the language of a fascist

Says Tarique

SAJJAD HOSSAIN from Mymensingh

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, hinting at Jamaat, asked why its two leaders stayed in the BNP-led alliance government if that government was corrupt, as being claimed by the party now.

At an election rally in Mymensingh city yesterday, he said the party is criticising BNP using the same language once used by a fascist, who later fled the country.

"They are speaking against BNP in the same way the fascist used to speak. It too is now claiming that the BNP was the champion of corruption," the party chief told the gathering at the Circuit House ground.

"So, my question is, from 2001 to 2006, didn't they also have two members in the BNP-led government? They did. So, if the BNP was really that bad, why didn't the two step down?"

Tarique said, "They did not resign ... because they knew very well that Khaleda Zia was cracking down on corruption with a firm hand."

He added that international statistics show Bangladesh began to diminish the level of corruption during Khaleda's tenure, starting in 2001.

"...The two members stayed in the government from the first day to the last day ... proving that how big a lie they are now telling."

From 2001-2006, Jamaat then chief Motiur Rahman Nizami and secretary general Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid served as ministers

in the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

Tarique's Mymensingh trip was his first in 22 years. He reached the city by road from Dhaka around 3:30pm. His motorcade faced heavy congestion as security personnel struggled to clear the crowd and escort the vehicles to the rally venue.

His wife, Zubaida Rahman, accompanied him on the stage.

After making his way through the crowd, Tarique went to the stage at 4:03pm, where he met families of freedom fighters and those killed or injured during the July uprising.

Calling on party leaders and activists to remain vigilant on election day, Tarique asked them to perform Tahajjud prayers, offer Fajr prayers in front of polling centres, and then cast their votes.

"Why did I say this? It has been many years since we got the chance to vote, hasn't it? Because we did not get the chance to vote before, many people took away our voting rights in different ways. This time, we must stay alert so that no one can steal our votes."

A large number of activists gathered to catch a glimpse of him, while some climbed nearby trees to watch and listen to his speech.

Since the morning, party leaders and activists started arriving at the venue from Sherpur, Jamalpur, Netrakona, Mymensingh, and

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'We seek no conflict, but will defend ourselves'

Says Shafiqur

STAR REPORT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said the party did not seek to provoke conflict but warned that if attacked, they would retaliate.

"We do not want to provoke conflict by stepping on anyone's toes, but if someone comes to attack us, we will not let them go."

He made the remarks while addressing an election rally at the Khulna Circuit House ground yesterday.

He alleged that a "so-called friendly" political organisation was distributing family cards on one hand while assaulting women on the other.

"I call upon those who have disrespected mothers to offer an apology. Place your trust in the people's verdict. Those who failed to do so in the past did not meet a good end."

Earlier in the day, Shafiqur addressed a rally at the Eidgah ground in Jashore, where he spoke of ending what he described as dynasty-based politics and building a new political culture in the country.

"If Jamaat comes to power, there will be no dynasty politics in Bangladesh."

Hinting at the BNP, he said parties that failed to control their own activists would not be able to govern the country. "Restore discipline within your party first. If you need our cooperation, we will provide it. We stand for truth, justice and a new Bangladesh."

Referring to the victories of Jamaat-backed Chhatra Shibir candidates in the recent student union elections at public universities, Shafiqur said young voters had delivered their verdict in favour of justice and a new Bangladesh.



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Insane bounty for bureaucrats

Proposed pay hike leaves heavy burden for next govt; experts brand the move reckless

AHSAN HABIB

A proposed pay hike of as much as 142 percent for civil servants clashes with the government's austerity measures adopted after the 2024 uprising.

On the one hand, the interim government is engaged in belt-tightening, slashing development projects and squeezing the money supply to tame persistent inflation. On the other hand, a state-appointed commission has just recommended a mind-boggling pay rise for civil servants that would double the government's recurring wage bill. For a treasury already straining under the weight of debt and missed revenue targets, the proposal looks like a fiscal landmine waiting to explode (if implemented).

NEWS ANALYSIS

The rationale behind the Ninth National Pay Commission's report, submitted last week by former finance secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, is not completely unwarranted. Civil servants have not seen a pay revision in a decade, during which their purchasing power has been eroded by inflation.

However, the mathematical reality is unforgiving. Implementing the new pay structure will require an additional Tk 1.06 lakh crore annually. This is on top of the Tk 1.31 lakh crore the state already spends on 14 lakh employees and nine lakh pensioners.

To put this largesse into perspective, the proposed increase alone is roughly 2.5 times the entire national

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Election stakes, coalition battles, and the AL issue

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Why women are being shut out of politics

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Iran wants talks: Trump

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L-R: Addressing a campaign rally at the Circuit House grounds in Mymensingh, BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday called on supporters to remain vigilant at polling centres and ensure that no votes are stolen; Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Dr Shafiqur Rahman told supporters at a rally at the Circuit House grounds in Khulna that, if elected, his party would bring an end to dynasty politics.

PHOTOS: STAR, COLLECTED



Leadership change without change in policy futile: IAB chief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A change in leadership without a change in policy will not bring the desired outcome for the people, said Multi Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, ameer of Islami Andolan Bangladesh.

"Although the July mass uprising created an opportunity to change old policies and arrangements, political parties are instead working to preserve entrenched vested interests," he said while addressing a rally at the Fatema Halim High School ground in Tangail's Kalihati.



"Islami Andolan Bangladesh is fighting single-handedly against the old system," he added.

The IAB chief, also known as Charmonai pir, also addressed rallies in Tangail Sadar and Delduar from noon to evening yesterday.

At the Kalihati rally, presided over by Muhammad Ali Amzad Hossain, the party's candidate for Tangail 4, Rezaul Karim urged people to stand by Islami Andolan in its movement.

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'Vote for justice, defeat the looters' Says Asif Mahmud

STAR REPORT

National Citizen Party Spokesman Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan yesterday urged voters to elect candidates from the 11-party alliance to build a Bangladesh based on equality, human dignity, non-discrimination and justice.

"On February 12, people will determine the nation's future and elect the rightful leadership - it will be a historical day for Bangladesh," he said while addressing election rallies in Senbagh upazila of Noakhali and at Cumilla Town Hall ground. Bangladesh suffered under "Sheikh Hasina's fascism" for 17 years, and the country is witnessing the same pattern from a party even without it coming to power, Asif said.

Pointing figure at BNP, he said a party is trying to bring loan defaulters to power to loot public money.

Recalling the July uprising, he said around 1,400 students and low-income working people had lost their lives in the struggle against "fascism", while thousands of mothers had lost their children in the fight for a fascism-free Bangladesh.

He further alleged that although the party frequently speaks of reform at rallies, its top leadership has never publicly addressed reform or a referendum.

Mentioning the attack on two NCP candidates - Ariful Islam Adeb of Dhaka-18 and Nasiruddin Patwary of Dhaka-8 - Asif said: "If a fair election environment is not ensured, the people will defeat them at the ballot box. The people of Bangladesh will not give any mandate to terrorists, attackers, extortionists or bank looters."

At the Cumilla rally, he assured of creating Cumilla a division if the 11-party alliance is voted to power.

ELECTORAL CODE 144 breaches, Tk 9.05 lakh in fines so far

EC says polls results may come late night or next day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 144 violations of the electoral code of conduct were recorded across 128 constituencies nationwide between January 6 and January 24 ahead of the upcoming February 12 election, the Election Commission said yesterday.

So far, 94 cases have been filed, leading to fines amounting to a total of around Tk 9.055 lakh.

Meanwhile, the EC said results of the national election and referendum may be announced late that night or the following day.

Sharing the updates with reporters at the EC headquarters in the capital's Agargaon, Election Commissioner Anwarul Islam Sarkar said, "Compared to past elections, I would not say that the code of conduct has been enforced 100 percent this time. But if you go out on the streets, fields, or marketplaces, you will understand why things look so clean and orderly.... Candidates and parties made commitments along with their nomination papers, and what we are seeing is a reflection of those."

He further said that returning officers and officials deployed in the field are carrying out awareness and motivational activities.

"This country has seen many elections.... We believe the environment this time has been the best so far."

Asked how long it may take to get the results, he said, "At most, it may take until the very late hours of the night or the following day.... A referendum has been added alongside the election. Taking into account the highest level of caution and manpower requirements, we are making efforts to ensure the results are published within the desired timeframe."

About the demands submitted to the EC to ban the Jatiya Party while the party is contesting the election, Anwarul said, "We have not received any such order to ban any party. Therefore, all registered parties and those who have received nominations will contest the election."

He added that the commission has already taken necessary measures to address the allegations of attacks made by Jamaat-e-Islami and the National Citizen Party.

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Eggs hurled at Patwary

Nahid blames Mirza Abbas; BNP denies allegations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eggs were hurled at Dhaka-8 candidate Nasiruddin Patwary, also National Citizen Party chief coordinator, while he was attending an event at the Habibullah Bahar College in the capital.

NCP leaders claimed that the incident took place around noon when Patwary went to the college upon invitation to attend a pitha (cake) festival.



Hours later, speaking at a press conference in the Fakirapool area, NCP Convener Nahid Islam alleged that the attack was carried out "on the instructions of Mirza Abbas, with the consent of Tarique Rahman".

He also claimed that identified cadres of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal carried out the attack.

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24 hurt in pre-polls clashes in 5 districts

STAR REPORT

At least 24 people have been injured in clashes between political activists during electioneering in five districts since Monday night.

Most of the clashes occurred between activists of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

In Netrakona, at least seven people were injured in a clash between supporters of BNP's Netrakona-3 candidate Islam Hilali, the party's district unit general secretary, and its

rebel candidate Md Delwar Hossain Bhuiyan, former vice-president of the same unit, yesterday.

The clash occurred in Jalli Purba Para village under Kendua upazila when both the groups faced off while campaigning around 2:30pm, said Md Mehdi Maksud, officer-in-charge of Kendua Police Station.

In Shariatpur's Naria upazila, five were injured in the Bhojeshwar Bus Stand area yesterday afternoon after a Jamaat activist published a Facebook

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Only 'yes' can bring change claim is 'misleading'

Says Brac ED Asif Saleh on referendum

STAR REPORT

Brac Executive Director Asif Saleh yesterday said the government's claim that change will come only if people vote "yes" in the referendum is "misleading".

In a Facebook post, he also raised concerns about the referendum process, its transparency and

the haste with which it is being conducted.

"Did you know that in this referendum you are also voting to separate Cumilla and Faridpur into different divisions? I didn't know. Not just me, everyone from my house help to my barrister friend is confused about this referendum," he wrote.

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ANFREL deploys 22 teams for polls monitoring

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) yesterday launched its International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) for the upcoming 13th parliamentary elections and the referendum.

The mission, which began yesterday, will continue until February 17, ANFREL said in a statement.

As part of the IEOM, ANFREL will deploy 22 international observer

teams, supported by two electoral analysts and a mission management team, across all eight divisions of the country.

The teams will cover around 71 percent of Bangladesh's 64 districts.

According to ANFREL, the mission will observe the campaign environment and broader political climate, election-related violence and disputes, participation and inclusion of vulnerable groups,

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Affidavits say Tk 396cr, but is that the real cost?

FROM PAGE 1

Of the total, BNP has declared Tk 115.4 crore spending for its 288 candidates, Jamaat Tk 66.3 crore for 224 candidates, Jatiya Party Tk 30.8 crore for 192 candidates, Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) Tk 29 crore for 253 candidates, Gono Odhikar Parishad Tk 12.3 crore for 90 candidates, and NCP declared the lowest - Tk 11.7 crore for 32 candidates.

Independent candidates together will spend a total of Tk 53 crore.

TIB's Outreach and Communication Director Mohammad Tauhidul Islam said they had compiled the information provided by candidates in their affidavits and elaborated that each political party's funding is also counted as a grant or donation.

"Similarly, when a supporter or well-wisher voluntarily contributes money to the party, it also falls under the category of grants or donations. In many cases, candidates also borrow from relatives or close acquaintances to cover expenses."

According to the TIB portal, BNP candidates announced that of the total funding, Tk 44.2 crore will come from donations or grants, Tk 6.8 crore from loans, and Tk 64.4 crore from the party's own funds.

Jamaat candidates declared that Tk 38.6 crore will come from donations and grants, Tk 10 crore from loans, and Tk 17.7 crore from its funds.

Jatiya Party candidates will get Tk 6.1 crore from grants and donations, Tk 6.9 crore from loans, and Tk 17.8 crore from own funds.

IAB candidates will get Tk 16.7 crore from grants or donations, Tk 1.6 crore from loans, and Tk 10.7 crore from its funds.

Gono Odhikar Parishad candidates will use Tk 2.8 crore from grants and donations, Tk 2.6 crore from loans, and Tk 6.9 crore from own funds.

NCP candidates will get Tk 7.3 crore from grants and donations, Tk 2.2 crore from loans, and the same amount from party funds.

The Representation of the People Order, 1972 allows a candidate to spend Tk 10 per voter, up to a maximum of Tk 25 lakh, based on the number of voters in the constituency.

In addition, candidates are required to submit a detailed return of their election expenses to the Returning Officer concerned within 30 days of the polls.

Asked about the affidavit declarations, polls expert and chief of the now-defunct Election Reform Commission, Badiul Alam Majumdar, smiled. "They are just mocking us... We all know that even securing a nomination requires candidates to spend several crores."

other stakeholders, while two focused group discussions were held.

Researchers also gathered data from secondary sources, including government publications, prominent international organisations, and academic literature examining the political economy of Bangladesh.

During the campaign phase, candidates need to spend Tk 3 crore to Tk 5 crore or more, depending on the constituency and level of competition.

PARTY WISE ELECTION EXPENSES (IN CRORE TAKA)

| PARTY | GRANTS/DONATIONS | LOANS | PERSONAL FUNDS | TOTAL |
|---------------------------|------------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| BNP | 44.2 | 6.8 | 64.4 | 115.4 |
| Jamaat | 38.6 | 10 | 17.7 | 66.3 |
| Jatiya Party | 6.1 | 6.9 | 17.8 | 30.7 |
| Islami Andolan Bangladesh | 16.7 | 1.6 | 10.7 | 29.0 |
| Gono Adhikar Parishad | 2.8 | 2.6 | 6.9 | 12.3 |
| NCP | 7.3 | 2.2 | 2.2 | 11.7 |

He added that candidates never keep their expenses within the ceiling.

According to a February 2025 report titled "The cost of politics in Bangladesh" by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, elections in Bangladesh are an expensive affair, with candidates spending between Tk 5-10 crore to secure nominations and run their campaigns.

The rising costs of electioneering have created barriers for many aspiring politicians, particularly those from less affluent backgrounds and marginalised communities, including women, the report said.

The research for the report was conducted between July and December 2024. As many as 25 in-depth key informant interviews were conducted with former members of parliament, election officials, and

They also have to spend money on polling day to secure votes. A minimum of Tk 50 lakh was spent on average per candidate on election day, according to the report.

"Vote buying" was a feature of all 2024 polls, with payments per vote ranging from Tk 1,000 to Tk 5,000.

Even after winning the election, some candidates need to spend another Tk 4-5 lakh to expedite administrative processes, such as the official publication of election results or other necessary documentation.

According to a TIB study on the 2024 election, the average expenditure of each candidate from before the announcement of the schedule until voting day was Tk 1.57 crore - six times higher than the limit authorised by the Election Commission (maximum Tk 25 lakh

per candidate). The study covered 50 seats.

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said, "Considering the overall activities and spending pattern of the parties, it can reasonably be assumed that they have already crossed the prescribed limits long ago."

He added, "Nothing will change much unless our political leaders reform themselves and their parties. In the meantime, at least some visible changes could be expected if three key relevant oversight institutions - EC, ACC [Anti-Corruption Commission] and NBR [National Board of Revenue] - had the courage and commitment to play their due roles to ensure accountability for non-compliance."

"For the EC, this means questioning the validity of candidacy in cases of campaign overspending or discrepancies between affidavit disclosures and reality; for the NBR, ensuring accountability for tax evasion reflected in affidavit data and campaign expenses; and for the ACC, acting against corruption, including the accumulation of wealth and income beyond legitimate means."

Contacted by The Daily Star yesterday, a top EC official admitted that candidates spend more than they declare in their affidavits.

"They are required to maintain a separate bank account for campaign expenses. In practice, however, much of the financial flow often bypasses formal banking channels. Large sums of money - sometimes in crores - are exchanged informally, making it extremely difficult to detect or prove instances of bribery or illicit transactions."

Officials acknowledge that scrutiny of these accounts remains a major challenge.

Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmani Masud said they will examine the submitted accounts carefully. "If black money is used to buy votes, it undermines the people's free will and distorts the democratic process.... We will strengthen scrutiny of expenditure reports for the upcoming polls."

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Palestinian ambassador condemns attack on Star

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Palestinian Ambassador to Dhaka Yousef SY Ramadan has strongly condemned the recent attacks, vandalism and arson at the office of The Daily Star in Dhaka. He also expressed solidarity with the newspaper and support for independent media.

The ambassador made the remarks yesterday during a visit to The Daily Star Centre, which was vandalised, looted and set on fire in the early hours of December 19.

He underscored the need to ensure the safety and security of journalists and media organisations.

Ramadan also praised The Daily Star for its extensive coverage of Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza since October 2023, when Israel launched its offensive on the enclave.

He expressed deep appreciation for the newspaper's two special editions on Gaza, as well as its special focus on journalists killed while covering the Israeli offensive.



Palestinian Ambassador to Bangladesh Yousef SY Ramadan visited The Daily Star Centre yesterday to express solidarity with the newspaper following the mob attacks and arson at its office on December 19. PHOTO: STAR

EC must ensure gender-sensitive polls environment

Say speakers at conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women's rights activists yesterday urged the Election Commission to ensure adequate security and a gender-sensitive environment ahead of the upcoming election, saying this was necessary so that all citizens, regardless of gender, religion, ethnicity or social status, can freely exercise their voting rights.

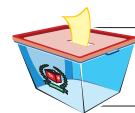
The demands were made at a press conference organised by the Samajik Protirodh Committee at the Jatiya Press Club. The platform comprises 71 women's, human rights and development organisations. Speakers also read out a memorandum addressed to the chief election commissioner.

In her welcome speech, Fauzia Moslem, president of the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said the very low number of women candidates in the election was "simply unacceptable".

She said the women's movement has long been demanding meaningful representation in parliament, including increasing reserved seats for women, reforming the voting process for those seats and ensuring a higher number of women candidates nominated by political parties.

Referring to nomination data, Fauzia said women

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FEBRUARY 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-4

Neglect, mounting woes and renewed pledges

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

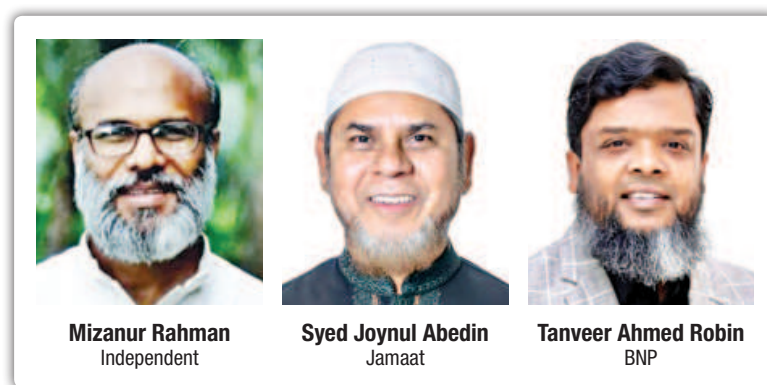
In the afternoon, a group of tired workers and locals were sipping tea at a roadside stall in front of an iron factory in the Jalalabad area of Muradpur under Kadamtali in the capital.

