

Prioritise balanced development

IPD urges political parties in 'People's Manifesto'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Institute for Planning and Development (IPD) yesterday unveiled its People's Manifesto, urging political parties to prioritise balanced and equitable development, inclusive planning, and environmental sustainability to turn Bangladesh into a welfare state.

The manifesto was presented at an online discussion organised by IPD, where speakers stressed the need to move away from Dhaka-centric development and increase investment and employment opportunities at district and upazila levels through comprehensive national and regional planning.

IPD said the next government must ensure regionally inclusive development free from discrimination, adopt inclusive urban and rural planning, and pursue sustainable economic growth while protecting the environment.

It highlighted poor civic services in rural areas and called for urgent measures to reduce urban-rural disparities.

The manifesto emphasised affordable housing for low-income groups through

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Police use water cannons, tear gas, and sound grenades to disperse government employees as they attempt to march towards the chief adviser's official residence, Jamuna, demanding implementation of the ninth pay scale yesterday. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

NINTH PAY SCALE

Police use water cannon, tear gas to disperse protesters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday used water cannon, tear gas, and sound grenades to disperse government employees marching towards the chief adviser's official residence, Jamuna, demanding implementation of the ninth pay scale.

The protest began around 10:30am at Dhaka's Shahbagh, with demonstrators attempting to march towards Jamuna.

Police blocked them at several points, but as protesters tried to push past barricades, security forces fired water cannons and sound grenades.

Despite resistance, the demonstrators advanced and briefly reached near Jamuna after 11:00am, before police intensified their action to clear the area.

Ziaur Rahman, a college teacher from Rajshahi, said the protesters had only one demand – implementation of the ninth pay scale. "Our demonstration will continue until this demand is met," he told The Daily Star.

He added that police initially showed restraint, but later used hot water cannons and sound grenades against the marchers.

By 1:00pm, protesters were seen regrouping at a distance, while leaders and activists of the Inqilab Moncho positioned themselves in front of the InterContinental hotel, continuing their protest.

Police maintained heavy deployment along the road connecting the hotel to Jamuna. At around 1:15pm, Inspector General of Police Baharul Alam arrived at the scene. He was joined by DMP Commissioner Sheikh Md Sajjat Ali and other senior officials, who were already present to oversee the situation.

KUSHTIA-3 CONSTITUENCY

Rumpa seeks change, women empowerment



ANIS MONDOL

As dusk falls, a woman and a man move from one tea-and-snack stall to another, asking for votes. Some accept the posters they offer; others walk away without a glance. Undeterred, the woman keeps extending her hand. Beside her, the man announces through a handheld microphone: "Please vote, brothers. Please vote. Vote for the Elephant symbol."

She is Rumpa Khatun, the only female candidate among Kushtia's four parliamentary constituencies, who has been campaigning in the Bottoil Mor area of Kushtia Sadar upazila.

Rumpa is contesting from the Kushtia-3 (Sadar) constituency with the Elephant symbol after securing the Bangladesh Republican Party's nomination. With no party workers or visible supporters, she campaigns accompanied only by her husband, Abdul Halim.

A parliamentary candidate canvassing alone has sparked curiosity among local residents. Explaining the situation, Rumpa said many of her relatives were pressured by major political parties to take oaths to support them. "They tell me they will vote for me later, but cannot do so this time," she said.

"That does not unsettle me," she added. "I want to walk towards my dreams following the principle of 'Ekla Cholo' – whether or not anyone responds to my call."

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FEBRUARY 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-1

Communal harmony and unmet civic needs take focus

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

In Hasnabad village of Bandura in Nawabganj, Teresa Hilda Gomes and her family live beside the Holy Rosary Church. Though interested in the upcoming election, she has yet to meet any candidate and has seen little campaigning in her area.

Hubert Joseph Gomes, headmaster of St Joseph Tutorial near the church, told The Daily Star that around 1,500 Christian families live across Dohar and Nawabganj, including about 350 in Hasnabad alone.

With the February 12 election approaching, these families have been actively discussing who to vote for to ensure the development of their community and the region.

Hubert said Muslims, Hindus and Christians in the area share a harmonious relationship, but stressed the urgent need for better roads and communication.

A few kilometres away in Raipara village under Dohar upazila, the steady rhythm of handlooms fills the air.

Badshah Mia, 72, has spent his life in weaving – a trade passed down through three generations. Six weavers now work under him from dawn to dusk, producing lungis for local wholesalers.

Badshah considers voting a civic duty. "I always vote. Even if it doesn't benefit us directly, it is our responsibility," he said. "Our life is simple – we just want to survive through hard work."

He said around 100 families in the area remain involved in weaving. Though they once produced sarees and lungis, they now focus solely on lungis.

Like many others, Badshah hopes the country's overall situation will improve after the election.

Many residents of Dohar-Nawabganj echoed a familiar sentiment: voting is a right, but elected representatives often forget voters once the polls end.



