



PHOTO: BNP/STAR/TITU DAS/MASUK HRIDOOY

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL... *Clockwise from top left:* BNP supporters at a rally in Bogura town's Altafunnesa Playground; Jamaat chief Shafiqur Rahman joins a rally in the capital's Mirpur 1 area in support of Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem, party candidate for Dhaka-14; Gono Samhati Andolon candidate Taslima Akhter during a voter outreach programme in Dhaka-12 area; Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal Barishal-5 candidate Manisha Chakraborty reaches out to young voters in the city's BM College area; independent candidate Rumeen Farhana engages with female voters in Bijoy Nagar under Brahmanbaria-2. The photos were taken between Wednesday and yesterday.



'Ensure policy support, cut red tape, bribery'

Business leaders ask Jamaat if it's voted to power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Business leaders yesterday urged the Jamaat-e-Islami to ensure policy support, cut red tape, and curb bribery to improve the ease of doing business if it forms the next government after the February 12 election.

They also demanded punishment for money launderers, uninterrupted gas supply and new gas connections for industrial units, deferment of Bangladesh's graduation from the least developed country (LDC) group, and greater facilitation of exports, particularly in the garment, IT, and software sectors.

Their other demands included improving the business and investment climate, strengthening law and order, lowering bank interest rates, improving infrastructure, and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI).

The demands were made at a discussion titled

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Remain strictly professional during polls

Gen Waker asks troops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army Chief General Waker-Uz Zaman yesterday directed members of the armed forces to perform their election-related duties with strict professionalism and neutrality.

He gave the directives during his visit to Cox's Bazar ahead of the 13th national parliamentary election and referendum, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a press release.

The army chief travelled to the coastal district as part of election preparations. He met with senior military officers, officials of various law enforcement agencies, and members of the civil administration at the BIAM Foundation regional centre.

The meeting discussed inter-agency coordination and overall security management to ensure that the upcoming national election and referendum are held in a peaceful, fair, and neutral manner.

At the meeting, Gen Waker emphasised the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

'Apologise for your misdeeds in 1971'

Says Fakhru hinting at Jamaat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday called on a political party to apologise for its misdeeds during the Liberation War before seeking votes from the public.

He made the remark while addressing an election campaign meeting in the Goreya union of the Thakurgaon-1 constituency in the afternoon.

Fakhru recalled the widespread atrocities committed by the Pakistan army in 1971, saying many families were forced to flee to India and homes were torched.

Referring to his own experience, he said his family home in Thakurgaon town was completely looted and destroyed, including the underground fuel tank of their petrol pump and several trucks owned by his father's construction business.

"The Pakistan army did all that. And we know very well who collaborated with them at that time."



SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

IN SHADOW OF MEGA PROJECTS

People of Dhalghata want homes along with growth

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, Cox's Bazar

There is little doubt that one area of Bangladesh is poised to become a major commercial centre in the future.

In Cox's Bazar's Moheshkhali upazila, particularly in Dhalghata union, large-scale development projects are rapidly reshaping the region. On one side stands a 1,200 megawatt coal-fired power plant and the construction of a deep sea port is underway nearby.

Officials and stakeholders believe these mega projects could transform the area into a key hub for business and investment.

However, alongside this development, the area's long-standing social fabric is gradually disappearing. Many residents have already sold their ancestral land to the government and left the area. A large number of labour-dependent families, who had lived there for generations, say they were forced to relocate earlier after receiving minimal compensation. Several families are still living under the fear of eviction.

SEE PAGE 12 COL 5

Farm loan relief, Padma barrage if BNP elected

FROM PAGE 1

and is now trying to obstruct the polls.

Tarique's visit to Rajshahi for the rally came after around 22 years, drawing large crowds including leaders, activists and supporters.

He reached Rajshahi airport at 12:20pm. Travelling on a red and green bus, he first visited the shrine of Shah Makhdom (R) and then went to the rally venue. His motorcade faced heavy congestion as security personnel struggled to clear the crowd.

Accompanied by his wife Zubaida Rahman, he took to the stage on the madrasa grounds at 1:54pm. Supporters welcomed them by chanting slogans.

From morning, party leaders and activists arrived at the venue from Naogaon, Chapainawabganj, and surrounding districts by bus and truck, carrying party flags and wearing colourful caps and T-shirts. Small processions, some accompanied by musical bands, continued to arrive throughout the day.

A large number of supporters gathered at the field to catch a glimpse of Tarique; some even climbed nearby trees to listen to his speech.

Addressing the crowd, he promised to revive development projects in the Barind region to ensure sustainable agricultural growth.

"Among state-owned institutional projects, the Barind Project was the largest, with its own budget of about Tk 1,000 crore.... Over the past 16 years, no real work has been done. Today, it is almost shut down.

"If the BNP comes to power, it will be properly revived."

He further pledged to establish cold storages for mangoes in

Rajshahi and Chapainawabganj to help farmers preserve their produce and secure better prices.

Referring to employment, he said, "Although there is an IT park in Rajshahi, it is practically inactive. We will make the IT park functional and provide skills training to youths for employment."

He added that entrepreneurs would be given special support to establish agriculture-based industries to create jobs across the northern region.

Calling the February 12 election "very important", Tarique said it will be the day the people of Bangladesh must decide which direction the country will move.

