



BAF chief orders neutrality in election duty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Air Force personnel deployed for the February 12 election must remain neutral in uniform, stay visibly present around polling centres, and follow the chain of command at all times, said Air Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan yesterday.

The Chief of Air Staff gave the directives while addressing the BAF personnel assigned to field duties for the upcoming election, at the BAF Base Bashar in Dhaka Cantonment.

With seven days to
SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Human hauliers illegally park in a row along the outer walls of Lalbagh Fort on Lalbagh Road in Old Dhaka. They continue disregarding law, obstructing pedestrians and vehicular movement while marring the historic site. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Prioritise rights, inclusion of persons with disabilities

Disability Rights Watch, TIB urge political parties ahead of polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reserve 2% quota in govt jobs

Allocate ministry-wise budgets

Fully implement existing disability laws

Reserve parliamentary seats

Ensure accessible education, healthcare, employment

Guarantee accessible polling stations and transport

Ahead of the upcoming election, Disability Rights Watch and TIB have urged political parties to ensure the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities by reserving a 2 percent quota in government jobs, allocating ministry-wise budgets, and fully implementing existing disability laws.

At a press conference in Dhaka yesterday, the organisations said despite Bangladesh ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and enacting the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013, implementation has largely stalled, depriving millions of people of basic services.

Citing World Health Organisation estimates, they said nearly 15 percent of Bangladesh's population – more than 20 million

people – live with disabilities. Excluding such a large group, they said, makes inclusive development and democratic participation impossible.

The press briefing, titled "Expectations of persons with disabilities from mainstream political parties ahead of the 13th national election," was
SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

DHAKA-5 | FEBRUARY 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-7

Little buzz, high hopes for a better future

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

The Dhaka-5 constituency, spanning the eastern edge of the capital and covering Jatrabari and Demra police stations, is currently alive with election campaigning.

Areas such as Konapara, Sarulia, Demra College, Jatrabari Intersection, the Matuail Institute of Child and Mother Health and the Dhaka-Chattoogram Highway are seeing frequent processions by candidates and their supporters.

However, voters say that although banners, billboards and rallies are visible across the constituency, the festive buzz associated with past elections is noticeably missing. Even so, expectations remain high.

Residents hope long-standing problems – gas and water shortages, illegal occupation, extortion, terrorism, environmental pollution, traffic congestion, drug abuse and the rise of teen gangs – will come under control after the election.

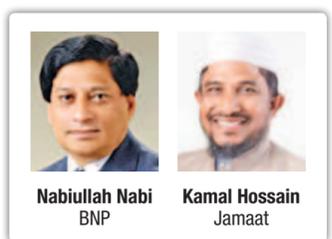
Abu Sayeed, a resident of Amulia in Demra, told The Daily Star that the area's drainage system is in a dire state and waste is scattered everywhere.

"There are serious security concerns. Muggings happen after dusk, and the drug trade has expanded unchecked," he said, adding that he hopes candidates will honour the promises made during door-to-door campaigns.

A resident of Jatrabari, speaking anonymously, noted a change in the election atmosphere.

"Earlier, people would crowd street corners all day – there was barely space to stand. This time, there's much less noise," he said. "Campaigning is ongoing, but voters are mostly quiet. They will cast their ballots on February 12 in their own way."

Dhaka-5 comprises Wards 48, 49, 50 and 60 to 70 of Dhaka South City Corporation. The total number of voters stands at 4,19,996, down from 4,90,764 in the last election – a decrease of around 70,768 voters.



Nabuillah Nabi
BNP

Kamal Hossain
Jamaat

Jamaat-e-Islami candidate Mohammad Kamal Hossain outlined plans focusing on development, anti-corruption measures and youth employment.

"If we form the government, we will make young people self-reliant," he told The Daily Star. He pledged interest-free loans for new entrepreneurs and said the two closed jute mills in the area would be reopened to create jobs.

He also promised to eliminate
SEE PAGE 9 COL 2

Festivities meet chaos in narrow alleyways

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE and SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK

Although Lalbagh and Chawkbazar areas of Old Dhaka are economically vital wholesale hubs, residents of this region continue to grapple with deep-rooted civic problems.

Unplanned housing, shops, factories and warehouses crammed into narrow alleys leave the area – which falls under the Dhaka-7 constituency – highly vulnerable to fires.

Residents also endure chronic traffic congestion, dysfunctional drainage systems, gas and water shortages, and a deteriorating law-and-order situation.

The constituency comprises wards 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 35 and 36 of Dhaka South City Corporation, covering Lalbagh, Chawkbazar, Bangshal, Kamrangirchar and parts of Kotwali police station.

Elections in the constituency are often influenced by business leaders and long-time locals of Old Dhaka.

"In business and in accessing civic services, corruption is everywhere. Law and order situation is not good either," said Anwar Hossain, 40, a Lalbagh-based businessman. "Currently, the government has no control over anything. We hope things will improve after the election."

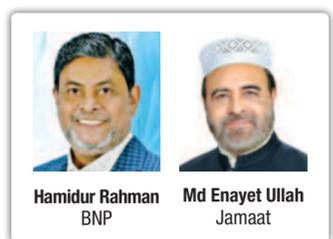
With campaigning underway in the Dhaka-7 alleyways, candidates' offices have sprung up at key intersections. Supporters march through alleys, distribute leaflets and use loudspeakers to draw attention.

