



BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman waves at the large crowd at Bell's Park in Barishal city yesterday while Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman addresses a campaign rally in Kurigram yesterday.



PHOTO: BNP MEDIA CELL/RAJIB RAIHAN

'No such thing as mob violence'

Says home boss, dismisses concern over such violence during polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Home Adviser Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury yesterday dismissed concerns over "mob violence" during polls.



"There is no such thing as mob violence. There is no possibility of violence during the election. The election will be very peaceful."

He said police are not performing their duties under any fear ahead of the upcoming polls.

"Look at them—do they look afraid?" he said, pointing at the Rajshahi Range DIG and police commissioner.

The police are working without fear, he told reporters in front of the Rajshahi Jail Training Centre auditorium in the afternoon, following a views-exchange meeting on election preparedness.

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Jamaat misusing religion to deceive voters: Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday accused Jamaat-e-Islami of deceiving people by exploiting religious sentiment for political gain.

"Many prominent Islamic scholars have clearly stated that Jamaat-e-Islami speaks in the name of Islam to mislead and deceive people," he said while addressing an election meeting at Kismat Daulatpur village in Sadar upazila of Thakurgaon-1 constituency.

Fakhrul alleged that Jamaat activists were misleading women voters by making false religious promises.

"They are telling our mothers and sisters that voting for the scale symbol will ensure entry into heaven..." he said.

"No Muslim can accept such claims. Whether someone attains heaven depends on one's deeds, and that decision rests solely with Allah," he added.

The BNP candidate for Thakurgaon-1 constituency said his party believes in action rather than rhetoric.

"I will not speak about their candidate, but I want to say something about this party. They were once with us. We worked together," he said.

"Now they are contesting the election, and that is their right. Anyone can do politics. But do politics honestly. Do not lie, do not engage in backbiting, and do not attack others in that manner," he said.

He further said Jamaat continued to invoke Islam for political purposes, although many Islamic scholars,



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Jamaat leader among 2 sued after fake ballot seal bust

BNP alleges wider conspiracy; Jamaat expels him

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A local Jamaat leader and a printing shop owner have been sued over making fake ballot seals in Lakshimpur.

Humayun Kabir, sub-inspector of Sadar Model Police Station, yesterday filed a case against Sohel Rana, 40, the shop owner, and Sourav Hossain Sharif, 35, secretary of Jamaat's ward-4 unit of Lakshimpur municipality, said police.

Jhalak Mohanta, inspector (investigation) of the station, told The Daily Star yesterday that an investigation found Sohel made the seals and kept them in his shop "under the instructions of Jamaat leader Sharif".

Sohel also made a confessional statement before a court under section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, admitting his role, said Jhalak.

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'By all means we'll ensure security for women'

Says Jamaat chief Shafiqur

STAR REPORT

Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said that, if voted to power, ensuring security and dignity for women would be his party's top priority.

"We will ensure 100 percent security and dignity for you in your homes, on the roads, in workplaces, and everywhere, by all means," he told a campaign rally at Kurigram Government College as the chief guest.

"A country where mothers are not safe can never be my country. Rather, my country will be that one where the safety and dignity of my mothers, sisters, and daughters will be ensured."

Addressing women, Shafiqur said, "Do not be afraid, you will keep fighting, and speak looking towards other's eyes. This Bangladesh will be a country for the people."

Emphasising the importance of an agriculture-based economy, he said, "We will turn Kurigram into the capital of agro-industry, where agriculture-based industries will flourish, and people will become self-reliant through employment."

The Jamaat chief also alleged that a political party, hinting at BNP, is carrying out a smear campaign against him after his X account was hacked. In the afternoon, he addressed another election rally in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha where he outlined development commitments for the northern region, including implementation of the Teesta Mega Project, ensuring fair prices for agricultural produce, and upgrading Burimari Land Port into a modern international gateway for regional trade.

The Jamaat ameer also said people will show "red card" to 54 years of dishonesty, deception, and misuse on February 12.

"Politics is not a business, nor a tool for extortion," he said, adding that leaders who leave the country in times of crisis should not expect public trust.

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EC cancels polls to Sherpur-3 after Jamaat pick dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday cancelled the election in Sherpur-3 (Jhenaigati Sreebordi) constituency following the death of Jamaat-e-Islami's nominated candidate Mohammad Nuruzzaman Badal.

"The election in Sherpur-3 will be cancelled or terminated for now. This is clearly stated in Article 17 of the Representation of the People Order [RPO]," said Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmani Masud while confirming the development to The Daily Star last afternoon.