Nearby at the entry point of the Mawa Expressway in Jurain, Dhaka-4 candidate Mizanur Rahman — contesting independently with the "Football" symbol — was campaigning door to door.

Before he could introduce himself, people at the tea stall burst into excitement. "Mizan Bhai, we know you! We want honest people like you to build a new Bangladesh," they shouted.

Surprised, Mizanur asked how they recognised him.

Locals recalled his long record



of activism, particularly his widely known protest against then-Wasa managing director Taqsem A Khan, when he attempted to force-feed him contaminated Wasa water.

Mizanur then asked the crowd a pointed question — "Suppose you vote for me because you think I am honest. I will be in power for five years. What

if I turn dishonest after being elected? What if I fail to keep my promises? What will you do then?"

The crowd hesitated. Mizanur answered himself: "Then you must stand against me. That is your responsibility. You must do it to claim your rights."

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E-learning to be introduced in 149 CHT schools

CA launches programme

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday inaugurated an e-learning programme in 12 schools across the three hill districts in Chattogram.

He virtually launched the programme from the state guest house Jamuna around noon.

The programme will be rolled out in phases across 149 selected primary and secondary schools in the three hill districts.

It was launched at Rani Dayamoyee High

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'Govt's last-minute deals risk long-term harm'

Says Gonotantrik Odhikar Committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonotantrik Odhikar Committee yesterday alleged that the interim government is secretly moving to sign a concession agreement with DP World for the operation of the New Mooring Container Terminal at Chattogram Port just 12 days before the national election.

The civic platform also claimed that the government is pursuing a trade agreement with Japan only six days before the polls.

"After the election schedule is announced, the responsibility of the government is to organise a free and fair election. Beyond routine

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Safeguard voting rights in CHT

Speakers urge govt, EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The CHT Peace Accord Implementation Movement yesterday alleged that most indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region are deprived of exercising their voting rights as polling centres are often located far from their residences in remote areas.

The ban on transport 48 hours before and after voting further makes it difficult for them to reach the polling centres and cast their votes, the platform said, adding that many indigenous voters are discouraged from casting their votes as they face unnecessary searches and harassment by security forces while going to polling centres.

The platform urged the interim government and the Election Commission to ensure voting rights

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Keep foreign policy above party lines

Say analysts at CGS dialogue

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

National consensus among political parties and a strong public mandate for the government in power are imperative to maintaining a strong foreign policy amid complex geopolitical realities, foreign policy analysts said at a dialogue yesterday.

They said Bangladesh faces multiple challenges, including those related to LDC graduation this year and maintaining a balance with global powers.

The government, whichever comes through the February 12 election, has to focus on strengthening the domestic economy by drawing foreign investment, creating jobs at home and abroad, and strengthening the armed forces for deterrence, they added.

The Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) organised the event on foreign policy at the CIRDAP Auditorium. CGS President Zillur Rahman moderated the event.

Analysts said Bangladesh's exports rely mostly on Western countries, while China, Japan and India supported some of the country's major infrastructure projects. The Middle East and Southeast Asian countries, they said, are important for overseas jobs.

Former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury said Bangladesh's relations with foreign countries should be interest-based.

"To attract foreign investment, Bangladesh must ensure a suitable environment for partner countries. This will also contribute to strengthening the nation's military and defence capabilities," he said.

Amena Mohsin, former professor of International Relations at Dhaka University, said the foreign ministry

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Two human hauliers carrying multiple passengers ply the wrong side of Buriganga Bridge-1 yesterday. Despite being barred from the route, these light vehicles continue to risk their own safety and that of their passengers, defying the law. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Next govt must back the anti-tobacco law amendment

2 advisers slam attempt to block ordinance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two interim government advisers yesterday strongly criticised tobacco companies, accusing them of exerting intense pressure to block the latest amendment to the anti-tobacco law and of using "notorious" tactics to promote tobacco products.

They said the Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 has been approved with stricter provisions to curb tobacco use, although it will require endorsement by the next parliament.

Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum and Fisheries and Livestock Adviser Farida Akhter made the remarks at a views exchange meeting at the CIRDAP auditorium in the capital. The meeting was organised by the National Tobacco Control Cell of the health ministry.

The advisory council approved the ordinance on December 26 last year, expanding the definition of tobacco products and introducing new measures

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'Fascists have no supporters left'

Home adviser rejects any impact of Hasina's statements

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Adviser Lt Gen (ret) Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday said there is "no doubt" over the 13th national election being held, insisting it cannot be destabilised by ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina's messages from abroad.

He further claimed that the fascists have no supporters left in the country.

Jahangir made the remarks while briefing reporters after the graduation parade of the 63rd batch of female prison guards at the Prison Training Centre in Gazipur's Kashimpur prison campus.

The home adviser said any audio message from Hasina, now staying in India, would have no impact on the election.

He claimed that those who supported them before no longer stand with them, and that many supporters have left the country and taken refuge abroad.

Earlier in the day, addressing the ceremony as the chief guest, Jahangir said ensuring prisoners' security must go hand in hand with safeguarding their rights.

He stressed the need for a transparent, accountable, and non-discriminatory prison administration.

After inspecting the parade, the adviser distributed awards among the best-performing female prison guards. Inspector General of Prisons Brig Gen Syed Md Motahar Hossain and other officials were present at the briefing.

Army chief reviews troops on polls duty

BSS, Dhaka

Army chief General Waker-Uz Zaman yesterday reviewed troops deployed

"in aid of civil power" in the northwestern Rajshahi and Rangpur regions, giving them directives and exchanging views with civil administration officials over the elections, said an ISPR statement.

The army chief joined two meetings at Rangpur Circuit House and the Infantry Regimental Centre in Rajshahi with senior military officers and divisional and district-level civil officials.

The meetings discussed issues of coordination and security management to hold the polls in a peaceful, neutral and fair manner.



Fishermen are rushing to catch fish, stretching seine nets across the water and pulling the catch to the shore using boats. They are doing this as canals and wetlands in various upazilas of Rajshahi are slowly drying up. The photo was taken from a wetland in Mohanpur upazila recently.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

US envoy visits Ctg, highlights trade ties

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador Brent Christensen has reinforced economic cooperation

and bilateral ties in meetings with business and civil society leaders during his first visit to Chattogram on January 26-27.

At Chattogram Port, he marked the arrival of nearly 60,000 tonnes of US wheat, underscoring burgeoning trade between American farmers and Bangladeshi agricultural importers, according to a statement of the US embassy in Dhaka.

He then met US agricultural commodity importers to highlight the quality of American agricultural products and discuss trade and shipping challenges.



Next govt must back

FROM PAGE 3

to regulate emerging tobacco items.

Farida Akhter said the ordinance was placed before the council in November 2024 but was initially delayed over concerns that it might reduce revenue.

She alleged that tobacco companies approached all advisers to persuade them not to approve the ordinance or to remain silent.

"Tobacco companies use notorious tactics to lure people into addiction. They are planning to kill people." "What is the rationale for the government holding shares in companies that are killing people?" she asked.

Health Adviser Nurjahan Begum said even the chief adviser faced both written and unwritten pressure over the ordinance but remained firm.

On the proposed nicotine pouch factory,

she said officials visited the site and found two sheds had already been built. "We have instructed them to remove the sheds. Without environmental clearance, the factory cannot be set up."

She directed authorities to form a committee to draft the rules under the ordinance and finalise them within the interim government's tenure.

Sheikh Momena Moni, additional secretary of the health ministry, said Bangladesh records 564 tobacco-related deaths daily.

While the government earns Tk 40,000 crore in tobacco revenue, tobacco consumption and production cost the country Tk 87,000 crore annually, she said.

Health Secretary Saidur Rahman and WHO Representative Ahmed Jamsheed Mohamed also spoke.

Govt's last-minute

FROM PAGE 3

administrative work, such a government has neither the authority nor the justification to undertake policy-making decisions," said a statement issued by the committee.

"Ignoring all logic, information and national interest, the government's initiative to lease out the New Mooring Container Terminal at Chattogram Port on a long-term basis and to enter into a trade agreement with Japan without proper consultation is highly questionable due to its lack of transparency, secrecy and undue haste," the statement read.

The platform urged the government to immediately stop what it described as anti-people activities, including signing controversial agreements and making wasteful financial allocations.

It said such hurried efforts to sign long-term agreements at the very last moment before the election, while ignoring the opinions of political parties and the public, strongly resemble the arbitrary actions of the previous authoritarian government.

The GOC said various steps taken by the interim government in the interest of domestic and foreign groups are pushing the country's economy toward greater risk.

"Amid massive shortfalls in government revenue and a sharp rise in operating expenditures, a proposal has been made to increase the salaries of government employees by 142 percent. Moreover, under an initiative to develop a luxury apartment project for ministers of the next government, a project costing Tk 786 crore is being undertaken to construct 72 luxury flats

in the Ministers' Area in Dhaka," the statement said.

"Instead of increasing allocations for employment, food security and social safety nets, budgetary allocations are being increased for government operations and administrative expenses. The wasteful high-expenditure allocations of this government, along with its suspicious efforts to sign internationally harmful agreements, will put even the next elected government in danger," it added.

Economist Prof Anu Muhammad, Dr Moshahida Sultana, Dr Samina Luthfa, Nazmus Sakib, Dilip Ray, Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, Ferdous Ara Rumi, Sajib Tanvir, Abdullah Mahfuz Ovi, Akram Khan, Sima Dutta, Afzal Hossain and Farhana Sharmin Emu were among the signatories to the statement.

EC must ensure

FROM PAGE 3

account for only around 4.2 percent of candidates, which she said reflects broader problems in the country's electoral and political systems.

She said women's organisations had earlier met the EC and submitted recommendations on candidate selection, the influence of money and power in elections, and broader electoral reforms from a gender perspective.

While the commission later took steps to improve voting access for persons with disabilities, she said there has been no response to other demands raised by women's groups.

Fauzia said the Committee sought another meeting with the EC ahead of the election but received no response, prompting the platform to raise its concerns through the media.

She said women's

participation in various movements has not translated into political leadership and criticised the misuse of religion and misogynistic narratives during election campaigns.

In reply to a question regarding the upcoming referendum, Fauzia said from the perspective of the women's movement, it is difficult to support any reform initiative when recommendations of the Women's Reform Commission are ignored, and women's rights and misogyny are not adequately addressed.

The written memorandum was read out by Morium Nesa, manager of the Women's Rights and Gender Equity team at ActionAid Bangladesh.

In the memorandum, the committee said women have long played a key role in struggles for democratic rights in Bangladesh, but continue to be treated merely as voters rather

than full citizens.

It expressed concern over reports of violence and intimidation targeting women, minorities and disadvantaged groups ahead of the polls and urged the EC to take special measures to ensure their security and enable them to vote freely and safely.

Among its 10-point demands were ensuring security before, during and after polling, preventing online harassment and hate speech against women, special security for women candidates, and a complete ban on the use of religion in election campaigns.

The press conference was also attended by Maleka Banu, general secretary of Mahila Parishad; Shashwate Biplob, associate director of BRAC; and representatives of other organisations under the platform.

E-learning to be introduced

FROM PAGE 3

School, Kaptai Al-Amin Nuria Dakhil Madrasah, Farua Junior Secondary School and Islamabad Government Primary School in Kamalchhari Pilot High School, Hajachhari

Junior High School, Manikchhari Girls' High School and Pujangam Government Primary School in Khagrachhari; and Balaghata Ideal School, Haji Firoza Begum Wami Academy, Tindu

Junior High School and Bogamukh Para Government Primary School in Bandarban.

Yunus said, "The internet has reached the whole world, but it has not reached your areas. The government is responsible

for this not happening for so long. We apologise. Today we started with only 12 schools, whereas it should have started in 3,500 schools. We have to reach that goal very quickly."

Safeguard

FROM PAGE 3

of indigenous voters living in remote hill areas by arranging accommodation and food facilities near polling centres, and ensure unrestricted movement for all indigenous voters travelling to polling centres in both plains and hill regions, and take measures to stop harassment.

The demands were made at a press conference at DRU yesterday. Dr Khairul Islam Chowdhury, joint coordinator of the platform, chaired the event, while another joint coordinator, Zakir Hossain, gave keynote address.

ALRD Executive Director Shamsul Huda, writer and journalist Abu Saeed Khan, and rights activists Mainthin Promila and Dipayan Khisa also spoke.

Birdem General Hospital
(An Enterprise of the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh)
122, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1000

Employment Notice

Applications are invited from the citizen of Bangladesh for the following post.

(1) Sr. Consultant (Gynae & Obs.), (2) Sr. Consultant (Critical Care Medicine) (3) Consultant (Radiology & Imaging) (4) Consultant/Jr. Consultant (Medical Oncology), (05) Junior Consultant (Rheumatology)

Academic designations will be conferred to eligible persons. Applications to be submitted in prescribed form, obtainable from Cash Counter # 15 & 22, BIRDEM on all working days (from 9:00am to 12:30pm).

For details please visit BIRDEM & BADAS Website:
www.birdembd.org & www.dab-bd.org
Last date of Application 16.02.2026.

Director General

NOTICE
IN THE SUPREME COURT OF BANGLADESH
HIGH COURT DIVISION
(STATUTORY ORIGINAL JURISDICTION)
COMPANY MATTER NO. 2261 of 2025
Tata Communications LimitedPetitioner
Vs.
Level 3 Carrier Limited and others..... Respondents

Notice is here by given that an application under Section 242 read with Section 241 (v) of the Companies Act, 1994, has been filed by the Petitioner for winding up of Respondent No. 1- Company. The petition was presented to the Hon'ble High Court Division on 18.12.2025 and was admitted by the Court. Any concerned party desirous of opposing the application should appear at the time of hearing in person or through an Advocate for that purpose; and a copy of the petition will be furnished by the undersigned to anyone requiring the same, on payment of a prescribed charge for the same.

Sd/- Saqeb Mahub, Barrister-at-Law, Advocate for the Petitioner, Room 2020 (Annex), Supreme Court, Shahbag, Dhaka - 1000.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Television
Dhaka Center
Rampura, Dhaka-1219
www.btv.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. For more details, please contact e-GP support desk contact numbers.

e-Tender is invited in e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Office of the General Manager, Dhaka Center, BTV as below:

| Tender ID No./Reference No./Procurement Type | Name of goods | Tender publication date and time | Last date & time for tender security submission | Tender closing & opening date & time |
|--|---|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Tender ID: 1220261 Invitation Reference No.: 15.54.3025.023.07.016.25 Procurement Type: NCT Procurement Method: Open Tendering Method (OTM) | Procurement of Broadcast Networking related Equipment for BTV Dhaka Station | 27-Jan-2026 15:00 BST | 15-Feb-2026 13:00 BST | 15-Feb-2026 14:30 BST |

e-Tender details can be downloaded from e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for pursue. e-Tender will be accepted only as stated in e-GP System Portal, accepted Tenders will be opened online immediately as stated in above table.

Md. Mushfiqul Islam
Television Engineer

পাওয়ার গ্রিড বাংলাদেশ পিএলসি
POWER GRID BANGLADESH PLC
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)

Grid Bhaban, Avenue-3, Jahurul Islam City, Aftabnagar, Badda, Dhaka-1212 Web: www.powergrid.gov.bd
স্মারক নং- ২৭.২১.৫৬৭৮.৬৪১.০৭.০০১.২৬.৮২ তারিখঃ ২৬/০১/২০২৬খিঃ

e-Tender বিজ্ঞপ্তি

পাওয়ার গ্রিডের জিএমডি, আরিচা দপ্তরের আওতাধীন নিম্নলিখিত দরপত্র e-GP পোর্টালে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে।

| ID | Title of Works |
|---------|---|
| 1215674 | Supplying, Painting & Fitting-Fixing of Name plate, Danger Plate & Warning Sign Plate of 132 kV Dhamrai-Kaliakoir Transmission Line at Dhamrai 132/33 kV GIS Grid Sub-Station, Under GMD, Aricha, Power Grid. |
| 1215816 | Repair of roof of control room with installation new tiles and repair of 1 and 2 nos room of residential building Jamuna-1 of Manikganj 132/33 KV Grid Substation under GMD, Aricha, Power Grid. |

অগ্রহী তিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে www.eprocure.gov.bd সাইটের মাধ্যমে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা যাচ্ছে।

প্রকৌশলী দেওয়ান মোঃ গিয়াস মাহমুদ
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, জিএমডি, আরিচা

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Inspector General
Bangladesh Police
Police Headquarters, Dhaka

Invitation for e-Tender

Memo No-44.01.0000.453.07.006.25/327 Date: 27 January 2026

For The financial year 2025-2026, e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following items.

| SL | Description | Tender ID No | Online Tender Notice Publication Date & Time | Online Tender Closing Date & Time |
|----|-------------|--------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | Hand Cuff | 1220501 | 28-Jan-2026 11:00 | 16-Feb-2026 12:00 |

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

(A H M Yeaul Islam)
BP-7907109032
AIG (Equipment)
For Inspector General
Bangladesh Police
Police Headquarters, Dhaka
Tel:-9585304, FAX-55101641
E-mail:aige_t@police.gov.bd



Rescuers place in a bag the body of a person found under debris of an apartment building which was hit during Russian drone strikes in Odesa, Ukraine, yesterday. Russian forces killed six people and wounded nearly two dozen others in separate attacks, Ukrainian officials said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Iran wants talks: Trump

Aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln arrives in ME

AGENCIES

A US naval strike force led by an aircraft carrier was in Middle Eastern waters yesterday as Iran vowed to hit back against any strike and President Donald Trump said he believed the Islamic republic still wanted talks.

Washington has not ruled out new military intervention against Tehran over its crackdown on protests, which according to rights groups saw thousands of people killed within days.

A strike group led by the USS Abraham Lincoln has now arrived in Middle Eastern waters, US Central Command said, without revealing its precise location, reports AFP.

Since Iran earlier this month launched the crackdown on protests accompanied by a blanket internet blackout, Trump has given mixed signals on intervention which some opponents of the clerical leadership see as the only way to bring about change.

"We have a big armada next to Iran. Bigger than Venezuela,"

Trump told the Axios news site, weeks after US military action resulted in the capture of the Latin American nation's president Nicolas Maduro.

But he added: "They want to make a deal. I know so. They called on numerous occasions. They want to talk."

Axios said Trump declined to discuss the options presented to him by his national security team, or which one he prefers. Analysts say

on Monday of a "comprehensive and regret-inducing response to any aggression". Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said: "The arrival of such a battleship is not going to affect Iran's determination and seriousness to defend the Iranian nation."

Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem said on Monday that any attack on the group's backer Tehran would also be an attack on the group, and warned that any new war on Iran



would ignite the region. Meanwhile, a US-based rights group said yesterday it had confirmed the deaths of over 6,000 people in protests in Iran suppressed by security forces. NGOs tracking the toll have said their task has been impeded by an almost three-week internet shutdown.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) said it had confirmed that 6,126 people had been killed, including 5,777 protesters, 86 minors, 214 members of the security forces and 49 bystanders.

