

Swaying voters on the digital space

A look at mayoral candidates' social media campaigns

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With close to 100 million internet users in the country, everything from shopping to entertainment is moving online, and it is no surprise that mayor and councillor candidates for the two Dhaka city corporation elections have jumped on the bandwagon. From live broadcasts to inspirational videos and at least one hip-hop song groovy enough for dance parties, the competition for voters' attention on the virtual space is no less serious than the real world.

According to the 2018 digital report of global creative agency We Are Social, there are 30 million active social media users in Bangladesh, and the country's median age currently stands at 27 years. Social media is proving to be an effective channel to reach out to the younger demographic, considering many of them are first-time voters.



This year, mayoral candidates took social media seriously from the start. No longer relying on accidental hits like Manik Bhai er Salam Nin, we saw organised efforts from the candidates to reach the digital audience.



IN REAL LIFE, AND ON FACEBOOK LIVE

With one look at the four major mayoral candidates' activity on Facebook, it is evident that the battle for the digital audience has heated up in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC). With an array of content on different topics, both Atiqul Islam and Tabith Awal are going on Facebook Live a few times a day, broadcasting campaigns and street rallies.

Although innovative at the start, the medium has become quite repetitive as the election draws nearer. However, it is Dhaka South City Corporation's (DSCC) BNP-backed aspirant Ishraque Hossain who has embraced



TABITH AWAL #Tabith4Dhaka FACEBOOK 716k likes 731k followers		ATIQUUL ISLAM #AtiqForDhaka FACEBOOK 628k likes 646k followers	
Live videos at least thrice a day		Live videos often	
Photos, animations, rally dates		Photos, animations	
Videos responding to comments		Rally dates	
Addressing electorate		Videos on past work	

ISHRAQUE HOSSAIN FACEBOOK 476k likes 549k followers		SHEIKH FAZLE NOOR TAPOSH FACEBOOK 209k likes 219k followers	
Highest number of live videos		Watch parties	
Green screen videos		Still photos of campaign	
Rally dates		Videos on Dhaka	

Facebook Live more than anyone else.

OVER AT THE SOUTH

Even if his followers miss Ishraque in real life, his Facebook page has live videos from the field every hour, with a whopping 21 videos posted on January 23 alone.

However, there is little variety of content on his social media. Like all other candidates, he posts rally dates and times, and has shared a few basic videos where he speaks to electorates about the issues he plans to tackle.

AL-backed candidate Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh appears to be putting the least importance on social media. Instead of live videos, he is the only candidate to hold "Watch Parties" on Facebook. His Facebook page also has still photos of his campaign, alongside video clips of talk shows addressing the electorate; some motivational videos on the future of Dhaka, and daily videos where he

addresses topics like the history and beauty of Dhaka, but rarely provides concrete information on his plans for the city.

Repeated attempts were made by multiple reporters to reach both DSCC candidates and their campaign officials for comments on their online campaigns, but neither parties responded.

THE NORTH-SIDE PICTURE

Candidates of the north have a better-curated social media presence. AL's Atiqul Islam is using his 11-month of experience as mayor to his advantage, posting photos, videos, animations and infographics highlighting both his past work and future plans. There are photos and videos of him interacting with people, hugging, laughing, singing, and playing sports -- painting a "relatable" image designed to elicit an emotional response.

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A safe Dhaka for all

CPB mayor candidate for DNCC unveils 22-point manifesto

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) mayor candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation Sajedul Haq Rubel yesterday pledged a safe and liveable city for all, if voted to power.

Rubel, running with CPB symbol sickle, made the promise while unveiling his 22-point election manifesto at a press conference in CPB's Mukti Bhaban office.

He alleged that the two major political parties -- AL and BNP -- are busy protecting rights of only a single percent people. "It is high time that we elect a mayor who would work for the rest," he added.

Reading out his manifesto, Rubel stressed the need for establishing a strong "urban governance" to enhance coordination among 56 departments under eight ministries for the city's development.

He said a major part of the country's population is youth and many are unemployed. "We would work for creating a congenial environment for small and medium entrepreneurs," he added.

He said he would initiate a proper plan to reduce traffic jam and pollution.

Traffic congestions waste massive work hours. As a remedy, new roads will be constructed while the existing ones will be repaired. Also, all roads will eventually have bicycle lanes, he added.

Actions will be taken to compel auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers to use metres and the city corporation will motivate people to use public transport, he said.

Terming Dhaka a "concrete jungle with only 3 percent greenery", he said the city needs at least 25 percent greenery. "We will increase greenery by utilising open spaces, roadsides and rooftops," he promised.

Blaming the slow pace of construction works behind air pollution, he promised to impose high tax on those polluting the city, violating rules. "Paper bags will be supplied to the markets instead of polythene," he pledged.

Besides, DNCC will work with relevant authorities to save the four rivers surrounding Dhaka. Anti-mosquito drives will be redesigned and continued round the year if he is elected mayor, Rubel said.

The city corporation will protest any kind of illogical price hike of utility services. "We will stand against slum eviction drives that do not ensure people's rehabilitation first," he added.

The CPB candidate said about 72 percent people live in rented houses.

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'No level-playing field in EC'

Alleges Election Commissioner Mahub Talukdar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Mahub Talukdar yesterday alleged that there is no level-playing field within the Election Commission as his capacity to address various issues has been curbed.

