



10 DAYS TO VOTE

Parties hunting voter NIDs, phone numbers in slums

Residents also allege some even took MFS numbers

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Campaigners from major political parties have been collecting voters' national identity (NID) details and mobile phone numbers while canvassing in several slum areas of Dhaka ahead of the election, residents said.

Many residents said Jamaat e-Islami campaigners seeking votes for Jamaat's Daripalla (balancing scale) symbol asked for NID details, sometimes along with phone numbers.

Several slum residents said BNP activists too collected NID photocopies or phone numbers during campaigning in some areas.

The Election Commission at a press release on January 22 said it had learned that certain individuals were collecting voters' personal information and NID details ahead of the February 12 national polls.

The commission warned that carrying, collecting, or transferring another person's NID information, as well as promising donations during campaigns, are punishable offences under the law.

Over the last week, this correspondent visited Bhashantek, Kafrul, Mirpur, Korail, Mohakhali Sat Tala and Tejgaon slums and spoke to at least 50 residents.

They said the trend of political activists collecting data, mainly NID information and, in some cases, phone numbers and mobile financial service numbers, had continued for weeks before declining in the beginning of the fourth week of January, when several incidents drew the attention of the authorities.

Many reported that individuals seeking votes for Jamaat went door to door asking to see NID cards and, in some instances, requested mobile numbers.

Rubina, 59, a resident of the Bhashantek Benarasi Palli field area,

The Election Commission warned that carrying, collecting, or transferring another person's NID information, as well as promising donations during election campaigns, are punishable offences under the law.

said that on January 21, two people came to her home asking for votes for Daripalla and requested her NID card. "When I showed it, they took photos of it on their mobile phones," she said.

Rahela Begum, 53, of Comilla Patti in Bhashantek Slum No. 1, said that about a month ago, people claiming to be campaigners for Jamaat and another group from BNP came to her home and asked to see her NID. Both groups took photos of her NID on their phones.

In the same area, 66-year-old Mossammat Rokeya said a group gathered several men and women in the slum about two weeks ago. "Those who were voters were asked to show their NID cards and give their mobile numbers," she said. She did not provide her card as it was not with her at the time.

Mummi Begum, also a resident of Bhashantek Slum No. 1, said a group of 10 to 12 people went door to door on January 21, seeking votes and collecting NID numbers. She said she challenged the group's motive, leading to an argument.

"Young men from the BNP who were nearby came over and questioned the group about seeking NID photocopies and phone numbers," Mummi said. Locals then informed the police and the administration, and police and army personnel later arrived there and took the group away.

Officer-in-Charge Aslam Hossain of Bhashantek Police Station confirmed that on January 21, locals handed over eight men and four women to the police. "During questioning, they said they were collecting voter ID card details and mobile numbers from different voters," he said.

Niloy Rahman, assistant commissioner (Land) of the Gulshan circle, said the detainees told officials they were conducting an election survey and were not campaigning for any side.

However, a police officer, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the detainees could not produce any document from the EC or other authorities authorising them to conduct a survey. They were released after signing a bond, as police found no evidence of forced collection.

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Residents of the capital's Moghbazar walking along and across the railway tracks yesterday. Amid dense population and heavy traffic, many use the tracks as shortcuts to reach their destinations faster, risking life and limb. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Most of Tarique's polls pledges are area specific

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman has made over four dozen area-specific pledges over the past 10 days while campaigning in 20 districts, assuring the people of job creation, welfare, healthcare, and the development of infrastructure and agriculture.

He addressed 23 election rallies between January 22 and 31.

The BNP chief vowed to create jobs through industrial expansion, including increasing the number of EPZs in Chattogram and establishing new ones in Feni and Cumilla, to woo young voters.

In Gazipur, Tarique pledged to set up new industries, including garment factories, while industrial parks would be established in Sirajganj and Pabna if the BNP is voted to power.

Two political analysts said the area-specific promises are mainly aimed at securing votes, but without a clear framework, roadmap, funding source, and implementation plan, such pledges risk remaining unfulfilled.

During his Rajshahi visit, Tarique committed to providing special support for building agriculture-based mills in Rajshahi, Rangpur, and the northern region. He also promised tax exemptions for a certain period for IT companies to generate employment.



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This election will end 'era of Aynaghar'

Jamaat ameer tells rally in Jamalpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jamaat e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday described the upcoming national parliamentary election as a turning point for Bangladesh.

"It [the election] stands on the sacrifice of 1,400 martyrs. It marks the end of the dark 'Aynaghar' era. It is an election to end the tears of the martyrs' families. It is an election to bury the rotten politics of the past," he said while addressing a rally organised at the Shinghajani Bohumukhi High School field in Jamalpur.

He said that if his party is voted to power, it will ensure jobs for the youth. "The youth do not want allowances; they want work."

"We will not insult them with unemployment allowances; instead, we will give them jobs."



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13 constituencies 'highly risky'

Police cite violence, heavyweight races; security beefed up

TOUSIF KARUM and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Police have identified 13 constituencies across nine districts as "high risk" ahead of the February 12 national election, after analysing political violence since the announcement of the polls schedule on December 11.

Meanwhile, reports indicate possible sabotage and clashes.

According to a police intelligence report, the identified seats are those where heavyweights are contesting, and incidents of violence have already been reported.

At least 57 clashes occurred in 50 constituencies, leaving 257 people injured and four killed since the polls schedule was announced, police officials said.

The high-risk constituencies are: Pabna-1 and Pabna-3; Khulna-5; Patuakhali-3; Barishal-5; Tangail-4; Sherpur-3; Dhaka-8 and Dhaka-15; Cumilla-4 and Cumilla-11; and Noakhali-2 and Noakhali-6.

Police data shows that of the 57 clashes, 25 occurred between the BNP and Jamaat e-Islami, while eight were intra-party clashes within the BNP, and another eight took place between the BNP and independent candidates. Around three were between the BNP and the National Citizen Party, an electoral ally of Jamaat.

"We have given instructions to increase security and police presence in these constituencies," a senior

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Fear now shapes journalism in Bangladesh

Mahfuz Anam tells Al Jazeera

STAR DESK

An overriding fear now shapes journalism in Bangladesh, where even a slight deviation from dominant narratives can invite attack, said Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

Speaking to The Listening Post on Al Jazeera, he said, "Today, we have far more free mainstream media, more investigative stories. Independent thinking is definitely much more prominent than before. But that overriding fear -- that if I slightly deviate from the present popular narrative, I might be attacked -- also exists."

"To tell you frankly, we sometimes think very carefully, should I use this word or that word? This sort of thinking, which is against the culture of independent media, also exists, now."

Reflecting on the attack on The Daily Star, he said, "We are now in a situation where we have to be very careful about what we say and do. We are being attacked from all sides. We are being attacked by the government, by the media, by the public. We are being attacked by everyone."



Chhatra Dal activists march the streets of Dhaka University yesterday in protest against what they described as a misogynistic post made by Jamaat e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman on X a day earlier. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Jamaat ameer's X account posts anti-women remarks

Gets flak; party alleges hacking; BNP questions Jamaat's defence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The comment against women allegedly made from the verified X account of Jamaat e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman has triggered widespread debate and criticism both online and offline.

People from different walks of life, particularly women, strongly criticised the Jamaat ameer over the alleged comment and held protests at various places across the country, including the Dhaka University campus.

The party, meanwhile, claimed the account was hacked by a 'special group' and filed a GD at Hatirjheel Police Station.

At 4:37pm on Saturday, a post denigrating women was published from Jamaat ameer's verified X account. A screenshot of the post went viral on social media, sparking an outcry, particularly among women.

The post, which was later deleted, stated that women should not be in leadership roles and portrayed

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1 RELATED STORY ON PAGE 2



Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman, *left*, addressing an election rally, organised by 11-party electoral alliance, at Sherpur Municipal Park yesterday. *Top right*, Rajshahi-2 BNP candidate Mizanur Rahman Minu seeking votes in the city's Bulonpur area, while Jatiya Party nominee for Khulna-5 Shamima Ara Parvin, *bottom right*, distributing leaflets during her campaign in the Shiromoni area.



PHOTO: JAMAAT MEDIA CELL, AZAHAR UDDIN, HABIBUR RAHMAN

JAMAAT AMEER'S 'REMARKS' DU, JnU erupt in protests

Students refute X account hack claim, demand public apology

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protests erupted at Dhaka University (DU) and Jagannath University (JnU) campuses yesterday over allegations that Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman made derogatory remarks about working women in a post on his X (formerly Twitter) account.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), left-leaning student bodies, and groups of working women staged separate demonstrations, including broom and torch processions, demanding a public apology from the Jamaat chief.

Around noon, JCD leaders and activists marched from DU's Madhur Canteen, parading through the Arts Building and Raju Sculpture areas before holding a rally at the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla.

Addressing the rally, speakers slammed the Jamaat leader for his alleged comments.

"They [Jamaat] view working women as prostitutes. They do not see women as equals but as servants," said

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BNP, Jamaat spar over poll environment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday met the Chief Election Commissioner with various complaints and accused the other party of disrupting the election environment without mentioning each other by name.

"A party is forming 'peace committees' in various areas under the pretext of law enforcement -- the term 'peace committee' carries historical controversy," said BNP Standing Committee Member Nazrul Islam Khan after the meeting in the morning.

Through this, fear may be created among the public and attempts may be made to suppress the opposition.

The commission, however, said no decision has been made to form such committees and they have no knowledge of this matter, he said, adding that the party has been campaigning in religious institutions in violation of EC rules.

He also alleged unusually high voter migration in certain constituencies before the election.

"Where only 4-5 people are supposed to live, 20-30 voters have been shown. In many cases, voter registration was done without holding numbers. Although the EC says it has found no evidence of these, we are not satisfied with the information provided."

He urged the EC to provide detailed constituency-wise migration information and demanded strict action if any suspicious evidence is found.

"Leaders and activists of certain political parties are working outside their own areas. Although there is no direct legal prohibition, we demand that outsiders leave the area at least two days before the election to prevent any kind of disorder," Khan added.

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'Jamaat will establish US, Indian types of justice'

Says IAB chief

STAR REPORT

Coming down heavily on Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) Ameer Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim yesterday said Jamaat plans to hold "secret meetings" with the US and India to implement "their own versions of justice".

He made the remarks while addressing an election rally in Lakshimpur, where he spoke about the policies and principles of BNP and Jamaat.

Rezaul, who is also the pir of Charmonai, said, "Jamaat says it wants to establish justice. What kind of justice? It will establish justice after holding secret meetings with America and India."

"We have observed Indian justice, we have observed American justice. We, the people of Bangladesh, don't want to see that justice."

Fear now shapes journalism in Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

Daily Star, Anam said the people who actually acted and set fire to the building were unlikely to be The Daily Star readers.

"So what motivated them?" he asked, adding, "I think it was well planned. They had their political motivation, financial motivation, and there was also the idea of demolishing the tradition of liberal journalism, journalism that supports democracy, multiplicity of views, and dissent, in a very big way."

"Our reporting, if it is flawed, somebody can say it. We can be criticised. But to burn us down, I think this is most unfortunate."

He described the night of the attack as "absolute panic". "They [the staff] were having problems breathing. I was talking to the newsroom over the phone, and they were telling me, 'Mahfuz Bhai, we may not meet again'. They were ringing their parents, their wives, their friends, saying maybe they will never meet again," described Anam.

The Daily Star editor said many in Bangladesh use social media to express their views, but

this freedom has also produced "a huge amount of fake news, hate speech, [and] unsubstantiated accusations" just like anywhere else in the world.

He said using social media to attack and discredit individuals or institutions "is also a reality in Bangladesh," adding that some political parties "have taken good advantage of it" by building dedicated "social media teams."

"So if you say anything against this particular political party, suddenly hundreds of people will start abusing you," Anam said. "And if you say something nice, again hundreds of people can start praising you. The political use of social media is very much in vogue."

He continued, "It is well known to anybody who followed social media that night that there was one influencer who said, 'Prothom Alo is down, now go to Daily Star and attack this'."

"They were trying to destroy us as an institution. And by the way, all the criticism that has been made against us has not been

substantiated. Sometimes we were cited totally out of context. So it has been a very deliberate, very powerful, and, I must say, sadly effective way of continuing to denigrate two powerful mainstream media of Bangladesh."

Anam spoke about how the politicisation of media has eroded public trust.

Over the years, journalists have become increasingly divided along political lines, with some openly aligning with one party and others with another, he said.

"So imagine that when the public sees that a journalist who is supposed to tell me the truth actually belongs to a political party, the credibility of that media outlet, the belief of the readers of a paper or viewers of a television, suffers greatly because of the political division within the journalist community."

He said that after being deprived of three credible elections, the public is now entering a fourth with heightened expectation and a strong desire to see a vote that genuinely reflects the people's will.

"Whoever gets elected, they will not forget the fact about the fall of Hasina. And her fall was directly linked with the oppressive nature of her government, and her government's treatment of the media."

He told Al Jazeera that the last 15 years of Sheikh

period of silence."

The editor elaborated how the then government spared no one -- from cartoonists and teachers arrested in midnight raids for innocuous social media posts to the systematic judicial harassment of the nation's leading editorial voices.

"I have had 83 cases launched against me by Hasina. Matiuur Rahman, the editor of Prothom Alo, had a murder case against him. Our advertisements were stopped, and our revenue dropped by about 40 to 45 percent. None of my reporters were ever allowed to cover the prime minister's events, and she personally attacked me on the floor of the parliament," explained Anam.

He expressed hope that this experience will shape future governments, leading to a brighter future for free media in Bangladesh.

The Listening Post featuring Mahfuz Anam will be re-aired on Al Jazeera today at 2:30pm (Bangladesh time) and can also be watched on YouTube.

FOR THE AL JAZEERA TV COVERAGE SCAN THE QR CODE



Hasina's governance "is epitomised by one act, which was called the Digital Security Act."

"This encapsulates the government's total dominance of dissent. They had 20 provisions for punishment, 14 of which were non-bailable. So, the whole idea was to create an environment of fear. Society goes into a total

Jamaat ameer's X account

FROM PAGE 1

women's participation in public life as morally harmful.

The account was compromised at 4:37pm and recovered by 5:09pm, and a rejoinder was issued at 5:22pm, said Ehsanul Mahbub Zubayer, chief of Jamaat's publicity and media department, at an emergency press conference held at the party's central office in Moghbazar, Dhaka, yesterday morning.

Following the incident, Sirajul Islam, a member of Jamaat's National Election Steering Committee, filed a GD at Hatirjheel Police Station yesterday morning.

Zubayer claimed the attackers took control of the device through malware and gained access during an active session.

He alleged a "special group" hacked the ameer's account and posted offensive content to tarnish the party's image.

Those responsible had been preparing for several days, he said, without

naming any political party, alleging a "deep conspiracy" behind the incident.

Describing the incident as an attempt to malign Jamaat, he said the party maintains a clear position on respecting women and that its chief has repeatedly emphasised the issue at election rallies.

The party claimed that not only the ameer's account but also several Jamaat-e-Islami pages had faced attempted cyberattacks in recent days.

Mahmudur Rahman, an ICT affairs member of the party, presented what he described as "technical evidence" of the breach at the briefing.

Around 4:53pm, a similar post was made from the X account of Shafiqur Islam Masud, secretary of Jamaat's Dhaka Metropolitan South unit, Mahmudur said, adding that later checks indicated both accounts had been compromised around the same time.

He further alleged that the hacking was carried out using a government

email address. According to him, a file purportedly containing election-related information was sent to the party's email from an official address in an attempt to sabotage Jamaat.

He claimed the sender used the email address "assistantprogrammar@bangabhaban.gov.bd" and was identified as Mohammad Sarwar Alam, an employee of the President's Office.

In a separate thread posted on X yesterday morning, Shafiqur said false and misleading content had been circulated to misrepresent both his views and the party's position.

He said Jamaat's manifesto supports women's active participation in education, healthcare, administration, entrepreneurship and public service.

He cited commitments to uninterrupted education for girls, safe campuses, zero tolerance for harassment, women-centred healthcare, equal pay, safe workplaces, childcare support, and skills development.

"These are not new positions," he wrote, adding that he had outlined them previously and reaffirmed them at a policy summit on January 20.

He also said the party's full manifesto would be launched on February 3.

"Judge me by my record and manifesto, not false narratives," he wrote, adding that respect for women could move the country forward.

Meanwhile, speaking at a press conference at the BNP Election Steering Committee office in Dhaka's Gulshan yesterday afternoon, Mahdi Amin said the "hack" claim surfaced nearly nine hours after the offensive post was published and only after public outrage.

"The claim appeared long after the post circulated and criticism mounted. If a verified account of a major political figure is hacked, the first responsibility is to inform the public immediately so confusion does not spread," he said.

Mahdi said the delay

raised doubts about the credibility of the explanation.

"Only after anger erupted did the hacking story surface. During that period, many posts were made from the Jamaat chief's Facebook account, but not a single one warned that his X account had been compromised," he added.

He also questioned inconsistencies in the timeline surrounding the GD.

"It was later observed that a GD was lodged at around 3:30am. In that document, it was mentioned that they learnt of the hacking at 4:55pm. If that is true, why was the GD filed nearly 12 hours later? What is the explanation? How believable is the claim that the account was recovered shortly after announcing it had been hacked?" he asked.

Condemning the language used in the disputed post, Mahdi said BNP stands firmly for women's dignity, freedom and equal rights.

Parties hunting voter NIDs

FROM PAGE 1

In Kafrul and Mirpur, BNP candidate for Dhaka-15 Shafiqur Islam Milton said tensions flared several times over requests for NID cards. He alleged that Jamaat activists faced public resistance at least four times, adding that the Jamaat ameer of Kafrul thana later apologised publicly and promised not to repeat the activity. A video clip of the local Jamaat ameer apologising spread online at the time.

Clashes were also

reported in South Pirobagh on January 20, after Jamaat activists allegedly went door to door asking for NID details.

Idris Ali, former general secretary of the Haven Tower Flat Owners' Association, said residents protested after campaigners ignored restrictions on entering homes to seek documents.

