

Rezia Ahmed passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rezia Ahmed, wife of late Zamiruddin Ahmed, a Supreme Court lawyer and former ambassador to Malaysia, Libya, and Tunisia, passed away on Saturday night. She was 90.

She had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Rezia left behind four children and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn her death. She was buried at Banani graveyard next to her husband and daughter yesterday.

A doa mahfil will be held at her Dhanmondi residence after Maghrib prayers tomorrow. Her family sought prayers for the eternal peace of the departed soul.



Two artisans weave shitalpati mats from murta canes in Sylhet's Balaganj, a region once famed for the craft. Now, only a few families keep the tradition alive, struggling with declining demand, and scarce raw materials. The mats sell for Tk 1,000-7,000 per piece. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

EC yet to begin social media

FROM PAGE 3

their social media accounts used in campaigns is meant to be submitted to the 67 returning officers across the country's 300 constituencies.

On November 10 last year, the EC finalised and gazetted the Code of Conduct 2025 for political parties and candidates.

Clause 16 of the code states that before starting electioneering, a candidate, their election agent, or the party concerned must submit to the returning officer the names of social media platforms, account IDs, email IDs, and other identifying information related to their campaign.

While electioneering began nationwide on January 22, the EC has yet to receive the list of social media accounts.

On February 3, the commission issued a directive asking ROs nationwide to centrally submit links of election campaigns on social media. EC officials said the ROs have yet to submit the links.

The letter also stated

that in the case of social media campaigning, all expenses — including content creation, advertisements, boosting, and sponsorships — must be submitted to the EC as part of the overall election expenditure.

Contacted, Election Commissioner Anwarul Islam Sarkar said, "The time has not ended yet... either today or tomorrow we will sit and get an overall idea of the matter."

Referring to the fact that even the EC itself does not know how many accounts have been submitted, he said, "I cannot give the exact number right now. If the parties and candidates fail to submit the account names and other necessary details, they will come under the purview of the law for violating the code of conduct."

He further said the EC's fact-finding cell is working on the matter, adding, "For each area, we have officials and technical experts monitoring the campaigns across electronic, print, and social media."

The election commissioner also said, "Effective measures are being taken in cases whenever the content is found to be fake... Many issues are appearing on social media in exaggerated or false ways. We are recording these and taking legal action through our channels."

Contacted, EC Director (Public Relations) Ruhul Amin Mollik said no RO had submitted the links of social media accounts being used in election campaigns to the commission.

"There is no problem with that. We will monitor it after the election. If any irregularities are found then, action will be taken against the parties and candidates concerned," he added.

PRAYER
TIMING
FEBRUARY 9

Fazr

Zohr

Asr

Maghrib

Esha

AZAN 5:30

12:45

4:15

5:52

7:15

JAMAAT 6:05

1:15

4:30

5:56

7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Integrate urban

FROM PAGE 3

Presenting the keynote paper, BIP President Dr Muhammad Ariful Islam said the July uprising had created a new opportunity to strengthen the foundations of social, economic, and urban development.

Referring to the February 12 elections, he said BIP welcomes the fact that political parties had increasingly acknowledged planning-related issues such as urbanisation, infrastructure, housing, and transport in their manifestos.

He stressed the involvement of professional planners in translating manifesto commitments into action.

Ariful also highlighted decentralisation as a key pathway to transforming Bangladesh into a developed country and expressed BIP's readiness to support the next government in the national interest.

Former BIP president Prof Adil Muhammad Khan said that despite planning being given more prominence in manifestos than previously, there remained a lack of clarity regarding sustainable development and decentralisation, as well as an absence of clear roadmaps for district-based budget allocation and development of regions that

are lagging behind.

Adil stressed the need for concrete implementation plans for public transport targets, control of private vehicles, and mandatory effluent treatment plants (ETPs) to curb industrial pollution, warning against keeping such commitments limited to paper.

BIP adviser Salma A Shafi noted that while nearly all parties attempted to address urban planning concerns, the issues varied across manifestos.