Iran's foreign ministry warned

Iran's foreign ministry warned

Iran's foreign ministry warned

Death toll from US monster storm rises to 30

Half a million without power

AFP, New York

More than half a million Americans woke up without power yesterday, as freezing temperatures gripped swathes of the country in a monster storm that has killed at least 30 people.

A frigid, life-threatening Arctic air mass could delay recovery as municipalities from New Mexico to Maine tried to dig out following the storm, which dropped a vicious cocktail of heavy snow and wind, along with freezing rain and sleet.

Forecasters warned that much of the northern half of the country will see temperatures that are "continuously below freezing through February 1," the National Weather Service said in an X post.

It added that "record low temperatures" hit southern states, which are unaccustomed to intense winter weather.

While skies began clearing in parts of the country, relentless snowfall in northeast meant parts of Connecticut saw over 22 inches of snow, with more than 16 inches recorded in Boston. The storm was linked to at least 30 deaths, according to a compilation of state government and local media reports.

Govt trying to get Bhola gas as LNG

FROM PAGE 12

industrial areas under Titas Gas.

Additionally, two more gas fields – Bhola North and Ilisha – are idle, with a combined capacity of 60 mmcf.

Bangladesh has discovered 29.74 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of gas so far, of which only 8.66 TCF remains.

Bhola's gas is seen as a key source for new gas supplies as most onshore fields are declining and the import facilities are almost in fully utilising.

Proven reserves in Bhola's three fields total about 1.4 TCF, with further drilling expected to yield more. The Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company, the government company responsible for oil and gas exploration and production, plans to drill 19 additional wells in the fields to increase production.

Based on Bhola's reserves, several pipeline projects – including one via the Padma Bridge – and gas-fired power plants have been planned in the gas-hungry Khulna-Barishal region.

The largest, an 800-megawatt Rupsha plant, is near completion, but no updates exist on pipeline installation.

In May 2023, Intraco Refueling Station was awarded the task of supplying CNG from Bhola to Dhaka and nearby industrial areas. They planned to supply 5 mmcf since January 2024, gradually increasing to 25 mmcf by 2025.

However, Titas Gas officials said the company has yet to supply more than 1 mmcf.

At the public hearing, an Intraco representative said that they carried CNG

on an emergency basis without approval from the Department of Explosives.

The department has yet to grant approval, and the company was asked to halt supply from November 9 last year.

"We have invested Tk 250-300 crore. And operations were halted for four months amid protests from locals demanding that gas is not carried outside from there. Yet we had to pay staff," the Intraco representative said.

Intraco had proposed a CNG price of Tk 52, but the government fixed it at Tk 47.50.

"LNG processing would require at least Tk 2,000 crore investment. I don't think it would be feasible for any company," he said.

Md Jamal Uddin Miah, director of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said industrial sectors like theirs cannot operate at such prices.

"We received gas at Tk 12 per unit, then it rose to Tk 17, and now it stands at Tk 32. Staying operational is becoming very difficult," he said.

As many as 300 factories have already shut down, with another 300 at risk.

"This will negatively impact foreign exchange earnings, employment and tax revenue. Our competitors – especially neighbouring countries – are far ahead. Gas prices must consider industrial competitiveness," he added.

A representative from the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) opposed supplying gas from Bhola in either CNG or LNG format.

Instead, he suggested building a gas-fired power plant on the island and

transmitting electricity to the mainland.

Using one cubic metre of gas, it is possible to generate 4 to 5 units of electricity, said Syed Zulfikar Ali, additional director (Finance) of the Bangladesh Power Development Board.

Transmitting that electricity to Dhaka would cost only Tk 1.24 per unit and no additional investment would be required as a transmission line already exists here.

By contrast, transporting gas from Bhola in LNG format has been proposed at a cost of Tk 29.90 per cubic metre, he said.

Transporting the proposed 30 million cubic meters of LNG would cost around Tk 930 crore per year and Tk 9,300 crore over a 10-year contract.

Instead of spending such a large amount, a 200MW plant could be built at a cost equivalent to just two years of gas transportation expenses.

"The plant would require about 45 mmcf of gas. If that much gas could be balanced through Dhaka's supply network, it would help ease both the capital's gas shortage and the power deficit," he added.

While the Bhola-Barishal pipeline construction is technically challenging due to long river crossings, it remains a priority, said BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed. Since a pipeline already exists on the Padma Bridge, it could be utilised.

"If Bhola's gas production rises to 350-380 mmcf, pipeline transmission will be unavoidable. We will formally recommend it as a national priority," he said.

Written submissions on the issue will be accepted until February 2, with a decision to follow.

Only 'yes' can bring change

FROM PAGE 2

Asif Saleh noted that while voters are told only four issues will be placed before them, in reality they will be casting a single "yes" or "no" vote on 84 reform proposals: 47 constitutional and 37 to be implemented through general laws or executive orders.

He said a single "yes" vote would approve several major constitutional changes at

once, including election governance, the structure of constitutional institutions, a mandatory 30-point pledge for future governments, and the creation of a new upper chamber, decisions with long-term consequences.

"To bundle all of these into a single question is to deprive voters of the opportunity to express their actual preferences," he said, adding that the process robs

people of freedom of choice.

He also said voters were not being informed about the cost, feasibility or effectiveness of the proposed reforms.

"It is being said that the key to the country is in your hands. But do you really know which lock you are going to open with which key?" he asked.

The Daily Star could not reach Asif Saleh despite several attempts.

144 breaches, Tk 9.05

FROM PAGE 2

Anwarul also said all complaints regarding the lack of a level-playing field have been forwarded to the concerned returning officers and the electoral inquiry committee, who will

take action in accordance with the law.

Asked whether the EC has been able to overcome public distrust, the election commissioner said, "We believe that trust or distrust ultimately

belongs to the people...

Political parties are taking part, and election campaigns are being conducted in a festive atmosphere in the field. These are expressions of confidence."

EU, India agree to 'mother of all' trade deals

FROM PAGE 12

benefit from so-called "first mover advantage".

Europe's key agricultural, automotive and service sectors stand to gain. But sensitive agricultural sectors, such as beef, rice and sugar whose inclusion in an earlier deal struck with South American bloc Mercosur sparked farmers' anger in Europe, were left out of the agreement.

New Delhi sees the European bloc as an important source of much-needed technology and investment to rapidly upscale its infrastructure and create millions of new jobs.

It also includes a security partnership, providing "new opportunities" for defence companies, Modi said.

"We are not only making our economies stronger – we are also delivering security for our people in an increasingly insecure world," von der Leyen said, speaking alongside Modi after exchanging agreements.

"By combining these strengths, we reduce strategic dependencies, at a time when trade is increasingly weaponised," she added.

Bilateral trade in goods reached 120 billion euros (\$139 billion) in 2024, an increase of nearly 90 percent over the past decade, according to EU figures, with a further 60 billion euros (\$69 billion) in trade in services.

Under the agreement, India is expected to ease market access, and European firms will get privileged

access to the Indian financial services and maritime transport market, the bloc said.

Tariffs on cars will be gradually lowered from a top rate of 110 percent to as low as 10 percent – with a quota of 250,000 vehicles – while duties on wines progressively go down from 150 percent to as low as 20 percent.

Currently at 50 percent, tariffs on processed foods – including pasta and chocolate – will be eliminated, according to the EU.

Von der Leyen said she expected exports to India to double, and that the EU would "gain the highest level of access ever granted to a trade partner in the traditionally protected Indian market".

Dhaka, Beijing sign

FROM PAGE 12

and assemble various types of Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) UAVs and Vertical Take-off and Landing (VTOL) UAVs.

In addition, the BAF will produce its own UAVs, which will play a significant role not only in military operations but also in humanitarian assistance and disaster management, the statement added.

As a result of this agreement, capacity will be expanded to achieve full self-reliance in domestic UAV production, which will help meet national and international demand, it said.

"At the same time, it will make a significant contribution to national technological advancement by developing a skilled aerospace workforce through specialised training, knowledge exchange, and capacity building."

Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen; Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Lt Gen SM Kamrul Hasan; Secretary of the Chief Adviser's Office Saifulah Panna; Secretary of the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division Hafiz Ahmed Chowdhury; senior officers of BAF; and representatives of CETC International and other officials and guests were present.

Trial ends, wait for verdict begins

FROM PAGE 12

prosecution and defence.

During the hearings, the prosecution pressed for the maximum penalty for all 30 accused, terming the killing a crime against humanity committed in the context of the mass uprising. The defence, meanwhile, sought acquittal, challenging both the evidence and the allegations against their clients.

Of the 30 accused, six are in custody while the rest – including former Begum Rokeya University vice-chancellor Hasibur Rashid and former Rangpur Metropolitan Police commissioner Md Moniruzzaman – remain absconding.

Those in jail are former university proctor Shariful Islam, assistant registrar Rafiul Hasan Rasel, staffer

Anwar Parvez, assistant sub-inspector Amir Hossain, constable Sujan Chandra Roy, banned Chhatra League leader Imran Chowdhury Akash, and two others. They were present in the dock yesterday.

On August 5, last year, the tribunal framed charges against all 30, detailing their alleged roles in aiding, inciting, or directly carrying out the shooting that killed Sayed, who was unarmed at the time.

The same year, the prosecution had submitted the formal charge on June 30, following the investigation agency's probe report filed on June 24.

On August 27 last year, the trial began with the deposition of Sayed's father, Mokbul Hossain, marking the third case over crimes against humanity

Submit probe report

FROM PAGE 12

The Daily Star filed the case on December 22 last year with Tejgaon Police Station against 350-400 unidentified people under the Penal Code, the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Special Powers Act, and the Cyber Security Ordinance, over the attack on its head office in Dhaka's Tejgaon area.

According to the case statement, the estimated loss from the attack stands at around Tk 40 crore, subject to revision following further assessment.

Court records show that 11 individuals were arrested in the case by December 26 last year. All of them are currently in jail.

'Some' US feds to leave city

FROM PAGE 12

agreed the present situation can't continue."

Another sign of a thaw was confirmation from a senior Trump administration official that Gregory Bovino, a top US Border Patrol official who has been a lightning rod for criticism from Democrats and civil liberties activists, will be leaving Minnesota along with some of the agents deployed with him.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Trump's designated border czar,

Tom Homan, would replace Bovino in the Midwestern state, at the helm of what the Trump administration has dubbed Operation Metro Surge.

Trump himself said earlier that Homan was being sent to Minnesota, adding that Homan had "not been involved" in the crackdown, but "knows and likes many of the people there."

Later on Monday, a different person familiar with the matter said Bovino had been stripped of his specially created title of "commander at large" of the Border Patrol and would return to his former job as a

chief patrol agent along California's El Centro sector of the US-Mexico border, reports Reuters.

The source said Bovino would then soon retire. Another source confirmed Bovino would return to the El Centro sector but gave no further details.

The White House was scrambling as video of the latest shooting went viral, prompting street protests, criticism from former presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama and, increasingly, from within Trump's Republican Party.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Young voters want credible pledges

Parties must heed their concerns about safety, freedom, jobs

Many have their hopes pinned on the 13th parliamentary election scheduled to be held on February 12. It is a moment Bangladeshis have long been waiting for after three largely questionable and non-participatory elections held under the Awami League government. So, while the interim government and participating political parties must ensure that voters can exercise their rights enthusiastically, without fear or coercion, it is equally important to listen to the concerns and aspirations of voters, particularly the younger ones aged between 18 and 35 who are defined as youth under the National Youth Policy 2017.

Many in this age group will be exercising their right to franchise for the first time. Given the role of young people in the 2024 mass uprising, it is only natural to expect that they will be influencing Bangladesh's post-election trajectory as well. Furthermore, their votes carry significant weight as they account about 40 percent of the total electorate based on Election Commission data. Therefore, the old way of doing electoral politics—simply dumping empty promises into manifestos—is unlikely to work with this increasingly vocal voter population. They are looking for credible, time-bound commitments from political parties.

While talking to this daily, several voters from this age group have placed safety—including an end to mob violence—at the top of their list of demands. They also want manifestos to clearly state political parties' commitment to making the justice system impartial and accountable, ensuring law enforcement agencies are free of political interference, and guaranteeing the security of minority communities. People's freedom to express opposing views without fear is also important to many. Other priorities include jobs, fair recruitment, digital education, better curricula, good governance in the health sector, and closing the "digital divide" in madrasa education. These voters also want the next government to rely more on domestic assets and reduce dependence on imports. Most importantly, they expect the next government to maintain zero tolerance for corruption and all forms of injustice.

As Bangladesh once again transitions into a democratic process, political parties—both those forming the government and those to be in opposition—must remember that these are not mere aspirations. While voters can decide parties' fates through their ballots, this generation also retains the power to hold them accountable, as was evident in July-August 2024. Moreover, they are living in a time of high geopolitical tensions and an unstable global economy. Therefore, it is even more crucial for young people to trust that they can build their future in this country. To do so, they need to first trust political governments to carry out reforms and take initiatives that align with their aspirations and priorities.

That is why political parties, old and new, must move beyond the outdated practice of treating their manifestos as mere promotional leaflets. Instead, they should regard them as binding commitments to fulfil their promises.

Ensure peace in the CHT

Fully implement CHT accord, recognise Indigenous people's rights

It is disappointing that nearly three decades after the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord was signed, the same unresolved issues continue to trouble the region. Speakers at a roundtable discussion held recently in Dhaka reiterated how far justice, dignity, and lasting peace continue to elude the Indigenous communities in the hills. Speakers discussed how the CHT crisis is not a local problem but a national one, which demands strong political will, institutional reform, and genuine engagement with all stakeholders.

Despite successive governments' commitments, the CHT accord is still not fully implemented. This bears serious consequences. Land-grabbing, weak governance, ineffective local administration, and the erosion of trust in law enforcement and the justice system have created a climate where impunity thrives. Recurrence of violence in the region, including the recent incidents in Rangamati and Khagrachhari, continues to serve as grim reminders that unresolved political and historical grievances are placing Indigenous communities in harm's way.

As experts stressed at the roundtable, lasting peace in the CHT is not possible unless Indigenous peoples are recognised as equal citizens whose identity and dignity are respected. Repeated failures to ensure justice in cases involving land-grabbing, attacks, violence against women, etc have further deepened feelings of insecurity among Indigenous communities. Governance gaps, including weak land and resource management, continue to worsen the situation. The Land Commission, in particular, cannot function effectively unless the Indigenous communities' land rights are formally recognised. Experts also cautioned against seeing the CHT issue only as a security issue, saying that real progress requires engaging the security forces in a rights-based dialogue and changing the mindset that shapes policies in the region.

With the national election only weeks away, our political parties should commit to full implementation of the CHT Peace Accord. Whoever forms the next government should clearly outline their plans to implement it. Strengthening land governance, reforming local institutions, ensuring credible investigations into recent violence, and ending the culture of impunity should be a priority for the upcoming administration. Without ensuring these, sustainable peace in the CHT will remain a distant dream.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Space shuttle Challenger explodes

On this day in 1986, US space shuttle Challenger exploded 73 seconds after lift off from Florida, killing all seven aboard, including a schoolteacher who had been chosen as the first American civilian to travel into space.

Election stakes, coalition battles, and the Awami League question



Zillur Rahman is a political analyst and president of the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS). He is the host of Tritiya Matra on Channel i. His X handle is @zillur.

ZILLUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh is heading into one of the most consequential elections in its history, not only because it follows the dramatic fall of Sheikh Hasina's government but also because it marks a decisive break from a long-entrenched political order. The February 12 election, therefore, will be more than about choosing a new government; it will be about redrawing the country's political map.

With the Awami League's political activities suspended and its leadership in disarray, millions of AL-leaning voters have been left politically orphaned. For decades, their loyalty was anchored in party identity, local patronage networks, and the memory of the liberation legacy. Now that this anchor is gone, these voters are unlikely to move as a single block. Instead, their behaviour will fragment across constituencies.

In many districts, tactical voting will dominate. AL supporters will likely back the strongest local candidate capable of winning—often a BNP nominee, sometimes a powerful independent, and in a few cases another coalition-aligned figure. The logic will not be ideological so much as practical. Politics in Bangladesh has always been intensely local, and personal networks still matter more than party labels.

In some constituencies, a section of former AL voters may even vote for Jamaat. Where Jamaat candidates have deep community roots or are

may push many into abstention or protest voting.

The net effect is that AL voters will not disappear from the election. They will help decide it—seat by seat, district by district—as a floating, unreliable force.

For Tarique Rahman and the BNP, this election represents a historic opening. But it is also a defining test of leadership. After years in exile and

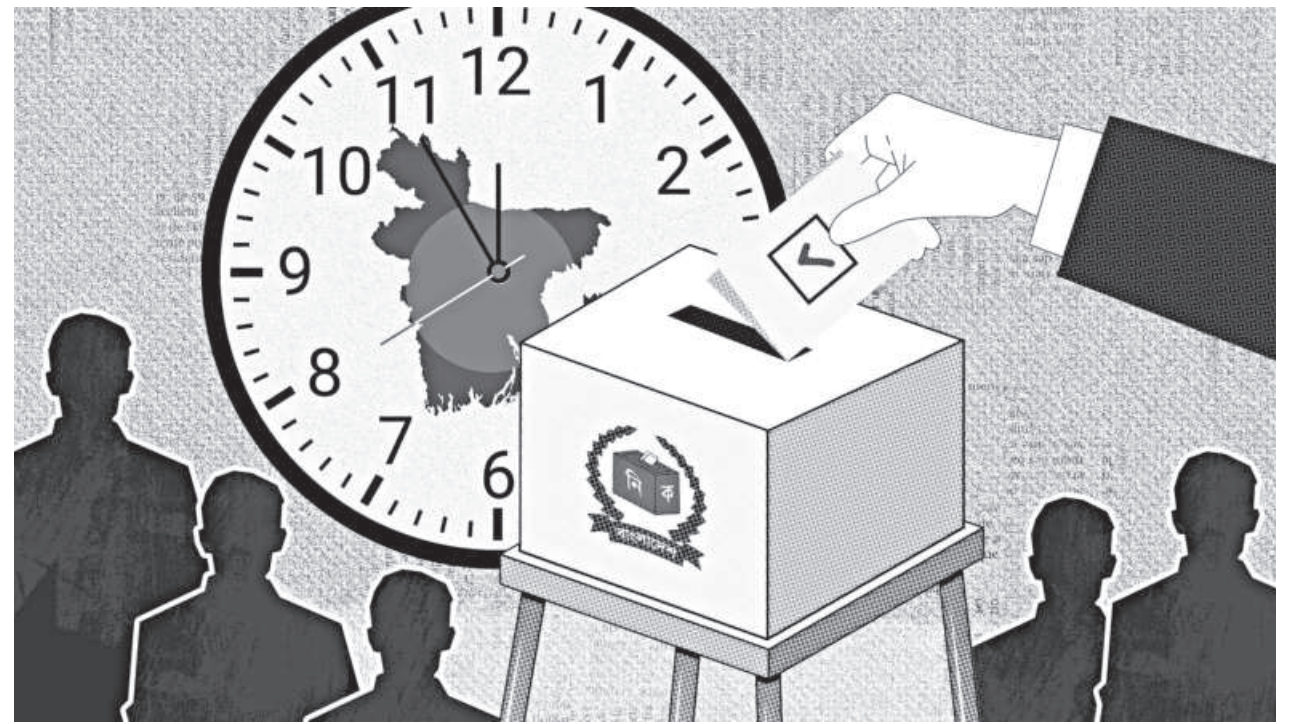
want stability, jobs, and security. The message should be simple: we want your vote, not your old rivalry.

