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## Deliver best services for Hajj pilgrims: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday directed the authorities concerned to ensure the best possible services for Hajj pilgrims this year.



"The prime minister said those engaged in serving Hajj pilgrims must ensure the highest standard of service this year. He also instructed the authorities concerned to remain vigilant so that pilgrims do not face any hardship," said his Additional Press Secretary Atikur Rahman Rumon.

He said the instruction was given at a meeting of the National Committee on Hajj Management held at the Secretariat chaired by the prime minister.

Rumon said the meeting reviewed the common problems faced by pilgrims and discussed ways to reduce or resolve them.

Rumon said the meeting also discussed improving overall Hajj management, storing pilgrims' information online, evaluating Hajj agencies, identifying agencies facing complaints, and appointing guides (Moallem) from Bangladeshi expatriates living in Saudi Arabia from next year.



Chakma community members float flowers placed on banana leaves on Kaptai Lake in Rangamati in observance of their annual Phool Biju festivities. Hill communities in the region mark the start of the Biju festival, two days before their New Year, by floating flowers on water bodies across the Chittagong Hill Tracts in honour of Goddess Ganga. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

## 'Medieval barbarism'

Rights bodies, parties express outrage over mob killing of Kushtia pir, decry 'culture of impunity'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human rights organisations, cultural bodies, and political parties have strongly condemned the mob killing of a pir (spiritual leader) in Kushtia, demanding an impartial investigation and the immediate arrest of those responsible.



The victim, Abdur Rahman, alias Shamim al Jahangir, was beaten and hacked to death at his darbar (shrine) in Daulatpur upazila on Saturday.

According to the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS), tensions had been building over an old social media video containing allegedly derogatory remarks about the Quran, which led a mob to vandalise and torch the premises.

Police rescued the critically injured pir, but doctors at the Daulatpur Upazila Health Complex declared him dead upon arrival.

Terming the killing a serious violation of human rights, the HRSS said such incidents reflect a deep-rooted culture of impunity that threatens communal harmony.

Expressing deep concern, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) pointed to law enforcers' alarming failure to control the

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## Barrister Shafique Ahmed passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Barrister Shafique Ahmed, eminent jurist and former law minister,



passed away yesterday while receiving treatment at Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in Dhaka. He was 91.

He breathed his last at 5:30pm. He left behind two sons, a daughter, and a host of well-wishers to mourn his death.

Barrister Shafique had been suffering from old-age complications. He will be buried at Azimpur Graveyard today, his son Barrister Mahbub Shafique Rajib told The Daily Star.

Shafique Ahmed served as the law, justice and parliamentary affairs minister from January 6, 2009, to November 21, 2013, during the regime of the Sheikh Hasina-led government.

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## RESERVED SEATS IN PARLIAMENT

## Over 1,200 seek ruling party nominations

Hopes run high as aspirants throng BNP central office on final day of sales

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A large crowd gathered at BNP's central office in Nayapalton yesterday on the final day of selling nomination forms for women in the 13th Jatiya Sangsad.

From early morning, the narrow lanes around the office were packed with aspirants, many accompanied by family members and local leaders. By afternoon, the crowd spilled onto adjoining roads, with slogans being chanted.

Party leaders said that as of 7:00pm yesterday, nearly 1,300 nomination forms had been sold over the three-day period. Sales were scheduled to continue until 10:00pm.

Inside the office premises, long queues formed in front of designated counters, while party activists tried to maintain order. Small groups of aspirants were seen discussing their

prospects, comparing political credentials, and seeking last-minute endorsements from senior leaders.

Party sources said women leaders from the BNP's central executive committee and Mohila Dal, as well as younger leaders with links to former

loyalty, and organisational experience, while others sought backing from senior leaders.

Talking to reporters, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said the party will prioritise candidates based on "qualifications, social



The party will prioritise candidates based on qualifications, social acceptability, education, and contribution to democratic movements, along with those who have faced repression during past political struggles.

RUHUL KABIR RIZVI, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General

Chhatra Dal, are in the race.