"We have to decide whether we will take the country towards democracy or let it move in another direction.... If we run the country in a democratic way, then it will be possible to implement the plans I have placed before you. "But if we fail to protect democracy, there will be 'mega projects', but none for the people."

He added that accountable governance can only be achieved when the foundation of democracy is strong. "Those who are accountable to the people will work for the people. In the past, those who held power were not accountable. That is why we saw corruption, oppression, enforced disappearances, killings, and millions of people becoming victims of cases and repression."

Referring to recent incidents of political violence, Tarique said, "If any unwanted incident occurs anywhere, there is an interim government... I request it to conduct a fair and proper investigation. If the investigation finds any role of the BNP, we will cooperate in the probe.

"But the investigation must be proper, and justice must be served according to the country's law."

He ended his speech by introducing the 13 BNP candidates from Rajshahi, Natore and Chapainawabganj. He told the crowd, "Your job is to watch over them until the 12th. From the 13th, they will watch over you."

Speaking at a rally in Naogaon's Etim grounds later in the day, Tarique Rahman said a party had stayed away from public movements and protests over the past 16 years, but had all along been secretly aligned with those who have fled the country.

"Over the last 16 years, did you see them anywhere on the streets or in movements? Did you see them in protests? They were nowhere. But secretly, they were with them all the time. Now they have started new conspiracies. That is why you must keep your eyes and ears open, so that they cannot move your votes here and there.

"You must guard the ballot boxes. Do you remember what happened in 2008? In 2008, that 'magic' happened — one moment the box was empty, the next moment it was full. You remember, right? So, you must be careful."

Addressing voters in Naogaon and Joypurhat, he said there has been no development in the areas over the last 16 years.

"Yes, there were some big flyovers and tall buildings in Dhaka and a few other cities. There were mega projects. But mega projects also meant mega corruption.

"We want to change the fate of people living in the villages. We want to change the fate of district towns. We want to change the fate of upazila towns. We want to ensure education for our students. We want

to make our women and mothers self-reliant. We want to create jobs for unemployed youth. We want to create a safe situation where people can walk safely, do business safely, and sleep safely at night."

Tarique urged voters to ensure the BNP's victory so that the party can meet their demands, including railway connectivity in Naogaon.

Around 12:00am, Tarique reached his ancestral district Bogura after 19 years.

Bogura-6 is also the constituency from which Tarique is contesting the election.

At 12:23am, he addressed the rally saying, "I want to thank Allah because after 19 years I have come to my own home, Bogura. I do not know what to say to you. I have become emotional. I cannot understand what speech to give."

He said that during the 2001-2006 BNP government, Bogura saw better development than many other districts of Bangladesh, something to be proud of.

"The work in the area was carried out by my mother, Khaleda Zia. Today she is no longer here. I am standing here in her place. Should I speak as a son or as a candidate?"

The crowd answered, "Son!"

Tarique then said, "You are my own people. I want to share this with you — in 2001-2006, my situation was one, but now it is another. Now the whole of Bangladesh is deprived.

"The people of Bogura must be serious about this election."

"Jobs and business will be based on merit. No one should say that someone is getting advantages just because they are from Bogura district!"

(Our Rajshahi and Bogura correspondents also contributed to the report.)

IAB vows to protect minorities thru' Islam

FROM PAGE 1

itself into an instrument of oppression and a source of profit for a specific small group, failing to ensure the security of minorities even after 55 years of independence, he said.

"Through rising commodity prices, inflation, and financial mismanagement, the weak have been made even weaker. Taxes are collected from the hard-earned income of people, and that tax money is siphoned off abroad," he said.

Students and members of the general public shed blood, lost their lives, and suffered disability and blindness in the 2024 uprising in an effort to overthrow this old system, the IAB ameer said at street meetings and election rallies in the northern districts.

"We have come to seek your votes by presenting Islam as an alternative, to turn the demands of the students and the people into reality. To erase 54 years of failure and to build the Bangladesh of our dreams, vote for the Hand Fan symbol. We promise that you will no longer be disappointed," he said.

He also claimed only IAB clearly presented Islam as the guiding principle for running the state in Bangladesh. "Therefore, those who love Islam, those who love the country, and those who want to overcome half a century of failure should vote for the Hand Fan symbol."

Among the other central and

local leaders who spoke at the programmes included Professor Mahbubur Rahman, a member of the party's presidium and convener of its Central Election Management Committee; and Sultan Ahmed, secretary general of IAB's student wing Islami Chhatra Andolan.

Claim of Sherpur

FROM PAGE 5

more than 15,000 views and over 100 shares. Similar claims were also posted from multiple other Facebook profiles and pages.

Besides, a local correspondent of a TV channel published a post on the channel's official page reporting Saiful Islam's death.

What the fact-check found Dismislab's investigation team contacted Jubaidul Islam, the Sherpur correspondent of News24, who confirmed that, "Saiful Islam, who was injured in the Jamaat-BNP clash in Sherpur, has not died."

The organisation further verified the matter after Saiful Islam himself appeared in a live video from his Facebook account.

In the live video, Saiful said, "Some people have spread the rumour that I had died. Alhamdulillah, I am alive. I am not dead... Please, do not believe such rumours."

Dismislab directly contacted Saiful, who confirmed that he had already gone live from his personal Facebook profile to clarify the false news.