According to Article 17(1) of the RPO, 1972, if a duly nominated candidate dies after the deadline for withdrawal of nomination papers but before polling, all election-related activities in the concerned



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Chattogram Port at complete standstill

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issued a customer advisory yesterday, updating on the evolving situation at the port.

"As the strike continues, it is creating significant operational uncertainty and may lead to delays in vessel schedules, cargo handling, inland movements, and related services," it said.

No import, export, or empty containers could be transported between the port and the 19 private inland container depots since Tuesday morning, said Md Ruhul Amin Sikder, secretary general of the Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association.

The deadlock has left exporters fretting if they would be able to maintain the schedule for the peak shipment season.

"We need an immediate solution..." said Mohammad Hatem, president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and

Exporters Association. Faruque Hassan, the former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, echoed the same.

His company, Giant Group, has a consignment of 100 tonnes of yarn imported from China and India stuck at the port. The delay means he might miss his production and shipment deadlines.

"Such a situation will have a negative impact on overall export earnings," said Shovon Islam, managing director of Sparrow Group, another garment exporter.

Asked what the government is doing to solve the stalemate, Shipping Adviser M Sakhawat Hossain said he is planning to visit the port today to talk to the protesters.

He said he would ask them why they are continuing with the movement by keeping the people hostage before

any deal is signed. If they do not listen, the government will take other actions.

He said that he gave his opinion that the port's interest should be ensured based on its average current income and not a single person would lose their job.

"I also said that instead of replacing workers, they should recruit more people, and that recruitment must be from within the country. No foreign workers should be brought in. They [DP World] know this and have agreed."

Asked why the government is rushing to seal the deal with the election just a week away, he said, "It is not being done in a hasty manner as they are claiming. This is an old project. It started back in 2022. This did not suddenly come up now. Negotiations have been ongoing for the last three months. It was interrupted in the middle stage due to a case in the High Court."

Otherwise, the deal would have been signed by now, he said, adding that the negotiations have not reached a final stage.

Asked about the protesters' claim that the process cannot move forward until the new appeal is settled, he said, "Our state lawyer has said that the court did not make such an observation. He said the hearing will be held on Sunday and that is what I have been informed."

The court's directive during Sunday's hearing will become effective, he said.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court chamber judge has sent the petition that sought an order of status quo to the entire process of leasing out the NCT to DP World to the full bench for hearing on February 9.

On February 1, Bangladesh Jubo Arthanitibid Forum, a philanthropic organisation, filed the petition.

'Just, humane and safe Bangladesh'

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and other historically underrepresented sections of society," the manifesto said.

It also promised a safe working environment for women while upholding their dignity. During maternity, working hours would be reduced to five per day with the mother's consent.

On governance reform, Jamaat said it would implement necessary changes to the system of governance and administration to shape a new Bangladesh.

"We are committed to establishing a discrimination-free state and ensuring equal rights for all citizens. Laws and policies containing discriminatory provisions will be promptly reformed or repealed," the manifesto said.

Governance, it added, would be entrusted to honest, competent and qualified individuals, with transparency, accountability and the rule of law ensured at all levels.

"The youth will be prioritised in state leadership. Qualified and promising young men and women will be appointed to key cabinet positions," the manifesto said.

State authority would be regarded as an amanah (sacred trust) delegated by the people through the electoral process.

Dhaka would be transformed into a smart capital and Chattogram would be developed as a modern, well-planned metropolitan city, while the main towns in the rest of the 64 districts, and around 500 upazilas and small towns would be developed as planned cities.

Alongside existing accountability mechanisms for the prime minister and cabinet, Jamaat said it would establish an independent

Accountability Council, where office-holders would submit monthly progress reports and explain their decisions.

On political reform, Jamaat said it aimed to foster a tolerant and consensus-based political culture by promoting service-oriented politics and creating a constructive political environment.

It pledged legal reforms, including amendments to the Representation of the People Order (RPO), to restore democratic practices within political parties.

The ongoing judicial processes against "fascist parties and leaders" would be completed in line with due process.

Jamaat also promised to introduce state funding for political parties contesting parliamentary elections, with annual allocations from the national treasury proportional to seats and votes secured.

"Strict enforcement of the law, along with collective social initiatives, will eliminate extortion and coercion carried out in the name of politics," the party said, adding that incidents of political vengeance would be addressed through engagement with other parties.

To strengthen parliament, Jamaat said executive power would no longer be concentrated solely in the prime minister's office and authority would be restored to parliament as the supreme representative institution. MPs' primary responsibility would be law-making, policy formulation and strategic oversight.

Open parliamentary debates would be held on major treaties, agreements and official state visits.