The third and perhaps most delicate challenge is managing the Islamist question. With Jamaat openly positioning itself for influence on that front, BNP faces a strategic dilemma. Cooperation may help in seat arithmetic, but dependence risks alienating liberals, minorities, women voters, and international partners. The next government will need global legitimacy, foreign investment, and diplomatic credibility. That requires clear red lines on rights, the rule of law, and pluralism.

This election's success will be measured not only by who wins but also by how many people vote. Turnout on February 12 will be a direct test of security and trust. The key

openness to a post-election unity or coalition arrangement.

This realignment is most visible on campuses. For more than a decade, Bangladesh Chhatra League, the Awami League's student wing, dominated universities through administrative backing and coercive politics. After the 2024 uprising and the collapse of the AL government, that structure disintegrated. In its place, Islami Chhatra Shibir has emerged as the most organised student force, winning all five recent student union elections at public universities. For years, Shibir operated underground and, according to media reports and student testimonies, embedded many of its cadres inside BCL units to survive political repression. After the uprising, that hidden network surfaced openly



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

This election's success will be measured not only by who wins but also by how many people vote. Turnout on February 12 will be a direct test of security and trust. The key question is not whether Bangladeshis want change—they have already demonstrated that. The question is whether they feel safe or encouraged enough to participate in the process.

perceived as strong challengers to BNP dominance, voters may choose influence over ideology. Others are likely to stay home. Alienation, anger, and a sense of political dispossession

political uncertainty, Tarique seems to be standing at the threshold of power. How he frames his campaign and manages his party will help shape not only BNP's victory prospects but also possibly the legitimacy of the next political order.

His first strategic option is a broad stability-and-inclusion narrative. After years of repression, economic stress, and political upheaval in the country, voters want calm and order. They want a functioning state. BNP's most powerful message is not revenge, but reassurance: that politics will return to institutions, that disputes will be resolved in courts and parliament, not on the streets, and that corruption will not be tolerated.

His second option is winning over orphaned or disgruntled AL voters without embracing the Awami League itself. BNP needs to make it clear that it is not rehabilitating the old order but offering a new political home for ordinary supporters who

question is not whether Bangladeshis want change—they have already demonstrated that. The question is whether they feel safe or encouraged enough to participate in the process.

Rising violence and fears of intimidation, if not properly addressed, could suppress turnout in sensitive districts or create uneven participation across the country. In politically contested areas, fear can be as decisive as persuasion. There are also concerns around election administration, including controversies surrounding expatriate postal voting and perceived administrative bias. In an election this charged and consequential, perception matters almost as much as reality.

Perhaps the most striking development of this election cycle is the return of Jamaat-e-Islami as a central political actor. Once marginalised, Jamaat is now positioning itself as a major power broker and has publicly signalled its

under the Shibir banner. Jamaat's growth is less about slogans and more about leverage. If it emerges as the second force or coalition pivot, it will shape the character of the next government.

As I indicated earlier, this election is not merely about replacing one party with another. It is about redefining power after the collapse of a long-entrenched authoritarian regime. The Awami League may be politically sidelined, but its voters will impact the outcome. Tarique Rahman may be on the verge of victory, as some suggest, and Jamaat may not win outright. But nothing is written in stone. And whoever wins or loses will be judged not just by the result but also by how responsibly power is claimed, contested, and exercised in the moment that follows.

So, February 12 is more than just an election day. The question of whether Bangladesh can change course is being put to a vote on that day.

Remembering Mark Tully, the trusted chronicler of 1971



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RAHAT MINHAZ

Sir William Mark Tully, well known in the Indian subcontinent as Mark Tully of the BBC, was a friend of Bangladesh. Interested in theology and history in early life, he was the main commentator for the BBC World Service of the Liberation War, which was not only decisive for Bangladesh but also changed the borders of the subcontinent. Alongside the bloody events of 1971, various events in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Myanmar have been known to the world for 30 years through Mark Tully's commentary. On his demise, India's popular media, The Wire, referred to him as a fearless titan of journalism. The BBC referred to him as a "chronicler of modern India". And we Bangladeshis can call him a "trusted chronicler of 1971" for his role during our Liberation War.

Mark Tully was born in Kolkata's Tollygunge in West Bengal in 1935. After completing studies in London, he joined the BBC in 1964. He was the

bureau chief of the New Delhi office for 22 years. During Operation Searchlight on March 25, 1971, Tully was stationed in London. Tully worked to collect information from sources in Kolkata and Delhi to broadcast the truth of the atrocities to the world.

The first report on the genocide committed in Bangladesh was published by Mark Tully's friend, Simon John Dring, a young journalist for The Telegraph. On March 30, the British newspaper published Simon's report titled "Tanks Crush Revolt in Pakistan: 7,000 Slaughtered, Homes Burned." After its publication, all other influential media outlets in the world started publishing reports on our issue. This mounted international pressure on Yahya Khan. To handle the situation, Pakistan invited a group of foreign journalists to visit Dhaka. Mark Tully came to Dhaka in the last week of April 1971 with this group. He arrived on the condition that he should be allowed to work freely. During this

two-week visit, he travelled by road to Rajshahi, witnessing burned villages and evidence of massacres. After this trip, he returned to London via Delhi to continue his reporting, which included an important document of the Liberation War of Bangladesh.

During the visit, he also went to Old Dhaka, which was home to a significant Hindu population. At the time,

Tully remained a man of professional ethics and modesty following the events of 1971. He frequently maintained that he was simply a journalist fulfilling his duty. When he was later formally honoured by the Bangladeshi government for his contributions, he said that he did not feel comfortable with such an honour.

reports were surfacing that the Hindu community was being systematically targeted by the Pakistani military. His first stop was Shakhari Bazar, the site of a brutal massacre. While Tully was documenting the devastation, he was detained by West Pakistani police.

However, he was eventually released with the assistance of a Bangalee officer-in-charge at the police station.

After Mark Tully returned to London, martyred journalist Nizamuddin Ahmed, who worked as a stringer for the BBC, cooperated with him from within Bangladesh. In addition, Tully also gathered firsthand intelligence from the families and contacts of BBC Bangla staff in London. Serving as the primary voice of the BBC World Service during the conflict, his exhaustive work became a monumental contribution to the international understanding of the liberation movement.

Tully remained a man of professional ethics and modesty following the events of 1971. He frequently maintained that he was simply a journalist fulfilling his duty. When he was later formally honoured by the Bangladeshi government for his contributions, he said that he did not feel comfortable with such an honour.

The contribution he made in 1971 is unforgettable. After his death on January 25, 2026, his mortal body may have merged with nature through his cremation at Delhi's Lodhi Estate crematorium, but his work will guide professional journalists for generations to come. He has written several books in his 90-year-long life. Among them, *Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle* and *No Full Stops in India* are particularly noteworthy.

BACKLASH AT THE BALLOT

Why women are being shut out of politics



Tasmiah T Rahman
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Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

TASMAIH T RAHMAN

Bangladesh is not short of women in leadership, be it in business, government offices, or academia. It is short of women in electoral politics.

Over the past two decades, women's presence across public life has expanded steadily and measurably. Girls now outnumber boys in secondary education. Maternal and child mortality have declined sharply. Women's economic agency has grown through microfinance and the ready-made garment sector, both of which rely overwhelmingly on women's labour. These gains were not incidental, but the result of sustained state policy, long-term NGO engagement, and deliberate investment in women as economic and social actors.

Women's representation has also grown within the state itself. Bangladesh has 495 upazilas, and today roughly one-third of all upazila nirbahi officers are female. Women now serve across administrative tiers: as assistant commissioners, additional deputy commissioners, and senior field-level officials—roles that were overwhelmingly male a generation ago. This shift matters because it shows something crucial: when institutions are rules-based, women advance at scale. But when it comes to party politics and elections, the numbers collapse.

After the closing of the nomination withdrawal deadline last week, with the exception of two constituencies, women made up just over four percent of general-seat candidates, while 30 registered political parties nominated no women at all. This is not a pipeline problem, but a structural divergence: women are increasingly present



VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

in governance and service delivery, but systematically excluded from competitive political power. This divergence tells us something important: that in Bangladesh, women have been professionalised for growth, but not politicised for governance.

Despite a proposal by the National Consensus Commission requiring individual political parties to nominate women candidates in five percent of general seats, most political parties failed to follow through. BNP nominated only 3.5 percent women candidates and Jamaat-e-Islami nominated none (*Prothom Alo*, January 22, 2026). Smaller parties initially nominated a few women but withdrew some of them afterwards. Former women's affairs reform

commissioners and women's rights activists criticised the parties for failing to honour promises and limiting women's political participation. This highlights a broader trend of women being underrepresented in Bangladeshi elections despite prior agreements and advocacy efforts.

Ironically, the country has been governed by women at the very top of the political hierarchy. That visibility created

particularly consequential. With an interim government led by Dr Muhammad Yunus—globally recognised for pioneering microfinance as a pathway to women's empowerment—there was a reasonable expectation that women's political representation would be institutionally safeguarded. That has not happened. Despite its reformist mandate, the interim government has not meaningfully intervened to protect or expand women's presence in political decision-making, whether through transitional arrangements, nomination frameworks, or implementation mechanisms. This failure now risks setting women's political participation back further, particularly at a moment when party structures are actively narrowing access.

The exclusion of women from electoral politics is often explained away as culture, conservatism, or lack of "electability." But what we are witnessing can be better understood as a political backlash. As women's social and economic agency expanded through education, income, public authority and visibility, their potential political presence became harder to ignore. Rather than absorbing this shift, party structures responded by retrenching. Women are being redirected to reserved seats. Competitive constituencies are deemed "too risky." This backlash is as ideological as it is procedural and strategic.

A recent episode inside the National Citizen Party (NCP) illustrates this clearly. When senior male leaders chose to pursue an alliance with Jamaat-e-Islami, several women leaders left the party in protest. Their exit was not symbolic. It revealed how strategic decisions about ideology and alliances were made without women. It was clear that women's participation was conditional.

The digital sphere continues to reinforce this exclusion. Women who speak politically face disproportionate online harassment, moral policing, and character attacks. Parties interpret this hostility as electoral liability, using it to justify their reluctance to nominate women. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle:

women are excluded because politics is hostile, and politics remains hostile because women are excluded.

The regional comparison sharpens the diagnosis. In Nepal, constitutional mandates and electoral restructuring produced women's representation at scale, with women holding around 41 percent of local government positions and roughly one-third of parliamentary seats following enforced quota systems. These outcomes did not emerge organically, but were the result of institutional compulsion that reshaped party behaviour. Bangladesh's reliance on voluntary reform has delivered symbolism, not power.

The contrast is telling. In the civil service, where entry and promotion are rule-bound, women now occupy leadership roles in significant numbers. In politics, where access depends on discretion, loyalty networks, and informal bargaining, women remain marginal. This is the result of institutional design, rather than a failure of capacity, ambition or preparation.

Women's expanding economic space has been demonstrably virtuous for Bangladesh. As of December 2024, over four crore people have accounts with microfinance institutions, 90 percent of whom are women. Meanwhile, women's labour sustains the export-oriented RMG sector that underpins national growth. These gains were achieved through decades of negotiation—between the state, NGOs, civil society, and women themselves—to normalise women's visibility, mobility and authority in public life.

But the backlash we are now witnessing threatens to arrest that trajectory at the threshold of politics. If women's negotiated space continues to stop at economic participation and bureaucratic service, without extending into electoral power, Bangladesh risks institutionalising a ceiling it once claimed to dismantle. Curbing this backlash is not just about symbolism or fairness, but also about ensuring that the country's curve of investment in women does not stall at the most consequential question of all: who gets to govern.

The Board of Peace is just the latest fig leaf for Israeli impunity



Jamal Kanj
is the author of 'Children of Catastrophe: Journey from a Palestinian Refugee Camp to America,' and other books. He writes frequently on Palestine/Arab world issues for various national and international publications.

JAMAL KANJ

The so-called ceasefire in Gaza was a cynical ruse to secure Israeli captives while giving Israel free rein to starve, murder and assassinate Palestinians at will. The world was duped into swallowing yet another Zionist deception, orchestrated by Israel first Americans, financed with US taxpayer dollars, and drenched in Palestinian blood.

Since the ceasefire was announced, north of 1700 people have been murdered or injured by Israeli fire. In one day this past week, Israel murdered 11 Palestinians in Gaza, including three journalists and children. By the numbers, this ceasefire has been a misnomer, amounting to an average of 17 Palestinians killed or injured every day over the past 100 days. Some were shot or bombed. Babies died more quietly, but no less violently, freezing to death. Infants die of hypothermia not because winter is unforgiving, but because Israel has destroyed their homes and continues to block the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) from bringing safe shelters, winterised tents, and adequate housing into Gaza. This is clearly part of a sinister Israeli policy.

Meanwhile, Steve Witkoff, Jared Kushner, and Donald Trump remain sanguine, insisting the ceasefire has "held" since early October 2025. One can ask, would they make the same assertions if only ten Israeli Jewish children had been killed? The answer is self-evident. This is plain racism—a blood soaked moral order, a Western and Jewish supremacist calculus that renders Palestinian babies disposable while using a radically different lens for Jewish children.

At the centre of this deception is the so-called yellow line—an ill-defined military boundary marking Israel's partial withdrawal as part of phase one of the supposed ceasefire. The yellow line has become a trap, a moving frontier. Israel shifts it in the middle of the night, and mows Palestinians in the sunlight,

without oversight and without warning. Palestinians believed the ceasefire meant a chance to return to inspect their damaged homes, recover belongings, or forage for wild plants to feed their children. Instead, they find their homes erased, not in battle, but methodically by an enemy with insatiable hatred.

Parallel to this, aid is not allowed to enter Gaza in accordance with the "ceasefire" agreement. The siege has not been lifted. It was refined. Convoys are delayed. Medical equipment is rejected over technicalities. Fuel, shelter materials, and prefabricated housing are blocked or restricted. Hospitals go without medicine not because of unavailability, but because Israel has revoked the licenses of 37 aid organisations, including Doctors Without Borders,

Palestinians do not need another peace circus. There can be no peace that erases Palestinian agency while entrenching Israeli criminal impunity.

preventing them from sending staff or bringing aid in.

As Israel's atrocities in Gaza continue, Israeli mobs terrorise Palestinian villages, torch homes, and assault civilians with near-total impunity, and as new Jewish-only colonies expand across the occupied West Bank, Israel is escalating regional tensions with calculated intent. A familiar display of chicanery designed to provoke a wider confrontation—shift headlines, playing the victim, and drowning culpability in the noise of a larger war. To that end, Israel is openly goading a confrontation with Iran in a bid to draw the US into another made-for-Israel war—one to serve Israeli political interests

only, while exacting catastrophic costs on the region.

The US remains Israel's main enabler for laundering war crimes through diplomatic language. Europe's wishy-washy position is no less cynical. In late 2025, the European Union debated punitive measures, including suspension of the preferential trade agreement over Israel's violations of international humanitarian law. Those measures were shelved the moment the fictional ceasefire was announced. By halting accountability in exchange for a supposed ceasefire, Israel's allies granted it another pass. It understood the message, adjusted its tactics, and the violations intensified. Demolitions continued, aid strangled, and children died not only by bullets or bombs, but freezing to death.

Now we hear echoes of Trump's archetypal diplomatic hubbub, cynically sold to the world as a "Board of Peace." A "Board" that includes among its membership an indicted war criminal, who skips Davos' signing to evade arrest and the International Criminal Court (ICC), is not peace, it's a farce at the highest level. A "Board" supposedly created for Gaza, yet it excludes Palestinian representation and has morphed into a billion-dollar club with lifetime memberships, governed by a charter that cannot even bring itself to name Gaza, Palestine, or any credible path to self-determination.

At the launch of his "Board," Trump ignored the continued Israeli killing of Palestinians in Gaza. Instead, he dwelled on his fixation with recovering the body of an Israeli soldier and on disarming the occupied. If this inauguration speech is any indication, the "Board of Peace" will be nothing but a performative shell, not a pathway to human justice. What emerges, in reality, is something closer to a Jared Kushner real-estate venture run by a self-appointed dictator with no mandate and answerable to no one.

Palestinians do not need another peace circus. There can be no "peace" that erases Palestinian agency while entrenching Israeli criminal impunity. What Palestinians demand is self-determination and the right to live in a secure, sovereign state of their own. Anything less is not peace; it's an international management of

subjugation and oppression.

What Gaza needs is legal redress for sustained Israeli repression and subjugation. It must be granted unimpeded ingress and egress by land, sea, and air. Gaza must not be condemned to survive as a managed humanitarian dependency, rationed by aid and policed by donors. The

international community must reclaim the primacy of international law by allowing the ICC to prosecute indicted Israeli political and military leaders for war crimes and genocide—without American coercion, Western exceptionalism, and moral fraud of double standards.

A ceasefire that leaves infants

freezing to death is not peace. A "Board" that grants itself the authority to "acquire and dispose of ... property," while Israel violates agreements in Gaza and Jewish mobs terrorise communities in the West Bank, is just a new phase in the normalisation of mass dispossession and genocide.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission
Plot#E-5/A, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka.

Invitation for Enlistment

| GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH | |
|--|--|
| 1. Ministry/Division | Ministry of Post and Telecommunication Division |
| 2. Agency | Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission |
| 3. Procuring Entity Name | Mohammad Rohol Amin Director (Admin) Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission Plot#E-5/A, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka |
| 4. Procuring Entity District | Dhaka |
| 5. Invitation for | Enlistment for Vehicle Repairing Workshop |
| 6. Invitation Ref No | 14.32.0000.000.400.07.0013.25-110 |
| 7. Date | 25/01/2026 |
| 8. Period for enlistment | 01 April 2026- 31 March 2027 (01 Year) |
| KEY INFORMATION | |
| 9. Procurement Method | Limited Tendering Method |
| PARTICULAR INFORMATION | |
| Date Time | |
| 10. Application Closing Date and Time | 19/02/2026; Time: 5.00PM |
| 11. Name & Address of the Office(s) | Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission Plot#E-5/A, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka. |
| Application Form Availability | 26/01/2026 |
| Receiving Application Form | 22/02/2026 Time: 2.00PM |
| INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT | |
| 12. Eligibility of Applicant | a. Must have updated Trade License b. Must have updated TIN c. Must have updated Bank Solvency Certificate (As per Terms & Condition). d. Must have updated VAT Registration certificate e. Must have minimum 05 (Five) years of experience in Workshop/Garage and related work. f. Security Amount (As per T&C after enlistment.) g. Experience Certificate (As per Terms & Condition). |
| 13. Price of Application Form (Tk) | 500/- |
| 14. Enlistment / Renewal Fee (Tk) | 5000.00 for Enlistment (Excluding Vat) 2000.00 for Renewal of Enlistment (Excluding Vat) |
| PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS | |
| 15. Name of Official Inviting Application | Director (Admin) |
| 16. Designation of Official Inviting Application | Director (Admin) |
| 17. Address of Official Inviting Application | Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, Plot#E-5/A, Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka |
| 18. Contact details of Official Inviting Application | Phone: +88 222217120 Fax: +88 02 222217168 Email: diradmin@btrc.gov.bd |
| 19. The Authority may change/amend/revise any conditions and reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal in whole or in part without assigning any reason. | |

Mohammad Rohol Amin
 Director (Admin)
 Email: diradmin@btrc.gov.bd

25/01/2026

GD-205



13th CONVOCATION

28 JANUARY 2026

DAFFODIL SMART CITY, BIRULIA, DHAKA



Message



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

CHIEF ADVISOR
GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
14 Magh 1432
28 January 2026

On the momentous occasion of the 13th Convocation of Daffodil International University (DIU), I extend my heartfelt felicitations to the graduates and the entire DIU community. This convocation is not only a celebration of your academic success but also a recognition of your journey through one of the most transformative periods in our nation's history.

