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Asif warns of violence on polls day

Alleges weapons stockpiling by some parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party (NCP) spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuiyan yesterday alleged that the Election Commission has remained "clearly biased" in enforcing the electoral code of conduct.

He also warned of potential violence on election day, alleging that certain political parties have been stockpiling weapons.

Addressing a press conference at the party's Banglamotor office, Asif expressed concern that such stockpiling of weapons could lead to "a horrific situation" or the suspension of polling at some centres, citing reports of weapons being displayed in different areas.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Activists under the banner of 'July Oikya' march on the Dhaka University campus yesterday, demanding justice for Sharif Osman Hadi. The Inqilab Moncho spokesperson died on December 18, six days after being shot in the capital.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Authorities failed to act on 47% of polls violence cases

Says Odhikar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The authorities have failed to take action in nearly half of the incidents of electoral violence recorded ahead of the February 12 polls, according to a field monitoring report released by human rights organisation Odhikar yesterday.

The report found that supporters of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami were predominantly involved in the documented incidents, most of which occurred in rural areas.

Odhikar presented its findings at a press briefing titled "Electoral Violence in the Pre-Election Period: Evidence from Field Monitoring" at a hotel in Gulshan.

The monitoring covered the period from January 18 to February 5 across 50 constituencies in 22 districts. The initiative was supported by the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD).

Odhikar officials said they documented 30 incidents of violence in 14 districts during the period.

"In 47 percent of cases, authorities took no action. Investigations or protective measures were rare, reinforcing perceptions of impunity," the report stated.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

49% candidates businesspeople

Shows Shujan data

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Almost half of the candidates contesting the 13th National Parliamentary Election come from business backgrounds, according to data released by Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan).

Of the 2,026 nominees -- both party-backed and independents -- 998 are businesspeople, accounting for 49.26 percent of the total.

Compared with the previous election, where nearly 59 percent of nominees were from business backgrounds, the share of business candidates has declined significantly.

The findings were disclosed yesterday at a press conference organised by Shujan at Jatiya Press Club.

Presented by Shujan Central Coordinator Dilip Kumar Sarkar, the data showed that business remains the most common occupation among candidates, particularly within the BNP.

Of the party's 290 nominees, 209 are businesspeople -- the highest number in absolute terms.

The Jatiya Party has 129 business candidates among 195 nominees, while Jamaat-e-Islami has 74 businesspeople out of 227 candidates. In the National Citizen Party, 12 of its 32 nominees are from business backgrounds.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 3



FEB 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-2

Pollution, traffic woes top local concerns

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE and SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK

Md Abul Kalam, a resident of the BSCIC area in Rohitpur, Keraniganj, is waiting for the election with cautious hope.

While he has no complaints about the overall local environment, he is worried about the economy and the rising prices of daily essentials.

"Overall, the situation here is peaceful, but many people are economically fragile," the Dhaka-2 voter told The Daily Star. "I hope things will improve at least after the election."

Anwar Bhuiyan from Atibazar echoed similar sentiments. Describing himself as a politically conscious citizen, he said the election could bring some relief, though he remained sceptical.

"Politics in our country is very vindictive," he said. "If political conflict stops, many problems will start

resolving on their own."

The Dhaka-2 constituency includes Hazratpur, Kalatia, Taranagar, Shakta, Rohitpur, Basta and Kalindi unions of Keraniganj upazila, along with Aminbazar, Tetuljhora and Bhakurta unions of Savar upazila.

According to locals, environmental pollution is the region's most pressing issue. Parts of the constituency border the Buriganga river, exposing residents to severe river and air pollution.

Traffic congestion is another major concern, particularly along the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Aminbazar and Hemayetpur. Unplanned urbanisation has also reduced playgrounds and open spaces across the area.

Now, with the election approaching, campaigning has picked up pace in the constituency.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 1



Aman Ullah Aman
BNP



Md Abdul Haq
Jamaat

Withdraw initiatives to amend labour act

Demands Chevron Bangladesh Employees' Union

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Chevron Bangladesh Employees' Union has demanded the withdrawal of all initiatives to amend the Labour Act, which seeks to exempt foreign-invested energy companies from the statutory obligation to provide a 5 percent Workers' Profit Participation Fund (WPPF).

