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DHAKA CITY POLLS

Campaigns officially kick off

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

A 19-day election campaign for the two Dhaka city corporations polls officially began yesterday with the ruling party candidates pledging to continue the ongoing development work in the capital.

The BNP candidates said they would participate in the elections to Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) for “re-establishing democracy” in the country.

The election buzz started immediately after the returning officers allotted electoral symbols to the candidates yesterday morning.

Candidates and their supporters held street meetings and conducted door-to-door campaigns.

Both returning officers warned candidates that stern actions would be taken if anyone violates the electoral code of conduct.

The campaign will continue until midnight of January 28. The voting will start at 8:00am on January 30.

DNCC returning officer (RO) Abul Kashem said, “Election is a festival. We will not allow anyone to resort to violence during the festival.”

DSCC RO Abdul Baten urged candidates to remain cautious about the overuse of loudspeakers during electioneering as the SSC exams will start

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PHOTO ON PAGE 3



With the Ijtema ground filled with devotees, many offer Juma prayers on a pontoon bridge and decks of boats on the Turag river in Gazipur's Tongi yesterday, the first day of the three-day Bishwa Ijtema.

PHOTO:
PALASH KHAN

Bishwa Ijtema begins, Akheri Munajat tomorrow

STAR REPORT

The first phase of Bishwa Ijtema, the largest Islamic congregation after Hajj, started yesterday on the bank of the Turag river in Tongi.

With the presence of thousands of devotees from home and abroad, the phase began with the delivery of religious sermons after Fajr prayers, and will end tomorrow with Akheri Munajat (final prayer).

The second phase will be held from January 17 to 19.

The three-day congregation includes delivery of sermons, prayers for spiritual adulation and welfare of Muslim Ummah, and recitation from the holy Quran and Hadith.

Meanwhile, four of the devotees have died due to old age complications in

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Mars loses its water faster than thought



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Water is unexpectedly disappearing from the surface of Mars, scientists have said.

The process is happening far more quickly than our current understanding of the red planet would suggest, say scientists. It is also not in line with what past observations would indicate should happen in the future, they say.

The gradual disappearance of the water happens when sunlight and chemistry turn water molecules into

SEE PAGE 8 COL 2

Pak mosque blast kills 14 people

Top cop among dead; 20 injured

DAWN ONLINE

At least 14 people were killed and 20 others wounded in a bomb blast during evening prayers at a mosque in Quetta's Satellite Town area yesterday, police and a doctor said.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Amanullah was among the deceased, said Quetta Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Abdul Razzaq Cheema.

The nature of the explosion, which took place inside the mosque in Ghousabad neighbourhood, has yet to be determined, police said.

Rescue services are at the scene to attend to the injured, many of whom have been shifted to Civil Hospital Quetta.

TV footage of the explosion's aftermath showed debris and shattered glass strewn on the floor at the scene.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing.

Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan, while condemning the incident, said that those who targeted worshippers have no religion or tribal affiliation.

“They are only terrorists and deserve the harshest punishment,” he said, adding that state enemies are once again trying to create a law and order situation in Balochistan.

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PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 11

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
5:30	12:45	4:00	5:36	7:00
JAMAAT	6:05	1:15	4:15	5:40
			7:30	

SOURCE:
ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Their brutality limitless

3 youths mercilessly beaten for 'stealing goats'; video goes viral; police wait for complaint

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A youth pins him to the ground and starts beating him with a stick. The victim cries in pain, repeatedly begs for mercy, but the youth does not stop.

At one point, another youth with a stick joins the assaulter. Someone present there insists that the beating go on, and over a

dozen bystanders do nothing to save the victim.

This is how a youth was tortured in Narayanganj's Fatullah on December 31 after some locals accused him of stealing goats from a house in the upazila.

Two other youths, accused of the same, were beaten in a similar fashion at the same

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Firefighters work as smoke rises from a bushfire in Penrose, in Australia's New South Wales state yesterday.

PHOTO:
AFP

Winds fan Australia bushfires

Govt urges quarter of million to flee, prepares military backup

AGENCIES

Australia urged nearly a quarter of a million people to evacuate their homes yesterday and prepared military backup as authorities said the next few hours could be “very, very challenging” even as rain poured down in some parts.

Gale-force winds merged two enormous fires into a megablaze spanning an area four times the size of Greater London yesterday.

“The conditions are difficult today,” said Shane Fitzsimmons, rural fire service commissioner for New South

Wales state, after days of relative calm.

“It's the hot, dry winds that will prove once again to be the real challenge.”

Temperatures soared above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in parts of New South Wales and neighbouring Victoria, where attention was focused on the two fires that linked to form yet another monster blaze of more than 600,000 hectares, reports AFP.

Defence personnel stood ready to move to bushfire grounds if conditions became extreme, Prime Minister Scott

Morrison told reporters, as soaring temperatures and erratic winds create dangerous conditions.

“Even with rain in Melbourne, even with forecast better conditions next week, there is a long way to go in what has been an unprecedented fire event...and, of course, we know that we have many weeks of the fire season to run,” Daniel Andrews, the premier of Victoria, told a televised briefing.

“The next few hours are going to be very, very challenging.”

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Mehreen Asaf Islam, Managing Director of Renaissance Décor Ltd. (right side)

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