Alongside party leaders, aspirants from a wide range of professions, including teachers, lawyers and artists, also bought forms.

Many submitted profiles outlining their activism,

acceptability, education, and contribution to democratic movements", along with those who had faced repression during past political struggles.

According to party sources, aspirants must pay Tk 2,000

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PAHELA BAISHAKH  
DMP rolls out multi-tier security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extensive security measures have been taken across the capital to ensure people from all walks of life can celebrate the Bangla New Year peacefully, said Dhaka Metropolitan Police Acting Commissioner Md Sarwar yesterday.

Speaking at a press briefing at Ramna Park, Sarwar said that although there is no specific intelligence indicating militant threats surrounding the Pahela Baishakh celebrations, law enforcement agencies remain fully prepared to respond to any situation.

"To ensure that people of all religions and communities can celebrate the national festival smoothly, DMP has taken extensive security measures," he told reporters.

The acting commissioner said large crowds are expected at major venues, including Ramna Park, Dhaka University, Bahadur Shah Park, Shakyamuni Buddhist Vihara in Mirpur, Rabindra Sarobar, and Hatirjheel.

To manage the scale of the event, the entire Dhaka Metropolitan area has been divided into nine sectors and 14 sub-sectors. A large number of police personnel -- both in uniform and plainclothes -- will be deployed across the capital.

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FARMERS' CARD  
PM to launch scheme on Pahela Baishakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is set to introduce a "Farmers' Card" scheme nationwide in three phases, bringing all farmers under a unified support system and offering 10 categories of benefits, including subsidised agricultural inputs, irrigation support, and soft farm loans.

The pre-pilot phase will be formally launched on Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla New Year, tomorrow.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is scheduled to inaugurate the programme at Shaheed Maruf Stadium in Tangail.

The announcement was made by Agriculture Minister Mohammad Aminur Rashid at a press conference at the Secretariat yesterday. The prime minister's adviser on finance and planning, Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, also spoke at the briefing.

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## His vision still guides healthcare

Say speakers on Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury marking his third death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury's lifelong contributions to community-based healthcare, affordable medicine, and people-centered development remain a guiding force for Gonoshasthaya Kendra (GK) and beyond, said speakers on Saturday at a commemorative event marking his third death anniversary.



They noted that Zafrullah's vision continues to inspire the struggle for a just, equitable, and accessible healthcare system in Bangladesh, underscoring his role as a pioneer of pro-people medical services.

Marking the third death anniversary of Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus on Saturday recalled him as "a movement in himself".

In a Facebook post, Yunus, also the former chief adviser of the interim government, wrote that Zafrullah's lifelong struggle was for the rights of the poor, especially healthcare for the most vulnerable. He stood firmly beside Grameen Bank's women members, offering active and courageous solidarity. Even in declining health, his commitment to the disenfranchised never wavered.

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Chhayanaut authorities officially announce arrangements for the year's traditional musical welcome programme, more popularly known as 'Barshabaran', at Ramna Batamul on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh. The photo was taken at Chhayanaut's cultural centre in the capital's Dhanmondi area yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORHSED

## 'Attempts to silence Bangalees won't succeed'

Chhayanaut announces Barshabaran programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A message of cultural resilience marked Chhayanaut's announcement of its Pahela Baishakh 1433 celebrations yesterday, as the organisation reaffirmed its commitment to continue its traditional musical welcome, more popularly known as "Barshabaran" at Ramna Batamul.

A hall full of students sat in attentive silence at Chhayanaut's cultural centre in Dhanmondi as the press conference opened with "Sedin Aar Koto Durey", a song by Salil Chowdhury that has long carried the weight of resistance and longing.

"We want to practise culture without obstruction," said Dr Sarwar Ali, president of Chhayanaut, about preparing this year's programme at Ramna Batamul against a backdrop of uncertainty and recent past attacks on cultural institutions.

Referring to recent incidents, including the 2025 attacks on Chhayanaut, Udichi, and other cultural spaces and media houses, he said, "We have faced planned repression since the nation's inception. This is not new to us. No matter what, we will keep singing because we want to sing freely. The state and society must stand aligned."

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