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Argentine ambassador condemns attack on Star

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Argentine Ambassador to Bangladesh Marcelo Carlos Cesa yesterday condemned the arson attacks on The Daily Star building and expressed hope that such attacks on the media would never happen again.

During a visit to the newspaper office, he expressed his solidarity with The Daily Star employees who had to endure the traumatic incident in the early hours of December 19.

"I express hope that soon we will see a new Bangladesh where such things won't happen again," he said.

A group of attackers carried out a coordinated assault on the headquarters of The Daily Star and Prothom Alo in Dhaka, vandalising offices, looting valuables, and setting fires.



Argentine Ambassador to Bangladesh Marcelo Carlos Cesa visited The Daily Star headquarters yesterday to express solidarity with the newspaper, whose office building had been vandalised, looted, and set on fire in the early hours of December 19.

Adopt a code of conduct to protect women in politics

Speakers urge parties at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties must adopt a binding code of conduct to protect female leaders from harassment and cyberbullying, speakers said yesterday.

Otherwise, women will be systematically pushed out of national politics, they warned.

Addressing a discussion in the capital organised by Women in Democracy (WIND), rights activists, political leaders, and journalists said a "feudal" mindset and a broken leadership pipeline are undermining the democratic aspirations of the July uprising.

Zaima Rahman, daughter of BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, said political parties must take full responsibility for the safety of their members through a formal legal framework.

"If a female leader or student leader faces any issue -- whether

cyberbullying or physical threats -- the party must stand by her and ensure her protection through this code," she said.

Describing the transition from student politics to local government as "fundamentally broken", Zaima said a structured pipeline must be created and sustained.

"If we do not repair this path, we will fail to create opportunities for talented leaders," she said.

Supreme Court lawyer Sara Hossain said the 1972 Constitution's guarantee of non-discrimination is a "settled achievement" of the Liberation War, leaving no room for fresh debate.

"We hear talk of constitutional repair, but there is no clear commitment to strengthening equality. Instead, we see a weaponisation of religious

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Minority issues must be treated as nat'l concerns

Speakers tell CGS report launch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Minority concerns must be treated as national issues to sustain democracy in Bangladesh, speakers said at the launch of a Center for Governance Studies (CGS) report in the capital yesterday.

They also said the rule of law has been undermined by mob pressure and that election manifestos hold little value without accountability. Gaps in oversight, enforcement, and institutional independence have created widespread doubts about election management, they observed.

CGS launched the report titled "From Pledges to Practice: Political Inclusion & Democratic Accountability -- Bangladesh's Polls 2026," at a city hotel.

Research findings and recommendations were presented on ensuring an inclusive, safe, and reliable election for minority and marginalised communities as the country approaches the national polls.

The discussion highlighted electoral realities and obstacles faced by religious minorities, ethnic groups, and gender-diverse populations, as well as the implementation of constitutional pledges on equality and non-discrimination.

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The only thing they [interim] can now do is hold a good election. Their scope for reforms, space to carry out reforms, and room to ensure justice has run out -- they have run out of steam.

DEBAPRIYA BHATTACHARYA



FEBRUARY 12 ELECTION | DHAKA-3

Civic amenities top voter demands

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

Sinthia Akter runs a beauty parlour in Rahmatpur, Jinjira, along the banks of the Buriganga river. She has lived in the area since childhood.

While she has grown accustomed to the congested surroundings, Sinthia deeply worries about her children's upbringing and education.

The entrepreneur is cautiously optimistic about the country's political transition and the upcoming election.

"If a qualified candidate is elected, things will be better in future," she told The Daily Star.

"Women must receive immediate administrative support whenever they face trouble," she said.

The electoral atmosphere is vibrant in the Dhaka-3 constituency, which includes five unions of Keraniganj upazila -- Jinjira, Aganagar, Teghoria, Konda and Shubhadya.

