

37% of buildings at fire risk

Shows fire service 2025 annual report on 10,533 buildings

DIPAN NANDY

Under the fire safety inspection programme in 2025, the Fire Service and Civil Defence inspected 10,533 buildings across the country.

Of these, 622 buildings (5.91%) were identified as highly risky and 3,316 buildings (31.49%) as risky.

In other words, over 37 percent of the inspected buildings were found vulnerable in terms of fire safety. The remaining 6,595 buildings were reported to be at a satisfactory safety level.

According to fire service sources, the highest number of inspections in 2025 was conducted in garment factories, totalling 1,533.

Among them, 88 were classified as highly risky

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Shahbagh intersection wore an unusual look yesterday, with little traffic congestion and only a handful of public and private vehicles on the roads. Many residents had already left -- or were leaving -- the capital for home to cast their votes in tomorrow's 13th national parliamentary elections.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

14 years of delays and despair

EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

An elderly mother, Saleha Monir, had renewed hope of getting justice for the brutal killings of her son, Sagar Sarowar, and daughter-in-law, Meherun Rumi, after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government on August 5, 2024, following a student-led mass movement.

But the 74-year-old is now devastated, as there has been no headway in the double-murder case in the past one and a half years during the tenure of the Prof Muhammad Yunus-led interim government.

The victims' families now believe justice remains a distant prospect.

Since the journalist couple was killed on a February night in 2012, investigators have failed to complete the probe, which the families describe as 14 years of investigative failure.

According to case records, investigators sought 125 extensions over the last 14 years to submit the probe report, but failed each time.

"I had great hope in the interim government and believed something would finally happen in the case. But they could do nothing. Now it feels like no one can do anything except Allah," Saleha told The Daily Star yesterday.



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SALEHA MONIR
Mother of Sagar Sarowar

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Against odds, 17 women take on Dhaka polls

From Mirpur to Ashulia, they campaign for space in a male-dominated race

SHARIF M SHAFIQUE and SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK

On the morning of February 9, a large crowd gathered near the Mirpur-1 Eidgah field.

The air was filled with commotion and the festive rhythm of a band party. Rickshaws and cars came to a halt, and pedestrians stopped to watch.

Suddenly, an open-top vehicle emerged from the crowd. A woman stood inside, waving to people lining both sides of the road.

A five-year-old girl standing with her mother on the sidewalk waved back.

The mother, Swapna Akhtar, said their house

AT A GLANCE

Total Dhaka candidates: 190
Women candidates: 17 (around 9%)
No women candidates in 7 Dhaka seats

KEY ISSUES FACED

Muscle power, money
Cyberbullying, character assassination
Security concerns
Weak institutional response



was nearby. Her daughter insisted on coming out after hearing the band. When they arrived, they realised it was an election campaign procession for Sanjida Islam Tulee.

As part of her campaign in the Dhaka-14 constituency, BNP candidate Tulee was touring several roads in the area.

On the final day of campaigning for the 13th National Parliamentary Election, her procession ended in front of the Mirpur Mazar. She later went to the party's election office for meetings before heading home.

Including Tulee, 17 women candidates have been campaigning across 13 of Dhaka's 20 constituencies since December 22, ahead of the February 12 polls.

Many of them have identities beyond politics. Some are engineers or doctors, others are rights activists, lawyers, businesswomen, or cultural workers. Some are backed by political parties, while others are running independently.

Dr Tasnim Jara, a physician and a familiar face on social media, is contesting as an independent candidate in Dhaka-9.

She has been campaigning with a small team of 10-15 people. With nearly 4.4 million followers on Facebook, Jara draws crowds wherever she goes.

At a recent campaign event in front of the South Banasree 10 storey market, residents approached her with local problems and complaints. Children, youth and women asked for selfies.

Jara listened patiently and obliged.

Dilshana Parul, a candidate from the National Citizen Party (NCP), was seen campaigning under the midday sun on dusty roads in Gazirchat, Ashulia.

While her team distributed leaflets in narrow alleys, a group of European Union observers arrived and spoke with her. She sat down for the interview, giving her team time to rest.

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FEBRUARY 12 ELECTION

With Tarique in race, all eyes on Dhaka-17

SADI MUHAMMAD ALOK and SHARIF M SHAFIQUE

Kona and Jannat were strolling through the Banani DNCC Market when they suddenly found themselves amid an election campaign procession.

As slogans echoed around them, one asked the other who she planned to vote for.

Both will cast their votes for the first time on February 12. One has recently graduated, while the other is in her final year of study.