This ceremony also marks the commencement of a new and meaningful chapter in your lives. Your years at DIU have endowed you with the knowledge, skills, creativity, and ethical values necessary to embark on a greater journey with confidence and purpose. I firmly believe that the education you have received here will serve you well in the years ahead.

The world today aspires to a "Three Zero" future-zero net carbon emissions, zero wealth concentration, and zero unemployment. As graduates of an institution renowned for its entrepreneurial focus, you are uniquely positioned to lead this change and contribute meaningfully to building a better world.

Let your education be a powerful tool for creating social businesses, fostering innovation, and ensuring that the benefits of technology reach the most marginalised communities.

I wish all the graduates every success in their future endeavours and the 13th Convocation of Daffodil International University every success.

Professor Muhammad Yunus

Professor Muhammad Yunus

An overview of Daffodil International University (DIU)

"Glorious Past - Thriving Present - Promising Future"

Introduction: Established on 24 January 2002, Daffodil International University (DIU), is the first fully digitalized and one of the fastest-growing private universities in Bangladesh. With over 25,000 students, more than 1,200 faculty members, and a strong focus on innovation, research, and global engagement, DIU consistently ranks among the top universities nationally and internationally. It holds the number one position among private universities in Bangladesh in Scopus-indexed research publications.

DIU is committed to producing responsible global citizens equipped with knowledge, skills, ethics, leadership, and an entrepreneurial mindset. Its academic and co-curricular activities emphasize science, technology, sustainability, soft skills, and industry relevance.


Campus and Infrastructure: DIU operates from its state-of-the-art Daffodil Smart City (DSC) campus in Birulia near Uttara, Dhaka. Spread across 30 acres of green and eco-friendly land, the campus attracts the widespread interest of learners, academicians, and researchers. The campus includes modern academic buildings, student halls, research and innovation labs, auditoriums, sports facilities, medical and fitness centers, digital classrooms, and extensive recreational amenities. Sustainability initiatives such as solar energy, biogas plants, plantation programs, and cycling tracks reflect DIU's commitment to environmental responsibility.

DIU has expanded internationally by launching a branch campus in Ras Al Khaimah (RAK), UAE, offering global exposure, credit transfer, and internship opportunities for students.

At a glance: Key Highlights

- 80,000+** Laptops Distributed (One Student, One Laptop)
- #1** Private University in Scopus-Indexed Research
- 57,000+** Alumni
- BDT 15 Cr.** 504 Guardian Claims Settled

Message



Adviser
Ministry of Education
Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

I am proud to join Daffodil International University (DIU) in its celebration of the 13th Convocation on the 28th of January 2026. This isn't just a ceremony; this is the reflection of hard work and resilience that the university has put in place over the past year to place the graduating class of 2026 in the new world where they are up to 'go and grab' even more new laurels of glory and achievement in their service to their families, the societies they live in, the nation, and the wider world. I sincerely congratulate the new graduates, their parents/guardians, the teachers, and the staff who helped them to reach this stage of glory and celebration today.

Today, we aim to build an education system where merit matters, and no student is left behind due to their individual beliefs and backgrounds. I am confident that Daffodil International University positions itself in line with the missions that the nation aims to achieve.

The new graduates are entering a new world of new rights, duties, and responsibilities. We are looking to them to be more than just skilled professionals. We hope that they will start their new journey with a firm commitment to fairness and justice. We pray that they will make a difference not only in their personal life but also in the nation and the wider world needs their service and dedication. Let their new journey begin a new dawn of fairness and justice and a new era of national reconstruction.

I wish the 13th Convocation all success.

Professor Dr. C.R. Abrar

Professor Dr. C.R. Abrar

Message



Chairman
University Grants Commission of Bangladesh

It gives me great pleasure to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the graduates of the 13th Convocation of Daffodil International University (DIU). This convocation represents a significant academic milestone and reflects the university's sustained efforts to uphold high academic standards, promote innovation, and foster a culture of creativity and research.

The higher education landscape of Bangladesh is evolving rapidly in response to national priorities and global developments. In this context, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh is placing strong emphasis on accountability, transparency, quality assurance, and the gradual internationalization of our universities. Daffodil International University, as one of the leading private universities of the country, has demonstrated commendable initiatives in adopting modern pedagogical approaches and integrating technology-driven teaching and learning practices.

However, the true strength and reputation of any university are ultimately reflected in the achievements, values, and social contributions of its graduates. As you receive your degrees today, you become proud ambassadors of both Daffodil International University and the higher education system of Bangladesh. I encourage you to apply your knowledge, skills, and ethical values responsibly in your professional and personal lives, contributing to national development and global progress.

I urge the university leadership to continue its commitment to providing quality education at an affordable cost, ensuring wider access for meritorious students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Strengthening collaboration between academia and industry, enhancing research and innovation, and nurturing entrepreneurship will remain key to producing competent and future-ready graduates.

I wish all the graduates a prosperous, purposeful, and meaningful career. I also extend my best wishes to Daffodil International University for the successful organization of the 13th Convocation and for its continued contributions to higher education in Bangladesh.

Professor Dr. S. M. A. Faiz

Professor Dr. S. M. A. Faiz

CSR and ASR: Daffodil International University (DIU) actively engages in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Academic Social Responsibility (ASR), reflecting its strong commitment to social equity, community development, and student welfare. A notable CSR initiative is the Daffodil Institute of Social Sciences (DISS), launched in 2016, which provides quality education, food, and training in modern technology to underprivileged street children. Currently, DISS supports 67 children, empowering them to build better futures and make positive contributions to society and the national economy.

DIU ensures financial security for its students and their families through comprehensive insurance programs. The Student Group Insurance Program, operating since 2016, and the Students' Guardian Group Insurance Program, introduced in 2019, are implemented in collaboration with Pragati Life Insurance PLC and Prime Islami Life Insurance Limited. Notably, DIU pioneered the first guardian-focused insurance policy in Bangladesh's higher education sector.

DIU Rankings

- World University Rankings 2026
- World University Rankings 2025
- World University Rankings 2024
- AppliedHE™
- WURI 2025 Rankings

Division of Research: The Division of Research at DIU began its operations in July 2017. Daffodil International University (DIU) has established itself as a renowned institution with an exceptional research culture based on collaborative philosophy, commitment to excellence, and a strong focus on innovation. DIU has published over 5,000 research articles in Scopus-indexed journals since 2018. DIU has secured first place for Scopus-indexed publications among private universities in Bangladesh in the last five consecutive years. As of 2025, the total number of Scopus-indexed publications is 1340, an increase from 1239 in 2024, demonstrating significant progress made in research at DIU.

Global Footprint

- International Students:** 170+ Current, 1000+ Graduated
- UAE Campus (RAK):** Global Exposure
- International Linkage:** 600+

Message



Member
University Grants Commission of Bangladesh

I am pleased to note that Daffodil International University (DIU) is holding its 13th Convocation on 28th January 2026. This important milestone reflects the commitment of the university to academic excellence and its crucial role within the higher education sector of Bangladesh.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh remains committed to ensuring the quality of education and promoting a culture of research and innovation across all higher education institutions. It is gratifying to witness DIU has been aligning on Information Technology, entrepreneurship in pursuing globally competitive excellence in education. The initiatives of the university in maintaining a "Green Campus" is truly outstanding.

On this auspicious occasion, I extend my sincere felicitations to the graduating class of 2026. The degree conferred upon them today is a testament to their academic perseverance, yet it also carries the profound responsibility of contributing to the construction of a "New Bangladesh". I trust they will apply their knowledge and skills to address the multifaceted challenges of our society and contribute to the sustainable development in Bangladesh.

I envisage every success for the 13th Convocation and offer my best wishes to all graduating students for their future professional endeavours.

Professor Dr. Mohammad Anwar Hossen

Professor Dr. Mohammad Anwar Hossen

Message



Economist, Executive Chairman of PPRC
Chairperson of BRAC and Former Adviser
Caretaker Government of Bangladesh

It gives me great pleasure to participate as the Convocation Speaker in the 13th Convocation of Daffodil International University (DIU) on 28th January 2026.

A convocation is more than a mere formal ceremony; it is a milestone that signifies the transition of our youth from the sphere of academic learning to the realm of professional application. In an era characterized by rapid technological transformations and global economic reformations, the dictate of higher education must transcend traditional degree-conferring functions. It is essential to cultivate "active citizenship" alongside an "entrepreneurial mindset," and I have observed with great interest how DIU has established itself as a pioneer in digitalising higher education and innovation within Bangladesh. By integrating academic rigor with practical competencies, the university effectively prepares its students to navigate the multi-layered complexities of the contemporary global landscape.

As the graduating class of 2026 enters a global environment that demands both professional excellence and a reflective sense of social responsibility, it is imperative to remember that genuine success is measured not solely by personal achievements but by one's contribution to the collective advancement of the nation. In this journey forward, I encourage them to remain lifelong learners, maintain their intellectual curiosity, and lead with unflinching integrity. I extend my sincere congratulations to the graduates, their esteemed parents, and the faculty of DIU for their unflinching dedication. I offer my best wishes for the continued success of all the graduates participating in this Convocation.

Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman

Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman

Chancellor's Gold Medal

- Mst. Swapnil Akter Noh (ID: 221-34-603)
- Most. Jakia Akter (ID: 221-11-1651)
- Sourav Garodia (ID: 221-15-5048)
- Arifur Rahman (ID: 221-15-630)
- Muntashir Sarkar (ID: 213-29-484)

Chairman's Gold Medal

- Anzir Rahman Khan (ID: 221-23-1253)
- Md Tuhin Islam (ID: 221-40-058)
- Md Abu Bokor Siddiq (ID: 213-47-461)
- Md. Abu Bakar Siddique (ID: 221-10-841)

Vice Chancellor's Gold Medal

- Sahriar Sahid (ID: 221-23-1253)
- Bayezid Chowdhury (ID: 221-45-037)
- Halima Akter (ID: 213-24-010)

Message



Chairman
Board of Trustees
Daffodil International University

Today's Convocation is not merely an academic ceremony; it is a defining milestone in a journey shaped by vision, perseverance, and collective commitment. The growth and standing of Daffodil International University (DIU) today reflect years of trust, sacrifice, and timely decisions supported by a strong ecosystem of collaboration.

From the very beginning, Daffodil Group believed that sustainable national development is impossible without quality higher education. Guided by this belief, the Group has consistently stood beside DIU—often quietly, yet decisively. Support for land acquisition, permanent campus development, academic infrastructure, laboratories, technology, transportation, and student facilities has always been driven by one priority: the future of our students.

A landmark example of this commitment is the One Student One Laptop (OSOL) initiative. This is not a symbolic gesture, but a long-term investment in empowering an entire generation with digital access, skills, and confidence. To sustain such initiatives, Daffodil Group has taken significant financial risks, including long-term bank financing—guided not by immediate commercial returns, but by a deep sense of responsibility towards youth development and national progress.

Today, DIU stands as a self-sustaining, internationally aligned university—powered by dedicated faculty, committed administrators, and the achievements of its graduates. This transformation is our greatest source of pride. The relationship between Daffodil Group and DIU goes beyond formal support; it represents a shared vision, shared accountability, and shared belief in education as a nation-building force.

On this special day, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to our faculty members, administrative teams, parents, partners, and above all, our students. Your success gives true meaning to every effort and investment made along this journey.

As you step forward into a new chapter, remember this—your achievements are the greatest return on our commitment.

Md. Sabur Khan

Md. Sabur Khan

Message



Vice Chancellor
Daffodil International University

On the occasion of the 13th Convocation of Daffodil International University (DIU), I extend my sincere congratulations to our graduating class of 2026. This ceremony signifies the culmination of their academic enthusiasm, devotion, and commitment. They are now ready to embark on a journey of practical and professional life defined by personal growth and societal contribution. During their tenure at DIU, they have experienced a transformative education that has shaped their mindset to meet the challenges of the 21st-century job market.

As a premier digitally advanced institution of higher education, DIU prides itself on an ecosystem where research, entrepreneurship, ethical considerations, and sustainability converge. Through strategic initiatives, such as the Employability 360° Framework and the Smart City infrastructure, we have prepared them to lead and innovate within the global landscape of the 4th Industrial Revolution. This success is a testimony to the steadfast dedication of our faculty and the visionary leadership of the Board of Trustees, particularly our Chairman, Dr. Md. Sabur Khan.

Dear New Graduates!

As you transition from students to our valued alumni, you carry the spirit of resilience and lifelong learning that defines the Daffodil family. We are honoured to celebrate this milestone alongside our distinguished guests, especially the Convocation Speaker, Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman. Wherever your career leads, I encourage you to remain ambassadors of DIU and continue creating positive change not only in your family, society, and the nation but also in the wider world. I wish you all a memorable convocation and enduring success in your future endeavours.

With warmest congratulations and best wishes for your continued success, I wish the 13th Convocation a grand and memorable success.


Professor Dr. M. R. Kabir

Professor Dr. M. R. Kabir

Degrees to be awarded at the 13th Convocation

| Faculty | Bachelor's Programs | Master's Programs | Total |
|---|---------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Faculty of Business & Entrepreneurship | 436 | 156 | 592 |
| Faculty of Science & Information Technology | 1860 | 153 | 2013 |
| Faculty of Engineering | 493 | 39 | 532 |
| Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences | 346 | 141 | 487 |
| Faculty of Health & Life Sciences | 256 | 140 | 396 |
| Total | 3391 | 629 | 4020 |

Message



Valedictorian
13th Convocation

Assalamualaikum and welcome to the 13th Convocation of Daffodil International University.

My name is Mst. Swapnil Akter Noh, and it is an honor to stand here today representing the graduating class of 2026. I stand here as one of you, carrying the same struggles, stories, and dreams. Congratulations to all of us.

Standing here, I feel immense gratitude to Allah, our parents - the silent heroes whose sacrifices shape every success - and our teachers, who over the past four years shaped our minds, nurtured our potential, and taught us not only careers, but character.

To my friends, thank you for turning stress into laughter and moments into lifelong memories - from long addas to shared dreams and endless support.

My journey at DIU shaped me beyond imagination. As a cadet of the DIU BNCC platoon, I learned discipline, leadership, and responsibility. Through the Learn and Earn program, I worked at the university library, gaining professionalism and humility. Micro-credential courses, GoEdu learning, seminars, and academic programs prepared me with practical, industry-relevant skills.

I was fortunate to complete my internship at the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and represent DIU at an international conference, where our university received appreciation. Despite challenges and self-doubt, with departmental support and hard work, I received the Dean's List Award twice.

Daffodil International University is a vision. I am deeply grateful to the Chairman Sir, Board of Trustees, and administration for creating a nurturing, globally recognized institution that prepares us for life.

To my fellow graduates - we did it. Dream bravely, work honestly, and always rise with courage.

Thank you, and congratulations once again.

Mst. Swapnil Akter Noh
ID: 221-34-603
Department of Nutrition and Food Engineering (NFE)



Keep foreign policy Neglect, mounting woes and renewed pledges

FROM PAGE 3
cannot be politicised, regardless of the political party in power.

She said Bangladesh is currently facing a crisis regarding its international image, with visa-related complications emerging as a major issue. She said the next government must prioritize these issues.

Former ambassador Kamrul Ahsan said Bangladesh needs to build a strong military for deterrence and a strong foreign policy.

He said mere anti-Indian rhetoric will not benefit Bangladesh. "While Dhaka should strongly lobby for its interests, it should also address Delhi's concerns."

He suggested coordination among foreign affairs and commerce ministries, and the Economic Relations Division, as well

as collaboration between foreign ministry and NSI and DGI for a coherent policy.

Janata Party Bangladesh Executive Chairman Golam Sarwar Milon stressed formulating a national foreign policy document to ensure continuity regardless of the political party in power.

CGS Executive Director Parvez Karim Abbasi said water diplomacy and transboundary river issues are critical for Bangladesh, yet they are not being given the necessary attention in foreign policy. He suggested that the next government adopt a well-defined stance on these matters.

DU IR Prof Niloy Ranjan Biswas said there are instances in which domestic political division led foreign countries to influence domestic policies, a trend that must end.

FROM PAGE 3
As he left, he reminded them, "Vote for whoever you believe is honest and capable. But make sure you vote. It is your power and your right."

The Dhaka-4 constituency, comprising Shyampur and Kadamtali thanas, is often described by residents as a concentration of every major urban problem in the country.

As Mizanur moved from the main road into the narrow alleys, a woman in her fifties blocked his path. She said despite having seven voters in her impoverished family, they had never received benefits from government schemes such as TCB or OMS.

Mizanur noted down her details before continuing. The constituency

includes nine wards – 47, 51, 52, 53, 54, 58, 59, 60 and 61 – under the Dhaka South City Corporation. Key landmarks include the Mawa Expressway, Buriganga Bridge, Postogola Cantonment and the Shyampur Industrial Area.

Home to working-class and middle-income families, the constituency has 3,62,506 voters, an increase of more than 1,07,000 since the last election. Of them, 1,86,467 are male, 1,76,034 female, and five hijra voters.

Residents cite poverty, environmental pollution, chronic waterlogging, narrow roads, drug abuse, extortion, and severe gas and water shortages as their main concerns.

"Even light rain turns our roads into rivers.

There is no one to take action," said Jahir Ahmed, 32, a resident of Nama Shyampur.

"Drug abuse and extortion are increasing. People will vote for whoever promises – and delivers – solutions."

For many, like a 58-year-old local businessman, the focus is on safety and fresh leadership. "We want security and a fix for our local problems," he said.

First-time voters at Dania Government College also highlighted security issues.

"The country's overall security situation feels fragile. I want those to come to state power who have the ability to manage the entire nation," said one student, requesting anonymity. "Rising crime in Jurain must also be

addressed." Among the prominent contenders are BNP candidate Tanveer Ahmed Robin and Jamaat-e-Islami's Syed Joynul Abedin.

Joynul Abedin, who recently resigned from a private bank to contest the election, said he is receiving strong support from women, youth, and workers.

"People are tired of 54 years of corruption and extortion. They want change," he told The Daily Star.

He said his campaign is based on documented grievances, not bare rhetoric, and pledged to serve as a "servant of the people".

Tanveer Ahmed Robin, son of former MP Salahuddin Ahmed,

described Dhaka-4 as the most neglected constituency in the capital.

"There are no playgrounds, parks, community centres or healthcare facilities here," he said, alleging that the previous Awami League government focused on looting rather than development.

