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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.

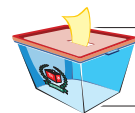
The demands were made at a press conference organised by the Samajik Protirodh Committee at the Jatiya Press Club. The platform comprises 71 women's, human rights and development organisations. Speakers also read out a memorandum addressed to the chief election commissioner.

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

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



FEBRUARY 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-4

Neglect, mounting woes and renewed pledges

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

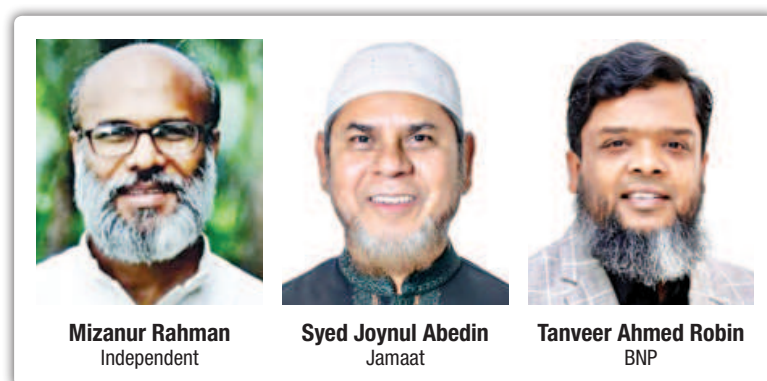
In the afternoon, a group of tired workers and locals were sipping tea at a roadside stall in front of an iron factory in the Jalalabad area of Muradpur under Kadamtali in the capital.

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."

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3

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

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'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

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

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