The union also called for an immediate halt to any attempts to amend the labour law on matters currently sub judice, labelling such moves -- particularly ahead of the national election -- as entirely unjustified.

The demands were made at a press conference held yesterday at the Dhaka Reporters Unity.

In a written statement, Mohammed Nur-e-Alam Siddiquee, general

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Pabna races heat up as BNP, Jamaat lock horns

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Ahead of the upcoming 13th National Parliamentary Election, the five constituencies in Pabna district are witnessing intense contests between the candidates of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami.

While the district has traditionally been a BNP stronghold, internal divisions and rebel candidates have weakened the party's position in several seats. Jamaat, meanwhile, sees the changed political landscape as a rare opportunity to secure its best electoral performance in decades.

In Pabna-1, Jamaat has nominated Barrister Nazibur Rahman Momen, son of executed Jamaat leader Motiur Rahman Nizami, while the BNP has fielded local leader Shamsur Rahman. After former Awami League state minister Prof Abu Sayeed joined the BNP on January 21, pro-liberation voters rallied behind the party. Momen, however, criticised Sayeed, accusing him of trying to "revive fascism".

Pabna-2 remains BNP's safest seat, with its candidate Advocate Selim Reza Habib facing no major challengers.

In Pabna-3 and Pabna-4, BNP's internal rifts pose the biggest challenge. In Pabna-3, BNP

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Internal BNP strife and rebel candidates weaken its stronghold, giving Jamaat an opening. Outcomes may hinge on 'silent' Awami League voters.

Feb 12 polls vital to state integrity

Speakers tell RAWA seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Securing the upcoming 2026 national election is not only about conducting fair polls but also about protecting the very integrity of the state itself, said experts at a seminar yesterday.

Addressing the legacy of the July uprising ahead of the 2026 national election, they emphasised the need for patriotic leadership and a crackdown on corruption.

They warned that the July uprising was not merely an emotional protest but a historic reaction to the breakdown of the social contract, urging that the aspirations of the youth and the sacrifices of martyrs be integrated into state policy.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Religious lens oversimplifies Bangla vocabulary

Say speakers at Star Itihas Adda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The relationship between Bangalee Muslims and the Bangla language during the British colonial period was not just a simple connection to a mother tongue. Instead, it was a complex and often "fractured" bond involving identity, religion and colonial power, speakers said yesterday.

They made these observations at the 11th session of The Daily Star's Itihas Adda, titled "The Language Question of Bangalee Muslims: British Period," held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

Speakers discussed how colonial interventions, religious revivalism, and the search for political identity shaped the region's linguistic history.

Linguist Prof Monsur Musa said while history often focuses on collective identities like "Bangalee Muslim," language is actually unique to every individual. "We often talk about the language of Bangalee Muslims, but if we look closely, we see that language is personal. National Professor Abdur Razzaq and writer Abul Mansur Ahmad were both Bangalee Muslims from this region, yet their spoken languages were distinct," he said.

He challenged the simplistic binary that Sanskrit-derived words are inherently "Hindu" and Arabic-Persian words are "Muslim". "Just as English uses Latin terms for medical science, Bangla uses Sanskrit words

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Speakers at the 11th session of The Daily Star's Itihas Adda, titled "The Language Question of Bangalee Muslims: British Period," held at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Girl hit by stray bullet from Myanmar dies at NINS

STAR REPORT

Nine-year-old Huzaiifa Afnan, who was struck by a stray bullet fired from Myanmar on January 11, died yesterday morning while undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospital (NINS) in Dhaka.

Huzaiifa was declared dead around 9:45am, her uncle Shaukat Ali told The Daily Star.

He said doctors informed them that Huzaiifa's heart was not functioning, and later declared her dead. Huzaiifa had been on life support at the hospital.

Humayun Kabir, an associate professor at the hospital, also confirmed her death.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5