His manifesto includes training centres for youth and women in every ward, reopening closed factories, and building libraries to help create a drug-free society.

"I am a local. My father brought major changes to roads and education here. If elected, I will remain among the people and never betray their trust," he said.

Despite political competition, Mizanur,

Joynul and Robin maintain cordial relations.

All three acknowledged each other and expressed willingness to work together to address Dhaka-4's long-standing problems.

Other candidates include Syed Md Mosaddeq Billah (Islami Andolon Bangladesh), Mohammad Firoz Alam (CPB), Md Zakir Hossain (BSD), Sahel Ahmed Sohel (Muktijote), and Md Abul Kalam Azad (Janata Dal).

PRAYER TIMING
JANUARY 28

| | | | | |
|-------------|-------|------|---------|------|
| Fajr | Zohr | Asr | Maghrib | Esha |
| AZAN 5:35 | 12:45 | 4:15 | 5:46 | 7:15 |
| JAMAAT 6:10 | 1:15 | 4:30 | 5:50 | 7:45 |

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তর
অতিরিক্ত প্রধান প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়
ম্যানেজমেন্ট সার্ভিসেস উইং
সড়ক ভবন, তেজগাঁও, ঢাকা-১২০৮।
Website: www.rhd.gov.bd



তারিখঃ ২৬/০১/২০২৬ খ্রিঃ

স্মারক নং-৩৫.০১.০০০০.১৫০.১১.০১৩.২৬-১০১

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তরের নিম্নবর্ণিত শূন্য পদে সম্পূর্ণ অস্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে নিয়োগের জন্য বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে অনলাইনে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

| ক্রমিক নং | পদের নাম | পদের সংখ্যা | বেতনস্কেল ও গ্রেড (জাতীয় বেতনস্কেল ২০১৫ অনুযায়ী) | বয়সসীমা | শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা | স্বাস্থ্যগত যোগ্যতা |
|-----------|------------------------------------|------------------|--|--|--|---|
| ০১। | সার্ভেয়ার | ০৯ (নয়)টি | টাঃ ১০২০০-২৪৬৮০/- গ্রেড-১৪ | ১৮ হতে ৩২ বৎসর (বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে বয়সসীমা ৪০ বৎসর পর্যন্ত শিথিলযোগ্য) | (ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে অনূন মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ। (খ) কোন স্বীকৃত ইনস্টিটিউট হতে ডিপ্লোমা ইন সার্ভে টেকনোলজি পাশ। | - |
| ০২। | সিকিউরিটি সুপারভাইজার | ০৪ (চার)টি | টাঃ ৯৭০০-২৩৪৯০/- গ্রেড-১৫ | ১৮ হতে ৩২ বৎসর (বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে বয়সসীমা ৪০ বৎসর পর্যন্ত শিথিলযোগ্য) | (ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে অনূন স্নাতক ডিগ্রী, তবে বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে কোন স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে অনূন উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ। (খ) অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের অগ্রাধিকার প্রদান করা হবে। (গ) Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence Academy হতে যে কোন অফিসার্স বা অফিসার্স প্রদর্শিত প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্স। | - |
| ০৩। | ইঞ্জিন চালক | ১৬ (ষোল)টি | টাঃ ৯৭০০-২৩৪৯০/- গ্রেড-১৫ | ১৮ হতে ৩২ বৎসর (বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে বয়সসীমা ৪০ বৎসর পর্যন্ত শিথিলযোগ্য) | (ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে অনূন মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ। (খ) অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন বিভাগীয় প্রার্থীদের অগ্রাধিকার প্রদান করা হবে। | - |
| ০৪। | ওয়ার্ক এ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট | ৫২ (বায়াম) টি | টাঃ ৯৩০০-২২৪৯০/- গ্রেড-১৬ | ১৮ হতে ৩২ বৎসর | (ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে অনূন উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ। (খ) সংশ্লিষ্ট ক্ষেত্রে অভিজ্ঞতাসম্পন্ন প্রার্থীদের অগ্রাধিকার প্রদান করা হবে। | - |
| ০৫। | নিরাপত্তা প্রহরী (সিকিউরিটি গার্ড) | ১০৭ (একশত সাত)টি | টাঃ ৮২৫০-২০০১০/- গ্রেড-২০ | ১৮ হতে ৩২ বৎসর | (ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বোর্ড হতে অনূন মাধ্যমিক স্কুল সার্টিফিকেট বা সমমানের পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ। (খ) সামরিক ও আধা-সামরিক বাহিনী, পুলিশ ও আনসার বাহিনী এবং বি.জি.বি এর অবসরপ্রাপ্ত সদস্যগণকে অগ্রাধিকার প্রদান করা হবে। | ক) উচ্চতা- ১.৬২ মিটার (৫'-৪")। খ) ওজন ১১০ পাউন্ড। গ) বুকের মাপ- ০.৭৬-০.৮২ মিটার (৩০"- ৩২")। |

আবেদন ফরম পূরণ এবং পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের ক্ষেত্রে নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্তাবলি অবশ্যই অনুসরণ করতে হবেঃ

- বাংলাদেশের সকল জেলার প্রার্থী আবেদন করতে পারবেন। আবেদন অনলাইনে করতে হবে। একজন প্রার্থী শুধুমাত্র একটি পদের জন্য আবেদন করতে পারবেন। ০১/০৩/২০২৬ খ্রিঃ তারিখে সাধারণ প্রার্থীর বয়সসীমা ১৮-৩২ বছর। বয়স প্রমাণের ক্ষেত্রে এফিডেভিট গ্রহণযোগ্য নয়।
- সরকারি, আধা-সরকারি ও স্বায়ত্তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে চাকরিত প্রার্থীদের অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের অনুমতিক্রমে আবেদন করতে হবে। প্রার্থীদেরকে অবশ্যই মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় সংশ্লিষ্ট নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত অনাপত্তি ছাড়পত্রের মূলকপি জমা দিতে হবে।
- প্রার্থী নির্বাচনের ক্ষেত্রে কোটা সংক্রান্ত সর্বশেষ প্রজ্ঞাপন অনুসরণ করা হবে।
- শারীরিক (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে) ও লিখিত পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ প্রার্থীগণ মৌখিক পরীক্ষার জন্য বিবেচিত হবেন।
- প্রার্থী কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত কোনো তথ্য বা দাখিলকৃত কাগজপত্র বিজ্ঞাপনে চাওয়া যোগ্যতার সাথে অসামঞ্জস্যপূর্ণ, জাল, মিথ্যা বা ভুল প্রমাণিত হলে কিংবা পরীক্ষায় নকল বা অসদুপায় অবলম্বন করলে সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রার্থীর প্রার্থিতা নিয়োগের যে কোন পর্যায়ে বাতিল করা হবে এবং তার বিরুদ্ধে যথাযথ আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে। ভুল তথ্য/জাল কাগজপত্র প্রদর্শিত হলে পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ যে কোন প্রার্থীর প্রার্থিতা বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করেন। মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় নিম্নবর্ণিত (ক্রমিক নং-ক-ঙ পর্যন্ত) কাগজপত্রের মূলকপি প্রদর্শনপূর্বক প্রতিটি ০১টি করে সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি দাখিল করতে হবে।
ক. প্রার্থীর সকল শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতার সনদপত্র (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্রসহ)।
খ. কোটার সমর্থনে মুক্তিযোদ্ধা, শহিদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধা ও বীরশ্রদ্ধা সন্তান, ক্ষুদ্র নৃ-গোষ্ঠী এবং শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধী ও তৃতীয় লিঙ্গের প্রার্থীদের সর্বশেষ সরকারি নীতিমালা অনুযায়ী উপযুক্ত কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সনদপত্র।
গ. প্রার্থী যে ইউনিয়ন/পৌরসভা-এর বাসিন্দা সে ইউনিয়ন পরিষদের চেয়ারম্যান/পৌরসভার মেয়র/কাউন্সিলর কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত নাগরিকত্বের সনদপত্র।
ঘ. জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের সত্যায়িত অনুলিপি।
ঙ. Online-এ পূরণকৃত আবেদনপত্রের কপি (Applicant's Copy)।
- নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে সরকারের বিদ্যমান বিধি-বিধান এবং পরিবর্তিত ক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য বিধি-বিধান অনুসরণ করা হবে।
- কর্তৃপক্ষ পদের সংখ্যা হ্রাস/বৃদ্ধি/বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন। নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত বিষয়ে নিয়োগকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে।

৮. উল্লেখ করা হয়নি এমন ক্ষেত্রে সরকারের সর্বশেষ জারিকৃত বিধি-বিধান প্রযোজ্য হবে।

৯. এ নিয়োগের বিষয়ে কোন প্রকার সুপারিশ বা তদবির প্রার্থীর অযোগ্যতা হিসেবে বিবেচিত হবে।

১০. নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি, লিখিত পরীক্ষা, শারীরিক (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে) ও মৌখিক পরীক্ষা, বিজ্ঞপ্তি সম্পর্কিত যে কোন পরিবর্তন/সংশোধন (যদি থাকে) এবং পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত অন্যান্য তথ্য সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তরের ওয়েবসাইট www.rhd.gov.bd এ পাওয়া যাবে।

১১. আবেদনকারী নিয়োগ লাভের পর বাংলাদেশের যে কোন স্থানে চাকরি করতে বাধ্য থাকবেন।

১২. লিখিত, শারীরিক (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে) ও মৌখিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য কোন প্রকার টিএ/ডিএ প্রদান করা হবে না।

১৩. অনলাইনে আবেদনপত্র পূরণ সংক্রান্ত নিয়মাবলি ও শর্তাবলিঃ

- পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণে ইচ্ছুক প্রার্থীগণ <http://rhd.teletalk.com.bd> এই ওয়েবসাইটে আবেদনপত্র পূরণ করবেন।
i. Online-এ আবেদনপত্র পূরণ ও পরীক্ষার ফি জমাদান শুরুর তারিখ ও সময়: ২৯/০১/২০২৬ খ্রিঃ, সকাল: ১০:০০ ঘটিকা।
ii. Online-এ আবেদনপত্র জমাদানের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়: ০১/০৩/২০২৬ খ্রিঃ, বিকাল: ০৫:০০ ঘটিকা। উক্ত সময়সীমার মধ্যে User ID প্রাপ্ত প্রার্থীগণ Online-এ আবেদনপত্র Submit-এর সময় থেকে পরবর্তী ৭২(বাহাতর) ঘণ্টার মধ্যে এসএমএস এর মাধ্যমে পরীক্ষার ফি জমা দিবেন।
খ. Online আবেদনপত্রে প্রার্থী তাঁর স্বাক্ষর (দৈর্ঘ্য ৩০০xপ্রস্থ ৮০ pixel) ও রশ্মিন ছবি (দৈর্ঘ্য ৩০০xপ্রস্থ ৩০০ pixel) স্ক্যান করে নির্ধারিত স্থানে Upload করবেন।
গ. Online আবেদনপত্রের তথ্যই যেহেতু পরবর্তী সকল কার্যক্রমে ব্যবহৃত হবে, সেহেতু Online-এ আবেদনপত্র Submit করার পূর্বেই পূরণকৃত সকল তথ্যের সঠিকতা সম্পর্কে প্রার্থী নিজে শতভাগ নিশ্চিত হবেন।
ঘ. প্রার্থী Online-এ পূরণকৃত আবেদনপত্রের একটি রশ্মিন প্রিন্টকপি পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত যে কোন প্রয়োজনে সহায়ক হিসেবে সংরক্ষণ করবেন।
ঙ. SMS প্রেরণের নিয়মাবলি ও পরীক্ষার ফি প্রদান: Online-এ আবেদনপত্র (Application Form) যথাযথভাবে পূরণ করে নির্দেশনামতে ছবি এবং স্বাক্ষর Upload করে আবেদনপত্র Submit করা সম্পন্ন হলে কম্পিউটারে ছবিসহ Application Preview দেখা যাবে।
নির্ভুলভাবে আবেদনপত্র Submit করা সম্পন্ন প্রার্থী একটি User ID, ছবি এবং স্বাক্ষরযুক্ত একটি Applicant's copy পাবেন। উক্ত Applicant's copy প্রার্থী download পূর্বক রশ্মিন প্রিন্ট করে সংরক্ষণ করবেন। Applicant's কপিতে একটি User ID নম্বর দেয়া থাকবে এবং User ID নম্বর ব্যবহার করে প্রার্থী নিম্নোক্ত পদ্ধতিতে যে কোন Teletalk pre-paid mobile নম্বরের মাধ্যমে ০২(দুই)টি SMS করে ০১ নং থেকে ০৪ নং পদের জন্য পরীক্ষার ফি বাবদ ১০০/-টাকা এবং সার্ভিস চার্জ বাবদ ১২/-টাকা, মোট ১১২/- টাকা এবং ০৫ নং পদের জন্য পরীক্ষার ফি বাবদ ৫০/- টাকা এবং সার্ভিস চার্জ বাবদ ৬/- টাকা, মোট ৫৬/- টাকা এবং অনগ্রসর নাগরিকরা (শারীরিক প্রতিবন্ধী, ক্ষুদ্র নৃ-গোষ্ঠী ও তৃতীয় লিঙ্গ) সকল পদের জন্য পরীক্ষার ফি বাবদ ৫০/- টাকা এবং সার্ভিস চার্জ বাবদ ৬/- টাকা, মোট ৫৬/- টাকা ৭২(বাহাতর) ঘণ্টার মধ্যে জমা দিবেন। এখানে বিশেষভাবে উল্লেখ্য যে, "Online-এ আবেদনপত্রের সকল অংশ পূরণ করে Submit করা হলেও পরীক্ষার ফি জমা না দেয়া পর্যন্ত Online আবেদনপত্র কোন অবস্থাতেই গৃহীত হবে না"।
প্রথম SMS: RHD<space>User ID লিখে Send করতে হবে 16222 নম্বরে।

Example: RHD ABCDF

Reply: Applicant's Name, Tk-112/56 will be charged as application fee. Your PIN is 12345678. To pay fee Type RHD<Space>Yes<Space>Pin and send to 16222.

দ্বিতীয় SMS: RHD<space>Yes<space>PIN লিখে Send করতে হবে 16222 নম্বরে।

Example: RHD YES 12345678

Reply: Congratulations! Applicant's Name, payment completed successfully for RHD Application for the post xxxxxxxx User ID is (RHD) and Password (xxxxxxx).

- প্রবেশপত্র প্রাপ্তির বিষয়টি <http://rhd.teletalk.com.bd> ওয়েবসাইটে এবং প্রার্থীর মোবাইল ফোনে SMS এর মাধ্যমে (শুধুমাত্র যোগ্য প্রার্থীদেরকে) যথাসময়ে জানানো হবে। Online আবেদনপত্রে প্রার্থীর প্রদত্ত মোবাইল ফোনে পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত যাবতীয় যোগাযোগ সম্পন্ন করা হবে বিধায় উক্ত নম্বরটি সার্বক্ষণিক সচল রাখা, SMS পড়া এবং প্রাপ্ত নির্দেশনা তাৎক্ষণিকভাবে অনুসরণ করা বাঞ্ছনীয়।
- ক্রমিক নং-৫ এ উল্লেখিত পদে শারীরিক পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ প্রার্থীগণ পরবর্তীতে একই প্রবেশপত্রের মাধ্যমে লিখিত পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন।
- SMS-এ প্রেরিত User ID এবং Password ব্যবহার করে পরবর্তীতে রোল নম্বর, পদের নাম, ছবি, পরীক্ষার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থানের/ক্ষেত্রের নাম ইত্যাদি তথ্য সংবলিত প্রবেশপত্র প্রার্থী Download পূর্বক রশ্মিন Print করে নিবেন। প্রার্থী প্রবেশপত্রটি শারীরিক (প্রযোজ্য ক্ষেত্রে)/লিখিত পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের সময়ে এবং উত্তীর্ণ হলে মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময়ে অবশ্যই প্রদর্শন করবেন;
- শুধুমাত্র টেলিটক প্রি-পেইড মোবাইল ফোন থেকে প্রার্থীগণ নিম্নবর্ণিত SMS পদ্ধতি অনুসরণ করে নিজ নিজ User ID এবং Password পুনরুদ্ধার করতে পারবেন।
(i) User ID জানা থাকলে RHD<space>Help<space>User<space>User ID & Send to 16222.
Example: RHD Help User ID & send to 16222.
(ii) PIN Number জানা থাকলে RHD<space>Help<space>PIN<space>PIN No & Send to 16222.
Example: RHD Help PIN 12345678 & send to 16222.
- এই নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি, Online-এ আবেদনপত্র পূরণের নিয়মাবলি, এসএমএস এর মাধ্যমে পরীক্ষার ফি প্রদানের নিয়মাবলি ও অন্যান্য প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্যাদি ওয়েবসাইট <http://rhd.teletalk.com.bd> এ পাওয়া যাবে।

২৬/০১/২৬

(এ, এস, এম, ইলিয়াস শাহ)

পরিচিতি নং-০০৫০০৭

অতিরিক্ত প্রধান প্রকৌশলী, সওজ
ম্যানেজমেন্ট সার্ভিসেস উইং

Sharsha: waiting for the border to breathe again

FROM PAGE 1
Trade has slowed, travel has shrunk, and uncertainty hangs heavy over border communities. In places like Sharsha, where livelihoods are tightly bound to cross-border movement, diplomacy is not an abstract concept. It is real-life encounters.

Kashipur, a frontier village in Sharsha upazila, lies about an hour's drive from Jashore town. By the time I reached its bazar around midday, the place felt subdued, reflecting its remoteness and unease. At a tin shed tea stall beside a three-wheeler stand, I sat with a shopkeeper, a farmer, a tempo driver and a meat seller, men whose fortunes rise and fall with the border to a large extent.

"What happens at the border affects us in ways people in Dhaka don't understand," said Anisur Rahman, 55, a lifelong resident. He spoke wistfully of a childhood when crossing into Indian villages like Boyra and Kulanandapur was casual, almost instinctive. "We moved freely then. No fear," he said.

That freedom has steadily disappeared, especially after India erected the border fence roughly 25 years ago. Today, even approaching the border pillars feels dangerous. "Farmers are afraid of being shot by the BSF," Anisur said. "Now it is unthinkable to go close."

While villagers in Kashipur may not follow geopolitics, they feel its consequences acutely. Trade, both formal and informal, has slowed, and prices have climbed. Tariqul Islam, a tempo driver, said a tyre that cost Tk 3,200 a year ago now sells for Tk 5,500. Fertiliser prices have risen from around Tk 1,200 to Tk 1,800 a sack.

"This is largely linked to India," he said simply.

Yet views in Kashipur are not uniform. Karimul Sheikh, a farmer and local BNP leader who joined the conversation, was surprisingly unfazed by the strained relationship.

"Let relations be bad for a while," he said with a shrug. "It's better if rice and onions stop coming from India."

His reasoning was bluntly economic. Imported rice, he argued, depresses prices for local farmers. Onion imports, too, have long distorted the market.

"Whenever prices rose, India stopped exports, and prices would skyrocket," he said. "We once bought onions at Tk 200 a kilo. Now, even without imports, you can buy them at Tk 50. Farmers here have started growing onions themselves."