Mohammad Anwar, a businessman

from Ward 27 in Hossaini Dalan area, said residents face gas shortages, waterlogging and insecurity. "We want a safe environment and security for trade," he said.

Voters say a festive election atmosphere has returned to the area, with processions, door-to-door visits and public outreach by candidates' supporters.

Seema Dutta, the Socialist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist)-nominated candidate for Dhaka-7, said growing



Hamidur Rahman
BNP

Md Enayet Ullah
Jamaat

public distrust in major parties has opened space for left-wing politics, though fear and anxiety remain among the general public regarding the election.

"If elected, I will work to protect Harijan Colony land in Lalbagh, resolve the gas crisis and address unemployment," she said, adding that her focus goes beyond infrastructure to representing ordinary people in national policymaking.

She also pledged to advocate for women's rights and urged young voters
SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

For Nurun Nahar, empowering women comes first



MD QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Under the afternoon sun on a rural earthen road, two jeeps slowed near a small gathering. A woman stepped out, greeted villagers warmly, shook hands and embraced several women before handing out leaflets bearing the plough symbol. It was Nurun Nahar Begum, the Jatiya Party nominated candidate for Thakurgaon-2, on a door-to-door campaign ahead of the 13th national parliamentary election scheduled for February 12.

In her sixties and a familiar face across Barabari union, Nurun Nahar has been canvassing villages, including Uttar Baliadangi, Phultala, Mahajanhat, Dangi Bazar and Haripur Katabari, seeking votes and urging residents to mobilise support.

Locals responded with recognition and encouragement. "Of course I know you. Isn't your father Chairman Badiuzzaman?" said Asia Begum with a smile.

Md Awal of Mahajanhat urged her to expand her outreach. "You are a daughter of this area, we are with you," he said.

At Dangi Bazar, shopkeeper Babul echoed the sentiment, noting that her election would make local representatives more accessible. "In times of need, we will be able to reach out to you easily," he said.

Digen Chandra Singh of Katabari added, "We are already with you."
SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Ekushey Boi Mela to begin on Feb 20

STAR REPORT

The month-long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela, organised by Bangla Academy, will start on February 20 this year.

Dr Md Selim Reza, member secretary of the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela 2026 Organising Committee, disclosed the information at a press conference yesterday at Bangla Academy's Shaheed Munier Chowdhury Auditorium.

Reading from a written statement, he said, "The fair is an inseparable part of the country's cultural heritage. However, due to practical reasons, it has not been possible to start the fair on February 1 this year like in previous years. The fair will begin on February 20."

Dr Reza added that stall rents have been reduced by 25 percent compared to last year following demands from publishers, adding that all preparations for the fair are complete.

"The government has allocated Subrawardy
SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Ongoing violence, state inaction raising fear before polls

Say speakers at dialogue by Sompriti Jatra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Continued election-related violence, attacks on cultural institutions, shrinking civic space, and administrative inaction are raising fears ahead of the national election, prompting doubts about whether a peaceful and credible democratic transition is possible, speakers said at a dialogue yesterday.

The discussion, titled "National Election 2026: The Continuity of Violence and the Sense of Responsibility for Harmony," was organised by Sompriti Jatra at Bishwo Shahitto Kendro in Dhaka.

Speakers noted that violence since the July uprising reflects a continuing pattern, compounded by state denial and weak accountability.

Samantha Sharmin, senior joint convener of the National Citizen Party (NCP), said instability at the local level is politically driven by a faction within the interim government.

She questioned the authority of Home Adviser Md Jahangir Alam Chowdhury. "There is no point in blaming Jahangir Alam. He is just a face, just a spokesperson. I question how much control he actually has."

Sharmin added that claims of law and order being under control are hollow.

Claims of law and order being under control are hollow. This is not just denial. A big portion within this government actually wants this kind of instability.

SAMANTHA SHARMIN
Senior joint convener, NCP

"This is not just denial. A big portion within this government actually wants this kind of instability," she added, warning that political deals had already begun to compromise women's rights.

Rafsan Galib, journalist at Prothom Alo, said the state's repeated denial of mob violence was the most

dangerous trend. Referring to attacks on Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, he said threats and calls for violence were circulated openly on social media by identifiable student representatives beforehand, but the
SEE PAGE 9 COL 1

Govt sets Ramadan office hours

STAR REPORT

The government yesterday approved revised office hours for the upcoming month of Ramadan, setting the workday from 9:00am to 3:30pm for all public institutions.

The decision was taken at the Advisory Council's weekly meeting chaired by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus.

Briefing reporters after the meeting at the Foreign Service Academy in Dhaka, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said the shortened schedule will apply throughout the fasting month.

Under the new arrangement, all government, semi-government, autonomous, and semi-autonomous offices will operate within the revised hours. A 15-minute prayer break will be observed from 1:00pm to 1:15pm.

According to the official calendar, Ramadan is expected to begin on February 18 or 19, depending on the sighting of the moon.

ইতিহাস আজ

বাঙালি মুসলমানের ভাষা প্রণয়: ব্রিটিশ পর্ব

আলোচক
তাহমিদাল জামি
ড. মো. চেঙ্গীশ খান
ড. মনসুর মুসা

পর্ব-১১

৭ ফেব্রুয়ারি,
শনিবার বিকাল ৫টা

৪র্থ তলা,
ডেইলি স্টার সেন্টার,
ফার্মগেট, ঢাকা

সবার জন্য উন্মুক্ত