

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 Aynaghar'

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 Chattar. 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 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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এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, মানিকগঞ্জ সড়ক বিভাগাধীন ঢাকা (মিরপুর)-উথুলী-পাটুরিয়া (এন-৫) জাতীয় মহাসড়কের ৩০তম কিলোমিটারে ধামরায় 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/ধামরায় থেকে মানিকগঞ্জ/পাটুরিয়া/আরিচাপাঙ্গী অথবা কালামপুর হতে ধামরায়/সাভার/ঢাকাগামী যানবাহনসমূহকে ধামরায়-কালামপুর জেলা মহাসড়ক (জেড-৫০৬৭)।

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