"India doesn't want us anyway," Karimul added. "If one side doesn't want a relationship, what can the other do?"

Asked what he expects from the next government, his answer was modest.

"We want to live in peace," he said. "No government can fulfil everyone's demands. Not even families can."

But one demand was non-negotiable: the vote.

"We couldn't vote for 17 years," he said. "This time we will."

Nowhere is the diplomatic chill more visible than at Benapole, Bangladesh's largest land port and busiest crossing with India. In normal times, thousands of people cross here daily. When I reached around 3:00pm, the area outside the immigration and customs buildings felt eerily empty.

Porters in red shirts sat idle on the pavement. Md Shajahan, one of them, said his earnings have collapsed over the past few months.

"India isn't issuing visas," he said. "Hardly 500 people cross now. Before, it was thousands every day."

Nearby, Md Rafiqul Islam, who runs Shantu Enterprise, a clearing

five or six now operate on a good day.

For Rafiqul, the solution is unmistakably political.

"Nothing will improve without an election," he said. "Whoever wins, an elected government is the only way out."

That sentiment was echoed by Nazrul Islam, a businessman in Benapole, though with sharper language. "We want a Bangladesh where India does not interfere or intimidate," he said. "We in border areas may endure hardship, but we don't want India frowning at us anymore."

Yet the cost of prolonged tension is undeniable. Transport companies, clearing agents, hotels, restaurants and car rental services across Benapole depend on smooth cross-border movement. For them, de-escalation is not ideological. It is existential.

On my way back from Benapole to Jashore, our vehicle was stopped at an army checkpoint. Soldiers were



In Kashipur, a frontier village in Sharsha upazila, many people's fortunes rise and fall with the border.

and forwarding agency next to the immigration office, described the downturn in stark numbers.

"Earlier, 1,200 to 1,400 trucks entered from India every day," he said. "Now it's barely 200 to 250."

The collapse began around eight months ago and has only worsened. With visas suspended, importers cannot even travel to India to negotiate deals.

"Look around," Rafiqul said, gesturing at the empty compound. "There used to be crowds here from morning till night."

Bus services have suffered the same fate. Where dozens of coaches once ran daily between Benapole and Dhaka, only

inspecting nearly every passing car, a visible sign that election-related security preparations are finally underway. For many traders in Benapole, the sight was perhaps quietly reassuring.

In Benapole and Kashipur, politics is not debated through manifestos and speeches. It is measured in border fences, idle porters, empty bus terminals, rising prices and the long wait for normalcy. People here are pinning their hopes on a fair and peaceful election and a transition to an elected government that might finally allow the frontier to breathe again. (Shakeel Anwar is a former BBC journalist)

Insane bounty for bureaucrats

FROM PAGE 1
health budget for the current fiscal year.

The disparity in priorities is glaring: while the health sector fought to secure a nominal increase of just Tk 501 crore – a pittance in real terms – the bureaucracy is eyeing a windfall. The scale of the distortion is equally visible elsewhere: the pay hike is equivalent to almost half (44 percent) of the total Annual Development Programme and would devour a fifth of the government's operating expenditure.

The pay hike is a contradiction in terms for a government committed to a "contractionary" budget. The ADP has already been trimmed by 13.2 percent to lower the deficit.

The verdict from Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur was unsparring. He told business leaders at an event yesterday that the salary hike would compel the state to borrow heavily from banks. "Is that going to help reduce inflation? No," he said. Taming prices to the desired level, he warned, would remain a distant dream.

The financing options range from the improbable to the disastrous. The National Board of Revenue (NBR) posted 14 percent growth in collection in the first half of the fiscal year, but still missed its target by Tk 46,000 crore.

With the tax-to-GDP ratio languishing at historic lows, a revenue-funded solution seems fanciful – an irony seemingly lost on the pay commission's chief, Zakir Ahmed Khan, who is himself a former chairman of the revenue board.

As Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka

office, points out, financing recurring expenditures through debt is economic heresy.

"Where will the money come from?" he says.

The government cannot print money without fuelling the very inflation it seeks to quash. Foreign agencies do not lend for public sector salaries. And heavy borrowing from the banking sector would crowd out private sector credit growth, which is already subdued at 6.58 percent.

It will further stifle the job creation needed for unemployed graduates.

MK Mujeri, a former director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, argues that the economy is simply not ready. The government's debt dependency is already creating risks; adding a permanent trillion taka obligation is reckless. He suggests a dearness allowance would have been a prudent stopgap, rather than a full blown pay commission, which has now raised expectations that the exchequer cannot meet.

There is also the question of equity. Dr Itteharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), brands the proposal as "not implementable."

In a country facing money scarcity, he argues, the burden of bureaucratic enrichment will ultimately fall on the general public through higher inflation and taxes.

The common refrain that higher pay reduces corruption is, in his view, a fallacy.

Historical data suggest the rate

of bribery often rises in tandem with salaries. Unless accompanied by strict asset disclosures – a condition rarely enforced – the hike is merely a "larger bill for the same results."

The spillover effects would be severe. A hike in government pay exerts pressure on the private sector and autonomous institutions to follow suit, creating a wage-price spiral that firms, lacking the government's fiscal immunity, cannot afford.

Belatedly waking up to the fiscal danger, the interim administration has offered an explanation. Muhammad Fouzul Kabir Khan, the power and energy adviser, told journalists that the commission's report is not binding.

The authority to accept, revise, or bin the proposal, he now insists, rests entirely with the next elected government. The current administration merely facilitated the process to address long-standing demands, he says.

This may be politically astute, but leaves a burden for whoever comes next. The next elected government will have to manage the soaring expectations of a powerful civil service against the hard reality of the treasury.

Zahid Hussain suggests a modest hike weighted towards lower-tier employees might be financeable, but anything resembling the commission's full proposal is a risk. By some estimates, inflation has eroded civil servants' purchasing power by 18.20 percent since the last pay review in 2015. Yet even a modest adjustment to match this, a hike of 25 percent, will add some Tk 25,000 crore to the wage bill.

Eggs hurled at Patwary

FROM PAGE 2
Patwary claimed that students welcomed his team with flowers after they reached the college.

He said a group identifying themselves as former Chhatra Dal leaders then confronted him at the gate and demanded money, which he refused.

He alleged that the situation soon worsened when brick chunks and eggs were thrown at him and his supporters.

Several people were injured in the attack, including a woman who required four stitches to her head, he claimed.

"The police said they were there to protect us, yet our supporters were attacked in front of them," he said.

The NCP leader called on the BNP leadership to expel Abbas, who is Patwary's rival in Dhaka-8, alleging that Abbas's family members and supporters were behind what he described as a planned attack. Nasiruddin also named several individuals who took part in the attack.

This newspaper could not independently verify his or the NCP's claims.

At the briefing, NCP Convener Nahid said he had not come to "play

the victim card" but to issue a warning over the repeated attacks on candidates and campaigners of the II-party "Oikoboddho Bangladesh" alliance.

"If an attack takes place, there will be a counter-attack. If the Election Commission remains silent and if the police remain inactive, then we will do what is necessary from our side."

Nahid spoke of a similar incident a day earlier in Dhaka-18, where their alliance candidate Ariful Islam Adeb and his supporters were allegedly attacked. He also claimed that over the past few days, women campaigners affiliated with the female wing of the Jamaat were attacked in around six to seven districts.

According to him, the incidents showed a pattern of targeting the alliance candidates and campaigners, particularly young candidates and women.

Referring to the throwing of eggs at candidates, which he said occurred in Dhaka-8 and other areas, Nahid said, "If eggs are thrown at candidates of one party, candidates of the other party will face the same fate."

"We don't want such an environment. We want a politics of harmony, having fought the anti-fascist movement

together. But today, one side is using Awami League-style tactics to humiliate its rival candidates."

The NCP leader also alleged that while an alliance was being allowed to campaign freely, often in violation of the electoral code of conduct, candidates and activists of their alliance were being targeted elsewhere. "This has made it clear that there is no level playing field."

He further alleged that since BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman's return home, they have been hearing of a plan which, judging by recent incidents, appears to involve attacking and humiliating candidates of other alliances, obstructing campaigns, pressuring the EC and the media, making the election one-sided, capturing polling centres, and controlling the results.

"If there is such a plan, it will be settled on February 12."

Mahdi Amin, spokesperson for BNP's Central Election Steering Committee, rejected Nahid's claims.

In a Facebook post, he said, linking Tarique's name to any incident without any evidence is a reflection of a fascist culture.

ANFREL deploys

FROM PAGE 2
public confidence in the electoral process, and compliance with the legal framework.

The observers will also monitor election day and post-election processes, including polling operations, vote counting, and the announcement of results.

The mission includes a social media monitoring component, conducted in partnership with The Carter Center, to examine online electoral discourse and the Election Commission's response to election-related content in the digital space.

ANFREL said its methodology is based on internationally recognised principles of election observation and builds on a pre-election assessment mission conducted in Bangladesh in November-December 2025.

ANFREL's observers will take part in a two-day briefing workshop in Dhaka on February 6-7.

The mission will issue an interim report with preliminary findings and immediate recommendations on February 15, accompanied by a press briefing in Dhaka, and publish a comprehensive final report after the mission concludes.

Leadership change

FROM PAGE 2
"There is no alternative to electing honest, just and principle-based leadership. A single vote in favour of Islam means taking one step forward towards building a justice-based state. With every additional vote for the hand fan symbol, the strength of Islam will increase," he said.

At a rally in Delduar, Akhiner Mia, the IAB candidate for Tangail 6, said, "If I am elected MP, the long cherished dreams of this region will be fulfilled. In Sha Allah [God willing], I will not engage in corruption, nor will I allow anyone else to do so."

Mahbubur Rahman, a presidium member of the party, said the core theme of Islami Andolan's manifesto is building a Bangladesh that reflects public aspirations. The manifesto emphasises the supremacy of Shariah, employment for youth, and a job-oriented education system, he added.

Among others, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Maruf, central publicity and dawah secretary of Islami Andolan, and Hossein Ibn Sarwar, central vice president of the party's student wing, also addressed the rallies.

'We seek no conflict, but will defend ourselves'

FROM PAGE 1
"Those who sincerely seek reform will find us by their side. Today, the youth have united against both old and new forms of fascism. Already, students from five public universities have made their stance clear," he said while addressing a rally at the Sathkira Government High School ground in the afternoon.

The Jamaat chief said two votes would be held on February 12 – one in favour of reform through a "yes" ballot and the other for a new Bangladesh.

He told the rally that a "yes" vote meant freedom, while a "no" vote meant slavery. "Entering the booth, voters must first firmly cast 'yes'. If 'yes' wins, Bangladesh wins. Fascism will not return, and the corrupt and extortionists will be buried.

Govt lenience fuelling mobs

FROM PAGE 12
phone calls to mobilise help but it did not arrive in time, Kabir said: "My witness is the Prime Minister's press secretary himself. If the chief adviser's press secretary cannot get help when major media houses are under attack, it means the government allowed this to happen."

Journalism in a democratic society must remain inherently critical of power, said Kabir, also the editor of the daily New Age.

"Press freedom is not for journalists – it is for the people," he said, adding that journalism enables public opinion to exert democratic pressure between elections.

The implementation of the Wage Board was not only the government's responsibility but also that of media owners. He called for transparency and a code of conduct for both journalists and owners.

Media Reform Commission Chief Kamal Ahmed warned that the government's planned Broadcast Commission Ordinance and Media Commission Ordinance could create serious regulatory conflicts due to overlapping authorities.

The television licensing authority already exists under the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC). If the BTRC remains and another broadcast commission is formed, there will be constant conflict over whose decision will prevail.

"If the Press Council is kept and a media commission is also formed, there will be the same kind of overlap and conflict," said Ahmed, also the consulting editor of The Daily Star.

Such duplication would undermine reform efforts, he said, adding that the Media Reform Commission had deliberately avoided proposing overlapping powers and instead proposed editorial oversight and grievance mechanisms.

Referring to the government's recent rush to issue ordinances, he said: "This government is at its final stage, and suddenly it has become very active."

The ordinances would still require validation by the next parliament.

"If things are done through patchwork, it can create a dangerous

situation in the future."

He also reiterated that financial insecurity poses a threat to press freedom.

"If journalists are not financially independent, they cannot work independently," he said.

Although the chief adviser talks about 'three zeros', in reality, he sees only emptiness around him, said Zillur Rahman, the president of CGS.

A government representative refused to use the term 'mobs' claiming it would be an insult to the mass uprising, he said, while raising questions about media freedom in such a situation.

"There is no real vote in the country; what exists is referendum campaigning – government campaigning through government offices, with 'Referendum 2026' above 'parliamentary election,'" said Rahman, also the host of the long-running talk show Tritiyu Matra.

Dhaka University Professor SM Shamim Reza stressed the need to identify gaps between media and the public, and address journalist pay, protection laws, Press Council effectiveness and safe work environments.

Robaet Ferdous, a professor at Dhaka University's department of mass communication, emphasised the role of courage and critical thinking in media and democracy.

Ayesha Kabir, head of Prothom Alo English, called for gender inclusivity.

"Women's participation in media must increase to build an equitable state," she added.

Journalists must secure their own independence, as those in power often seek flattery, said Shakhawat Hossain Sayantha, general secretary of political research organisation G9.

He called for vigilance in preventing the spread of misinformation before elections via AI-generated videos and edited photos.

Sajedul Huq Rubel, central committee member of the Communist Party of Bangladesh; Bazlur Rashid Firoz, general secretary of the Socialist Party of Bangladesh; Dhaka Tribune Editor Reaz Ahmad; Senior Journalist Zahid Newaz Khan; and Bangladesh Pratidin Executive Editor AKM Monjurul Islam spoke at the event among others.

But if 'yes' loses, Bangladesh loses. The second vote, for the 'Daripalla' symbol, is the vote for justice."

Addressing the youth at the Khulna rally, the Jamaat ameer commended them for their struggles and sacrifices, saying Jamaat did not want to humiliate young people by offering unemployment allowances. "We want to turn your hands into the hands of skilled workers. Then you yourselves will say that you do not want to sit idle and take unemployment benefits."

Referring to events after August 5, he said Jamaat had assured the nation that regardless of the oppression inflicted upon them, they would remain peaceful and patient. "We promised to act as guardians of people's lives, property and

dignity. We have kept that promise. We will not seize anyone's property, and we will not engage in extortion."

Addressing party activists, he said, "Each of you must protect the voting rights of every man and woman. Voters will cast their votes wherever they choose, but we want to ensure that they reach the ballot box safely."

Shafiqur said Bangladesh did not belong to Muslims alone, although Muslims were the majority. "This country is a garden of flowers where people of other communities live together. No one will be able to look at them with ill intent, and no hand will be raised against them."

[Our correspondents from Khulna, Bagerhat, and Benapole contributed to the report.]

24 hurt in pre-polls clashes in 5 districts

FROM PAGE 2
post in the morning alleging that a BNP female leader had been campaigning for a "No" vote in the referendum, police and locals said.

Calling the post a rumour, local BNP men went to the office of Taher Nazrul, ameer of Jamaat's Naria upazila (west) unit, to inquire about it.

An altercation ensued between the two groups, triggering the clash, witnesses said. The injured later received treatment at Shariatpur Sadar Hospital, said its on-duty doctor Khondoker Rashed Ahmed.

Bhojeshwar union unit Jubo Dal president Mizan Sikder and Naria upazila (west) unit Jamaat's nayebe-ameer Morshed Khan made counter-allegations regarding the incident.

Naria Police Station OC Md Bahar Miah said filing of a case in this connection was underway.

In Narayanganj, at least three people were injured in a clash between BNP and Jamaat activists in the Mollarchar area under Araihaazar upazila yesterday noon.

The clash ensued after tension prevailed between the two groups over allegations of obstructing each other's electoral campaigns, said Md Alauddin, officer-in-charge of Araihaazar Police Station.

Jamaat's Narayanganj-2 candidate Md Elias Mollah alleged that his

female supporters were obstructed by BNP men while campaigning for him in Mollarchar around 12:15pm.

On information, several Jamaat men rushed there, but they came under attack by BNP men, he alleged.

Araihaazar upazila unit BNP president Yusuf Ali Bhuiyan denied the allegations, claiming there was no attack and that Jamaat's candidate was spreading propaganda.

He said a clash occurred over setting up a Jamaat candidate's banners alongside BNP banners.

Assistant Returning Officer Asadur Rahman said Elias Mollah has submitted a written complaint, which remains under investigation.

The injured received treatment at a local health complex. None lodged a complaint with police, OC Alauddin said.

In Sirajganj Sadar upazila, at least six were injured in a clash between BNP and Jamaat men on Monday night.

The incident took place near the Dumur area around 8:00pm during a face-off between both groups' campaign processions, locals said.

BNP district unit general secretary Md Saidur Rahman Bachchu and Jamaat's Sirajganj-2 candidate Jahidul Islam made counter-allegations of provocation over the clash.

The injured received treatment at

Sirajganj 250 Bed General Hospital, said resident medical officer Dr Shimul Talukdar.

No case was filed in this connection till filing of this report yesterday evening, said Sirajganj Sadar OC Md Shahidul Islam.

In Patuakhali, at least three were injured in a clash between supporters of BNP alliance-backed candidate for Patuakhali-3 Nurul Haq Nur and his opponent Hasan Mamun, BNP's rebel candidate who was expelled by the party, on Monday night.

Locals and witnesses said Mamun's supporters at a campaign office in the Paglabazar area under Dashmina upazila came under attack by some 20-25 supporters of Nur, triggering the clash around 8:00pm.

The injured received treatment at Dashmina Upazila Health Complex, said the hospital's doctor Mostafizur Rahman.

Contacted, Nur, also president of Gono Odhikar Parishad, denied the allegations and claimed his supporters were not involved in any such incident.

No case was filed till filing of this report yesterday evening, said Dashmina OC Md Hasnain Parvez.

[Our correspondents from Netrakona, Shariatpur, Narayanganj, Pabna and Patuakhali contributed to the report.]

A party is now echoing the language of a fascist

FROM PAGE 1
surrounding districts by bus and truck, carrying party flags and wearing colourful caps and T-shirts. Small processions, some accompanied by music bands.

"We must stay together, because when we stayed together, we achieved independence. When we stayed together, we removed autocracy. If we stay united in the days ahead as well, then we will surely be able to take Bangladesh towards the future Bangladesh we hope for."

"So, let today's election rally be our pledge that we will turn this Bangladesh into a people's Bangladesh."

At the rally, 24 party candidates placed several demands before him, including the establishment of a university, development of river routes, and modernisation of the railway network.

In reply, Tarique said Mymensingh district hospital would be upgraded and the canals in the area would be re-excavated.

Tarique left Mymensingh at 5:00pm and reached the Bhawal Rajbari Estate in Gazipur around 11:40pm.

As he entered Gazipur, a large number of leaders and activists stood along both sides of the road for about four kilometres to greet him. Because

of the crowd, his vehicle was delayed in reaching the venue.

"Will you allow vote robbery this time?" he asked at the rally.

The attendees replied, "No".

The BNP chief also promised that if the party comes to power, an overpass will be built over the Joydebpur rail crossing, day-care centres will be set up for the children of female workers in garment and other factories, and three canals in the district will be re-excavated.