At Mohakhali Sat Tala slum, Selina Begum said groups enter the slum every one or two days, sometimes identifying as political activists and other

times as NGO staffers. She said both Jamaat and BNP activists recently collected phone numbers and NID details.

Md Hasan, 65, a resident of Korail's Ershadnagar, said that in recent days, BNP activists collected NID photocopies while distributing blankets.

Rana Ahmed, senior joint convener of the Banani thana BNP, said "some parties" are collecting this information in slums as proof of outreach.

"Those collecting the information told us that

they had to prove to their superiors that they had campaigned for the party," he said.

BNP Standing Committee member Selima Rahman, who is also a member of the party's election steering committee, said she was not aware of BNP activists seeking voters' NID details.

"We've asked the party activists to avoid such activities. We're continuing our campaign," she told this newspaper yesterday.

Jamaat central leaders could not be reached

for comments about the matter despite repeated attempts.

Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, Jamaat assistant secretary general and lead of its publicity wing; Maolana ATM Masum, assistant secretary general and head of its national election steering committee; and Maolana Abdul Halim, assistant secretary general and member secretary of the committee, did not respond to The Daily Star's calls and text messages over the matter last night.

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Travel ban slapped
on the DNCC
administrator

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday imposed a travel ban on Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) administrator Mohammad Azaz over allegations of corruption.



Mohammad Azaz

Judge Md Sabbir Faiz of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order following a petition by Anti-Corruption Commission Assistant Director Md Ashiqur Rahman, who is leading the inquiry, said court bench assistant Riaz Hossain.

ACC Public Prosecutor Samsuddin Mohammed Abul Kalam moved the petition on behalf of the anti-graft watchdog, he added.

According to the ACC petition, Azaz is under investigation over abuse of power, irregularities, corruption and bribery in several DNCC-related matters.

According to the ACC application, the allegations include irregularities in leasing the Mirpur Gabtoli cattle market, the e-rickshaw project and taking control of Borak Tower or Hotel Sheraton.

The allegations further relate to the

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Discussants at the Just Energy Transition Conference 2026, organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation at the Military Museum in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Include women in
policymaking for
energy initiatives

Speakers urge political parties to include issues in election manifestos at MJF conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an event yesterday highlighted that women, despite being among the most affected by climate change and energy poverty, remain largely excluded from policy decision-making.

They urged political parties to address renewable energy initiatives and women's inclusion together, calling for clear manifesto commitments to a women-centred energy transition.

The remarks came during a session titled "From Dialogue to Commitment: Holding Political Parties Accountable for a Gender-Responsive Energy Future" at the Just Energy Transition Conference 2026, organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) at the Military Museum in Dhaka.

The national-level conference, themed "Voices for a Gender-Responsive Energy Future", focused on the social dimensions of energy transition, including equity, inclusion and justice, alongside technology and finance, with an emphasis on translating grassroots realities into policy and investment recommendations.

At the programme, Sharif Jamil, member secretary of Dhoritri Rokkhai Amra (DHORA), said the energy

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A day on the
campaign trail
with Nabila Tasnid

SHAMIMA RITA

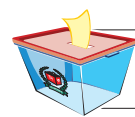
Around 11:30am on Thursday, National Citizen Party (NCP) Dhaka-20 candidate Nabila Tasnid set out on her campaign in Jhilkuti village of Dhamrai, about 40 kilometres northwest of the capital city.

Accompanied by 10 to 15 supporters, she walked through the village, seeking votes and listening to residents.

At times, the group moved along narrow paths between mustard, red amaranth and spinach fields, the grass still wet with morning fog.

At other times, they followed winding paved roads, where Tasnid paused to speak with voters, hand out leaflets, and seek their support while exchanging smiles and brief conversations.

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FEBRUARY 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-18

Civic reforms, bridging urban
divides top candidate agendas

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

The election in the Uttara area -- widely seen as a crucial gateway to the capital -- has drawn intense attention from the outset.

A palpable tension now mixes with the festive air of the election across the winding lanes of Uttara, Turag, Uttarkhan, and Dakshinkhan.

Candidates are campaigning throughout the Dhaka-18 constituency, invoking the legacy of long-standing street struggles and the July uprising.

The central theme of local conversations is a familiar promise: bridging the gap between the gleaming high-rises of Uttara and the deprivation in the surrounding neglected neighbourhoods.

Dhaka-18 comprises Wards 1, 17, and 43 through 54 of Dhaka North City Corporation, along with the Airport area.

It is a diverse constituency, home to the elite and middle class in Uttara Model Town and Basundhara, as well as large lower-middle and working-class populations in densely populated areas such as Khilkhet, Uttarkhan, and Dakshinkhan.

A walk through the constituency reveals streets choked with dust and waste.

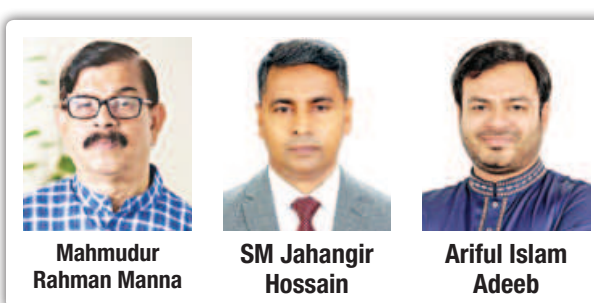
Residents say many roads go under water during the monsoon, while unplanned construction contributes to chronic traffic congestion.

The rise of teen gangs and drug abuse in Uttara and Khilkhet has become a growing concern, alongside

frequent shortages of gas and water in residential areas. As the election draws near, the area is bustling with campaign activities.

Candidates are reaching out to voters, listening to grievances, and offering assurances.

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Mahmudur
Rahman MannaSM Jahangir
HossainAriful Islam
AdebHC issues rule over
Limon's shooting,
compensation

Seeks names, whereabouts of Rab personnel involved

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the authorities concerned of the government to explain why detaining, shooting and harassing Md Limon Hossain in 2011 by implicating him in several cases should not be declared illegal, and why they should not be directed to pay Tk 2.6 crore in compensation to him.

The court also directed the authorities to provide the names and whereabouts of the then Rab personnel involved in the incident.

The HC bench of Justice Ahmed Sohel and Justice Fatema Anwar passed the order and rule following a writ petition filed by Limon seeking necessary directives.

After the HC passed the order, Limon's lawyer Barrister Sara Hossain told reporters, "Today's order marks a major milestone in a 15-year-long struggle for justice. When Limon Hossain was a

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ডাচ-বাংলা ব্যাংক ক্রেডিট কার্ড

অজস্র সুবিধা
একসাথে আপনার হাতে

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- মিট এন্ড গ্রিট
- পিক এন্ড ড্রপ
- হেলথ চেকআপ

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ATM Withdrawal-সহ
আরও অনেক সেবা

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দিন-রাত ২৪ ঘণ্টা যে কোন ফোন থেকে

ডাচ-বাংলা ব্যাংক
আপনার বিশ্বস্ত সহযোগী

Begum Waheeda Wasiuddin passes away

CITY DESK

Begum Waheeda Wasiuddin, wife of late Lt Gen Khwaja Wasiuddin, passed away in Maryland, USA, on January 27. She was 92, said a press release.

She is survived by three sons, one daughter, grandchildren, and a host of relatives.

Her namaz-e-janaza will be held today after the Zohr prayers at Dilkusha Masjid in Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka, after her body is brought home.

Her family has requested everyone to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.



Farmer Md Habib carries washed and bundled Boro paddy seedlings to a field for transplanting at Moddhokorapur village in Barishal Sadar upazila. Sown in the Bengali month of Magh, the crop is expected to be harvested in early Joishthya. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Feb 12 voter turnout may surpass 1991 polls: Touhid

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Voter turnout for the February 12 election may surpass 55 percent, the turnout rate for the 1991 elections, said Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain.

He made the remark on the concluding day of the two-day training on election reporting jointly organised by the Diplomatic Correspondents Association Bangladesh (DCAB) and MRDI at a Dhaka hotel yesterday.

Responding to queries about Awami League's campaign for boycotting the polls and "no" voting for the referendum, Touhid said Jamaat and NCP actively campaigned for the referendum, while some local BNP leaders supported it. BNP central leadership was less vocal. However, now the confusion has been cleared as BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman has supported it.

"People will read the conditions and then decide how to vote, but realistically, most will vote along party lines," he said.

Regarding turnout, he said, "Whether abstention will be higher this time, I cannot say. In the 1991 election, voter turnout was 55 percent. From what I see, turnout may be higher this time."

Regarding foreigners' concerns over violence during elections, he said, "Even if parties do not instigate violence, individual-level incidents can occur. We will continue trying to minimise such incidents." SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Azmi recounts ordeal during ICT-1 testimony

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brig Gen (ret'd) Abdullahil Amaan Azmi, a victim of enforced disappearance, yesterday testified before the International Crimes Tribunal-1 as the third prosecution witness in a case over enforced disappearance and illegal confinement of 24 victims at the Joint Interrogation Cell (JIC), operated by the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) during the Awami League regime.

In the testimony, Azmi said he was held in a pitch-dark cell without natural light or air, completely cut off from the outside world for 2,908 days, and was subjected to relentless physical and mental suffering, denied proper food and medical care, and forced to endure constant, jarring mechanical noise that caused headaches and reduced his hearing capacity considerably.

The noise was deliberately used to block outside sounds and ensure that screams during interrogations could not be heard beyond the facility, he added.

Azmi is the son of late Ghulam Azam, former Jamaat-e-Islami chief who was convicted for war

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Series of fires at households sparks panic in Mirsarai

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A series of fires at houses and land belonging to members of the Hindu community in Mirsarai upazila of Chattogram has caused panic among locals.

Locals and police said houses were set on fire in the Dhar Para area of Jafrabad village under Wahedpur union. No casualties have been reported so far, police said.

Mirsarai police confirmed two fire incidents and said they are working to uncover the truth.

Locals and victims, however, said the incidents occurred between January 23 and January 29, from 6:00am to 7:00pm, claiming that six to seven fires have taken place so far.

Tobacco sales banned near health facilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health ministry has directed all field-level health administrations to ensure that tobacco products are not sold within a 100-metre radius of health facilities.

It also asked them to keep all hospitals, clinics, health centres and adjoining areas tobacco-free in line with the anti-tobacco law, which was recently made stricter.

The ministry sent a letter in this regard to all directors and superintendents of hospitals, civil surgeons, and upazila health and family planning officers on January 29, a ministry official said yesterday.

The move came more than a month after the interim government amended the Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act, expanding the definition of tobacco products and introducing several new provisions to control their use,

particularly emerging ones.

The new ordinance banned the sale of tobacco products within a 100-metre radius of educational institutions, hospitals, playgrounds and children's parks.

"The directive was issued in line with the ordinance, asking health authorities to ensure its full implementation," said the official, who wished not to be named.

The original 2005 regulation designated hospitals as public places where smoking had been prohibited and stipulated a Tk 50 fine for violations. The fine was later increased to Tk 300 through an amendment in 2013.

The ordinance raised the fine to Tk 2,000 for both smoking and the intake of any kind of tobacco-based products in designated public places.

The ministry also asked health facility authorities to display placards prohibiting smoking.

HC issues rule over

FROM PAGE 3

child, he was subjected to a horrific human rights

violation."

"After all these years, the court has finally reopened the door for a proper investigation and moved closer to a formal declaration that his fundamental rights were violated, as well as an order to compensate him for the harm he has suffered," she said.

This journey toward justice could not progress for the past 15 years due to repeated attempts to suppress the truth, she also said, adding that although the HC had earlier issued several directives for investigation and ordered that all medical treatment be provided by the state, those orders were never properly implemented.

Barrister Sara Hossain also thanked media professionals, saying, "It was the journalists who first broke this story -- revealing how Limon Hossain was shot by Rab, left in a hospital, and then falsely implicated in multiple fabricated cases. Without the media's role, this story might never have come to light."

A team of Rab-8, led by then deputy assistant director Lutfor Rahman, reportedly shot Limon in the left leg while he was fetching his family's pet calf from a field near their house in Chhaturia village of Jhalakathi on March 23, 2011.

On the same day, Lutfor Rahman filed two cases against Limon and several others with Rajapur Police Station on charges of possessing arms and ammunition, obstructing law enforcers from discharging their duties, and attempted murder. Later, Limon's wounded leg had to be amputated.

Limon's mother filed a case against six Rab men on April 11, 2011.

Rajapur police initially refused to record the case even after a court order. However, they recorded it on April 26 following a 48-hour deadline set by a Jhalakathi court.

International Holdings Limited
Address: Australian International School, 300 Feet Purbachal Road, Khilkhet, Dhaka-1229
Contact: 88-01711567236, 88-01713486813, 88-01762010853, Email: info@amisdhaka.net
Website: http://www.amisdhaka.edu.bd

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Australian International School, Dhaka (a concern of International Holdings Limited), is seeking an experienced professional for the position of **Principal**. No. of Posts: 01.
Educational Qualifications: Master's degree in Education or a related discipline. Doctorate degree will be considered an added advantage. **Training Requirement:** Completion of IB Leadership Training is mandatory. **Other Requirements:** At least 5 years of work experience as a Principal in an IB-authorized school and a minimum of 15 years of experience as an IB practitioner. Expatriate candidates are welcome to apply, acknowledging the specialized nature of the role. **Remuneration:** BDT 200,000.00 (Basic: Tk. 100,000.00, House Rent Tk. 70,000.00, Medical Allowance Tk. 15,000.00, Transport Allowance Tk. 15,000.00). **Other Benefits:** Provident fund and festival bonus after the completion of 1 year of service. **Instructions to Apply:** Please send a detailed CV with a photograph, along with academic and professional certificates. Applications should be sent by **18 February 2026** to career@amisdhaka.edu.bd or in hard copy to the HR Department, Australian International School, 300 Feet Road, Purbachal Road, Khilkhet, Dhaka-1229.

REQUEST FOR QUOTATION
For Grounds Equipment's & Machineries

Bangladesh Cricket Board

Ref No: BCB/Admin/T&P/Grounds/2026/45 Date: 02nd February 2026

The Bangladesh Cricket Board hereby invites reputed, experienced & bona fide organizations, Authorized Distributors/Dealers, suppliers, manufacturers for the supply of Grounds Equipment's & Machineries for BCB. A detailed technical specification and requirements of the requisite items are given as follows:

Sl No	Particulars	Specifications	Qty.	Place of Delivery				
1	Organization	Bangladesh Cricket Board						
2	Procuring Entity Name	Chief Executive Officer, BCB						
3	Invitation for	Supply of Grounds Equipment's & Machineries for BCB.						
4	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka, Bangladesh						
5	Invitation Ref:	BCB/Admin/T&P/Grounds/2026/45						
6	Procurement Method	Open tendering Method (OTM).						
7	Budget and source of Fund	Bangladesh Cricket Board						
8	Tender Submission Date and Time	08/03/2026 at 12.15 pm						
9	Tender Opening date and Time	08/03/2026 at 12.30 pm						
10	Place of Submission & Opening Tender	Management Office of Bangladesh Cricket Board at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216.						
11	Description of the Items	Lawn Mower - Jeep	Nominal Power 17-25 HP	02 Nos	To be delivered at SBNCs, Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216			
		Grass Cutting Machine (3-Wheeler) with attached built-in Grass Box	Cutting Deck 42" Staggered SD Height Adjustment 5 Positions (Minimum) PTD Manual Country of Origin USA / Australia / UK					
		Hand Pushed Grass Cutting Machine (Walk-Behind)	Nominal Power 6 - 6.5 HP Self-Propelling Hand Push Cutting Width 46 cm Grass Height 10 - 15 cm (max)					
		Manual Hand Roller	Dia-15", Length-36", Handle-75", Weight: 300 Kg.					
		Manual Hand Roller	Dia-20", Length-36", Handle-75", Weight: 500 Kg.					
		Manual Hand Roller	Dia-29", Length-36", Handle-75", Weight: 700 Kg.					
		Manual Hand Roller	Dia-29", Length-36", Handle-75", Weight: 1000 Kg.					
		Ground Utility Vehicle (Soft Wheel)	Transmission Automatic Recommended Grille Guard Dump Bed: 36" L x 45" W Dump Bed Type: Manual Features			03 Nos		
		Boundary Rope	Dia: 4" - 4.5", Running Feet: 1440 Rft., Material: Plastic			70 Set		
		Eligibility of Tenderers:						
		• The Tenderer must be an authorized distributor or a bona fide supplier.						
Submission of Tender:								
• A sealed envelope quotation must be submitted attaching the following relevant business documents i.e. (i) valid Trade License, (ii) updated Tax Identification Number (TIN), (iii) Business Identification Number (BIN), and (iv) the latest Tax Return Certificate, at the designated Quotation Box located at the BCB Management Office, Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216, no later than Sunday, 08 th March, 2026 12:15 pm (BST).								
Delivery & Installation:								
1. Delivery must be completed within forty-five (45) days from the date of issuance of the formal Work Order, and it must be delivered to BCB Central Store, Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium (SBNCs), Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216.								
Warranty & After-Sales Service:								
i. A minimum warranty of 24 months must be provided for all equipment and machinery.								
ii. The Tenderer shall ensure after-sales service support, availability of spare parts, and maintenance service for all equipment and machinery.								
Price Quotation:								
i. The price must be quoted in Bangladeshi Taka (BDT), inclusive of applicable VAT, transportation, delivery, and installation costs (if any).								
The BCB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason. Further, BCB also reserves the right to cancel the entire tender process and / or modify, add or alter the terms of the document and/ or the conditions for Tender by issuing an addendum(s) at any time prior to the submission of the Tender.								
Chief Executive Officer Bangladesh Cricket Board Management Office: Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, Mirpur-2 Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh Tel: +880 2 8031001-4, Fax: 803 1199								

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক
প্রধান কার্যালয়
মিরপুর-২, ঢাকা-১২১৬।

বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং- ০২/২০২৬ **টেন্ডার বিজ্ঞপ্তি** **তারিখ: ০২-০২-২০২৬**

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংকের বিভিন্ন শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজের জন্য সরকারি/আধা-সরকারি/স্বায়ত্বশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানের তালিকাভুক্ত প্রকৃত ইমারত নির্মাণকারী প্রথম শ্রেণির ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে নির্ধারিত ফরমে সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনা অফিস, বগুড়া (খান্দার গোহাইল রোড, বগুড়া-৫৮০০)।
লট নং-০১ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, বালুয়া সোনাটলা শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : উত্তর আটকরিয়া, পোঃ বালুয়া, উপজেলাঃ সোনাটলা, জেলাঃ বগুড়া।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনা অফিস, সিলেট (শামসুদ্দীন হাউস, বাসা নং-২৩২/১, রোড নং০১, ব্লক নং-এইচ, শাহজালাল উপ-শহর, সিলেট-৩১০০)
লট নং-০২ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, গিয়াসনগর মৌলভীবাজার শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : গিয়াসনগর, পোঃ গিয়াসনগর, উপজেলাঃ মৌলভীবাজার, জেলাঃ মৌলভীবাজার।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনা অফিস, বরিশাল (কুমুবাগ-ফরাজী ওয়াকসপ সংলগ্ন, সি.এন্ড.বি রোড, বরিশাল-৮২০০)।
লট নং-০৩ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, ধামুরা উজিরপুর শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : ধামুরা, পোঃ ধামুরা, উপজেলাঃ উজিরপুর, জেলাঃ বরিশাল।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনা অফিস, বিনাইদহ (বাড়ী নং-০৯/১, অধ্যক্ষ করিম উদ্দিন সড়ক, আদর্শ পাড়া-কচা তলার মোড়, বিনাইদহ-৭৩০০)।
লট নং-০৪ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, কাঁচেরকৈল শৈলকুপা শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : উত্তর কচুয়া, পোঃ উত্তর কচুয়া, উপজেলাঃ শৈলকুপা, জেলাঃ বিনাইদহ।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনা অফিস, কক্সবাজার (হক টাওয়ার, খুকশকুল সংযোগ সড়ক, কক্সবাজার পৌরসভা, কক্সবাজার-৪৭১০)।
লট নং-০৫ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, হোয়াইকং টেকনাফ শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : উত্তর নীলা, পোঃ হোয়াইকং, উপজেলাঃ টেকনাফ, জেলাঃ কক্সবাজার।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনা অফিস, যশোর (চাকলাদার ভবন, কোতোয়ালী, যশোর-৭৪০০)।
লট নং-০৬ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, রোহিতা মনিরামপুর শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : কোদলাপাড়া, পোঃ রোহিতা, উপজেলাঃ মনিরামপুর, জেলাঃ যশোর।

গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, যোনা অফিস, নেত্রকোনা (বারহাটা রোড, নেত্রকোনা সদর, নেত্রকোনা)।
লট নং-০৭ : গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, পূর্বধলা শাখা অফিস ভবন নির্মাণ কাজ।
মৌজা : পূর্বধলা, পোঃ পূর্বধলা সদর, উপজেলাঃ পূর্বধলা, জেলাঃ নেত্রকোনা।

১) দরপত্রের সাথে উল্লেখিত কাজের টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি বাবদ মোট উদ্ধৃত দরের ২.৫% পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/ব্যাংক গ্যারান্টির মাধ্যমে যে কোন সিডিউল ব্যাংক হতে "গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, প্রধান কার্যালয়" এর অনুকূলে জমা দিতে হবে।

২) প্রতিটি টেন্ডার দলিলের মূল্য ২,০০০/- (দুই হাজার) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য)।

৩) প্রতিটি কার্য সম্পন্ন করার সময়ঃ ১২ (বারো) মাস।

৪) বাজেট ও অর্থের উৎস: নিজস্ব অর্থায়ন।

৫) উল্লেখিত কাজের টেন্ডার দলিল গ্রামীণ ব্যাংক, প্রধান কার্যালয়, নির্মাণ শাখা, মিরপুর-২, ঢাকা-১২১৬ এবং সংশ্লিষ্ট যোনা অফিস হতে ০২-০২-২০২৬ তারিখ থেকে ১৮-০২-২০২৬ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে সংগ্রহ করা যাবে।

৬) আগামী ০২-০২-২০২৬ তারিখ থেকে ১৮-০২-২০২৬ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে এবং ১৯-০২-২০২৬ তারিখ বেলা ১১:০০ টা পর্যন্ত উপরোক্ত স্থানসমূহে সক্রিয় টেন্ডার বাস্তব টেন্ডারসমূহ গৃহীত হবে এবং ঐদিন অর্থাৎ ১৯-০২-২০২৬ তারিখ বেলা ১১:৩০ টায় ঠিকাদার বা তাঁদের প্রতিনিধিদের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) টেন্ডার বাস্তব খোলা হবে। টেন্ডার বাস্তব খোলার দিন কোন টেন্ডার দলিল বিক্রি করা হবে না।

৭) টেন্ডার দাখিলের নিয়মাবলী টেন্ডার দলিলের সাথে সংযুক্ত থাকবে।

৮) দরদাতাকে প্রধান ঠিকাদার/উপ-ঠিকাদার হিসেবে কমপক্ষে ৩ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন হতে হবে।

খ) গত ৩ বছরের মধ্যে একক কার্যাদেশে সফলভাবে সম্পন্নকৃত ন্যূনতম ১.৬ (এক দশমিক ছয়) কোটি টাকার ভবন নির্মাণ কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।

গ) গত ৩ বছরে গড় বার্ষিক আর্থিক লেনদেনের পরিমাণ ৩ (তিন) কোটি টাকার বেশি হতে হবে।

ঘ) টেন্ডারদাতার ন্যূনতম Liquid Asset / Working Capital অথবা Credit Line (ঋণ সীমা) ১.৬ (এক দশমিক ছয়) কোটি টাকা হতে হবে। তবে টেন্ডার জমাদানের পূর্ববর্তী ৭ (সাত) দিনের আগে ইস্যু করা তরল সম্পদের সনদ মূল্যায়নের জন্য গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।

কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকেই উক্ত টেন্ডার গ্রহণ/বাতিল, সংশোধন, পরিবর্তন করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

মহাব্যবস্থাপক
সেবা ও সম্পত্তি ব্যবস্থাপনা বিভাগ

Ukraine thanks Musk for blocking Russia's Starlink use Zelensky says new trilateral talks set for Feb 4-5 in Abu Dhabi

AGENCIES

Ukraine's defence minister yesterday thanked Elon Musk after the US tycoon said efforts to stop Russia from using Starlink satellites for drone attacks seemed to have worked. "The first steps are already delivering real results ... Thank you for standing with us. You are a true champion of freedom and a true friend of the Ukrainian people," said Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov. Elon Musk said that steps SpaceX had taken to stop the "unauthorized" use of Starlink by Russia seemed to have worked. "Looks like the steps we took to stop the unauthorized use of Starlink by Russia have worked. Let us know if more needs to be done," SpaceX CEO Musk said on X. Despite Musk's differences with Ukrainian officials over his views on the war with Russia, Ukraine's military



People protest against immigration agents in an "ICE Out of Everywhere" National Day of Action follow-up in front of City Hall in downtown Los Angeles, California, US on Saturday. PHOTO: AFP

Iran warns of 'regional war' if US attacks

Khamenei says anti-govt protests akin to 'coup'; Trump confirms Iran 'talking to us'

AFP, Tehran

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday warned of a "regional war" if the United States attacked following heavy military deployments by Washington in the Gulf.

"The Americans should know that if they start a war, this time it will be a regional war," Khamenei was quoted as saying by the Tasnim news agency. He said the recent anti-government protests that saw

killings and vandalism were akin to "a coup".

"They (rioters) attacked the police, government centres, IRGC centres, banks, and mosques, and burned the Koran... It was like a coup," Khamenei said, adding that "the coup was suppressed".

Iran's top security official Ali Larijani said later on Saturday that progress had been made towards negotiations with the US. President Donald Trump confirmed the two sides were talking.

"(Iran is) talking to us, and we'll see if we can do something, otherwise we'll see what happens... We have a big fleet heading out there," Trump told Fox News. "They are negotiating."

"Contrary to the hype of the contrived media war, structural arrangements for negotiations are progressing," said Larijani, head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council. He was speaking a day after the Kremlin said he held talks with President Putin.

Israel partially reopens Rafah crossing

AFP, Rafah

Israel partially reopened the Rafah crossing between the devastated Gaza Strip and Egypt yesterday following months of urging from humanitarian organisations, though access is limited to the movement of people.

The reopening comes as violence continues despite a ceasefire in the Palestinian territory, with Gaza's civil defence agency reporting dozens killed in Israeli attacks on Saturday. The Israeli military said it was retaliating against violations of the truce.

The Rafah crossing is a vital gateway for both civilians and aid, but it had remained closed since Israeli forces seized control of it in May 2024 during the war, aside from a brief and limited reopening in early 2025.

COGAT, the Israeli defence ministry body coordinating Palestinian civilian affairs, said yesterday that the "Rafah Crossing was opened today for the limited passage of residents only".

An official at Gaza's health ministry said that about 200 patients were waiting to be permitted to leave the territory once the crossing opened.

POST-POLLS MYANMAR Junta orders protesting civil servants back

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's junta yesterday called for ex-civil servants who quit their jobs in protest over the coup five years ago to report back to work, pledging to remove absent state employees from "blacklists".

After the military snatched power in a coup on February 1, 2021, tens of thousands of public workers left their posts in a surge of civil disobedience. Last week, the junta completed a month-long election it has touted as a return to civilian rule. But the dominant pro-military party won a walkover victory, which watchdogs say was stacked with army allies to prolong its grip on power.

still relies on tens of thousands of Starlinks for battlefield communication and for piloting some drone missions, reports Reuters.

A new round of US-brokered trilateral talks between Ukraine and Russia will take place in Abu Dhabi on February 4-5, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday, adding that Kyiv was ready for a "substantive discussion".

"Our negotiating team has just delivered a report. The dates for the next trilateral meetings have been set - February 4 and 5 in Abu Dhabi," he wrote on X.

"Ukraine is ready for a substantive discussion, and we are interested in ensuring that the outcome brings us closer to a real and dignified end to the war."

Meanwhile, a Russian night-time strike in the central Ukrainian region of Dnipropetrovsk killed two people, authorities said yesterday.

13 constituencies

FROM PAGE 1

official of the police's Special Branch (SB), requesting anonymity, told The Daily Star yesterday.

In Cumilla-11, among the seven contesting candidates, the main competition is expected to be between Jamaat's central Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher and Cumilla BNP's Senior Joint General Secretary Kamrul Huda.

"There is a risk of clashes between supporters of the two candidates as they try to assert dominance in the area," the SB official said.

Contacted, Cumilla's Superintendent of Police Md Anisuzzaman told The Daily Star that elections always involve some risks. "We have already intensified security measures. There is nothing to worry about; everything is going on smoothly."

In Pabna, SP M Anwar Zahid said police were closely monitoring the situation. "We have polling centres across five constituencies. Some areas are traditionally vulnerable. We will increase force strength and deploy mobile

teams in those places." Dhaka-15 has also been marked as high risk as Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman goes head-to-head with rival BNP candidate Shafiqul Islam Khan Milton, a former Jubo Dal leader.

"Jamaat will make its highest effort to ensure its top leader's victory, while Milton has long standing influence in the area. As a result, clashes may occur before or on polling day," another senior SB official said, requesting anonymity.

Similarly, Dhaka-8, where BNP Standing Committee member Mirza Abbas is running against NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwari, is also on the high risk list.

The seat was initially identified as "risky", but recent heated verbal exchanges and egging incidents between supporters of the two candidates have further raised security concerns, the official said.

Besides the areas identified as high risk, police have also stepped up surveillance in Gopalganj, Madaripur, Shariatpur, and Faridpur, widely known as

strongholds of the Awami League, whose political activities have been banned.

Officials at the Police Headquarters (PHQ) fear there could be possible incidents of voters being deterred through intimidation before and on election day.

Police have therefore intensified monitoring of outsiders' movements, political activities, and suspicious behaviour around vulnerable polling centres in the four districts.

They said security planning in these districts was undertaken following violence in 2024, including the attack on army personnel in Gopalganj following the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government, and clashes surrounding an NCP rally last July.

Khondokar Rafiqul Islam, additional inspector general (crime and operations) at the PHQ, said, "Special vigilance would be maintained in areas previously known as strongholds of particular parties."

"Where needed, instead of one mobile team covering four centres, one team will

be deployed for two centres. Force will be strengthened accordingly."

He added that police have strategic plans in place to prevent any attempt to disrupt the polls, but declined to share details. "Those who may try to obstruct the election will not be allowed to remain at ease. We will keep them under surveillance and arrest them if necessary."

The addl IG also said police operations are already underway and will be intensified as polling day approaches.

As law enforcers beef up security nationwide ahead of the election, Operation Devil Hunt phase-2 has been underway since December 13. As of Saturday, at least 24,085 people had been arrested and 591 firearms recovered in the operation so far, according to the PHQ database.

Meanwhile, the Inter-Services Public Relations, in a statement yesterday, said that joint army operations recovered 179 firearms and 1,941 rounds of ammunition, and detained 1,774 people between December 11 and February 1.

This election will end 'era of Aynagarh'

FROM PAGE 1

Shafiqur further said that if the "yes" in the referendum is defeated, Bangladesh will be defeated. "Yes" means freedom, "no" means slavery. Some parties cannot openly speak in favour of the 'yes' vote. They speak cautiously and secretly. If you want the 'no' vote, say it openly."

He also said, "The martyrs of 2024 have left their bodies on our shoulders and their blood in our hands. We cannot betray their bodies and blood."

The Jamaat chief added that Jamaat does not want power for itself; it wants power for the people. "Jamaat's victory lies in the victory of 18 crore people. Power is not a matter of desire; it is a burden of responsibility.... If Jamaat candidates are elected, they will be bound to present their asset statements before the people every year."

Addressing women, he said, "Security and dignity in the home, workplace and public movement will be ensured. They will be partners in all work based on justice. Everyone will be given their due rights."

About minorities, he said, "Bangladesh is a garden. We will decorate this garden called Bangladesh with flowers of all kinds. There will be no discrimination based on religion. Only patriotism and commitment to the country will be considered."

Shafiqur arrived at Gopalkhila High School field in Sherpur's Sreebardi upazila yesterday around 11:00am by helicopter from Dhaka.

Later, he visited Gopalkhila, the village home of slain Jamaat leader Rezaul Karim, where he offered prayers at the grave and expressed condolences to the bereaved family.

Ahead of his arrival, local leaders and activists began gathering at Shaheed Darog Ali Municipal Park from the morning, carrying placards, banners and festoons. They chanted various slogans as the park and the adjacent municipal Eidgah ground were packed to capacity.

Presided over by Sherpur district Jamaat Ameer Hafizur Rahman, the election rally was also addressed by former Sherpur

district Jamaat ameer Shahadat Hossain, DUCSU GS SM Farhad, Jamaat leader Hafez Abdul Baten, Sherpur district NCP Chief Coordinator Mohammad Likhon Mia, Jamaat candidates for Sherpur-1 and Sherpur-2 Rashedul Islam and Golam Kibria.

Addressing the rally, Shafiqur expressed concerns over the local law and order situation.

Mentioning that Jamaat leader Rezaul was beaten to death in the presence of law enforcers during a meeting convened by the administration on Thursday, he voiced his frustration that no arrests had been made yet.

Without naming any party, he said those who have removed over 200 people from their own ranks are no strangers to playing with people's lives and dignity. "Those involved in such acts would get what they deserve in due course."

"Do not consider us weak. We are civilised people and want to live in a civilised manner. But if we stand up, there will be no place to run," he said.

Highlighting the long-standing demands for Sherpur's development, he pledged to establish a medical college hospital, an agricultural university, a railway line to improve connectivity, and a vegetable EPZ in the agricultural sector.

After the rally ended around 1:30pm, he left Sherpur by helicopter for Jamalpur.

Following the rally there, Shafiqur returned to Dhaka and conducted door-to-door campaigning in his constituency - Dhaka-15.

Addressing a rally in Kafrul's Ibrahimpur area later, he said that if a "certain group" comes to power, the country will not survive.

"You can already see what this group is doing now. If the responsibility of running the country is handed to them, they will erase its very existence. They will bite, grab, and tear apart this land of 56,000 square miles and its 180 million people once again. The country cannot be entrusted to them. It is not safe."

(Our Jamalpur correspondent contributed to the report)

DU, JnU erupt in protests

FROM PAGE 2

JCD Central Joint Secretary Sayera Chandra Chakma.

"You [Jamaat] will not be able to confine women to their homes again," she added.

The protesters chanted slogans such as "Women are not prostitutes; Shafiq must apologise" and questioned the Jamaat chief's claim that his social media account had been hacked.

"You called them

prostitutes and now claim your ID was hacked," they shouted.

JCD Central President Rakibul Islam Rakib warned of tougher programmes if Shafiqur does not offer an unconditional apology.

"When women make up 52 percent of the voters, how can they call them prostitutes and still claim the right to do politics?" questioned JCD Central Joint General Secretary

Mansura Alam.

Around the same time, Jagannath University (JnU) students, led by several female activists of the JnU unit JCD, held a protest rally at the university's Shanto Chatter.

Farzana Akter Tumpa, president of the Nawab Faizunnesa Chowdhurani Hall unit of JCD, said, "We strongly condemn the vulgar comments made about women by the Jamaat ameer while

holding a responsible position."

Khadijatul Kubra, joint convener of the JnU unit of JCD, termed the equation of working women with prostitution "a gross insult".

Around 1:00pm, women leaders from various student organisations brought out a broom procession in front of the Raju Sculpture at DU to protest the remarks.

