

Uphold dignity of children with disabilities: Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday urged everyone to stand by children with disabilities.

"Let us all take an oath today to support children with disabilities around us from our own positions. Let us try together to build a Bangladesh where all people, in one way or another, will have dignity and where everyone can live with self-respect," he said at a wheelchair give-away programme for persons with disabilities at a Bogura hotel around 12:00pm.

The programme was organised by the non-government organisation CSF Global, on behalf of Tarique's wife Zubaida Rahman, for children and adolescents with special needs.

Urging for support for persons with disabilities from both social and state positions, Tarique said proper support would help nurture talent across the country.

"It does not take much. What is needed is opportunity, so that they can move freely in the light and air of the world like everyone else. Minimum SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Battery-run auto-rickshaws continue to ply Dhaka streets despite a ban. Although law enforcers carry out drives against them, their operations persist. The photo was taken on North-South Road in the Siddique Bazar area yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bandarban voters demand more than promises

MONG SING HAI MARMA, Bandarban

The remote hill district of Bandarban comprises a single parliamentary constituency, designated as constituency 300.

Ahead of the 13th national election, the electoral contest in Bandarban is no longer just about numbers. Instead, voters find themselves at a crossroads, balancing a growing desire for change against decades of perceived neglect.

Although four candidates are in the race, conversations among voters across both indigenous communities and Bangalees largely centre on two names: BNP candidate Sachingpru Jery, contesting with the sheaf of paddy symbol, and National Citizen Party (NCP) candidate Abu Sayeed Md Sujauddin, running with the water lily bud symbol.



According to the district election office, the Bandarban-300 constituency has a total of 3,15,422 voters, including 1,53,667 women and 1,61,775 men. Of them, 30,671 are new voters, most of whom are young people expected to play a decisive role in shaping the outcome.

Employment opportunities, education, connectivity and security dominate discussions among young voters, reflecting both their immediate concerns and long-term aspirations.

Many voters say they are hoping for an election in which they can cast their ballots freely and see their voices meaningfully reflected in national politics.

"Everyone comes during elections with promises to seek votes, but they disappear later," said Kanuching Marma of Thanchi upazila. "This time, we want someone who will actually work for our betterment."

Menle Mro of Alifikadam upazila echoed similar sentiments.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

Abul Hossain has been running a roadside shop in Khilgaon for decades.

Having grown up in the area, he has watched it change from a semi-rural neighbourhood into a dense residential hub. Over the years, he has seen everything - from land grabbing to illicit tender syndicates.

"Over the last few decades, many here have changed their fortunes using political muscle. But for ordinary people like us, life has only become harder," said Abul, a voter in the Dhaka-9 constituency.

He, however, senses a faint hope ahead of the upcoming national election that voters may finally turn away from what he calls "old rotten politics."

With the February 12 polls nearing, Dhaka-9 - comprising Khilgaon, Sabujbagh and Mugda thanas of Dhaka South City Corporation.

pledging to address long-standing problems such as waterlogging and safety issues.

Meanwhile, Javed Rasin, backed by the Jamaat-led 11-party alliance, is campaigning on the "spirit of the July Uprising" and calls for "radical political reform".

He has been outspoken against extortion, corruption, and what he describes as the "Godfather culture."

Dhaka-9 includes wards 1 to 7 and wards 71 to 75 under Khilgaon, Sabujbagh and Mugda thanas of Dhaka South City Corporation.

The constituency, boasting 4,69,360 voters - 2,37,673 men, 2,31,682 women and five hijra voters - is a densely populated mix of residential and commercial areas.

Khilgaon is largely middle and upper-middle class, Basab and South Banasree are major social hubs, and Mugda is a fast-growing centre for commerce and transport.

The area also includes the Balu River, Rampura, and Manda canals, and landmarks such as Mugda Medical College and the Basab Buddhist Temple.

Many believe the constituency's fate will hinge on the preferences of young and female voters, as the contest has turned into a battle between the BNP's vote bank and the growing appeal of youth-led politics.

Residents identified waterlogging, traffic congestion, gas shortages and the lack of parks as major concerns.

Even light rainfall floods streets in Sabujbagh, Khilgaon and Mugda. Drug abuse, teen gang activity, and mugging are also common complaints.