On electoral reform, Jamaat said it would undertake legal and regulatory changes to

strengthen and make the caretaker government system fully effective. Measures would also be taken to reduce election costs, with enforceable expenditure limits.

The party pledged to establish an accountable public administration, introducing an online grievance redress system in all government offices, allowing citizens to track complaint resolution.

To deliver services at citizens' doorsteps, Jamaat said it would use digital and artificial intelligence-based technologies, introduce a one-stop service system, and develop a centralised e-governance portal similar to "MyGov".

It reiterated a zero-tolerance stance on corruption, saying CCTV cameras would be installed in government offices, documents and services digitised, and recruitment, promotion and posting strictly based on merit. No application fees would be charged for public sector jobs.

All development activities would be implemented under local government institutions, with ministries limited to oversight and coordination. City corporations and municipalities would manage most civic services.

Jamaat also said it would establish a professional, modern and citizen-friendly police force through transparent recruitment, continuous training and advanced technologies.

Urban security would be enhanced through smart CCTV systems, facial recognition, traffic management, robotic surveillance and rapid response units.

On media freedom, Jamaat said it would formulate a National Media Policy to ensure independent,

responsible media, in line with the Constitution and internationally recognised human rights standards.

The Jamaat ameer described the manifesto as "a roadmap for Bangladesh over the next five years," built on five "yeses"—honesty, unity, justice, efficiency and employment—and five "nos"—corruption, fascism, hegemony, unemployment and extortion.

About the foreign policy based on mutual respect, justice, and equal dignity, Jamaat said, they will work for enhancing the global standing of Bangladesh and the Bangladeshi passport.

"Peaceful, friendly, and cooperative relations will be built with neighboring and nearby countries—including India, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Thailand—based on mutual respect and fairness."

It said the expatriates' welfare ministry will be re-designated as the Ministry of Manpower Industry, and comprehensive regulations will be formulated to govern investment and management in this sector.

By 2030, Bangladesh will pursue the "Three Zeros Vision"—zero environmental degradation, zero waste, and zero flood risk—to advance the goal of a green and resilient Bangladesh, the party pledged.

If elected, Jamaat said it will form a permanent Education Commission under the leadership of nationally respected teachers, eminent educationists, researchers, and education administrators to lead comprehensive education reform.

Jamaat said a National Women's Protection Taskforce will be formed to ensure swift action against violence.

'Those once hidden are now oppressors'

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Referring to the alleged controversial comments on working women by Jamaat ameer, he said any person or any party that has not even a little respect for mothers and sisters of the country, that has no respect, cannot bring progress to Bangladesh. "From them, the people can never expect dignity or respectful behaviour."

Citing a statement by a leader of the "covert group, whose home is in Cumilla," Tarique said the leader recently remarked at a rally that, until February 12, they would beg at the people's feet, but after that, for the next five years, it would be the people begging at their leaders' feet.

"Who can say such things? Does it mean that after the polls, the people will follow them everywhere and beg at their feet? What

kind of people are they? Who can speak about the people in such a degrading way?"

"If such people are elected... it is already clear to us how miserable the fate of the people will be. What is in their minds is already coming out in their actions."

The BNP chief said, "Just as the leader of the covert group said they would beg at the people's feet until February 12, we say the opposite. I tell my leaders and activists that from February 13, and for the next five years, you must remain at the feet of the people."

He said the nation already saw what happens to those who do not have the strength and support of the people behind them.

The BNP chief urged voters to deliver a fitting response to anyone who seeks to control or disrespect

the people after the February 12 polls.

"If we look at history, in 1971 and 1986, we see that they [Jamaat] were always with those who fled the country. So, the people of the country cannot expect anything good from them."

At the Barishal rally, Tarique also pledged to construct the Barishal-Bhola bridge, develop Sher-e-Bangla Medical College to improve healthcare services, establish a medical college in Bhola, take effective measures to prevent river erosion, and construct cold storage facilities for farmers.

Later at a rally at Faridpur's Rajendra College ground, Tarique said conspiracies are being hatched again against people's freedom, voting rights, and the right to speak.

"Who is carrying out this conspiracy? The people call

those behind it by one name. Do you know what name the people have given them? Gupto."

"Because the people have seen that at one time they take one form, and at another time they take another form. They change their appearance depending on the situation."

Explaining why he believes they have no trust or faith in the people, Tarique cited two reasons, including that the main leader of the covert group had made offensive comments about women.

"Those who think in such a dirty way about mothers and sisters, we cannot expect anything good from them."

"Because of their controversial role in 1971, millions of women and mothers and sisters in Bangladesh lost their honour."