Later in the evening,

around 6:40pm, the Ganantatik Chhatra Jote - a coalition of seven left-leaning student organisations including Chhatra Union, Biplobi Chhatra Maitree, and Chhatra Federation - staged a torch procession from the TSC.

Meanwhile, a group of working women also brought out a broom procession in the Baishteki area of Kafrul in Mirpur yesterday afternoon.

Since these incidents are happening repeatedly, the women of Bangladesh are extremely concerned and anxious.

"A proper environment is necessary for a free, fair, acceptable, and peaceful election. Half of our voters are women, and ensuring a safe environment for them is the responsibility of the government and the EC," he added.

BNP, Jamaat spar over poll environment

FROM PAGE 2

Jamaat's Assistant Secretary General Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair denied the allegations after the meeting later in the day and accused the BNP of disrupting the election environment.

"All these absurd allegations cannot come from a healthy mind. No sound party or individual could make such claims.

A group of people, seeing the overwhelming public support for us, is making these statements out of fear. This is not a sign of wellness. We pray for their wellbeing."

Regarding campaigning in religious institutions, he said: "You all can see where and what we do. None of our campaigns take place in the darkness of night - they are all done

in broad daylight. All these statements are merely an attempt to question the election. This is completely wrong."

He mentioned that female activists are being attacked across the country.

"When female activists are going door-to-door in neighbourhoods or work for the election, a group of people is subjecting

them to various forms of harassment and abuse."

They are being subjected to cyberbullying, physical assault and their hijabs and niqabs forcibly removed. They are also receiving various threats.

"We have reported these matters locally as well."

Law enforcement officials and those in the electoral committee have also been informed.

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গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, মানিকগঞ্জ সড়ক বিভাগাধীন ঢাকা (মিরপুর)-উপুলী-পাটুরিয়া (এন-৫) জাতীয় মহাসড়কের ৩০তম কিলোমিটারে ধামরাই উপজেলাধীন ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত কেলিয়া সেতুর জরুরী মেরামত কাজের নিমিত্তে আগামী ০৪/০২/২০২৬খ্রিঃ তারিখ বুধবার ভোর ০৪.০০ ঘটিকা হতে সকাল ০৬.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত ২(দুই) ঘণ্টা সেতুর উপর দিয়ে সকল প্রকার যানবাহন চলাচল সাময়িকভাবে বন্ধ থাকবে। উক্ত সময়ে মহাসড়কের এই অংশে চলাচলরত সকল যানবাহনকে বিকল্প পথ হিসেবে নিম্নোক্ত সড়কসমূহ ব্যবহারের অনুরোধ করা হলো।

- > ঢাকা থেকে মানিকগঞ্জ/পাটুরিয়া/আরিচাপাঙ্গী অথবা আরিচা/পাটুরিয়া/মানিকগঞ্জ হতে ঢাকাগামী যানবাহনসমূহকে হেমায়েতপুর-সিংগাইর-মানিকগঞ্জ (আর-৫০৪) আঞ্চলিক মহাসড়ক এবং
- > সাভার/ধামরাই থেকে মানিকগঞ্জ/পাটুরিয়া/আরিচাপাঙ্গী অথবা কালামপুর হতে ধামরাই/সাভার/ঢাকাগামী যানবাহনসমূহকে ধামরাই-কালামপুর জেলা মহাসড়ক (জেড-৫০৬৭)।

সাময়িক অসুবিধার জন্য কর্তৃপক্ষ আন্তরিকভাবে দুঃখিত।

মোঃ শাহরিয়ার আলম
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ
সড়ক বিভাগ, মানিকগঞ্জ

GD-231

Why the hurry to sign deals?

Govt's haste to sign DP World deal ahead of election is perplexing

The ongoing strike at Chattogram port over the interim government's decision to hand over the New Mooring Container Terminal (NMCT) to a foreign operator has opened a Pandora's box of questions. While we are not opposed to foreign investment aimed at improving port efficiency, management, and overall trade logistics, any deal involving a strategically vital national asset like the country's principal seaport must be fully transparent. The proposed agreement with UAE-based DP World falls short on that count.

Little information is available regarding the terms of the proposal or the status of its evaluation, even though sources at the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) indicate that the government is preparing to sign the deal ahead of the election. But why the rush to conclude such a consequential agreement when fewer than 10 days remain before we welcome a new government?

Reportedly, the deal originated during the tenure of the previous Awami League government when an MoU was signed with DP World. After assuming office following the fall of the AL government, the interim administration revived the proposal. However, the contract was not awarded through a standard public bidding process. In March last year, a civil society organisation challenged the decision by filing a writ petition with the High Court. Although the court delivered a dissenting verdict on December 3, 2025, the Supreme Court, on January 29, rejected the petition, clearing the way for the government to move forward with the deal. The apex court noted that the awarding process complied with the 2017 Procurement Policy, which allows for direct selection in certain cases, and was consistent with the MoU signed during the AL era.

However, yesterday, a fresh petition was placed before a Supreme Court chamber judge seeking an order of status quo on the government's move to award the contract to DP World. The petitioner's lawyer told *The Daily Star* that with the national parliamentary election imminent, executing the contract at such a critical juncture amounts to "executive high-handedness, arbitrariness, and malafide exercise of power." We, too, believe that such decisions should rest with an elected government operating under a functional parliament, where opposition voices can scrutinise long-term strategic agreements involving ports, energy, and other critical infrastructure. A non-political interim government, formed in the wake of a popular uprising, is better suited to pursuing reforms that have emerged from broad and meaningful stakeholder consultations. It remains unclear why, in its final days, the government is pushing through such high-value projects and deals—often without adequate consultation—that risk constraining the choices of the incoming elected administration.

Besides, CPA's decision to transfer four protesting employees to the Pangoan Inland Container Terminal raises questions. Why was punitive action the authorities' first response? Should they not instead have initiated dialogue with the protesters and addressed their concerns regarding the agreement? According to the protesters, leasing out the NMCT would result in a significant share of the port's earnings being transferred abroad. Had the interim government ensured transparency and made the contract terms public, the strike now paralysing the port might well have been avoided. The government's priority right now should not be taking steps that could trigger unrest; only the election should be its main priority.

A test for the govt before the polls

Surge in mob killings and violence raises alarm

It is quite concerning that there is a sharp rise in mob killings and widespread violence across the country ahead of the 13th parliamentary election. The latest report from Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation (MSF) shows that deaths from mob violence more than doubled in January, while custodial deaths, recovery of unidentified bodies, election-related clashes, and attacks on minorities also surged. These incidents reveal a serious breakdown in law enforcement and the justice system.

According to MSF, at least 21 people were killed in mob beatings in January, up from 10 deaths recorded in December. Meanwhile, 15 people died in prison custody in January, up from nine in December, alongside additional deaths in law enforcement custody. During the same period, 57 unidentified bodies were recovered, compared with 48 in December. MSF describes the overall human rights situation as "alarmingly violent and complex," noting that the state's failure to take visible action against mob killings has emboldened perpetrators.

Election-related violence has escalated sharply, with four people killed and more than 500 injured in January alone. However, it has been noted that instead of focusing on preventing violence, law enforcement agencies appear increasingly entangled in politically charged case-making. Reportedly, the number of "unnamed accused" in political cases tripled in a month, jumping from 110 to 320. Rights activists warn that this will enable blanket arrests and create fear ahead of the election. January also saw hundreds of incidents of violence against women and children, alongside a sharp rise in attacks on minority communities, including vandalism of temples and idols.

Politicians have also voiced serious concerns about the worsening law-and-order situation and the risk of increased election-time violence—concerns that the government must take seriously. It is the state's responsibility to ensure that no vested interest groups are allowed to disrupt the election or instil fear in the public mind through violence and intimidation. We urge the government to take immediate and decisive action to prevent further occurrence of such incidents. Those involved in mob violence must be identified and prosecuted, custodial deaths should be independently investigated, and perpetrators of recent political killings must be held accountable, regardless of their affiliations. Without proper action, fear and insecurity could discourage voters and affect the turnout rate, undermining the election's credibility. The government must send a strong message that violence will not be tolerated.

The NCP manifesto: Bold on youth, silent on inclusion



Kamal Ahmed is consulting editor at The Daily Star. He led the Media Reform Commission under the interim government. His X handle is @ahmedkal.

KAMAL AHMED

Globally, there is a never-ending debate over whether voters are driven more by policies or personalities. In Bangladesh, where most political parties are leader-centric rather than bottom-up democratic organisations, experience suggests that leaders—not policies—win elections. Policies rarely influence the masses. Manifestos, therefore, receive little serious scrutiny as tools to judge a party, its candidates, or a leader's electability. It is no surprise that manifestos have become the least of priorities in the February 12 election for major parties vying for power. So far, leaders have been announcing policies at campaign rallies in a fragmented manner rather than releasing them as a cohesive package, selectively targeting different segments of the electorate.

The National Citizen Party (NCP), which emerged as a new political force following the mass uprising of 2024, deserves credit for unveiling its manifesto first. On Friday—just 13 days before the vote—the NCP, largely dominated by young activists of the uprising, announced the "Manifesto of Youth and Dignity." The 36-point document's most distinctive feature is its strong emphasis on young people's political aspirations. Among its youth-centric pledges, the most striking is the proposal to lower the voting age to 16.

While the idea sounds exciting, it requires a broader societal consensus. Universally, individuals under 18 are considered children—expected to be in classrooms, barred from full employment, and often requiring guidance in financial decision-making. Whether extending voting rights to this age group would meaningfully advance democratic governance remains debatable. Moreover, the manifesto's dual pledge to lower the voting age to 16 and establish a youth civic council to institutionalise youth participation in policymaking leaves ambiguity as to whether voting rights would apply only within this council or extend to all elections.

Targeting young voters, the NCP

has pledged to create one crore jobs in five years—numerically similar to the BNP's promise but arguably more ambitious in quality, as it claims these will be "decent jobs." However, questions arise about what constitutes a decent wage when the manifesto proposes an hourly minimum wage of Tk 100.

In education, the NCP proposes establishing a long-overdue reform commission—an initiative



PHOTO: BSS

NCP convener Md Nahid Islam talks during the party's manifesto unveiling programme ahead of the 13th national election on January 30, 2026.

conspicuously absent from the reform agenda of the interim government led by Professor Muhammad Yunus, despite its wide-ranging efforts across social, economic, and constitutional domains. However, the education reform commission's mandate should go beyond merely "rationally coordinating" existing systems. It must modernise education to align with global developments, scientific and technological advancement, and the evolving needs of the national economy. The proposal to link higher education with careers—by making a six-month full-time internship or thesis research mandatory at the undergraduate level—is a bold and

commendable step.

The proposed reverse brain drain programme, aimed at attracting expatriate researchers through seniority recognition and one-time lab funding, would be a novel addition to national policy. Allowing lateral entry into the bureaucracy could also incentivise skilled professionals to return home. However, the plan to establish an independent promotions commission to ensure 100 percent performance-based government promotions lacks practical clarity. The Public Service Commission already plays this role, yet allegations of nepotism and corruption persist. Another innovative attempt to court expatriate voters is the proposed one-stop "diaspora digital portal," offering essential services along with investment and pension benefits tied to remittance inflows and "RemitMiles" travel rewards.

extortion and political levies through hotlines and strict enforcement—tools that have long existed within policing frameworks but have delivered limited success. Its strong stance against loan defaulters is more promising, particularly the proposal to revoke their voting rights, which could deter them from seeking public office. However, such a policy requires a specific commitment to ensure that a strict judicial process will be followed in identifying defaulters.

As a fledgling political party, the NCP appears to lean heavily on nationalist rhetoric, especially in defence policy. It proposes expanding the armed forces by creating a reserve force of five lakh, establishing a UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) brigade, and acquiring several medium-range surface-to-air missile batteries. Whether these measures are necessary or sufficient for a comprehensive national defence strategy is debatable. Worse, such proposals could be perceived by adversaries as provocative rather than stabilising.

Other notable initiatives include pledges to establish an independent commission to monitor reform commitments, form a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate past atrocities and extrajudicial killings, and require ministers, MPs, and senior officials to publicly disclose assets and income. Proposals for digitising health records to facilitate access to medical services and national health insurance are commendable. Subsidies for farmers, six-month maternity leave, and one-month paternity leave are also welcome offers. However, their financial implications and resource-mobilisation strategies remain unanswered.

The most glaring disappointment, however, is the manifesto's silence on inclusivity. None of the NCP's 36 pledges address the concerns of religious minorities or ethnic communities, including Adivasis. These groups have long demanded equality, fairness, and respect for their rights, faiths, cultures, and ways of life. Is this omission the result of political compromise with newly formed allies in the 11-party alliance? Or does the NCP simply fail to recognise the needs of Bangladesh's diverse citizens? Either explanation suggests a troubling lack of empathy and understanding—qualities essential for uniting the nation towards collective progress and advancement.

Why we need more 'techies' in our newsrooms

Usama Rafid is a lecturer of media studies and journalism at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB).

USAMA RAFID

From the invention of the printing press to the rise of broadcast media, every major shift in communication technology has reshaped how news is produced, distributed, and consumed. Journalism has survived for centuries not because it resisted change, but because it adapted to it.

Each phase of journalism's evolution, shaped by wider social changes such as industrialisation, urbanisation, and mass education, brought new formats, audiences, and business models. When telegraph and photography appeared, news organisations were quick to adopt them. Speed and visual evidence became central to journalism. Later, radio and television transformed news into a real-time experience.

However, as these technology companies like Facebook and Google captured the advertising market that once sustained legacy media, news outlets became dependent on platform algorithms for visibility, audience reach, and income. Headlines began to chase clicks, content formats shifted towards virality, and editorial decisions began being shaped by content algorithms rather than newsroom judgement.

Artificial intelligence has intensified this crisis. AI systems are now crawling with news content, summarising and redistributing it without compensation to media companies. This has further weakened the link between journalism and revenue. For many newsrooms, it

feels like the final blow to an already fragile business model.

In this context, survival demands a new path. News organisations now cannot afford to treat technology as a fringe factor. Yet in Bangladesh, most media outlets have not invested seriously in experimenting with new products, formats, or technologies. As a result, a strong and paying reader-base never developed here. News has long been perceived as a free good. Audiences are willing to pay for data, cable connections, or devices, but not for journalism.

This mindset is further reinforced by the structure of the media industry. Many outlets are subsidised by parent businesses and are not expected to be financially independent. Profit orientation, innovation, and long-term sustainability often take a back seat. Only a few top outlets actively explore new models, while the rest continue with business as usual.

This is precisely why newsrooms need technologists, or "techies." Editors, reporters, and producers alone cannot solve today's structural challenges. Newsrooms also need data analysts, developers, designers, and AI specialists who can help build new products and revenue streams.

Around the world, media outlets are already moving in this direction. A clear example is Kontinentalist, a data-driven media startup in Singapore. Alongside publishing in-depth, data-based stories with long-form journalists, it generates income by training organisations in data visualisation and building interactive content for partner organisations. Journalism remains central, but technology enables diversification. Established public broadcasters are

also investing heavily in technology. Munich-based radio and television broadcaster Bayerischer Rundfunk, for instance, uses artificial intelligence to moderate audience comments and understand public demand.

Across global newsrooms, AI is being tested for tasks such as news alerts, verification support, and workflow efficiency, always with human editorial oversight. Geographic Information System (GIS) experts work on cartography and spatial reporting. User Interface (UI) and User Experience (UX) designers build news apps and interactive experiences.

Editors, reporters, and producers alone cannot solve today's structural challenges. Newsrooms also need data analysts, developers, designers, and AI specialists who can help build new products and revenue streams.

Web developers create "scrollytelling" projects that combine narrative storytelling with code. AI specialists explore ways to improve newsroom productivity without compromising editorial values.

Of course, such investments are difficult, especially for resource-constrained newsrooms. There is no guarantee that every experiment will succeed. However, refusing to experiment is far riskier. Bringing technologists into newsrooms can introduce new ways of thinking, encourage collaboration, and slowly build a culture of innovation within

the Bangladeshi media ecosystem.

A practical challenge remains: how can news organisations attract skilled technologists when large tech companies offer better pay and prestige? Universities can bridge this gap by partnering their engineering or computer science wings with media outlets. Workshops, joint projects, internships, and bootcamps could expose students to real newsroom problems and demonstrate the potential social impact of their skills.

Another possible source of support can be media development funding. For years, NGOs and international organisations have funded training in basic reporting skills. Redirecting some of this support towards technology-focused capacities such as data journalism, verification tools, or newsroom automation could be a more forward-looking approach. This would not replace traditional journalism training, but complement it.

Ultimately, what is needed is collaboration. Media outlets, universities, and media development organisations must work together to modernise journalism in Bangladesh. Shared labs, joint fellowships, and collaborative innovation projects could reduce risk while building collective capacity.

Media history shows that those who fail to adapt eventually fade away. Bangladesh's once-popular FM radio stations are a reminder of what happens when formats and business models remain static. So, spending to hire "techies" is an investment. If a newsroom wants to remain relevant, independent, and sustainable, technology must move from its margins to the centre of its journalistic practices.

WORLD WETLANDS DAY

Failed governance is killing our wetlands. We must act fast



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MUHAMMAD MUKTADIRUL ISLAM KHAN

Across centuries, people of the haor region lived by the cycle of water for generations, rather than by the calendar. Ways of life were shaped by when water arrived, how long it lingered, and how gently it retreated. The dominant livelihood activities—farming and fishing—followed the same rhythms of the water cycle, guided by a collective understanding that land is never permanent and therefore would have to be used cautiously, and for a limited time span. Seasonal paths, temporary homes, and agricultural practices reflected an acceptance of limits, informed by memories of past water cycles and anticipation of the next.

Today, that shared understanding no longer guides how the haor is used. Structures are built as if water will not return. Shared stewardship has eroded and regulatory oversight has weakened, enabling intensified extraction. Haors are increasingly treated as fixed assets rather than shared inheritances. In this shift, the haor represents a troubling national story of Bangladesh's wetlands and poses a direct challenge to its policy discourse. The question is, can the country re-learn how to govern its wetlands by recognising its vulnerability, impermanence, restraint, and ecological limits?

