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Spanish ambassador condemns attack on *Star*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Spanish Ambassador to Bangladesh Gabriel Maria Sistiaga Ochoa de Chinchetru visited The Daily Star office yesterday and expressed solidarity and support for the newspaper, which came under arson attacks and vandalism on December 19. “I would also like to convey to you my solidarity and support, along with my appreciation for the work that the media do in a democratic society,” he said while condemning the attack on the newspaper. A group of attackers carried out a coordinated assault in the early hours of December 19 on the headquarters of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo in Dhaka, vandalising offices, looting valuables and setting fires.

At least 28 journalists
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Spanish Ambassador to Bangladesh Gabriel Maria Sistiaga Ochoa de Chinchetru talks to The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam and Consulting Editor Kamal Ahmed during his visit to The Daily Star Centre yesterday to express solidarity and support for the newspaper, which came under arson attacks and vandalism in the early hours of December 19.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Comparison cannot justify rights violations

Speakers tell symposium

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is no scope to downplay current human rights violations by comparing the present situation with past authoritarian rule, speakers said at a symposium yesterday.

They said recent indications of custodial deaths, torture, mob violence and a tendency to implicate individuals in motivated cases suggest that human rights concerns persist.

The speakers noted there is “no room” to claim conditions have improved while such incidents continue.

The symposium, titled “State of Human Rights in Bangladesh: An Overview”, was held at the Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA) auditorium in Dhanmondi and highlighted the need for a justice system that can ensure accountability without fear or favour.

Retired justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury, former chairman

Enforced disappearance is more than death. Families can mourn a death through religious rites, but disappearances leave them in complete darkness.

MOYEEENUL ISLAM CHOWDHURY

Wrongdoing must be called wrongdoing regardless of the timeframe. Smaller abuses today cannot be made acceptable because bigger abuses occurred in the past.

NUR KHAN LITON

of the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, said judicial independence is the “lifeblood” of a democratic constitution.

Moyeenul, also the chief guest, said public perception of this independence is essential, adding that if citizens believe the

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A walk thru Dhaka-9 with Tasnim Jara



NILIMA JAHAN

Just after 9:00am on Friday, independent Dhaka-9 candidate Tasnim Jara stepped into the narrow lanes of Goran Bazar in Khilgaon with around 15 volunteers by her side.

There were no posters, loudspeakers, or processions. Instead, she blended easily into the neighbourhood, going door to door, speaking directly with street vendors, shoppers, and families.

They were asked to vote for the football symbol and encouraged to persuade five others in the constituency to do the same.

Dhaka-9 – covering Khilgaon, Sabujbagh, and Mugda – is one of the capital’s most densely populated constituencies, with

about 4,69,360 registered voters.

Volunteers handed out leaflets outlining her manifesto, as the team moved slowly through South Goran and Baganbari Kacha Bazar.

Children ran ahead, while adults stepped out to exchange brief greetings. From balconies and rooftops, residents waved or called out as volunteers reminded them to spread the message among friends and family.

Jara drew attention almost everywhere she went. Some residents said they had followed her online videos as a doctor long before she entered politics.

Children approached her often for selfies. A toddler handed her chocolates, a four-year-old boy gave her a football, and his five-

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From boats to ballots

Manta people to vote for the first time in Barishal

SUSHANTA GHOSH

For the first time, members of the river-dwelling Manta community in Barishal are set to exercise their voting rights in the upcoming 13th national elections.

The community has lived on boats along the Arial Khan, Sandhya, Mirganj and several other rivers in Barishal for more than a century. In the absence of national identity cards, most members were previously excluded from the



electoral process. This year, some of them have finally been enlisted as voters.

Currently, around 400 Manta people live with their families on 93 boats in a single fleet on the Arial Khan in Sadar upazila.

Jasim Sarder, a leader of the fleet, said while around 300 of them are adults, only 73 have



been included in the voter list.

“Nonetheless, this will be the first time that 73 voters from our fleet will cast votes,” he said.

Despite this milestone, members of the community said they are disappointed that political candidates have shown little interest in reaching out to them.

They claimed that although around 3,000 Manta people live on different rivers across the district, almost no candidates have visited them during the election campaign so far.

“Only one candidate came to see us last week in Laharhat.

Other than that, no candidate, no chairman, no member has visited us or asked us how we are living. It is disappointing,” Jasim said.

He said many of them might not be able to cast their votes as they lack basic information about polling centres, voting procedures and candidates.

An elderly woman voter from the Laharhat fleet said, “We cannot even bury our dead on land. We drink river water. No candidate comes to us. What will I gain by voting?”

Echoing her, Rana, another Manta leader from Charbaria in

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KUSHTIA-3 (SADAR) ‘Chinese bhabi’ boosts husband’s polls campaign



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

She moves from door to door across villages, stopping at courtyards and narrow village paths, speaking slowly and carefully in Bangla. The words come haltingly, with pauses and a faint accent, often prompting laughter from women and children gathered around her. But the laughter is warm, curious, welcoming. And before long, the crowd is listening.

Wang Lina, a Chinese national, is campaigning for her husband, BNP candidate Zakir Hossain Sarkar, in the Kushtia-3 (Sadar) constituency.

“I am learning Bangla slowly,” she tells people, choosing each word with care. “My daughter and sister-in-law teach me. My husband is a good man, an engineer from Buet. His electoral symbol is the sheaf of paddy (dhaner shish), please vote.”

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330 int’l observers confirmed for polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six international organisations, including the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), have agreed to deploy at least 63 observers for Bangladesh’s 13th general election and the referendum on the July National Charter, both scheduled to be held on February 12.

They will join observer missions from the European Union – 16 countries and 32 individuals affiliated with various global bodies, bringing the total number of confirmed international observers for the dual polls to 330 so far.

The number of international observers confirmed for the upcoming election is more than double that of the “controversial general election” held on January 7, 2024.

Star ITIHAS ADDA Uprisings failed to deliver lasting change: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has repeatedly risen against authoritarian rule but has failed to turn popular uprisings into lasting structural change, said speakers yesterday, drawing parallels between the 1969 mass uprising and the July 2024 uprising.

The observations were made at the 10th session of The Daily Star Itihas Adda, titled “The Unfulfilled Mass Aspirations of Mass Uprisings”, held at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

Former caretaker government adviser and economist Hossain Zillur Rahman said the main challenge of mass uprisings lies not in the moment of revolt but in what follows, which he described as the unresolved “day after”.

Referring to 1969, 1990 and 2024, he said all three movements challenged authoritarian rule, though in different forms. While 1969 and 1990 were movements against military regimes, July 2024 was a struggle against authoritarianism under civilian rule.

“When we talk about authoritarianism, we usually mean military rule. But authoritarianism can also exist under civilian governments. If we forget that, our criticism becomes one-dimensional,” he said.

He warned that phrases such as “it will take time” or

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Former caretaker government adviser and economist Hossain Zillur Rahman speaks at the 10th session of The Daily Star Itihas Adda, titled “The Unfulfilled Mass Aspirations of Mass Uprisings”, held at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

‘It’s bizarre, medieval’

Naripokkho slams Jamaat ameer’s remarks on female leadership

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women’s rights organisation Naripokkho has strongly condemned remarks by Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman on women’s political leadership, describing them as “objectionable” and “bizarre”.

In a recent interview with Qatar-based broadcaster Al Jazeera, Shafiqur said it is not possible for a woman to hold the post of ameer of the party.

In a press statement, Naripokkho said the remarks reflect a “medieval mindset” and are pushing Bangladesh further backwards in terms of gender equality and democratic progress.

The organisation noted that in the past, when it suited its political interests,

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