Sinthia, though she is not well-versed in individual candidates, said the election buzz is palpable in the area. As a conscious citizen, she plans to vote and hopes the polls will bring overall improvements.

Campaigning continues throughout the day in areas such as Adarshanagar, Jhilmil Residential Area,

Babubazar Bridge, Hasnabad, Bashundhara Riverview, Pangaon Container Depot, the Jagannath University new campus and Ekuria.

The Mawa Expressway and Padma Rail Link also pass through the constituency.

Jinjira and Aganagar are densely populated commercial hubs marked by narrow roads and heavy traffic. Hundreds of small-scale industries operate here, discharging toxic waste directly into the Buriganga river.

Traffic congestion remains severe from Babubazar Bridge to Kadamtali and the Jinjira Ferry Ghat. The Shubhadya Canal is clogged with garbage, effectively turning the area into a dumping ground.

Residents say rapid urbanisation here has not been matched with increased civic facilities.

There are no parks or adequate playgrounds, while land filling for housing projects has destroyed natural water bodies. Locals also report a recent rise in drug use and the activities of teen gangs.

Gas shortages have added to public frustration. "The entire area has no gas connection," said Paul Babu, a private-sector employee from Konda area.

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Gayeshwar Roy
BNP

Md Shahinur Islam
Jamaat

EC yet to begin social media monitoring



Only 3 days left before election

Parties yet to submit social media details to ROs

Failure to submit could lead to legal action, EC says

EC monitoring content for fake posts, despite delays

AHMED DEEPTO

The Election Commission had claimed that it would monitor the campaigns of political parties and candidates on social media ahead of the 13th National Parliamentary Election and referendum scheduled for February 12.

However, with just three days remaining before the election and referendum, the EC said it could not begin the monitoring as it has yet to receive the list of social media accounts from the parties and candidates.

The commission, however, said the time for monitoring social media accounts of parties and candidates has not yet run out, adding that it has been observing election campaigns on social media platforms, and checking posts to determine whether they are genuine or fake.

A total of 52 political parties are registered with the EC, and 2,017 candidates are contesting the polls. The list of

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RANGPUR-4 CONSTITUENCY Farmers' rights, Pragati's key focus

S DILIP ROY

In an election season dominated by blaring loudspeakers and long motorcades, Rangpur-4 candidate Pragati Barman Toma is taking a different approach: a quiet, door-to-door campaign, focused entirely on a manifesto centred on farmers' rights, women's dignity and basic public services.

The 33-year-old candidate of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (Marxist) says her constituency -- covering Pargachha and Kaunia, two major potato-growing areas -- cannot progress unless agriculture survives.

Her pledges reflect that focus.

Pragati's manifesto includes subsidies for potato farmers, fair prices for all crops including rice and potatoes, government-run cold storage with fees fixed at Tk 100 per sack, lower fertiliser, seed



and pesticide costs, and interest-free agricultural loans.

The manifesto further emphasises rights for marginalised communities, including Dalits and Harijans, recovery of khas land and rehabilitation of the landless, establishment of agro-based

industries, and measures to prevent the spread of drugs.

"My constituency is agriculture-based. If farmers do not survive, development of this region is impossible," she said. "That is why agriculture comes first in my manifesto."

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POLLS MANIFESTOS

Health gets priority, many plans unrealistic

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

When major political parties highlighted health issues prominently in their election manifestos, many of their plans lacked clarity in terms of implementation, with some pledges appearing highly ambitious, experts said.

Although reform measures in the health sector featured in their future agendas, none of the parties addressed the core reform proposals -- such as the formation of a separate health commission and a separate health service -- as recommended by the Health Sector Service Commission, said Prof Syed Abdul Hamid of the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University.

The party that assumes power after the January 12 elections, in consultation with stakeholders, should formulate a pragmatic plan backed by an adequate budget, ensuring corruption-free and effective service management to gradually improve health services, said Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director of Disease Control at Director General of Health Services.

The country is headed to the polls at a time when

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