Wetlands in Bangladesh are estimated to cover 70-80 lakh hectares, roughly 50 percent of the country's total land surface. These encompass rivers and streams, haors, freshwater lakes, baors, beels, water storage reservoirs, fish ponds, flooded cultivated fields, and estuarine systems with extensive mangrove swamps. Wetlands function as the country's core natural infrastructure, supporting the environment, economy and biodiversity. They also act as buffers against floods and stormwater by absorbing monsoon flows. However, the benefits of having wetlands are not adequately valued within the governance processes, resulting in gaps in operational decisions, budget priorities, and enforcement practices. As a result, wetlands have become increasingly vulnerable, the scale and nature of which are now starkly visible across urban wetlands, haors, and coastal ecosystems.

Urban wetlands are deteriorating faster and more visibly than any other types of wetland in the country. Between 1999 and 2019, the total area of wetlands in Dhaka declined from 19.09 sq km to just 5.87 sq km, with about 22 percent disappearing in a single decade between 2010 and 2019. From a longer-term perspective, the city has lost around 60 percent of its wetlands



Urban wetlands are deteriorating faster and more visibly than any other types of wetland in Bangladesh. This photo was taken near the Dhaleshwari River in Keraniganj, Dhaka.

FILE PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

between 1980 and 2024. A similar trend is evident in Chattogram, where wetlands covered about 23.15 percent of the total land surface in 1990 but declined to 16.46 percent by 2018. The problem extends beyond the loss of wetland area to worsening pollution. The number of pollution sources around Dhaka's rivers have increased from 608 to 1,024 over the last five years. Dissolved oxygen levels in the Buriganga and Shitalakhya rivers have fallen below one mg per litre—an extremely critical

condition incompatible with the survival of most aquatic life forms.

Like urban wetlands, haors—another nature-based ecosystem covering around 20 lakh hectares in northeastern Bangladesh and home to approximately 1.94 crore people—are also increasingly vulnerable to ecological degradation driven by climate variability and human intervention. In the Hakaluki Haor, one of the largest wetlands in the region, the loss of waterbody area increased from 10 percent to 75 percent between 1980 and 2012. Tanguar Haor, an internationally important wetland under the Ramsar Convention (1971), is also under severe pressure, with long-term climatic stress significantly affecting local hydrology and weather patterns. Between 1980 and 2008, annual rainfall declined by about 582 mm, while the average temperature increased by 1.4 degrees Celsius, a critical

intense pressure due to sea-level rise, salinity intrusion, and climate change. Sea levels are rising at a rate of 4.0-7.8 mm per year, and projections indicate that if this trend continues, around 18 percent of the country's coastal area could be permanently submerged by the end of the century. Coastal wetlands are highly susceptible to salinity intrusion driven by cyclonic storm surges, sea-level rise, and coastal flooding. Several scientific models project that the proportion of river areas containing freshwater could decline by about 50 percent by 2050, severely affecting drinking water availability, land productivity, and biodiversity. The coastal region is also experiencing increased land erosion, flooding, waterlogging, and loss of agricultural productivity, further undermining wetland services and local livelihoods.

Paradoxically, the growing vulnerability

Bangladesh is also a signatory to the Ramsar Convention, reflecting its international commitment to the "wise use" of wetlands and the maintenance of their ecological character through sustainable management. Several other policies and planning instruments—including the National Environment Policy, 2018, Jolmohal Management Policy, 2009, Delta Plan 2100, and sectoral policies such as the National Water Policy, 1999, Protection and Conservation of Fish (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025, and Coastal Zone Policy, 2005—also provide a strong legal and planning basis for wetland protection.

However, this policy environment has not translated into effective protection on the ground and has failed to produce tangible outcomes. Wetland governance remains fragmented in Bangladesh, with responsibilities spread across multiple ministries and institutions, including land, water, fisheries, environment, urban development, and local government. This complex institutional arrangement struggles with clear ownership, enforceable protection, and cross-sector accountability. In practice, wetland management often suffers from inadequate staffing, limited resources, weak monitoring systems, and poor enforcement capacity, allowing degradation and pollution to continue. As a result, wetlands continue to be treated primarily as land assets to be leased, converted or reclaimed.

The question is how Bangladesh can move from recognising wetlands to actually protecting them. To do that, wetland governance must shift beyond fragmented responsibilities towards clear institutional mandates, measurable performance indicators, and consistent financing. Protection efforts also need to move from reactive responses to preventive enforcement. Urban wetlands should be safeguarded as essential drainage and flood-retention systems, while haor and coastal wetlands require management approaches that reflect their seasonal dynamics and resilience to growing climatic risks. Strengthening co-management with local communities, whose traditional knowledge once ensured restraint and balance, will also be critical.

Unless wetland protection moves beyond isolated projects to permanent systems with clear mandates, budgets and public oversight, degradation will continue. Ultimately, the future of Bangladesh's wetlands will depend on whether policies move beyond recognition to enforcement, and whether fragmented actions give way to accountable, long-term governance.

Safeguarding voters' minds against AI



Shoukot Ali is working with the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development in Canada.

SHOUKOT ALI

The people of Bangladesh are expecting a free and fair election after a long time. However, voters are currently facing not only traditional deep-rooted political issues but also the manipulation of information online. And AI has been the go-to tool for spreading manipulated information during this election season.

Bangladesh's population is remarkably youthful, with a median age of 26 at the end of 2025. Around 47 percent of the population is also connected to the internet, while 36.3 percent are social media users. These factors can bring both opportunities and threats. With the nationwide spread of high-speed internet connectivity, any news can reach people within moments. During elections, this means that even a single deepfake going viral could potentially distort public perception and fuel unrest.

Globally, there is precedence for elections being influenced by AI. During India's 2024 elections, deepfakes were employed both

creatively by campaigns to reach more voters and offensively to discredit opponents. For instance, two widely circulated deepfake videos showed Bollywood actors Aamir Khan and Ranveer Singh attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi and supporting the opposition parties. The celebrities denied their involvement in these videos. On a positive note, one political party used AI to dub their leaders speaking in the languages/dialects of various regions. AI chatbots were also used to clone politicians' voices to make personalised calls to voters. Additionally, some parties "revived" deceased leaders using AI and recreated speeches in their voices to encourage youth support. During Pakistan's February 2024 elections, deepfakes were used for and against opposition leader and former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who was in prison at the time. His supporters used his image and voice to create a deepfake of

him, motivating people to vote for his party. There were also deepfake videos created to undermine Khan's campaign on Facebook and TikTok. In one video, he was shown calling for an election boycott, creating confusion amongst his supporters.

In the US, AI-generated deepfakes were used for voter suppression during the 2024 presidential election. One such instance was a robocall in January that recreated Joe Biden's voice to urge New Hampshire primary voters to abstain from voting. This led to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) imposing fines and indictments. Meanwhile, Romania's Constitutional Court annulled the country's 2024 presidential election because of AI-enhanced misinformation and disinformation created by Russian interference. The foreign actors ran campaigns on TikTok and Telegram, flooding the platforms with content featuring fake endorsements of far-right and pro-Russia candidate Calin Georgescu.

It is crucial for the Bangladesh government to develop workable, multi-layered defences that combine technology, communities, and policy for quick impact against AI-generated disinformation during this election season. The interim government could consider establishing a high-powered task force to take down deepfake content in collaboration with the Election Commission (EC), Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission

(BTRC), Meta, and Google. It could also develop a rapid response fact checking unit and help political parties to employ their own fact checkers. The government could also require commitment from political parties to avoid making or promoting deepfake content and label AI-generated campaign materials accordingly.

In the long run, Bangladesh should integrate AI literacy into its national curriculum and

Bangladesh should integrate AI literacy into its national curriculum and work with universities and NGOs to conduct workshops for the same. To ensure platform accountability, Bangladesh should require Meta and Google to employ Bangla-fluent fact checkers and produce post-election reports on information transparency.

work with universities and NGOs to conduct workshops for the same. To ensure platform accountability, Bangladesh should require Meta and Google to employ Bangla-fluent fact checkers and produce post-election

reports on information transparency. Passing a comprehensive AI policy and relevant laws with technical assistance from government partners is also necessary. The government could also join an international election integrity forum by collaborating with the UN to exchange intelligence on deepfakes and other AI-generated information, and build a firewall against foreign meddling in the country.

The deeper question haunting democracy is not whether the EC, government authorities or internet platforms can move fast enough to stop deepfakes, but whether societies can build the resilience needed to withstand such manipulated information. A multi-layered, comprehensive response package—rapid deepfake detection, transparent AI labelling, strong platform accountability, better AI literacy, and international cooperation—can significantly reduce the impact of AI-driven manipulation.

Evidence from Romania, the US, India, and Pakistan show that when safeguards exist, AI's influence on election results remains limited. Bangladesh's upcoming election could become the first one where the country proves that it can protect voters' minds from artificial deception. The true cost of failure is not just a contested result or post-election unrest, but the slow collapse of public trust in what they see and hear—without which democracy becomes conceptually meaningless.

CROSSWORD
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Where art empathises with the silent struggles of cancer-affected lives

Rabindra Sangeet exponent Mahnaz Karim was to perform, but she became deeply emotional hearing the stories of cancer patients. She is a mother of a cancer survivor herself. She shared memories of her son's diagnosis in 2011 and the long journey that followed.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Cancer does not only attack the body; it slowly drains the soul. It pulls patients and their families into a daily battle, watching a loved one fight for life while the disease relentlessly tries to take everything away. Each day becomes a test of endurance, patience, and hope.

For those with financial means, there is at least a fragile possibility of treatment and care. But for those who cannot afford the fight, the suffering feels endless. Their lives are marked by uncertainty, pain, and the quiet fear of being left without options.

For them, a ray of hope arrives through Alok Nibash, an initiative of BANCAT, Bangladesh's first holistic cancer care home. Alok Nibash provides free treatment, accommodation, counselling, and emotional support for patients and their families. It is more than a shelter; it is a space of dignity and compassion. Founded by Najmus Ahmed Albab, himself a cancer survivor, the initiative grew from his determination to ensure that financial hardship does not decide who gets to fight cancer.

On Saturday night, BANCAT created a space where pain could finally speak. Through kabbo sangeet, poetry, and storytelling, untold emotions found voice. The audience included

survivors bearing their scars with courage, families still fighting beside loved ones, and those living with irreversible loss. Together, they shared stories of love, loss, fear, and resilience. It was not merely a cultural event, but a collective act of healing.

Mahzabin Ferdous, General Secretary of BANCAT, hosted the event by introducing the guests. The first to take the stage were Jeetu Ahsan and Kishi Tahnin, who narrated moving stories of cancer patients. The struggles and pain of these families brought tears to everyone's eyes.



Dr Zobaida Akhter, originally scheduled to narrate a poem, instead read a heartfelt piece dedicated to her mother—an open letter to her dearest mother.

Rabindra Sangeet exponent Mahnaz Karim was to perform, but she became deeply emotional hearing the stories of cancer patients. She is a mother of a cancer survivor herself. She shared memories of her son's diagnosis in 2011 and the long journey that followed. Despite her struggle, she moved the audience with renditions of *Sokatore Oi Kadiche Sokole* and *Bhalobese Sokhi Nibhrite*.

Fahim Hossain Chowdhury followed with renditions of *Akash Bhora Surjo Tara* and *Neel Akasher Niche Ei Prithibi*.

Professor Dr Nashid Kamal shared her reflections about losing her husband to cancer. She then performed *Tomar Du Chokhe Amar Swapna Aka and Srijono Chonde Anonde Nacho Notoraj*.

Later, Najmus Ahmed Albab and his wife Kaniz Fahmida Ahmed then recited poems written during Albab's own battle with cancer. He described how poetry became a lifeline during his darkest days. He reflected on forgiveness, love, and hope through his works *Khoma* and *Khushi*.

He concluded by reading a poem dedicated to his father, with whom he had a distant relationship that became deeply close during his cancer journey.

The kabbo sangeet segment concluded with Mustari Hossain Panna, who lost her son to cancer and later joined Alok Nibash to support patients in need. She performed *Khelicho E Bissho Loye* and *Dui Chokhe Dui Nodi*.

The evening ended with a powerful recitation by Jayanto Chattopadhyay, narrating Albab's journey through acute myeloid leukemia and the birth of Alok Nibash. Lt Col (Retd) Mudassar Hossain Khan, Bir Pratik, Chief Advisor of BANCAT and a cancer survivor, closed the programme by urging collective responsibility in supporting cancer patients across the country.

As the night drew to a close, what stayed was not just music or poetry, but courage and hope. Alok Nibash is more than a place for treatment—it is a home where lives are restored, hearts are healed, and hope is given a chance to grow.

Jagannath University hosts three-day theatre festival

Jagannath University has opened its third annual theatre festival, a three-day programme running until February 3 at the Bangladesh Mohila Samity auditorium at New Bailey Road in the capital. Organised by the Department of Theatre and Performance Studies, the festival features six productions under the theme "Andhar Katuk Monchaloke" (Let the stage light cut through the darkness).

The ceremony was inaugurated yesterday in the presence of the International Theatre Institute Bangladesh Centre president, Professor Abdus Selim, as the chief guest. Veteran actor Ferdousi Majumdar received a theatre honour. The festival opened at 7:30 pm with *Mulluk*.

Productions by Badal Sircar, Franca Rame, Osvaldo Dragún and others will be staged over three days. Actor-director Tariq Anam Khan will attend the closing ceremony. A single ticket allows access to all shows each day.



Amar Bhashar Cholochitro to kick off tomorrow



Inspired by the spirit of the Language Movement, the University of Dhaka's Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) hosts the annual film festival Amar Bhashar Cholochitro. Organised by the DU Film Society, this year's edition will run from February 3 to 8.

The festival will screen 23 films, including 20 feature-length and three short films, featuring both new and older works. One film will be shown on the opening day, followed by four screenings daily at 10 am, 12:30 pm, 3:30 pm and 6:30 pm.

Ahmed Hasan Sunny's *Ekhane Rajnoitik Alap Joruri*, starring Intiaz Barshon, will be screened at 6:30 pm as the opening film.

NEWS

Harassment of teachers stalks public univs

FROM PAGE 12 Referring to section 59 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), Sayeed said it allows "a private person to arrest" someone committing a cognisable offence. "We did not take the law into our own hands. We handed him over to the authorities."

When asked, Sara Hossain, a senior advocate at the Supreme Court, said that any person may make an arrest under the CrPC provision if they believe that someone has committed a non-bailable and cognisable offence — one for which it is possible to arrest someone even without a warrant. But, in doing so, they cannot assault or abuse the person in any way.

"The images of a teacher being chased and assaulted by students on the Chittagong University campus are deeply disturbing. Reports suggest that the students alleged his 'direct involvement in the July massacre,' while a proctor described him as a 'soldier of the fascist regime.'"

These are serious allegations and can only be verified through independent and impartial investigations, said Sara, also honorary executive director of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST).

Asked about the January 10 incident, CU Pro-Vice Chancellor (academic) Prof Kamal Uddin said, "If no one files a complaint with us, we cannot take action on our own."

He, however, said that taking the law into one's own hands was unjustified.

Earlier on July 4, a group of CU students entered the office of Vice Chancellor Prof Muhammad Yahya Akhtar and intimidated him, saying, "You did not sit here on your own merit; we installed you here. You are bound to listen to us."

That day, Assistant Professor Kushal Baran Chakraborty was confined to the VC office for three hours, and his promotion process was allegedly postponed under pressure from student groups.

Similarly, another assistant professor, Rantu Das, was confined to the office of the history department chairman for nearly two hours on October 23, 2024, and forced to resign over his alleged links to the BCL.

CU Shibir General Secretary Mohammad Parvez; Shibir Publicity Secretary Md Ishaq Bhuiyan, and ex-office activities secretary Habibullah Khaled were present during all three incidents, as shown in video clips.

A nearly identical situation prevails at Rajshahi University.

At a rally on December 19 last year, Rucus General Secretary Salahuddin

Ammar announced that any teacher favouring the "fascist Awami League" would be "dragged by the collar and tied up".

A couple of days later, Ammar demanded the resignation of six deans over their alleged links to the AL regime. He phoned them one by one, asking them to sign pre-drafted resignation letters.

That day, a group of students locked the Deans' Complex and the main administrative building, and staged a demonstration attended by several Shibir leaders, video clips show.

The six deans resigned later that night.

Terming the forced resignations unwarranted, RU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Farid Uddin Khan said, "The university administration cannot evade responsibility when students engage in such activities."

"Political tagging without evidence of anti-uprising activities is not justified," he added.

Incidents of teacher harassment also took place at Dhaka University.

On December 11 last year, a group of students, led by Ducus Social Welfare Secretary AB Zubair, harassed three teachers who belong to the pro-AL "Neel Dal".

The incident occurred at the Faculty of Social Sciences after the three — Prof AKM Jamal Uddin; Prof Azmal Hossain Bhuiyan; and Prof Zeenat Huda — submitted a memorandum to the VC, demanding that the teachers barred from taking classes be allowed to resume duties.

Video footage showed students chasing Prof Jamal and blocking his car from leaving.

About the incident, Zubair said he and several Ducus members went to the faculty to hand over "accomplices of fascism" to police.

Earlier in August 2024, student groups forced Arts Faculty Dean Prof Abdul Bashir and Biological Sciences Dean Prof AKM Mahbub Hasan to resign.

When contacted, Education Adviser Prof CR Abrar termed the assaults on teachers "criminal offences", and said that no grievance justifies such intimidation.

Asked why the ministry did not make any move, he cited legal constraints regarding autonomous institutions.

"I am walking a very thin line. As per the law, I cannot do much, as these are autonomous institutions governed by the University Grants Commission [UGC]... But no one has the licence to assault, harass or intimidate any

individual," he told The Daily Star.

He attributed the present crisis to "blatant partisan politics" involving both teachers and students. "This is a dangerous trend. The previous regime practiced it, but that does not justify us doing it in this new era."