Dr Farhana Ahmed, BIP vice president 2, said greater emphasis should have been placed in manifestos on spatial and region-based planning and linking economic strategies with development plans.

BIP presented 10 key recommendations, including: preparing national and regional spatial plans; protecting agricultural land; affordable housing; improving public transport systems; restoring rivers and waterbodies; strengthening local government institutions; and ensuring social justice and inclusion.

The organisation also called for evidence-based, data-driven planning led by professional planners rather than ad hoc political promises.

Minority issues must

FROM PAGE 3

Speaking at the event, distinguished fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Debapriya Bhattacharya said the interim government's capacity and potential have reached their limit.

"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," he added.

"Without ensuring the safety of marginalised communities before and after elections, the democratic process will remain fragile," Debapriya said.

He further stated that if the interim government succeeds in delivering a free and credible election at the end of its tenure, that achievement will be remembered in history.

The event saw the release of a CGS survey conducted among 505 people from minority communities. The findings revealed a grim picture of electoral participation, with over 50 percent of respondents expressing anxiety about voting and 25 percent stating they feel unsafe or extremely unsafe.

Debapriya pointed out disconnect between the chief adviser's rhetoric and the reality on the ground. He recalled the head of government's promise that all citizens, regardless of faith or ethnicity, would be protected under one umbrella.

"But the umbrella was never opened, and the rain pours down," he told the audience.

"To sustain democracy,

minority issues must be treated as national issues and never be trivialised or politicised," he said, adding that without accountability, even the most progressive political manifestos remain worthless.

At the beginning of the event, CGS President Zillur Rahman said the report, though prepared with the upcoming national election in mind, goes beyond a single electoral cycle and reflects a long-standing democratic crisis and structural inequalities.

Recalling the 1971 pledge to build an egalitarian society, he said that promise remains unfulfilled and added, "Today, inequality persists across Bangladesh — between men and women, across religions and identities, and between the centre and the periphery."

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik Secretary Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar said there has been no meaningful improvement in the conditions of marginalised communities over the years and that serious doubts remain about whether the upcoming election will be genuinely free, fair, and inclusive.

Economist Dr Selim Jahan said repeated questions about how inclusive elections truly are point to deep institutional failure, as constitutional commitments have been violated and minority rights and security have not been adequately protected or prioritised.

Politicians, teachers, economists, civil society members, media professionals, and representatives from minority communities attended the event.

Farmers' rights Adopt a code

FROM PAGE 3

However, without funds to hire workers or organise rallies, Pragati campaigns mostly alone. Each morning she sets out on foot with leaflets bearing her election symbol (scissors) and walks from village to village, stopping in fields and courtyards to speak with voters.

In Hatiram village, 36-year-old Sandhya Rani said she was impressed by Pragati's clarity. "Pragati Barman Toma clearly highlights women's problems. If a woman like her goes to parliament, women's welfare will be ensured," she said.

Farmers, too, say they value her willingness to listen. Afzal Hossain, 60, recalled her visiting the fields to discuss crop prices and irrigation costs. "She understands our problems. The way she thinks about farmers really appealed to us," he said.

A former Bangla student at Dhaka University and once general secretary of the Socialist Students' Front's campus unit, Pragati now earns a living through private tutoring.

Her father, Pijush Kanti Barman, a retired schoolteacher, says he is surprised by her stamina; her mother, Molina Roy, says women voters respond warmly.

Still, the path is not easy. She is the only female candidate among nine contenders in a constituency with more than half a million voters. She says the election lacks a "level playing field", arguing that money-driven politics sidelines smaller candidates.

"When politics is dominated by money, inequality is inevitable," she said. "People should decide based on morality and competence."

FROM PAGE 3

sentiment, where women are judged by their clothing rather than their competence," she said.

She urged the interim government to release women detained on politically motivated charges to avoid leaving a "stain" on its tenure.

Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, warned that "money and muscle power" have caused politics to be framed as a "dirty game", further excluding women and threatening an economy reliant on female labour.

"You cannot build a sustainable democracy while excluding the very people who power your economy," she added.

