

Bangabhaban

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The controversy began on Saturday night when a "misogynistic" post appeared on Shafiqur's verified X handle. The post claimed that women should not be in leadership positions and suggested that women working outside the home were exposed to "moral decay" and "prostitution."

The remarks triggered a political firestorm. The BNP issued a formal protest, while Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal held rallies at several universities.

In some areas, women's groups brought out broom processions to denounce the statement.

Jamaat, however, disowned the post immediately.

Sirajul Islam, a member of the party's election management committee, filed a general diary with Hatirjheel Police Station on Saturday night, claiming the account had been compromised.

During an emergency briefing at the party's Mogbazar office, Jamaat's IT cell members alleged the hack was carried out using a government email address - assistantprogrammar@bangabhaban.gov.bd - which they linked to Sorware Alam.

Detectives also conducted a drive at a government facility inside the Rajarbagh Police Lines in connection with the case, sources said.

While the police investigation is ongoing, Jamaat's leadership has pointed fingers at political rivals and foreign influence.

At an election rally in Narayanganj, Jamaat Secretary General Mia Golam Parwar said, "We believe BNP has started cyberattacks, in a package plan with Bangabhaban and India, to destroy Jamaat-e-Islami's image."

Parwar further said his own X account was hacked on Tuesday night, shortly after the party filed its complaint at Bangabhaban.

Bangabhaban has not yet issued an official statement regarding the detention of its employee or the allegations involving its official email server.

ICT-1 accepts

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The first charge relates to killings across the country during the uprising following the Ganabhaban meeting. The second alleges that the decision to use lethal force caused the deaths of 23 people on July 20 in Badda and surrounding areas.

The prosecution also accused Menon and Qamrul of abetment, incitement, and conspiracy to commit crimes against humanity during Hasina's tenure.

Jamaat

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"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, including the Pir of Charmonai, had publicly stated that Jamaat-e-Islami was not an Islamic party.



Around five- to six-year-old sand-filled geo-bags lie along Kuakata Sea Beach, with algae growing on them over time. Although installed to prevent beach erosion, the geo-bags have become hazardous as algae and dents make them slippery and unsafe for locals and tourists. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Countless promises, little change

Tea workers remain indifferent to voting on Feb 12

MINTU DESHWARA

Although the 13th national election is a week away, tea garden workers in Sylhet division remain largely indifferent to voting, citing decades of neglect and unfulfilled promises by elected representatives.

Tea workers, considered a significant voting bloc, say candidates engage with them only during election periods and fail to deliver meaningful improvements once polls are over.

Workers across the division complain of persistent problems, including dilapidated roads, a lack of safe drinking water, inadequate educational facilities, the absence of hospitals and ambulances and ongoing health risks.

According to industry sources, several hundred thousand workers are employed in 158 tea gardens in the Sylhet division.

The workers said although their votes have often been decisive, their living conditions have not improved. This time, workers say they want concrete commitments, including improved roads, safe drinking water, schools and colleges, hospitals, ambulances and reliable healthcare services.

Ratan Ghatual, a worker at Chandichara Tea Garden, said she brings her six-month-old child to work to support her family. "Who should we vote for? They are not available after the election," she said.

Echoing the sentiment, another worker from the same garden Meghna Mridha said, "We haven't decided yet whether we will vote."

Ranjan Kurmi, a worker at Khadim Tea Garden in Sylhet, said, "When someone falls sick, it becomes extremely difficult to take them to a hospital. Candidates promise solutions during elections, but none are implemented."

Noyon Bauri, a resident of Noapara Tea Garden in Habiganj, said workers intend to



be more cautious this time. "We will vote wisely - for whoever actually works for our development."

Elderly residents said successive governments have made promises over the years, but little has been done to protect tea gardens and surrounding forests or to develop tourism in the region. Youth in the area said planned tourism could create local employment and reduce migration.

"If tourism were developed properly, we wouldn't have to leave our area for work,"

said Suman Goala, a young resident of Chhatlapur Tea Garden in Moulvibazar.

Nirmal S Palash, general secretary of SHUJAN (Kamalganj), said Kamalganj and Srimangal have immense tourism potential, but government initiatives remain inadequate. Candidates should pursue planned, safe and environmentally sustainable tourism to ensure economic benefits for local communities.

CANDIDATES OUTLINE COMMITMENTS

Meanwhile, candidates have outlined their commitments during campaign activities.

BNP candidate Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury said his priorities include improving tea workers' living standards, developing the tourism industry and creating jobs for unemployed youth if elected.

Pritam Das, NCP candidate for Moulvibazar-4 (Srimangal-Kamalganj), said he has identified key challenges in tourism. "If elected, I will work to improve the quality of life of tea workers and Khasia communities, modernise tourism, create employment and develop roads in the haor-tila region."

BSD candidate Md Abul Hasan from the same constituency pledged environment friendly and planned development, prioritising tourism, increasing tea workers' wages, ensuring land ownership rights and providing constitutional recognition to indigenous communities.

FACT-CHECKED

Fact-checkers disprove two viral claims

STAR REPORT

Dismislab has debunked a viral claim that BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir endorsed votes for Jamaat's "scale" symbol and assigned Chhatra Dal to carry ballot boxes.

Recently, a photo card bearing the DBC News logo went viral on social media. The card claimed that Mirza Fakhru said, "There is no problem with people going to vote, and it is the responsibility of the Chhatra Dal to bring the ballot boxes on their heads." The photo card was shared in multiple Facebook groups on February 2.

Dismislab examined all photo cards and posts published on DBC News' verified Facebook page on February 2 but found no such photo card or report containing the alleged statement.

The organisation also checked DBC News' official website and YouTube channel, where no record of such comments was found.