Meanwhile, various teachers' platforms condemned the incidents of assault and harassment of teachers, describing them as forms of "mob justice".

The White Panel, a platform of pro-BNP teachers at DU, said allegations must be resolved through legal procedures, not assault.

The Nationalist Teachers' Forum of Jahangirnagar University expressed concerns, while the University Teachers' Network condemned the "extra-judicial criminal activities" of elected student representatives, highlighting their links to Shibir. The network urged Jamaat-e-Islami to rein in its student wing.

Prof Anu Muhammad, a member of the teachers' network, said these student leaders wore a "mask of inclusivity" before elections but revealed a "violent and anti-education face" after their victory.

"We are seeing these representatives incite vandalism."

Criticising the authorities, he said, "It is under the patronage of an incompetent administration that students have the audacity to do whatever they please."

Drawing a parallel with the past, he said the "tagging culture" seen during the BCL era has now taken a more violent form.

The economist said that if there are specific allegations of crime, corruption, or murder against certain teachers, they should be tried under the law of the land.

When contacted, UGC Chairman Prof SMA Faiz described the recent incidents as "completely unexpected and unacceptable".

Referring to the incidents at the CU, Faiz said, "I have spoken with the vice chancellor of the university. He assured that his administration is taking necessary steps."

He said the UGC cannot interfere in the internal affairs of a university to the extent of issuing show-cause notices to individuals.

Faiz also pointed out a breakdown in the student-teacher bond.

"A healthy relationship cannot be ensured by rules alone. The relationship falters when teachers don't view students as their own children, and vice versa," he added.

Ctg port faces congestion risk

FROM PAGE 12 than crippling the country's main seaport.

Neither the port authority nor the government are yet to initiate any discussion with the protesters, said Md Humayun Kabir, coordinator of Bandar Rokkha Songram Parishad.

The authorities have instead taken punitive measures by transferring and placing on standby several protesting labour leaders, he said.

The Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) yesterday transferred seven more CPA employees to Pangaon Inland Container Terminal (ICT) in Keraniganj and Kamalapur ICD in Dhaka. The seven employees were actively taking part in the work abstention.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Jubo Arthanibid Forum, a philanthropic organisation, yesterday moved a fresh petition before a chamber judge of the Supreme Court seeking an order of status quo on the entire process until the filing of a leave to appeal petition against the High Court verdict on the issue.

"The national parliamentary election is imminent, and at such a critical, sensitive and transitional juncture, the intended execution of the disputed contract amounts to an act of manifest executive high-handedness, arbitrariness and mala fide exercise of power on the part of the government," Md Anwar Hossen, one of the lawyers for the petitioner, told The Daily Star.

If the court is not pleased to pass an order of status quo, the petitioners will suffer irreparable loss and injury and

the rights and interests of the public at large will be materially prejudiced, he added.

The deal signing procedure with the foreign operator is being carried out by the government through the Public Private Partnership Authority following the PPP guideline, said CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk in a press briefing.

"So far, there is no news of the deal being signed — it is not right to start agitation and movement before the signing," he said, adding that such work abstention is having an impact on the port's normal activities.

Regarding the transfer of employees, he said it was a routine transfer done for an emergency official requirement.

Remittance jumps

FROM PAGE 12 Bangladesh abroad sent home a record \$32.8 billion in 2025, according to central bank data.

Surging remittances have been a key driver behind the recent increase in reserves, indicating improved performance of the external sector.

As of January 29, gross foreign exchange reserves stood at \$28.9 billion, up from about \$20 billion a year earlier.

The Bangladesh Bank is now purchasing US dollars from banks to build up foreign exchange reserves.

The banking regulator has purchased a total of \$3.93 billion from the interbank foreign exchange market so far this fiscal year.

Pakistan forces kill 145

FROM PAGE 12 Friday and Saturday, as well as additional militants killed during ongoing clearance operations, the chief minister of Balochistan, Sarfaraz Bugti, told a press conference in Quetta. The military had said 92 militants were killed on Saturday.

The latest total is the highest number of militants killed in such a short span

since the insurgency intensified, Bugti said, without providing comparative figures. He also said 17 law enforcement personnel and 31 civilians were killed in the attacks.

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest and poorest province, has faced a decades-long insurgency led by ethnic Baloch separatists seeking greater autonomy and a larger share of its natural resources.

Alcaraz makes

FROM PAGE 12 each from Wimbledon and the French and US Opens.

At 22, he surpassed legendary countryman Rafael Nadal — in the crowd to witness the feat — who was two years older when he did the same.

A seventh Slam put him alongside John McEnroe and Mats Wilander and one behind Andre Agassi, Jimmy Connors and Ivan Lendl.

It was a first defeat for Djokovic in a Melbourne final, having won all 10 previously, leaving him still searching for a landmark 25th major to better Australia's Margaret Court, who was also watching on centre court.

Djokovic, striving to become the oldest man to lift a Grand Slam singles trophy, last won one at the US Open in 2023. Since then Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner have shared the spoils

Editors' Council

FROM PAGE 12 and General Secretary Dewan Hanif Mahmud said the structure and provisions of these draft ordinances clearly raise concerns about increased state control rather than the protection of media freedom. Moreover, the initiative to complete the law-making process by seeking opinions within a limited timeframe runs contrary to participatory and democratic practices.

The Council believes that the enactment of such important laws should take place after the formation of an elected parliament, through broad and meaningful consultations with all relevant stakeholders — journalists, editors, media organisations, and representatives of civil society.

When it comes to ensuring media freedom and professional security, haste is not the answer. Instead, a transparent, participatory, and responsible process best serves the country and democracy, the statement added.

Pakistan to play in T20WC

FROM PAGE 12 hosted by India and Sri Lanka and featuring 20 teams, with Bangladesh replaced by Scotland following the former's unwillingness to travel to India over security concerns.

Cricket's governing body, the International Cricket Council (ICC) rejected Pakistan's decision.

"This position of selective participation is difficult to reconcile with the fundamental premise of a global sporting event where all qualified teams are expected to compete on equal terms per the event schedule," ICC release said.

"ICC tournaments are built on sporting integrity, competitiveness, consistency and fairness, and selective participation undermines the spirit and sanctity of the competitions."

The ICC said decision was not in the interest of the game.

"While the ICC respects the roles of governments in matters of national policy, this decision is not in the interest of the global game or the welfare of fans worldwide, including millions in Pakistan."

ICC said it expects Pakistan to consider implications of the decision.

"The ICC hopes that the PCB will consider the significant and long-term implications for cricket in its own country as this is likely to impact the global cricket ecosystem, which it is itself a member and beneficiary of."

ICC hopes Pakistan will reconsider the decision.

"It (ICC) expects the PCB to explore a mutually acceptable resolution, which protects the interests of all stakeholders."

A day on the campaign trail

FROM PAGE 3

"I know you. Your symbol is Shapla Koli [water lily bud] – my daughter told me about you," said Shahnaz Begum, a 40-year-old homemaker.

Tasnid smiled, embraced her and thanked her.

Moments later, a seven-year-old boy began chanting slogans for the water lily bud symbol.

Tasnid moved on, distributing leaflets to villagers of all ages.

Jhilkutia is a traditional village of around 50 families, home to about 250 people, of whom 230 are registered voters. Located in politically important Chauhat union, the village is considered a key area in Dhamrai.

One of 76 female candidates contesting this year's election, Tasnid is running on the NCP ticket, part of the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 10-party alliance.

She is campaigning door to door across villages in the constituency.

Before starting her campaign in Jhilkutia, Tasnid said she wants to help build a new Bangladesh, with a focus on education, health, agriculture and technology, especially for women and youth.

She said winning votes in the village may be challenging, as most residents are from religious minority communities and remain cautious due to past experiences and recent events.

Her campaign, she added, is focused on women and young voters, which is why she is visiting every household and college.

A few steps from Shahnaz's home, Tasnid entered another courtyard where several teenagers were making boroi bhorta (mashed jujube).

She sat with them, shared the food and spoke about reform, urging them to vote for the Shapla Koli symbol and support "yes" in the referendum.

Questions soon followed. Villagers asked whether real reforms were even possible and expressed frustration that candidates often disappear after elections.

Tasnid assured them she

has a clear reform agenda and stressed the importance of voting for change.

Despite not growing up in Jhilkutia, Tasnid is familiar to many as a member of a well-known local family – known to some as Ayub Chairman's grandniece and to others as Bulbul's niece.

As the campaign continued, she chatted with children, hugged elders and shared meals.

Residents raised long-standing demands for tube wells, housing and business support.

A betel leaf trader grew emotional while recalling broken promises by past candidates. Tasnid listened quietly, acknowledging their struggles.

Narendra, a local resident, told The Daily Star, "Before elections, everyone makes promises. This time, I will vote based on action."

First-time voter Ripon Mia, a mason and farmer, said he hopes for a new Bangladesh after the July uprising. "We need leaders who work, not just promise. Youth matters, but experience also matters," he said.

After concluding the Jhilkutia campaign around 2:00pm, Tasnid headed to Kalampur Bazar, one of Dhamrai's busiest cattle markets. There, she distributed leaflets from shop to shop.

At the weekly market beside Bhalum Ataur Rahman Khan High School and College, fuchsia vendor Arifur said, "I want the old political scenario to change."

Later Tasnid joined a road meeting in the area, where Jamaat's Dhaka district Nayeb-e-Ameer Md Abdur Rauf and other local Jamaat and NCP leaders were present.

After the event, Nabila Tasnid, an engineer by profession, told The Daily Star, "Moving from engineering to politics is not easy, but I want to do something for my country."

She also alleged a lack of coordination within the alliance, saying separate campaigns by some partners were confusing voters.

"Regardless of whom

people vote for, I urge them to support reform and vote 'yes' in the referendum," she said.

At the same time, slogans from supporters of BNP's "Sheaf of Paddy" symbol echoed from a nearby street, while "Shapla Koli" leaflets were being distributed nearby, briefly turning Dhamrai's streets into a contest of competing campaigns.

Six candidates are contesting the Dhaka-20 seat, including BNP's Md Tamij Uddin, considered the most influential candidate in Dhamrai upazila.

Others include Khelafat Majlis's Md Ashraf Ali, Jatiya Party's Ahsan Khan, Amar Bangladesh Party's Helal Uddin Ahmed and Bangladesh Jasad's Md Arzu Mia.

Dhaka-20 comprises 16 unions and one municipality, with 3,76,639 registered voters—1,88,802 women, 1,87,835 men and two hijra voters.

Travel ban

FROM PAGE 3

allocation of shops at Banani kitchen market, construction and allocation of shops in the parking area of Khilgaon Taltola Super Market, the city corporation's van service and allocation of shops on footpaths, among other matters involving the corporation's interests.

The ACC said Azaz was served a notice to appear for a hearing and record his statement, but he did not comply.

"Reliable sources indicate that Azaz may leave the country and abscond abroad. In the interest of a proper inquiry into the allegations, it is necessary to prevent his foreign travel," added the ACC petition.

The ACC launched a preliminary probe into the allegations on November 27 last year.

Azaz was appointed DNCC administrator for a one-year term by the interim government on February 12 last year when Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain was in charge of local government.

Azmi recoups ordeal during

FROM PAGE 4

crimes by a tribunal during the AL regime.

During Azmi's testimony, three of the 13 accused in the case – Maj Gen Sheikh Md Sarwar Hossain and Brigadier Generals Md Mahub Rahman Siddique and Ahmed Tanvir Majahar Siddique – were present in the dock. Other accused, including deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, are absconding.

Azmi said some 50-60 plainclothes men forcibly entered his Boro Moghbazar residence around 9:30pm on August 22, 2016, and demanded that he be handcuffed. He said they refused to identify themselves or produce an arrest warrant.

Fearing assault, he complied and was handcuffed, blindfolded and taken away with his head covered. One of them, whom he claimed to have recognised due to loosened blindfold,

was then DGFI personnel Lt Col Makhurul, who verbally abused him.

Despite being blindfolded, Azmi said gaps in the covering allowed him to discern the route and he became certain that he was taken to a secret detention centre near Station Officers' Mess-B of the DGFI complex inside Dhaka Cantonment, where he was confined to Cell No-11, marked "VIP".

He told the tribunal that he was commissioned into the Bangladesh Army in 1981 and lived at Station Officers' Mess-B in 1982-83.

"During my stay at the mess in 1982-83, I occasionally heard cries of agony coming from the JIC," he said.

In his deposition, Azmi described his prolonged, harrowing ordeal.

"The quality of food was extremely poor. For six years and four months, I was never able to eat three

meals a day," he said.

He said medical care was grossly inadequate and that he suffered from persistent eye, ear and dental problems, as well as skin disease and gastric ailments. He also claimed to have lost consciousness four times, developed an acute kidney infection, contracted Covid-19, broken two teeth and struggled to read due to deteriorating eyesight.

Azmi further informed that earlier on June 24, 2009, the then AL government dismissed him from service without charge, investigation or trial, stripped him of all pension benefits, barred him from entering cantonment areas, and kept him under intelligence surveillance and harassment for more than seven years before abducting him.

The tribunal fixed today for recording the remainder of Azmi's deposition.

Include women

FROM PAGE 3

transition must move from dialogue to concrete political commitments.

He stressed that election manifestos should address renewable energy in light of Bangladesh's climate vulnerability.

Fahima Nasrin Munni, assistant secretary for international affairs of the BNP, said women's participation remains limited across sectors and is particularly low in energy.

Decision-making, she said, continues to be dominated by men, while the changing climate context makes women's inclusion increasingly urgent.

She added that her party will examine the crisis faced by women in the energy sector if it comes to power.

Navid Nowroz Shah, joint chief coordinator of the National Citizen Party (NCP), spoke about women's security and rights, saying the party would work to strengthen women's empowerment in the coming days.

Bonni Bepari, vice-

president of the Jatiya Sangskritik Party and Jatiya Party-nominated candidate from the Dhaka-10 constituency, cited biogas as a practical renewable energy option.

She vowed to raise gender-responsive energy issues within party discussions.

Moderating the session, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam expressed disappointment over the minimal number of female nominations in the upcoming election.

"Women's participation in the energy sector remains very low. Regardless of which government forms, their role in renewable energy must remain a national priority," she said.

Banasree Mitra Neogi, director of Rights and Governance Programmes at MJF; M Zakir Hossain Khan, executive director of Change Initiative; Tanzina Dilshad of the European Union Delegation to Bangladesh; and Hasan Mehedi, chief executive officer of CLEAN, also spoke, among others.

Civic reforms, bridging urban

FROM PAGE 3

A resident of the Turag area told The Daily Star that waste management is their top concern. "The entire area is dirty and uncleaned, but there is no initiative for proper waste management," she said.

Theft, mugging, and overall security were also cited as major issues.

A teacher, requesting anonymity, expressed scepticism. "With the election approaching, many are giving assurances. But I don't know if we will see them once the polls are over. We want representatives who will actually listen to us and solve our problems."

Saiful Islam Himel, a resident of Uttara Sector-13, said elected representatives must prioritise local needs. "Extortion is a regular occurrence here. Teen gangs, theft, and mugging are rampant. Administrative action must be increased," he said, adding that the government must ensure communal harmony, control commodity prices, and make civic services more accessible.

Harun-or-Rashid, 45, a "July Warrior" from the Uttarkhan Mazar area, described life in the constituency as increasingly difficult. Traffic jams, roadside encroachments, extortion, uncontrolled auto-rickshaws, poor drainage, low gas pressure, and contaminated Wasa water, he said, have made daily life unbearable for many residents.

Voters believe the main contest will be between BNP candidate SM Jahangir Hossain and Ariful Islam Adeeb of the National Citizen Party (NCP), a candidate of the Jamaat-led 10-party alliance.

Other prominent contenders include Mahmudur Rahman Manna of Nagorik Oikya and Md Anwar Hossain of Islami Andolan Bangladesh. Independent candidates

Md Mohiuddin Hawlader and Md Ismail Hossain, along with Zakir Hossain of Jatiya Party, Syed Harun-or-Rashid of BSD, Sabina Javed of NPP, and Md Jashim Uddin of Bangladesh Islami Front, are also in the race.

NCP candidate Ariful Islam Adeeb says he is focusing on grassroots mobilisation.

"Instead of large show-downs, I am holding small ward-level meetings daily to reach people of all classes and ages," he told The Daily Star.

He has pledged to transform Uttara into a "planned, safe, and just city", proposing a government hospital to address disparities in civic services, specialised task forces for business security, and dedicated buses for women.

Adeeb also alleged he was attacked during the campaign. Claiming that the electoral environment is becoming uneven, he said the administration and large businesses are favouring a particular party.

BNP candidate SM Jahangir Hossain said no meaningful development has taken place in Turag, Uttarkhan, and Dakshinkhan over the past 17 years.

"If elected, I will solve waterlogging, traffic congestion, and utility crises," he said, promising modern education for youth, employment opportunities for women, and "Family Cards" for underprivileged households.

He also committed to making Dhaka-18 free from thuggery, extortion, and drugs.

Addressing the alleged attack on the NCP leader, he termed it a "misunderstanding" and said organisational action had already been taken against the BNP activists involved.

"If I win, I will work with Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Ariful Islam Adeeb, and others to build a humanitarian and new

Bangladesh," he added.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna said voters have responded positively to his campaign.

"People in this constituency – known as the gateway to the 2024 uprising – now want qualitative change," he said, describing the area as "neither a city nor a village".

He pledged a radical transformation, identifying extortion as a key challenge, and called on the youth and women to engage in politics to build a discrimination-free Bangladesh.

With 6,13,883 voters – 3,79,906 men, 3,67,151 women, and six hijra voters – Dhaka-18 remains one of the country's largest and most closely watched constituencies.