At Mugda Hospital, allegations of broker interference, bed shortages and medical negligence persist.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



PEACEBUILDING Bangladesh elected vice chair of UN commission

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has been elected as the vice-chair of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) for the year 2026.

The election of the five-member bureau of the PBC was held at the UN Headquarters in New York on Thursday.

The members of the commission during its first meeting of the 20th session elected Morocco as chair while Germany, Brazil and Croatia and Bangladesh were elected as vice chairs.

The Peacebuilding Commission is an international advisory body that supports peace efforts in conflict-affected countries.

The commission is composed of 31 member states, elected from the General Assembly, the Security Council, the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



Border Guard Bangladesh searches a vehicle as BGB strengthens security measures ahead of the February 12 parliamentary elections. The photo was taken in front of Rajshahi city's Postal Academy yesterday. PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

DHAKA-4

Pro-people dev, accountability Pledges independent candidate Mizanur in election manifesto



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mizanur Rahman, an independent candidate from Dhaka-4 (Shyampur, Kadamtali and parts of Jatrabari) constituency, yesterday unveiled his election manifesto, pledging people-centred development, environmental protection, and strict accountability of public institutions.

The manifesto was announced at a press conference held beside an unplanned garbage dumping site at Munshibari Intersection in Jatrabari, a location chosen to symbolically highlight what he described as years of unplanned development, neglect and mismanagement that have turned the entire Dhaka-4 area into a dumping ground of civic problems.

Presenting himself as a representative of citizens

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Boy killed in chemical drum blast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A boy was killed and a workshop owner seriously injured after an empty drum that previously contained chemicals exploded in Ashuganj upazila of Brahmanbaria yesterday.

The incident occurred around 11:45am at Loknath Workshop in Lalpur Bazar of the upazila.

According to locals, the workshop owner, Loknath Das, was cutting an empty drum with a grinder machine when the explosion occurred. The drum had remained sealed for a long time, and flammable gas is believed to have accumulated inside it.

As the grinder was cutting through the drum, it exploded with a loud bang. At that moment, SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

16 countries sending polls observers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 16 countries have accepted Bangladesh's invitation to send election observers for the upcoming 13th National Parliamentary Election and referendum, scheduled for February 12.

The information was disclosed in an official statement by Chief Adviser's Press Wing yesterday.

These observers will join several hundred international monitors from the European Union, the Commonwealth, and other global organisations.

Malaysia will send the largest contingent with 14 observers, led by Dato Sri Ramli Bin Dato Harun, chairman of the Election Commission of Malaysia.

Turkey will dispatch 12 observers, headed by Mehmet Vakur Erkul, a former Turkish ambassador to Bangladesh.

Other countries confirming observer teams include Indonesia (5), Japan (4), Pakistan (3),

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Manisha to fund campaign with clay bank donations

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) candidate in Barishal-5 constituency, Dr Manisha Chakraborty, yesterday launched a grassroots initiative to raise funds for her election campaign.

In the first phase, Tk 10,000 was collected from 10 clay banks (earthen money box), previously distributed among the public to deposit donation.

Manisha, contesting with the "moi" (ladder) symbol, inaugurated the programme at the party's Barishal office around 11:00am.

She said more than a hundred clay banks had earlier been handed over to workers and supporters. Of those, 10 were opened in the first phase and the remaining 90 will be opened gradually.

She also called on her supporters to contribute to the campaign through mobile financial services.

"In elections, money often becomes the deciding factor. We want to break free from that culture," Manisha said, adding that the use of "black money" (undeclared wealth) in elections forces candidates

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

FEBRUARY 12 ELECTION 35,000 BGB members being deployed from tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 35,000 members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will be deployed across the country from tomorrow to help maintain law and order for the February 12 national election.

In several districts, BGB members have already been deployed and have begun setting up base camps.

A total of 1,210 platoons of BGB will be deployed across all 64 districts from February 1, Shariful Islam, public relations officer of BGB Headquarters, told The Daily Star.

In Narayanganj, 17 platoons of BGB have been deployed, with camps set up across all five upazilas of the district.

During a press briefing at the BGB permanent

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5