Jahangirnagar University Prof Nahrin I Khan called for a shift in how women are portrayed in the national narrative. "We must celebrate the 'revolutionary mother' who inspires political change, not the 'household mother' praised only for domestic roles," she said.

Another JU academic, Prof Mirza Taslima Sultana, said the state's failure to ensure inclusive education has pushed low-income women into the madrasa system.

She called for a context-based interpretation of rights that addresses both class and gender.

Taslima Akhter Lima of Ganosamhati Andolon said women are often framed only as "victims" or "warriors", rather than "citizens".

She warned that populist promises, such as reduced working hours, often ignore economic realities.

Labour activist Kalpona Akter echoed this concern, calling such promises a trap to push women out of the workforce.

Zina Tasreen, senior

journalist at The Daily Star, said rights remain meaningless without financial independence.

"As long as a woman depends on her father or husband for survival, she cannot make independent decisions," she said.

She proposed mandating female representation on corporate boards and offering incentives such as tax rebates to companies that promote women.

Investigative journalist Zyma Islam of The Daily Star said religion is frequently weaponised to silence logical debate.

"It is a weapon that shuts down every argument. It starts with saying women cannot be the prime minister and ends with saying they cannot play football," she said.

Umama Fatema, former spokesperson of Students Against Discrimination, said women who led the uprising are now being pushed back.

"Our struggle should be about research and education, but instead we are forced to debate how a woman should dress," she said.

Sports advocate Sarwat Siraj Shukla said rising conservatism and the closure of historic clubs have made sports spaces increasingly hostile for women, forcing female athletes to prioritise self-defence over professional training.

Liberation War veteran Lutfa Haseen Rosy, Prof Shamima Sultana Lucky, labour rights advocate Nazma Akter, researcher Munia Amin, lawyer Samira Chowdhury, Ducus research secretary Sanjida Ahmed Tonni, and Ducus member Hema Chakma also spoke at the programme, which was moderated by journalist Kazi Jesin, convener of WIND.

INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH (IUB)
VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

School of Business & Entrepreneurship

Department of Marketing

• Assistant Professor

• Lecturer B

Application Deadline
Sunday, February 22, 2026

For detailed information and to apply, please visit:
<http://iub.ac.bd/news-and-events/jobs-at-iub> or scan the QR code

EAST WEST UNIVERSITY
Progoti Foundation for Education and Development
Permanent Sanad Holder

INVITATION OF TENDER

East West University (EWU) is inviting Tender from the bonafide/intending suppliers/firms for the following items:

- Supply and Installation of Network Switches for East West University.
- Engagement of outsourced printing services for East West University.
- Procurement of 39 sets Computer and 39 units Monitor (Two Types) for Cloud Computing Lab, Department of CSE, East West University.
- Different types of works at 20 katha land of East West University.
- Printing of 162,000 units Exam Script (General, to be used by various departments) and 42,000 units Exam Script with OBE Based cover sheet (to be used by the department of English) for Spring, Summer and Fall Semester 2026 of East West University

The schedule of the above-mentioned tender items with terms and conditions can be obtained from the Finance & Accounts Department (1st floor) of the University until 02.03.2026 during office hours (until 03:00 p.m.) on working days. The schedule of item # 3 will also be available in the e-tendering process (<http://etender.ewubd.edu>). The price of the tender schedule (non-refundable) is **Tk.500/-** (Taka Five Hundred) only.

The interested bidders are requested to submit the tender by 03.03.2026 by 11:00 A.M. through hard copy or e-tender process (as mentioned in the schedule). The tender (hard copy) must be dropped in the tender box kept at the 2nd floor of the office of the Treasurer (Room No-316) of the University. The tender(s) submitted within the deadline will be opened on the same day (03.03.2026) at 11:30 A.M. in the Conference Room (4th floor) of East West University in the presence of the representatives of the bidders.

The bidders must mention the **"name of the item"** at the top of envelope. Otherwise, the bid document will be treated as cancelled.

East West University authority reserves the right to accept any tender in full or part of it or reject all tenders without mentioning any reason thereof.

Chief of HR & Logistics