PRAYER TIMING	
FEBRUARY 2	
Fazr	Zohr
5:30	12:45
Asr	Maghrib
4:15	5:52
Esha	JAMAAT
7:15	6:05
1:15	4:30
5:56	7:45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION	

বাংলাদেশ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ড
Bangladesh Power Development Board
Directorate of Purchase
Biddut Bhaban (12th Floor)
1, Abdul Goni Road, Dhaka-1000

e-Tender Notice

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

Sl No	Tender ID No.	Package No.	Reference No.	Description of goods/works	Last selling date and time	Closing date and time	Opening date and time
01	1221808	EE-GRL-17 Fy-25/26 LOT-1.	27.11.0000.304.26.126.26 Date: 01/02/2026	Supply of 250 KVA 11/0.4 KV Distribution Transformer (For Tongi Store).	08-Mar 2026 17:00	09-Mar 2026 14:00	09-Mar 2026 14:00
02	1221810	EE-GRL-17 Fy-25/26 Lot-2.	27.11.0000.304.26.127.26 Date: 01/02/2026	Supply of 250 KVA 11/0.4 KV Distribution Transformer (For Fauzderhat Store).	08-Mar 2026 17:00	09-Mar 2026 14:00	09-Mar 2026 14:00
03	1222418	CC-GRL-01 Fy-25/26	27.11.0000.304.26.128.26 Date: 01/02/2026	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Desktop Computers with Monitors, UPS, Laptops, Laser Printers, A4 Size Scanners and Legal Size Scanners for different Offices of BPDB.	08-Mar 2026 17:00	09-Mar 2026 14:00	09-Mar 2026 14:00

This is 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).

For more details please contract to the PE's Support Desk (01768595879).

বিস্তারিত/সহকারী
মি. নানু মিয়া
ID No. 1-01304
Director
Directorate of Purchase
BPDB, Dhaka

Army International Islamic Institute (AII)
Jolshiri, Dhaka
Plot # 20A, Road # 403, Sector # 8, Jolshiri, Dhaka

JOB VACANCY

Qualified candidates are encouraged to apply for the following posts:

Post & Benefits	Qualifications & Experiences
Position: Vice Principal/Coordinator/ Section Head	Educational Qualification: Masters or 4 years Honours degree in any subject from a recognized university with minimum CGPA-3.00 or equivalent at all levels. Experience: Minimum 07 years teaching experience in an International English medium school. Experience in English medium Islamic School / College is preferable
Salary: Attractive and Negotiable	Other Qualifications: • Fluency in English is a must. • Competent to develop English medium curriculum in English Medium School. • Hafiz/Hafiza of Al-Quran will be given preference. • 'O' & 'A' Level with a good score in IELTS will be preferred. • Must possess and depict Islamic values/culture. Age: 30-50 years

Deadline to apply: 10 February 2026

NB:

- Apply through website www.aaii.edu.bd
- Contact 01769055487 (if need).
- Date of Exam will be notified later.
- Educational qualifications and age limit are negotiable for experienced candidates.
- No money/Bank Draft is required.**

Principal

আই.ই.এস.পি.আর./সেনা/১০৪
GD-236

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক
(সেন্ট্রাল ব্যাংক অব বাংলাদেশ)
প্রধান কার্যালয়
মতিঝিল, ঢাকা-১০০০

ব্যাংকার্স সিলেকশন কমিটি সচিবালয়
ইমেইল: info.bsccs@bb.org.bd

তারিখ: ১৪ মার্চ, ১৪৩২
২৮ জানুয়ারি, ২০২৬

বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-৩৮/২০২৬

ব্যাংকার্স সিলেকশন কমিটি (BSC)-এর সদস্যভুক্ত ২০২২ সাল ভিত্তিক ০৩টি ব্যাংক এ সহকারী প্রকৌশলী (ইলেকট্রিক্যাল)/এসিস্ট্যান্ট ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (ইলেকট্রিক্যাল) (Job ID-10212) এর ০৩টি শূন্য পদে নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে লিখিত পরীক্ষার সময়সূচি, content, প্রবেশপত্র ডাউনলোড সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ব্যাংকার্স সিলেকশন কমিটি সচিবালয়ের তত্ত্বাবধানে ০৩টি ব্যাংক এ সহকারী প্রকৌশলী (ইলেকট্রিক্যাল)/এসিস্ট্যান্ট ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (ইলেকট্রিক্যাল) (Job ID-10212) এর ০৩টি শূন্য পদে যোগ্য বিবেচিত প্রার্থীদের এক সেশনে লিখিত পরীক্ষা আগামী ০৬/০২/২০২৬ তারিখ, শুক্রবার (দুপুর ৩টা-বিকাল ৫টা; ০২ ঘণ্টা ব্যাপী) অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। লিখিত পরীক্ষার প্রশ্নপত্রের Content ও নম্বর বিভাজন এবং কেন্দ্র সংক্রান্ত বিস্তারিত তথ্য বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত ওয়েবসাইট (<https://recruitment.bb.org.bd>) এ আপলোড করা হয়েছে।

ডিসিপিঃ ৪৮/২০২৬-৩৫৬
তারিখঃ ০১/০২/২০২৬

স্বাক্ষরিত/-
মিজানুর রহমান আকান
পরিচালক (বিএসসিএস) ও
সদস্য-সচিব, বিএসসি

ব্যাংকিং ও আর্থিক সেবা পেতে, হয়রানির শিকার হলে কিংবা কোনো অভিযোগ থাকলে ১৬২০৬ নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

জিডি-২০৪

RAIHAN-GHATAK-TARKOVSKY

We shall search, we shall find



Still from *A Missing Can of Film* (2025), directed by Naeem Mohaiemen.

NAEEM MOHAEMEN

"Eisenstein, Pudovkin / We shall fight, we shall win" was a chant by students of Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) during the 2015 student strikes. Their protests were against the appointment of a television actor-turned-politician as head of the film institute. This slogan invoked Soviet directors Sergey Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin, who proposed an idea of revolutionary cinema in the Soviet Union. That slogan reappears in a transformed meter as the title of Ashish Rajadhyaksha's *John-Ghatak-Tarkovsky: Citizens, Filmmakers, Hackers* (Tulika, 2023), a vigorous history of public film education in

pushed far away. When I recently interviewed Zahir Raihan's wife, actress Kohinoor Akhter Suchanda, she expressed a familiar sentiment—that cinema had once been an art form, a legacy vanished in the bustling contemporary.

I have thought of the John-Ghatak-Tarkovsky coupling while sifting through the uneven space of recovering Zahir Raihan's legacy. While his portrait sits in the first-floor landing of the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation, our film industry is out of sync with the Raihan project of revolutionary cinema in his final years. In my new film *A Missing Can of Film* (2025), I attempt a dialogue with the absent figure of Zahir Raihan,

cinema" (a phrase used by Catherine and Tareque Masud in a different context). The other punctum is the hallucinatory murder scene in Raihan's *Anwara* (1967), in which I read the traces of Sergei Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* (1925)—transposing a mutiny on a Russian battleship to a tangled family conflict in rural Bangladesh were the forms of internationalist cinema that Zahir Raihan was arriving at by the late 1960s.

Missing Can premiered at the Eva International-Ireland Biennial of Contemporary Art last year, and it is currently on view at the Kochi-Muziris Biennial of Art in India. Considering the internationalism of Zahir Raihan's *Stop Genocide* (1971)—he invokes Auschwitz, Vietnam, Algeria, and Palestine through Alamgir Kabir's narration—I spent my time in Ireland surveying what other forms of world cinema were being screened alongside my on-screen Raihan. In this process, I came across Eoghan Ryan's *Carceral Jigs* (2025) where a ventriloquist's puppet is the centre point for a meditation on the rise of a new form of Irish anti-migrant racism. Throughout the film, the puppet keeps reappearing, channeling dark and light, flopping around, never settling, never firm. In that physical apparition—one of the few elements to occupy the full 16:9 ratio of the video—I gleaned the presence absence of a commitment to an accelerated editing rhythm, colour schema, and fluctuating ratio-proportions. We also encountered grainy surveillance of immigrant containment camps, a menacing dance floor in hyper-saturated VHS-like colour, and, at a repeating interval, furious mobs burning down homes for migrants.

This month in Dhaka, while organising screenings of *Missing Can*

somnolent tracking style of my earlier film *Jole Dobe Na* (2020). The hushed silence of the Dhaka Film Development Corporation during my 2024 shoot (an echo of Kolkata's dream-state hospital in the 2020 film) parallels my unresolved questions around Zahir Raihan and a particular nation-state-bound film history.

Zahir Raihan disappeared on January 30th, 1972, immediately after the Bangladesh Liberation War. He had set out to find his missing brother, novelist Shahidullah Kaiser, and was abducted in Mirpur. A restless polymath, he had directed and produced numerous films and written many novels. The tensions within his cinematic forms (from neorealist social realism to mass-popular entertainment), film dialogue (from Pakistan's 'Islamic language' of Urdu to the Bangladesh national language of Bengali), and political alignments (from a nationalist project to the Soviet International) rendered

a 'paucity of filmic documents of [that] gruesome massacre,' and responded, through montage and inserts, with 'artistic stubbornness'. Mahmudul Hossain posits in *The Other National Cinema of Bangladesh* (2023) that Raihan had observed 'Third Cinema' and drew upon its use of documentary clips, newsreels, photographs, and statistics.

Masha Salazkina ends her book *World Socialist Cinema: Alliances, Affinities and Solidarities in the Global Cold War* (2023) with a close reading of *Stop Genocide*. She reads in Raihan's approach a kinship he may have had with socialist filmmakers Sergei Eisenstein, Santiago Alvarez, and Andrzej Wajda. Yet, if we look at Raihan's corpus from the 1950s until the Bangladesh war, he also made family dramas, commercial blockbusters, and one nationalist film. His family members recall that *Let There Be Light* was to be the film in which his affinity



Still from *Carceral Jigs* (2025), directed by Eoghan Ryan.

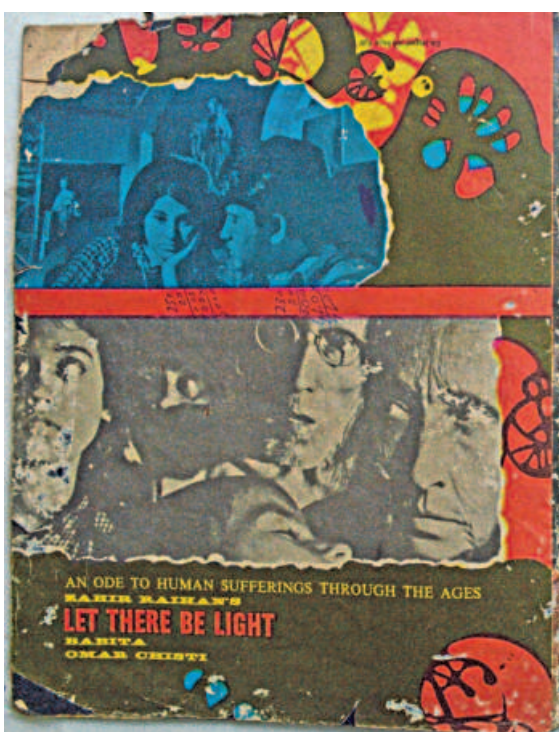
There are two concepts at work here—first, that if Zahir Raihan had lived, a very different film industry would have been birthed from 1972 onward; and second, if in spite of Raihan's wishes the distorted film space we have today had prevailed, he would have rejected these "killing fields of cinema" (a phrase used by Catherine and Tareque Masud in a different context).



Still from *Bhobar Vita* (2025), directed by Molla Sagar.



Zahir Raihan (1935-1972)



An advertisement for Zahir Raihan's unfinished film *Let There Be Light*, published in the magazine *Chitrita*.

India, which today manifests on vibrant film campuses that often encounter state-managed sanitisation. The first two names in Rajadhyaksha's book title are Indian third cinema directors John Abraham and Ritwik Ghatak. On the walls of India's film institutes, murals of both these figures are a typical sight (at Dhaka University's Film & Television Department, Ghatak also appears on wall murals). Yet these majestic memorials exist alongside the uneasy contemporary reality—film schools that are increasingly run along anodyne, controlled vertices, with cinema's original potential for radical change

and the punctum is a sequence where our camera glides up the stairs of FDC, past portraits of Raihan and Satyajit Ray. As the camera glides forward, it is interrupted, and then reverses itself, while on-screen supertitles propose that "angry" Ritwik Ghatak would have been a more appropriate pairing with Zahir Raihan. There are two concepts at work here—first, that if Zahir Raihan had lived, a very different film industry would have been birthed from 1972 onward; and second, if in spite of Raihan's wishes the distorted film space we have today had prevailed, he would have rejected these "killing fields of

at the Liberation War Museum, Bengal Shilpalay, and the Dhaka University Film & Television Department, I have been thinking back to Eoghan Ryan's staccato editing rhythm, and the way he slaloms between 4:4 archival and 16:9 contemporary, rather than the more typical approach of expanding archival footage to occupy the same screen span as the more recent footage. Walking into Eoghan's space brought into intriguing contrast the slow, roaming shots of my own film and the frenetically exuberant pacing of his, both now unspooling to the same Irish audience. *Missing Can* includes the

him a cipher after death. We consider him a war martyr (*shaheed*), but he was abducted 45 days after the end of the fighting. In *Missing Can* I search for Zahir Raihan within his own film archive, and I supplemented my reading of his life through conversations with his family members (Kohinoor Akhter Suchanda, Farida Akhtar Babita, Tapu Raihan, Anol Raihan), film scholars (Mir Shamsul Alam Baboo), and Film Archive leadership (Farhana Rahman). These conversations are the foundation of my own understanding of his legacy, yet the search for Zahir Raihan is stymied by the absence of critical materials, including around his unfinished film *Let There Be Light*.

During the editing phase, I was in my own internal dialogue with the films of Molla Sagar, about whom I first wrote in *The Daily Star* in 2017 ("The cinema you were waiting for"). In Sagar's new film *Bhobar Vita* (2025), for which I assisted with subtitles, he is on a similar quest for the legacy of Ritwik Ghatak. Interspersed with conversations with Ghatak's twin sister, Sagar's film attempts a "road movie" style journey through Old Dhaka, often with a GoPro camera that searches for traces of Ritwik Ghatak's residence. That search faces current residents whose fear is that a documentary may result in some loosening of their own claims to the land they live on, often without paperwork. At the end of the film, Sagar provides a painful coda—the news that Ritwik Ghatak's ancestral Rajshahi home was destroyed during the many conflictual events of post-uprising Bangladesh in 2024. The reader can understand how, while editing his subtitles, I experienced a flash of recognition around the ways that Zahir Raihan's legacy has also slipped out of reach.

The posthumous ambiguity around Zahir Raihan circumnavigates the way he became a symbol for a nation state project that he may have been critical of if he had lived. Dhaka's film industry emerged from the war shattered by the murder of Raihan, who had held promise of what anthropologist Lotte Hoek called 'cross-wing filmmaking' within a period when 'united' Pakistan was about to split into two nations. Raihan started as an assistant director on *Jago Hua Savera* (*The Day Shall Dawn*, dir. A. J. Kardar, 1959), an early Pakistani neorealist production. Featuring East Bengali fishermen speaking an invented Urdu-Bengali patois, the film was a commercial failure. However, scholar Itikhar Dadi argues that the film played a 'spectral role in subsequent cultural developments'.

The two Raihan films that are relevant to trace his turning away from Pakistan are *Jibon Theke Neya* / *Taken from Life* (1970), made a year before the war, and *Stop Genocide*, completed at a feverish pace in the middle of the 1971 liberation war. Both films intercut documentary footage with filmed fiction. Newsreel footage and photographs of street marches against the Pakistan military junta are inserted between filmed scenes. *Stop Genocide* was completed during the war and faced what Alamgir Kabir (*Film in Bangladesh*, 1979) called

with direct cinema was finally going to find full expression—it was slated to be a film in multiple languages, including English and, possibly, Russian. In *Missing Can*, I wanted to trace the genealogy of Raihan's brief, liminal socialist cinema, or what I call the "Socialist Stillborn" formed under the crucible of a liberation war in which the communist parties were not allowed a central role. What type of socialist cinema did Raihan develop during that war year spent in exile in India? What earlier tendrils of this had he concealed within productions while having sympathy for left politics? What future Bangladesh socialist cinema might have been birthed if Raihan had survived the war and moved forward with his proposal (co-authored with Alamgir Kabir and Syed Hasan Imam) for a nationalised cinema industry?

I spoke to Eoghan Ryan about some of this, and he highlighted the work of 'unpack[ing] a life not lived but presumed, through detritus and intention; compelling the dead to speak'. Over an afternoon conversation, I asked him if he made a differentiation in his editing choices between footage of the quietly confident Irish immigrant who speaks of gardens with many flowers, and the covert video material of white ethnonationalists he spliced together. Though inconclusive, I cited the difference between Walter Heynowski and Gerhard Scheumann's *Der lachende Man* (*The Laughing Man*, 1966), in which the interviewee mistakenly thinks he is among 'friends', and Joshua Oppenheimer's *The Act of Killing* (2012), where Indonesia's executioners embrace the restaging of their crimes with gusto and a lack of remorse. What could a similar method be for the messy, unresolved narrative left behind by a mysterious abduction in 1972?

Missing Can projects my own simmering hesitation to break free of the path of quiet viewing. The editing pace quickens only when it comes to Raihan's own films, sometimes mixed as three scenes per screen, to create a split-screen homage to John Frankenheimer's *Grand Prix* (1966). Then, as the jumpy rhythm of those scenes ends, we politely return to the Film Development Corporation (FDC). The red text on screen queries the artifacts in the FDC buildings—the Ray-Raihan portrait stairway, the rusted reel-to-reel machines, and the underused sound stages. These scenes from an enervated film industry sediment into a gentle critique that sits alongside Raihan's own lifelong desire to challenge icons and deities.

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Missing Can of Film can be viewed online for a limited period at these links.

Bangla: <https://vimeo.com/user1938880/raihanbangla>
English: <https://vimeo.com/user1938880/raihan>

SPORT

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“

“Lifting the trophy for the first time in Australia was crazy. A dream come true. I dreamt about getting an Australian Open and completing the career Grand Slam.”