Khandaker Abu Ashfaq
BNP



Mohammad Nazrul Islam
Jamaat

The Dhaka-1 constituency, comprising Dohar and Nawabganj upazilas and the Ichhamoti river flowing through it, is largely sustained by remittances.

Many residents work in the Middle East, Europe, America and elsewhere, while agriculture and business remain key sources of income.

Residents say Nawabganj and Dohar are relatively peaceful, with fewer incidents of terrorism, illegal occupation or clashes than in other regions.

However, civic woes persist. Despite being only 25-30 kilometres from Dhaka, the area lacks gas connections.

Their primary demands remain gas connections and well-equipped government hospitals – promises they say past representatives failed to fulfil.

Candidates contesting the seat include Khandaker Abu Ashfaq (BNP), Mohammad Nazrul Islam (Jamaat-e-Islami), Nasir Uddin Molla (Jatiya Party), Nurul Islam (Islami Andolan Bangladesh), Sheikh Md Ali (Bangladesh Labour Party), and independent candidate Antara Selima Huda.

Voters said the main contest is shaping up between BNP's Abu Ashfaq, the district BNP president, and Jamaat candidate Mohammad Nazrul Islam, a former general secretary of Islami Chhatra Shibir.

Antara Selima Huda, daughter of the late former minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, is also seen as a popular contender.

Meem Hajera, 45, from Kumarbarila village in Nawabganj, knows most of the candidates. The only hijra voter in her village, she said she plans to vote for her preferred candidate. "We survive by seeking help from people. We go to both the good and the bad – so everyone is good to us," she told The Daily Star.

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Patwary pledges to become a 'people's MP'

Unveils 8-point manifesto for Dhaka-8

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nasiruddin Patwary, candidate of Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party alliance for Dhaka-8 constituency, yesterday unveiled his eight-point electoral manifesto.

In the manifesto, unveiled in front of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) office at Dhaka's Segunbagicha around 4:00pm, Patwary, also chief coordinator of National Citizen Party (NCP), pledged to ensure justice for the killing of Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman bin Hadi as his central objective.

He also pledged to freeing Dhaka-8 from extortion, drugs and terrorism, and building it in an environmentally friendly and liveable manner, alongside ensuring universal healthcare, a non-discriminatory and modern education system, employment generation, easing traffic congestion and civic sufferings, and direct services to the citizens. Patwary also promised to become a "people's MP and people's servant", if elected.

He stressed that issues such as poor waste management, lack of parks, utilities supply shortages, and lack of high-speed in different areas within the constituency will be addressed.

"This manifesto has been prepared based on the real issues of Dhaka-8. If elected, I will try to implement these through laws in parliament. And even if I am not elected, respecting the people's verdict, I will continue to work for freedom, staying connected with the people and fighting to liberate them from civic oppression," Nasiruddin said.

"This struggle will continue for a lifetime, until Bangladesh becomes a beautiful, sovereign country free from domination, imperialism and fascism," he added.

After hearing about the clashes centring an Inqilab Moncho sit-in at Shahbagh, he shortened his speech and joined a protest march.



He talks about a plan but knows nothing about Bangladesh: Nahid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Without mentioning any name, National Citizen Party (NCP) Convener Nahid Islam yesterday said people of the country have understood the plans of those who have "no idea about the country, who have lived abroad for 16-17 years and remain detached from the people".

Addressing an election rally at Jatiya Press Club in Savar's Shahbagh area in the morning, he said they have observed that a dominant party in an alliance had absorbed many others, undermining multi-party democracy.

"The party's leaders and activists are moving around, issuing threats," he alleged.

He further said when the leader of that party returned to the country and spoke of having a "plan", they had welcomed it.

However, the leader lacked knowledge about the country's basic realities, the NCP leader said.

"He does not know where the sugar mills are located, where the EPZs are, which city is the commercial capital, or where soybeans or corn are cultivated. He knows nothing about the country," Nahid added.

"Do not make any plans that would push Bangladesh

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Winners of a photography competition and exhibition "Echoes of the Earth: Photography for the Planet" among guests at the award distribution ceremony at Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka yesterday. In the fuel category, first prize went to Muhammad Mostafizur Rahman of BDNews24, second to Habibur Rahman of The Daily Star, and third to Minhaj Uddin of The Business Standard. In the environment category, Mamunur Rashid of Dainik Samakal won first prize, followed by Mehedi Hasan of Ajker Patrika in second place and Sheikh Nasir of The Daily Star in third. The event was organised by Dhoritri Rokhaya Amra (DHORA) and Bangladesh Photojournalist Association.

PHOTO: STAR

Leasing out Ctg port terminal goes against public interest

Says Farhad Mazhar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Poet and columnist Farhad Mazhar yesterday said leasing out the New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) of the Chattogram port without informing the public goes against public interest.

He stressed that such decisions must be made through transparent consultations with workers, business communities, and other stakeholders.

He made the remarks while speaking as the chief guest at a discussion titled "Port Protection versus the Politics of Port Paralysis" at the Chattogram Press Club. The event was organised by the Port Protection Committee.

Mazhar criticised the use of non-disclosure clauses to keep the public

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