Dismislab contacted Kamrul Islam Rubel, deputy general manager of DBC News' Digital Media Department. He confirmed that DBC News did not publish any such photo card.



NO ELECTION DAY NET BAN

Meanwhile, fact-checking organisation Rumor Scanner has also disproved a claim alleging that Home Affairs Adviser Jahangir Alam Chowdhury announced an internet shutdown on election day.

A video titled "Internet to be shut down on election day! What a shocking announcement made by the home affairs adviser" has been widely circulated on social media platforms, particularly TikTok and YouTube.

During its investigation, Rumor Scanner identified a video published on February 1 by a YouTube channel named "Aaf Times." Screenshots from this video's thumbnail matched those circulating online.

Although the thumbnail claimed an internet shutdown announcement, the video actually said the home affairs adviser warned of legal action if internet services were shut down on election day.

'Bhabi' Elen Bhutto

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she particularly reaches out to women voters and seeks their support.

Many female voters said they feel comfortable approaching her as a woman candidate.

"We are happy to have a female candidate, as we can easily reach her and share our demands," said Eliza Begum, a voter from Premahar village in Nalchity upazila.

Another voter, Tasmin Akter, said that when Elen previously served as their lawmaker, access to her was easy. "She mixes with women without any social barriers," she added.

During the campaign, Elen has made various promises, including assurances of security for minority communities.

"We want nothing more than the freedom to move safely," said Babita Gharami, a voter from Satodaskathi village in Jhalakathi Sadar upazila, adding that as a woman, Elen would better understand their concerns.

She alleged that members of the Hindu community in the area have been feeling insecure for quite a long time now.

"Besides ensuring security, Elen Bhutto will play a vital role in the development of our area, which remains largely underdeveloped," said another voter, Lipi Gharami.

Elen's supporters expressed confidence in her victory. "Bhabi (Elen) is a humble person who can easily connect with ordinary people," said supporter Md Jamal Chowdhury.

Talking to The Daily Star, Elen Bhutto said voters have been responding warmly, citing the long-standing relationships she has built over the years.

"Even as a female candidate, I do not face any obstacles," she said while campaigning on foot in the remote Premahar village.

"I am hopeful of victory," she added, saying she is assuring voters of public welfare initiatives pledged by her party if elected.

Healing through shared experiences

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Many survivors, she added, find it easier to share sensitive issues with peers who have lived through similar harm rather than with family members or supervisors.

With consistent support, survivors gradually recover, regain confidence and begin planning their futures, she said.

"The most emotional moment is when many say they want to be like me," Ferdousi said, describing this shift as the real measure of progress.

The workshop concept note said survivor aftercare has traditionally been led by professional social workers and service providers. However, evidence shows that models strengthened by people with lived experience can improve trust, engagement, continuity of care and long-term reintegration.

It added that, in the absence of scalable best-practice models, rescued survivors have often faced dropouts, re-trafficking and displacement.

Under the model discussed, trained peer facilitators with lived experience work as skilled professionals delivering structured, trauma-informed aftercare, including counselling, peer mentoring, psychosocial support and life skills development.

The programme also provides leadership training, vocational skills and income-generating support, along with family counselling to aid reintegration. It coordinates rescue, repatriation, rehabilitation and health services through local providers and has introduced a Digital National Referral Mechanism in partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Chief guest M Jashim Uddin Khan, additional secretary at the home ministry, said the model is important because people with lived experience understand problems in ways others often cannot.

He said systems can produce many experts, but those who have lived through exploitation know where the real pain points lie. He also stressed the need to distinguish clearly between "victim" and "survivor" and outlined stages of support - rescue, reintegration and restoration - emphasising that restoration is essential, as reintegration alone may not always be sufficient.

Special guest Tahera Jabben, social development adviser at the British High Commission, said the dialogue provided space to reflect on how the model could inform future policy and programme design.

She cited global figures showing nearly 50 million people affected by modern slavery, with women and girls comprising 54 percent of victims, and nearly 80 percent of those trafficked for sexual exploitation being female. She said survivor leadership makes services more practical and respectful.

Salma Parvin of the University of Dhaka said recovery is often underestimated by those who have not experienced exploitation, and that rebuilding a life is a far more complex process than many assume.

Justice and Care Country Director Mohammed Tariqul Islam delivered the closing remarks.

Office of the Sub-project Manager (SPM) HEAT Sub-project: "A Study of Microplastic Pollution". Department of Chemistry, University of Barishal, Barishal- 8254. Reference No: BU/PIN13838/G-2/Chem./Chemicals & Glassware /01. Date: 05 February 2026. e-Tender Notice 02/2025-2026 (OTM). e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for procurement of the following packages: SI No., Tender ID, Package No., Description of Goods, Last Selling Date and Time, Closing and Opening Date and Time.

SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) BARC Complex, Farmgate Dhaka - 1215, Bangladesh. Vacancy Announcement. SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC) is inviting application for the following positions [to be recruited from the citizens of Bangladesh]: 1. Driver (Number of positions: 1) 2. Watchman (Number of positions: 1). Details of appointment notice, qualification and experience, terms and conditions, salaries/allowances, facilities and benefits, etc. shall be available at the SAARC Agriculture Centre (SAC), BARC Complex, Farmgate, Dhaka - 1215, Bangladesh and in website: http://www.sac.org.bd. Application in English with complete "Curriculum Vitae" with two copies of recent passport size photographs, photocopies of all certificates and other documents (education, experiences, NID, etc.) should be submitted to Director, SAARC Agriculture Centre, BARC Complex, Farmgate, Dhaka - 1215 within 19th February 2026. Convassing of any form will disqualify the candidate. All rights reserved by the authority. Director, SAC.

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