Tarique was also scheduled to address the last election rally of yesterday in the capital's Uttara. [Our Mymensingh correspondent contributed to this report.]

ICC's 'unfair' schedule hits Bangladesh U-19s

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Bangladesh's early exit from the ICC U-19 World Cup was sealed after a lacklustre performance against England in their opening Super Sixes fixture on Monday. While inconsistent performance and miscalculations during rain-affected fixtures played a major role, officials have also criticised the team's heavy travel schedule, which they deemed as "unfair".

"More than the approach, I think our calculations were lacking [against England and India]. But this [travel schedule] is something I want to highlight, even if people think I'm making excuses," game development coordinator Habibul Bashar told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Junior Tigers left for Zimbabwe on January 6 for the 16th edition of the tournament and were required to play their two warm-up matches at different venues – Masvingo and Harare – against Pakistan and Scotland on January 10 and 13 respectively. Masvingo is nearly a four-hour drive from Harare, meaning the team had to travel back and forth within a short span.

This year, the ICC prohibited domestic



PICTURE GENERATED BY AI

air travel during the tournament, requiring teams, officials, and staff to move by bus.

The long journeys did not end there. Bangladesh travelled from Harare to Bulawayo – a nearly nine-hour bus ride during monsoon season – for their opening Group B matches on January 17 and 20. Considering the importance of the fixtures, the BCB arranged and funded an internal flight on their own for the matches against India and New Zealand.

"To avoid the boys getting too tired before the India match, the BCB actually paid for an internal flight out of its own pocket because the bus journey was too long and direct flights were scarce,"

Bashar informed.

After those games, Bangladesh returned to Harare by bus for their match against the USA on January 23 before heading back to Bulawayo again by bus for the Super Six clash against England on January 26. Following that match, the team once again travelled to Harare to prepare for their final game against hosts Zimbabwe on January 31.

It is understood that both players and team management repeatedly expressed frustration over the hectic schedule. Even head coach Naveed Nawaz appeared worn down by the constant travel. When contacted on Tuesday while the team was en route from Bulawayo to Harare, he replied briefly: "Nine hours in the bus."

India, meanwhile, stayed in Bulawayo for all their matches and practice games. Similarly, several major teams had far lighter travel burdens.

Australia played all their warm-up and group matches in Windhoek, Namibia, travelling to Harare only for their final Super Six fixture against the West Indies. England played their warm-ups in Harare and Bulawayo but had all their group

matches in Harare, with a four-day gap before their Super Six games in Bulawayo.

Pakistan also played their group matches and opening Super Six fixture in Harare and will only travel to Bulawayo for their final Super Six match against India.

"The schedule was very unfair to us," Bashar said. "During the initial schedule, we were supposed to play two of our warm-up matches in Masvingo and travel to Bulawayo, which is a four-hour drive, for our opening two group-stages matches. Later, they [ICC] suddenly changed the schedule, and it meant we had to play two of our warm-up games at different venues, travelling back and forth."

"We notified them [of the travel burden] before the tournament started. We asked them to move our practice games to avoid the back-and-forth travel, but they didn't listen. Once the tournament starts, you can't really change these things."

As Bashar's account highlights, the contrast between Bangladesh's burden and the lighter schedules of other teams draws attention to long-standing concerns over tournament planning – a debate the ICC may now find impossible to ignore.

MIXING SPORTS AND POLITICS | WHAT THEY SAID

What I do know is that it's sad, and that it should never get to a point where teams have to withdraw themselves from tournaments. I really feel that it's sad and a bad look, and a bad take on our sport. And it should never get to this. Whoever is in control, whoever can make the decisions, just sort it out. I have spoken enough about it in the past – I hate it when politics get so involved in cricket that it gets to a point like this. Really, really sad.

South Africa great AB de Villiers.

Politics is our enemy, and it's not just harming cricket but humanity as a whole. It's a loss for the sport and its players. Cricket is meant to unite nations, not drive them apart.

Legendary Pakistan spinner Saqlain Mushtaq.

In a sport driven by global audiences, sidelining Bangladesh's legitimate security concerns raises serious questions about consistency and governance.

Former Pakistan cricketer Mohammad Yousuf.

| CLUB | MP | W | D | L | GD | Pts |
|----------------------|----|---|---|---|-----|-----|
| Arsenal Q | 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 21 |
| Bayern Q | 7 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 13 | 18 |
| Real Madrid | 7 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 15 |
| Liverpool | 7 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 15 |
| Tottenham | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 14 |
| PSG | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 10 | 13 |
| Newcastle | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 10 | 13 |
| Chelsea | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 13 |
| Barcelona | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 13 |
| Sporting | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 13 |
| Man City | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 13 |
| Atlético Madrid | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 13 |
| Atalanta | 7 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 13 |
| Inter | 7 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 12 |
| Juventus | 7 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 12 |
| Dortmund | 7 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 11 |
| Galatasaray | 7 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 10 |
| Qarabag FK | 7 | 3 | 1 | 3 | -2 | 10 |
| Marseille | 7 | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 9 |
| Leverkusen | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | -4 | 9 |
| Monaco | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | -6 | 9 |
| PSV | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 8 |
| Athletic Club | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | -4 | 8 |
| Olympiacos | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | -5 | 8 |
| Napoli | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | -5 | 8 |
| Copenhagen | 7 | 2 | 2 | 3 | -6 | 8 |
| Club Brugge | 7 | 2 | 1 | 4 | -5 | 7 |
| Bodo/Glimt | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | -2 | 6 |
| Benfica | 7 | 2 | 0 | 5 | -4 | 6 |
| Pafos | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | -6 | 6 |
| Union Saint-Gilloise | 7 | 2 | 0 | 5 | -10 | 6 |
| Ajax | 7 | 2 | 0 | 5 | -12 | 6 |
| Eintracht Frankfurt | 7 | 1 | 1 | 5 | -9 | 4 |
| Slavia Praha | 7 | 0 | 3 | 4 | -11 | 3 |
| Villarreal | 7 | 0 | 1 | 6 | -10 | 1 |
| Kairat | 7 | 0 | 1 | 6 | -14 | 1 |

Note: Top eight qualify directly for last 16; teams from ninth to 24th enter a play-off round to contest the remaining last-16 berths; bottom 12 teams will be eliminated.



UCL'S DECISIVE NIGHT: Chelsea's Cole Palmer enjoys a training session as a dramatic final day of the Champions League league phase beckons, with all 30 teams from Real Madrid in third to Ajax in 32nd still in contention for the play-off round. As it stands, only Real Madrid, Liverpool and Tottenham know that a win will secure direct qualification to the last 16. Just behind them, PSG, Newcastle, Chelsea, Barcelona, Sporting CP, Manchester City, Atlético Madrid and Atalanta are level on 13 points, one behind Spurs, with victory giving them a strong chance of a top-eight finish and automatic qualification. However, goal difference could yet be decisive, and even a win on matchday eight may not be enough. Chelsea travel to Napoli, while Barcelona host Copenhagen and Manchester City welcome Galatasaray in more favourable fixtures.

PHOTO: CHELSEA

Tigresses wary of Thailand on T20 WC road

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will look to move a step closer to the ICC Women's T20 World Cup when they take on Thailand in their opening Super Six match of the Qualifiers in Kathmandu today.

The Tigresses stormed into the Super Six unbeaten, winning all four group matches and carrying four crucial points forward.

A win for Bangladesh at Mulpani Cricket Ground, combined with a Netherlands victory over the USA in the day's other match, would see both Bangladesh and Netherlands (four points) secure qualification for the main event in England and Wales in June. Four teams will advance from the Super Six stage.

Bangladesh began with a 21-run win over the USA before defeating Papua New Guinea and Namibia by 30 and 80 runs respectively. They then edged Ireland by nine runs in a high-voltage clash to top Group A.

Sharmin Akhter Supta has been in fine form, leading Bangladesh's batting charts with 156 runs in four innings – the second-highest in the tournament – while Rabeya Khan has taken seven wickets, joint fourth among the top bowlers.

Captain Nigar Sultana Joty credited recent domestic T20 competitions for the team's consistent batting form. "Our batters have been in great touch since the NCL and BCL. Here too, we've consistently scored 140-plus," she said.

Despite a 7-0 record against Thailand in T20s, Joty warned against complacency. "Every team is competitive, and every point matters. We're not taking anyone lightly."



Minnows seize transfer window to tighten BFL race

SPORTS REPORTER

With the mid-term transfer window of the Bangladesh Football League (BFL) set to close on January 31, the league's smaller outfits are moving decisively to reshape the title race and relegation battles, capitalising on a rare opening created by restrictions on the country's traditional powerhouses.

Abahani, Mohammedan, and joint table toppers Bashundhara Kings are currently unable to register new players due to a FIFA ruling related to unpaid wages. That situation has left the door ajar for the rest of the league, and the minnows appear keen to step through it.

At the end of the first phase, Kings sit joint top of the 10-team table with 18 points from nine matches alongside Fortis FC, while Rahmatganj are close behind on 15 points. Abahani, meanwhile, are fifth with 13 points, and defending champions Mohammedan are sixth with just 10 points.

As the second phase is expected to begin after the February 12 national elections, clubs outside the big three have turned the mid-season window into a strategic weapon, reinforcing their squads with foreign and regional players in a bid to close the gap at the

top and escape the relegation zone.

Footballers from South Asia have dominated the transfer activity, with three Bhutan national team players and two Pakistan national team players already confirmed to make their BFL debuts in the second phase. Several clubs have also brought in players from African nations, alongside additions from Brazil and Russia.



Fortis FC have confirmed the signings of Bhutanese left wing-back Dawa Tshering and local goalkeeper Nayeem Islam, while continuing their search for a striker. Manager Rashedul Islam said the club was focused on maintaining balance rather than wholesale changes.

"We are going to add value instead of numbers because we want to keep the team bonding, combination, and understanding intact," said Islam.

Second-placed Rahmatganj managed to secure Ghanaian forward

Earnest Boateng, a familiar face at the Old Dhaka club, despite financial limitations preventing further reinforcements. Coach Kamal Babu believes the addition could help them "fight for the top two positions" after the side played the first phase without a genuine striker.

Bangladesh Police FC, who sit just behind the leading pack, have signed Bhutanese player Sherub Dorji along with two locals and are close to adding an African forward, as their coach Asifuzzaman aims to see "ourselves on the top of the table."

At the other end of the table, promoted sides PWD and Arambagh have also been active. PWD brought in a Bhutanese defender, two Pakistani players – goalkeeper Usman Ali and Ali Uzair – three foreigners from Brazil, Ghana, and Russia, and five U-19 footballers, including Bangladesh U-19 captain Nazmul Huda Faisal. Arambagh, meanwhile, added a Ghanaian forward and four experienced local players in their bid to escape the relegation zone.

With the giants unable to strengthen and the rest reinforcing aggressively, the second phase of the BFL is shaping up to be an exciting one.

Historic first in open era

STAR SPORTS DESK

The 2026 Australian Open has written a unique piece of already tennis history. For the first time in the Open Era, which began in 1968, the top six seeds in both the men's and women's singles have progressed to the last eight of a Grand Slam. It is a statistical first in 58 years of top-level tennis.

While the women's draw last achieved this feat in the 1998 US Open, and the men did so as recently as the 2024 Australian Open, this marks the first occasion both draws have mirrored each other so perfectly at the same major.

The trade-off has been a noticeable lack of early-round drama. Upsets were scarce, straight-sets victories common, and the opening stages unfolded without the usual Grand Slam chaos.

What the tournament has delivered instead is a loaded quarter-final line-up – a heavyweight clash of the sport's elite, promising quality over surprise as the Australian Open moves into its decisive phase.



Carlos Alcaraz swept into the Australian Open semifinals for the first time on Tuesday and a clash with Alexander Zverev to take a step closer to tennis history. The Spanish world number one silenced a partisan Melbourne crowd in brushing aside outclassed home hope Alex de Minaur 7-5, 6-2, 6-1 at Rod Laver Arena. The 22-year-old Alcaraz is yet to drop a set as he arrws in a maiden Australian Open crown. "I'm just really happy how I'm playing every match, each round my level is increasing," he said.

PHOTO: AFP



Govt trying to get Bhola gas as LNG

Stakeholders frustrated over plans

ASIFUR RAHMAN

After a private operator fell far short of delivering the approved volume of gas from Bhola island to the mainland in compressed form, the government has now moved to pursue a liquefied gas option – despite warnings that it may also prove commercially unviable due to high costs.

A more viable alternative could be to set up power plants in Bhola and transmit electricity to the mainland, or develop export-oriented industries on the island to directly utilise the gas reserves, said sector stakeholders in a public hearing yesterday.

They expressed frustration as the plans to instal a gas pipeline from Bhola to Barishal to feed underutilised power plants in Khulna or to connect Bhola's gas to the Padma Bridge pipeline for national distribution – remain stalled.

The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) held the public hearing to set Bhola's gas prices for industrial and captive power usage in LNG format.

Following instructions from the energy division and



PHOTO: ASADUZZAMAN TIPU

The 41-km Dinajpur branch canal under the Teesta Irrigation Project has dried up as all upstream regulator gates remain closed following a breach at Sindoi village in Nilphamari on January 20. As a result, authorities have had to suspend irrigation for about 10,000 hectares of boro fields in Nilphamari and Dinajpur until the Water Development Board carries out repairs. The photo was taken in Nilphamari Sadar upazila yesterday.

Govt lenience fuelling mobs

Say speakers at a dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government patronage is fuelling organised mobs in the country, said speakers at a dialogue yesterday.

At a dialogue organised by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) styled "Media Reform in Bangladesh: Between Freedom, Responsibility and Power", Editors' Council President Nurul Kabir described the attacks on the offices of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo in the capital's Kawran Bazar as cases in point.

The government either allowed the attacks on December 18 last year or failed to prevent them, he said.

"That was not spontaneous – that was organised," he said, adding that the inability of fire services to reach the scene reflected a grave breakdown of state responsibility.

Earlier this month, in an interview with Al Jazeera Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam dismissed Kabir's assertion that the entire government or a part of the government let the attacks happen, saying the allegation lacked evidence. Kabir, however, rejected Alam's statement.

Citing Alam's post on his Facebook page the day after the twin attacks in which he said he had made scores of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

EU, India agree to 'mother of all' trade deals

The pact set to cover a quarter of global GDP

AFP, New Delhi

The European Union (EU) and India yesterday announced the "mother of all deals", a huge trade pact to create a market of two billion people, reached after two decades of negotiations.

EU chiefs and Prime Minister Narendra Modi hope the pact will help shield against challenges from the world's two leading economies, the United States and China.

The agreement will cut or eliminate tariffs on almost 97 percent of European exports, saving up to 4 billion euros (\$4.75 billion) annually in duties, the 27-nation bloc said.

"A mother of all deals," Modi said yesterday in the capital New Delhi, where he met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council

President Antonio Costa.

"This deal will bring many opportunities for India's 1.4 billion and many millions of people of the EU," Modi said, adding the agreement "represents about 25 percent of global GDP, and one-third of global trade".

The EU has eyed India – the world's most populous nation – as an important market for the future.

"Europe and India are making history today," von der Leyen said in a statement, a day after she and Costa were feted as guests of honour at India's Republic Day parade. "We have created a free trade zone of two billion people, with both sides set to benefit."

EU officials said the deal was the most ambitious India had ever agreed, and European companies would

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ATTACK ON Star Submit probe report by March 8

Court tells cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked detectives to submit the probe report by March 8 in a case filed over vandalism, arson, and looting at The Daily Star's office in the capital.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Awlad Hossain Muhammad Zonaid passed the order after the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police failed to submit the report within the earlier deadline, a police officer at the court said.

On December 23 last year, the court had directed the investigator to submit the probe report by yesterday.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 6

Dhaka, Beijing sign drone procurement deal

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) and China Electronics Technology Group Corporation International (CETC) yesterday signed a government-to-government agreement (G2G) for establishing an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) manufacturing and assembly plant, as well as for technology transfer.

Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmud Khan attended the ceremony as the chief guest at the BAF Headquarters, according to a statement on BAF's verified Facebook page.

Under the agreement, the BAF and CETC International will jointly establish a state-of-the-art UAV production and assembly facility in Bangladesh.

"This will include technology transfer, capacity building, industrial skill development, and joint technical cooperation, which will help achieve long-term self-reliance in UAV production," the statement said.

Initially, the BAF will acquire the capability to produce

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

- BERC proposes Tk 47.50 per cubic metre at consumer level
- Tariff same as Intraco's CNG price
- Stakeholders oppose high price
- Bhola's gas key source for new gas supplies

applications from Petrobangla with two other distributor companies – Titas Gas and Sundarban Gas – the technical evaluation committee of BERC proposed a gas price of Tk 47.50 per cubic metre at the consumer level.

The proposed price matches the rate at which the private company Intraco supplies gas to industries in small quantities as compressed natural gas (CNG).

During the hearing, most stakeholders opposed the move, arguing that such high rates would make usage unfeasible, as they currently receive gas at Tk 30 per cubic metre from the pipeline.

Recently, the BERC fixed Tk 40 per cubic metre as the gas price for new industries.

According to the proposals, six gas wells from Shahbazpur Gas Field are currently in operation, with a production capacity of around 120 million cubic feet per day (mmcf/d).

Bhola island's demand stands at 90 mmcf/d. The remaining 30 mmcf/d is planned to be supplied to

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Vendors occupy both pavements and a significant portion of this street in the capital's Gulistan. They've been running their businesses illegally in plain view of the authorities for a long time. The photo was taken yesterday.

'Some' US feds to leave city after fatal shooting

Says Minneapolis mayor after talks with Trump

AGENCIES

Some federal immigration agents were due to leave Minneapolis yesterday, the city's mayor said, as US President Donald Trump struck a conciliatory note after nationwide outrage over the killings of two American citizens.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said in a post on social media platform X that "some federal agents" will begin leaving the city, but did not provide specifics of how many. "I will continue pushing for the rest involved in this operation to go," Frey added.

Frey said he spoke with Trump on Monday, adding: "The president

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ABU SAYED KILLING Trial ends, wait for verdict begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday kept its verdict pending in the case over the killing of Begum Rokeya University student Abu Sayed during the July 2024 uprising in Rangpur, with judgement expected any day.

The three-member tribunal placed the case under CAV (Curia Advisari Vult), a Latin term meaning the court has reserved its judgement, after concluding arguments from both

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URGENT NOTICE

Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC SYSTEM UPGRADATION

Dear Valued Customers,

To ensure more advanced, secure, and reliable banking services, Core Banking System (CBS) upgradation activities will be carried out as per the following schedule. During this period, Al-Arafah Islami Bank PLC banking services will remain temporarily unavailable.

| Sl. | Date & Time | Interrupted Services |
|-----|---|---|
| 1 | From 30/01/2026, 12:01 AM to 07/02/2026, 11:59 PM | All online banking services including Card, iBanking, ATM, Islamic Wallet, Agent Banking, etc. will remain unavailable. |
| 2 | From 01/02/2026 to 03/02/2026 | Cash deposit, cash withdrawal, and other branch-based banking services will remain suspended. |
| 3 | On 05/02/2026 from 10:00 AM | Limited branch-based services will be available, only for cash transactions. |
| 4 | From 08/02/2026 | All banking services will resume and operate normally. |

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience caused during this period and highly appreciate your patience and cooperation.