"This election is very important for the country," they told The Daily Star. "Those who form the government will carry huge responsibilities. So voters also have a responsibility to choose a capable and responsible candidate."

These two young voters from the Dhaka-17 constituency are still undecided on whom to vote for.

On one hand, they feel sympathy for BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman, who returned to the country after 17 years in exile.

On the other, they feel like Jamaat-e-Islami -- once banned and unable to operate openly under the previous regime -- also deserves a chance.

The Banani-Gulshan area falls under the Dhaka-17 constituency.

Comprising Wards 15, 18, 19, and 20 of Dhaka North City Corporation, and the Gulshan, Banani, and Cantonment police stations, Dhaka-17 consists of both elite neighbourhoods and slum areas.

On one side are the affluent voters of Baridhara, Mahakhali and Banani DOHS, Baridhara Diplomatic zone, and Niketan; on the other are the votes of the slum dwellers in Bhashantek, Korail, and Mohakhali.

Although 12 candidates are contesting the seat,

national attention is firmly on Dhaka-17 because of Tarique Rahman.

Meanwhile, Jamaat candidate SM Khaliduzzaman is also confident about his chances against the BNP chairman.

Taslima Akter, a resident of Korail slum, said, "The Jamaat candidate has been coming here for a long time and has helped us in different ways. Tarique Rahman also came recently. We have to vote for someone, but we don't know if our situation will really change."

Rezaul Karim, 36, a banker from Niketan, observed, "BNP and Jamaat once did politics together. Now they are rivals. That may be why the election tension feels relatively low."

Tarique Rahman called on people to stay united and build a Bangladesh full of hope.

At a rally in Banani on Monday, "If the people could liberate the country in 1971 and oust autocracy through the mass uprising in 2024, they can surely rebuild the nation," he said.

"We have the capability; all that is needed is for everyone to work together."

While Tarique remains busy campaigning nationwide alongside his party candidates, Jamaat candidate Khaliduzzaman is focusing on his own constituency.

"I have tried to stay close to people from the beginning," Khaliduzzaman told The Daily Star. "There are elite societies here, as well as slums. As a physician, I have connections with the elite, and I have also helped slum residents find employment."

He added, "I am in contact with the residents of the Cantonment and DOHS. I will get the support of a large portion of those voters."

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Tarique Rahman
BNP



SM Khaliduzzaman
Jamaat

'Polls come and go, but will our fate ever change?'

Marginalised people urge next govt to work for their betterment

ARAFATH SHETU

Ahead of the 13th national election scheduled for February 12, people from marginalised communities across the country have urged the next elected government to work for the betterment of their lives and livelihoods and to ensure a brighter future for their children. People from different walks of life shared their grievances and aspirations with The Daily Star correspondents while making the call.

Polls come, polls go. Many promises are made to us during elections, but later we are forgotten.

TARALA GHATUWAL
A tea worker from Kulaura



Sathi, a vegetable seller at Fakinni Bazar in Dhaka's Tejkunipara, struggles to earn a living while raising two children. "Even the Rohingya refugees are better off than us. The government has given them houses. We don't even have a proper shanty. Every other day, city corporation officials come and demolish my shop and shelter," she said.

"I don't want much from the government anymore. Just rehabilitate floating people like us," she added.

Despite being the country's top export-earning industry, the ready-made garment sector continues to pay its vast workforce a minimum wage of Tk 12,500 a month.

Kajoli Begum, a garment worker at SM Sourcing Garments Factory in Gazipur, said, "With the

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A fisherman prepares to head out for work after finishing his lunch on parched, cracked earth in the Baromile area of Rajshahi's Mohanpur upazila. Prolonged dry conditions have dried up canals, wetlands and rivers across the Barind region, leaving once water-filled areas barren and deeply fissured, and severely affecting livelihoods dependent on fishing and agriculture. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Trial of Anisul and Salman begins at ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The formal trial of Salman F Rahman, former adviser to the ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, and former law minister Anisul Huq in a crimes against humanity case began yesterday, with the prosecution placing its opening statement before the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

Chief Prosecutor Tajul Islam outlined the charges linked to lethal attacks on unarmed protesters during the July-August 2024 uprising and urged the tribunal to ensure justice.

"Through this tribunal, the martyrs seek justice, the wounded await recognition of state crimes, and the nation hopes that truth and justice will prevail in history," Tajul told the tribunal.

The tribunal set February 22 for recording the first prosecution witness in the case.

The prosecution brought five charges of

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