CARLOS ALCARAZ



- This was Alcaraz's first Australian Open title.
- At 22, Alcaraz became the youngest man in the Open era to win all four majors, adding to his two titles each from Wimbledon and the French and US Opens. He surpassed legendary countryman Rafael Nadal, who was two years older when he did the same.
- Alcaraz is also just the sixth player to complete the career Grand Slam.
- Alcaraz moved into joint seventh on the all-time list of

Grand Slam men's singles titles won in the Open Era. The Spaniard moved clear of his fellow ATP No. 1 Club members Boris Becker and Stefan Edberg (six titles each) to level with John McEnroe and Mats Wilander.

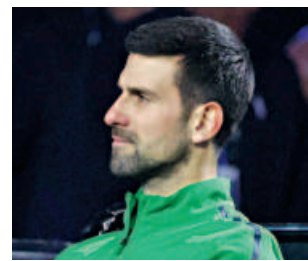
• Meanwhile, it was a first defeat for Djokovic in a Melbourne final, having won all 10 previously.

• That also leaves Djokovic still searching for a landmark 25th major to better Australia's Margaret Court, who won 24 women's Grand Slam titles.

“

“God knows what happens tomorrow, let alone in six months or 12 months. So it has been a great ride. I love you guys.”

NOVAK DJOKOVIC



Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) president and Chief of Army Staff General Waker-Uz-Zaman inaugurates the plaque of the proposed Bangladesh Olympic Complex at Trishal in Mymensingh on Sunday in presence of BOA and Army high-ups. The foundation ceremony marked the formal launch of the country's first planned Olympic-standard multi-sports complex, envisioned as a long-term training and competition hub for national athletes. Spread over 173.2 acres, the complex will feature indoor and outdoor venues for more than 30 disciplines, along with athletes' accommodation, training facilities, a media centre and supporting infrastructure. (Inset) The masterplan of the project.

PHOTO: ISPR/COLLECTED



Imranur to compete at Asian Indoors

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's fastest man Imranur Rahman arrived in Dhaka on Sunday ahead of his participation in the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships, scheduled to be held in Tianjin, China from February 6 to 8.

The Bangladesh Navy sprinter is set to leave for China in the early hours of Wednesday. Imranur had a brief training session at the National Stadium on Sunday and is scheduled to train again at the same venue on Monday morning.

Bangladesh Navy official Al Amin, a former national jumper, told The Daily Star that Imranur is fully fit for the competition.

The England-born sprinter won gold in the 60-metre event at the 2023 Asian Indoor Championships and finished fourth in the 2024 edition. He will compete in Tianjin on February 6.

Imranur was overlooked for the 2025 Asian Indoor Championships due to a knee injury, with 400-metre runner Zahir Raihan representing Bangladesh instead.

“Imranur has been selected based on his current form and past success,” Bangladesh Athletics Federation general secretary Shah Alam said.

‘Job finished, four out of four complete’

AGENCIES

Carlos Alcaraz's smile may come easily, but history never does.

On Sunday night at a floodlit Rod Laver Arena, the 22-year-old Spaniard carved his name into tennis immortality, rallying past Novak Djokovic 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 7-5 to win his maiden Australian Open title and complete a career Grand Slam at a younger age than anyone before him.

With the victory, Alcaraz became the youngest man to win all four major titles, surpassing the mark set by his compatriot Rafael Nadal, who was watching from the front row in Melbourne. Nadal was 24 when he achieved the feat; Alcaraz has done it at 22, underlining his rapid rise from prodigy to standard-bearer of the sport's next era.

The triumph was built on the same traits that have defined Alcaraz's journey from the small town of El Palmar to the summit of the game: tactical flexibility, fearless shot-making and a refusal to wilt under pressure. After losing the opening set, he steadily wrested control from the 38-year-old Djokovic, matching power with patience and aggression with clarity in the biggest moments.

At the trophy ceremony, Alcaraz reflected on the significance of his achievement and his bond with Melbourne, saying it was “an honour” to return to the city each year. Moments later, he leaned into the camera lens and scribbled a simple message that summed up his night and his journey: “Job finished. Four out of four complete.”

Alcaraz also made clear that his

breakthrough had been shaped by the giants he is now challenging. Addressing Djokovic, he described the Serb as an inspiration not just for tennis players, but for athletes everywhere, adding that it had been an honour to share the locker room with him and to watch him compete.

He then turned his attention to Nadal, calling it a special and unfamiliar feeling to have his idol watching from the stands.

“It's a bit weird seeing Rafa in the stands. I think it's the first time as a professional because I know you watched me when I was 14 or 15 years old. It's such an honour playing in front of you, we had great battles on the court and it was a honour sharing the court with you. Thank you for being here,” Alcaraz said. Djokovic, gracious in defeat, reflected

on an uncertain future after another chapter in a storied rivalry with the young Spaniard. The loss left him on 24 Grand Slam titles, still one short of the outright all-time record. He admitted he had not expected to reach another major final and told the Melbourne crowd that the support he received over the past two weeks was unlike anything he had previously experienced in Australia, describing his journey as “a great ride”.

For Alcaraz, however, the road is clearly still rising. Already the youngest champion across clay, grass and hard courts, and now the youngest to complete the full set of majors, he stands not merely as Nadal's heir, but as a player intent on redrawing the limits of what is possible — with his best tennis seemingly still ahead of him.

Not preparing for a World Cup but smiles return

SPORTS REPORTER

“Nothing much, just preparing for the football World Cup.”

That was Bangladesh middle-order batter Tawhid Hridoy's playful post on his official Facebook page yesterday, posted alongside a picture of national cricketers taking part in a football session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

The light-hearted post came at a time when the national team was originally expected to be preparing for the upcoming T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in Sri Lanka and India from February 7. Instead, the players have returned to Mirpur for a fitness camp ahead of a domestic three-team competition — the ODOMMO Bangladesh T20 Cup 2026 — which will run from February 5 to 9.

The shift followed the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) decision not to



“Nothing much, just preparing for the football World Cup.”

That was Bangladesh middle-order batter Tawhid Hridoy's playful post on his official Facebook page yesterday, posted alongside a picture of national cricketers taking part in a football session at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur.

send the team to the T20 World Cup in India due to security concerns. After the International Cricket Council (ICC) rejected Bangladesh's request to relocate their fixtures outside India, the Tigers were replaced by Scotland for the marquee event — an outcome that left players disappointed.

While Hridoy's post was clearly meant in jest — reinforced by the emojis that accompanied it — it also subtly captured the reality of missing out on a global tournament. Still, the resumption of training appeared to lift spirits, with players smiling as they reunited at the home of cricket.

Veteran Mushfiqur Rahim, who was not part of the World Cup setup, was seen fully engaged in fitness drills and timed runs. The mood lightened further during the football session, with friendly tussles and laughter adding energy. The scenes marked the players' return to Mirpur following the conclusion of the Bangladesh Premier League last month.

However, questions remain over how much a short, three-team, five-day T20 tournament can compensate for the void left by missing the World Cup. Although Bangladesh's next international assignment is an ODI series at home against Pakistan in March, BCB vice-president Faruque Ahmed made it clear

that the tournament was arranged largely in response to the World Cup snub.

“The national election is on 12th [February], and we also didn't go to the World Cup, which was in T20 format. We did talk about the format, but we opted for T20 since we didn't go to play the T20 World Cup, which is possibly how the decision came,” Faruque told The Daily Star.

Bangladesh face a busy 2026, with home series scheduled against Pakistan, New Zealand, Australia, India and the West Indies. A BCB media committee official also confirmed that direct qualification for the 2028 T20 World Cup — which could have been ensured by reaching the Super Eight stage of the upcoming edition — also remains a key consideration for the board.

For now, however, the focus is simply on getting back into action. With cricket returning to the calendar, the players appear content to be training again, even if it is not for the World Cup.

Joty wants better preparation before T20 WC

STAR SPORTS DESK

Bangladesh captain Nigar Sultana Joty welcomed the Tigresses' tournament-winning qualifiers campaign but warned that sustained and competitive preparation will be crucial if the team are to make a meaningful impact at the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in June.

Bangladesh capped off their Women's T20 World Cup Qualifier 2026 campaign with another commanding performance, registering a seven-wicket win over the Netherlands yesterday in Mulpani.

The victory ensured the Tigresses finished top of the Super Six stage and maintained a flawless record throughout the tournament, winning all seven of their matches — the only team to remain unbeaten.

While pleased with the outcome, Joty stressed that the focus must now shift quickly to preparations for the main event, which will be held in June in England and Wales. “Preparation will be extremely important. We would like to play some international matches before the World Cup because in previous tournaments we were not able to prepare properly,” Joty said in a video message released after Sunday's match. “If we can play a good, competitive T20 tournament



before the World Cup, whether it is a franchise league or any other event, it will boost the team a lot and help our preparation,” she added.

The call for better preparation comes against the backdrop of last year's ICC Women's World Cup, where Bangladesh endured a long gap without competitive cricket. After playing their final qualifier match on April 19, the Tigresses did not return to competitive action until October 2 — a hiatus of nearly six months.

The lack of match readiness was reflected in the World Cup results, as Bangladesh managed just one win from seven matches and finished second-last in the eight-team tournament, ahead of only Pakistan.



Mbappe penalty seals late Real win

Kylian Mbappe calmly converted a 100th-minute penalty to give Real Madrid a dramatic 2-1 victory over nine-man Rayo Vallecano in a fiery La Liga derby on Sunday. The win cut Barcelona's lead at the top to one point after their Saturday victory over Elche. Vinicius Junior opened the scoring after Jude Bellingham went off injured, but Jorge de Frutos equalised early in the second half. After red cards for Pathe Ciss and Pep Chavarria, Mbappe struck late to secure the win.

PHOTO: AFP

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Harassment of teachers stalks public univs

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Several public universities have lately been shaken by incidents in which teachers were harassed, confined to their offices, or even assaulted by student leaders over alleged links to the previous regime, with the authorities failing to prevent the recurrence of such untoward events.

Educationists have termed the incidents “unexpected and unacceptable”, while student leaders involved in the incidents have defended their actions as efforts to hold “corrupt teachers” accountable for their “past misconduct”.

The latest incident unfolded at Chittagong University (CU) on January 10, when several CU Central Students’ Union (Cucus) leaders, elected from the Islami Chhatra Shibir-backed Sampriti Shikharthi Jote panel, forcibly took an assistant professor to the proctor’s office over alleged ties with the Awami League regime.

While the teacher, Hasan Mohammad Roman from the law faculty, was supervising an admission test, a group of Cucus leaders grabbed him. In a video clip, they were seen dragging him onto a rickshaw to take him to the proctor’s office.

The students accused Roman, a former assistant proctor, of filing cases against protesters during the July



Dhaka North City Corporation is digging up part of the lane leading from Gabtoli to Technical to install sewage pipes. The work, which occupies half of this busy entry point to the capital, leaves vehicles stuck for long periods. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Ctg port faces congestion risk as strike continues

Fresh petition moved before SC against DP World deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers and employees of the Chattogram port will continue with their eight-hour work abstention programme for the third day today over the planned leasing of New Mooring Container Terminal to the UAE-based operator DP World.

The programme will continue until the government cancels its move to hand over the NCT to a foreign operator, said Md Ibrahim Khokan, general secretary of Chattogram Bandar Jatiyabadi Sramik Dal.

Although operations like loading, unloading of cargo and containers from vessels, as well as cargo and container delivery from port yards, resume in full swing after 4:00pm, the port will face yard congestion soon if the stalemate prolongs, said Fazley Ekram Chowdhury, president of the Berth Operators, Ship-Handling Operators and Terminal Operators Owners Association.

He urged all to find solutions through discussion rather

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Remittance jumps 45% ahead of the polls, Ramadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Remittance hit a nine-month high of \$3.17 billion in January ahead of Ramadan and the national election scheduled.

January’s receipts were 45 percent higher than a year earlier, according to data from the central bank.

Remittances generally increase in January, the first month of the year, but this year the inflow has risen due to multiple reasons, said Mirza Elias Uddin Ahmed, managing director of Jamuna Bank.

Typically, remitters send more money to their relatives ahead of Ramadan, which is set to start this month, and Eid-ul-Fitr.

The election is another factor behind the growing trend of remittance inflows, he added.

January’s inflows take the receipts in the first seven months of the fiscal year to \$19.44 billion, up 21.8 percent year-on-year.

Due to the rising trend of remittances, the country’s foreign exchange market is now stable, Ahmed said, adding that the exchange rate is stable, luring in remitters to send money through the banking channels.

Not only in January, remittance inflows have been growing since the fall of the previous government in August 2024.

Previously, the demand for hundi was on the rise amid reports of large sums of money being siphoned abroad. That has stopped under the interim government.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

Editors’ Council slams rushed draft media ordinances

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Editors’ Council has expressed deep concern over the process and timing of the formulation of two draft ordinances related to the national media and the broadcasting commissions, which are available on the website of the information and broadcasting ministry.

With the election just around the corner, the Council considers the hasty publication of such important draft ordinances with far-reaching implications to be undesirable and unreasonable. Draft laws that are directly related to media freedom, professional standards of journalism, and the future of the broadcasting system cannot be acceptably formulated without proper discussion and review.

In a statement yesterday, President of the organisation Nurul Kabir

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

Pakistan to play in T20WC but boycott India match

AFP, Lahore

The Pakistani government cleared its national team on Sunday to compete in the Twenty20 World Cup starting from February 7, but stopped them from playing arch-rivals and tournament co-hosts India.

“The government of Pakistan grants approval to the Pakistan cricket team to participate in the Twenty20 World Cup, however, the Pakistan team shall not take the field in the match scheduled on 15th February against India,” a Pakistan government release said.

The Pakistan team will fly to Colombo on Monday afternoon after a week of uncertainty in the wake of Bangladesh’s expulsion from the tournament.

The decision was announced after Pakistan’s cricket chief Mohsin Naqvi met Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, for a second time in a week, in Lahore on Sunday.

Naqvi had not previously said whether the national team would refuse to play in the Sri Lankan capital against India – the highest revenue-generating game – but the Shahbaz Sharif-led coalition government confirmed its decision on Sunday.

The World Cup runs from February 7 to March 8, co-

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

mass uprising and maintaining ties with the banned Bangladesh Chhatra League, said campus sources.

Roman, however, refuted the allegations.

The student leaders, seen in the clip, include Cucus Office Secretary Abdullah Al Noman; Library and Cafeteria Secretary Masum Billah; Career Development Secretary Mehedi Hasan Sohan; Law and Human Rights Secretary Fazle Rabbi Towhid; Executive Member Sohanur Rahman; Co-communication and Housing Secretary Obaidul Salman; and Assistant Student Welfare Secretary Jannatul Ferdous Rita.

When contacted, Cucus General Secretary Sayeed Bin Habib, also international and human rights secretary of Shibir’s CU unit, said, “No teacher was harassed. Those accused of involvement in killings are being described simply as teachers in attempts to shield them.”

He alleged that Roman abused his position as assistant proctor in the past and expelled students, labelling them as “militants”.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



People gather as others collect recyclables beside a burnt vehicle on the outskirts of Quetta, Pakistan, yesterday — a day after a Baloch separatist attack.

PHOTO: AFP

Pakistan forces kill 145 militants in 40hrs

AGENCIES

Pakistan’s security forces killed 145 militants over 40 hours after coordinated attacks across Balochistan, the chief minister of the southwestern province said yesterday, as the authorities battle one of the deadliest flare-ups in years.

The attacks underscore the persistence of insurgents in the resource-rich province bordering Iran and Afghanistan, where separatist militant groups have stepped up assaults on security forces, civilians and infrastructure.

The death toll includes militants killed in raids on

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Alcaraz makes tennis history

AFP, Melbourne

Carlos Alcaraz swept past Novak Djokovic to win his first Australian Open on Sunday and become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam, denying the Serbian great an unprecedented 25th major.

The Spaniard was imperious after a slow start in dismissing the 38-year-old, 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 7-5 on Rod Laver Arena to claim a seventh Slam title and cement himself as undisputed world number one.

In doing so, he became the youngest man in the Open era to win all four majors, adding to his two titles

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

জাতীয় নিরাপদ খাদ্য দিবস-২০২৬

“নিরাপদ খাদ্য নিশ্চিত করি, সুস্থ সবল জীবন গড়ি”

অতিরিক্ত লবণ পরিহার করুন

একজন প্রাপ্তবয়স্ক ব্যক্তির দৈনিক ৫ গ্রাম লবণ প্রয়োজন।

গবেষণা থেকে দেখা যায় বাংলাদেশে অতিরিক্ত লবণ গ্রহণ করা হচ্ছে।

অতিরিক্ত লবণ রক্তে সোডিয়ামের মাত্রা বাড়িয়ে দেয় যা রক্তচাপ বৃদ্ধির অন্যতম কারণ।

অতিরিক্ত লবণ রক্তে সোডিয়ামের মাত্রা বাড়িয়ে দেয় যা রক্তচাপ বৃদ্ধির অন্যতম কারণ।

দৈনিক পরিমিত মাত্রায় লবণ গ্রহণ করুন।

অতিরিক্ত লবণযুক্ত খাবার যেমন- চানাচুর, চিপস, নুডলস, সস, ফাস্টফুড ইত্যাদি পরিহার করুন।

১ জন লোকের ৫ গ্রাম লবণ প্রয়োজন ১ দিনে

৪ জনের পরিবারে ৪ x ৫ = ২০ গ্রাম লবণ প্রয়োজন ১ দিনে

৪ জনের পরিবারে ১০০০ গ্রাম লবণ প্রয়োজন ২০০ দিনে = ৫০ দিনে

দৈনিক জনপ্রতি ৫ গ্রাম হিসেবে ৪ জনের পরিবারে ৫০ দিনের পূর্বে ১ কেজি লবণ শেষ হয়ে গেলে বুঝতে হবে অতিরিক্ত লবণ গ্রহণ করা হচ্ছে। লবণের ব্যবহার কমাতে হবে।

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