Mahub alleged that he sent four unofficial notes to the chief election commissioner and other commissioners regarding lawmakers and ministers not following the electoral code of conduct during the Dhaka city mayoral elections slated for February 1.

"But those were ignored," Mahub said at a press briefing yesterday noon in his EC office.

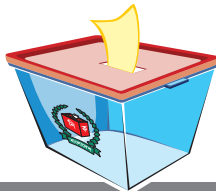
Mahub in his unofficial notes called on the commission to issue a specific circular stating that lawmakers and ministers will not be able to take part in any election-related activities during the upcoming polls.

He made the call in the wake of growing tensions between the ruling party and Election Commission, over MPs' participation in the campaigns.

"No discussion took place regarding the notes, let alone taking proper steps to address the issue. I should have been notified if my statements were unacceptable," Mahub said.

On the other hand, he said, since the announcement of the election schedule on December 22, three commission meetings had taken place but there was no agenda to

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**DHAKA CITY
POLLS 2020**

Petition seeks cancellation of Tabith's candidacy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A former Supreme Court judge yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking cancellation of candidature of Tabith Awal, BNP's mayor candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation polls, on charges of concealing information about his wealth in Singapore in his affidavit.

Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik submitted the petition to the HC for its directive on the Election Commission to probe the allegation and cancel his candidature if the allegation is found true.

He told The Daily Star that Tabith and two others have a private company named "NFM Energy Singapore Ltd", which is worth US \$21 million in Singapore, but he did not mention it in his affidavit submitted to the EC. This is a violation of the rules and laws concerned, he added.

Justice Manik also said he has authentic documents in this regard.

He said he has submitted a written application to the EC for cancelling Tabith's candidature but the commission is yet to respond, adding that the HC may hold hearing on the petition today.

'Ban gender detection of unborn babies'

Writ petition with HC seeks directive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking its directive on the authorities concerned to prohibit the gender detection of unborn babies, in order to ensure protection of the babies and pregnant mothers.

Advocate Ishrat Hasan submitted the petition to the section concerned of the HC, requesting it to order the authorities to stop selling, transferring or handling any machine used for gender detection of unborn babies and to submit lists of hospitals, diagnostic centers and other entities having registration to do so before the court.

In the petition, she also prayed to the HC to issue a rule asking respondents to explain why their failure to frame directions or guidelines to prevent gender detection of unborn babies should not be declared illegal, and why they should not be ordered to frame directives or guidelines to this effect.

In the prayed rule, the lawyer also sought explanation from respondents why they should not be ordered to maintain a database of diagnosis report of unborn babies conducted by registered hospitals, diagnosis centres and other entities.

Secretaries to the ministries of health, women and children affairs and social welfare affairs, directorate generals of health services, family planning, department of women affairs and national institute of population research and training have been made respondents to the required rule.

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Labour court grants bail to Dr Yunus

JNU CORRESPONDENT

A labour court in Dhaka yesterday granted bail to Nobel Laureate Prof Dr Muhammad Yunus in a case filed over violating labour laws.

Dhaka 3rd Labour Court Chairman Rahibul Islam passed the order after Dr Yunus surrendered before it seeking bail in the case.

The same court also exempted Prof Yunus from personal appearance in the cases after his lawyer Mustafizur Rahman Khan submitted separate petitions.

But the court asked him to be present during the hearing on charge framing.

On January 5, Labour Inspector Tarikul Islam of Inspection for Factories and Establishments Department filed the case with the 3rd labour court against Dr Muhammad Yunus and three other top officials of Grameen Communications, bringing allegations of violating 10 provisions of the Labour Act.

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With less than a week to go until Amar Ekushey book fair, workers are putting final touches on the stalls, painting signs and banners. The photo was taken at Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

The Daily Star
21st 'O' & 'A' Level
Awards Presentation Ceremony, 2018-2019

Announcement for 'O' & 'A' Level
Private Candidates and Schools

Private Candidates
Private candidates who fulfill the criteria described below are requested to register their names at The Daily Star office for inclusion as awardees. The criteria to be fulfilled are as follows:

Criteria for 'O' Level
Minimum 6 (six) 'A' grades in two consecutive sittings from **May/June 2018 to May/June 2019** for Edexcel and **May/June 2018 to October/November 2019** for Cambridge.

Criteria for 'A' Level
Minimum 3 (three) 'A' grades in two consecutive sittings from **May/June 2018 to May/June 2019** for Edexcel and **May/June 2018 to October/November 2019** for Cambridge.

Eligible candidates are requested to contact The Daily Star, (64-65 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Level-5, Dhaka-1215), with their original results certificates and a photocopy and 2 (two) passport-size photographs in person by 31st January 2020, anytime between 11:00 am to 5:00 pm (Except Fridays and Saturdays). Please do contact +8801786111100, before coming to The Daily Star office.

Schools
Any school that has students meeting the above criteria but has not been contacted by The Daily Star (i.e. has not been informed of the first scheduled meeting through regular post, email or phone) is requested to contact The Daily Star (64-65, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Level-5, Dhaka-1215), on the aforementioned dates and times or email at n.level.star@gmail.com by 31st January 2020, with:

- The name of the school, phone number and name of a responsible representative and a valid email address that is checked regularly.

The schools are also requested to promptly prepare a list of the candidates meeting the above criteria, the number of 'A'/'A' grades achieved by each candidate, and photocopies of results certificates for each candidate.

No registration will be allowed or accepted after 5:00 pm of 31st January 2020.
NOTE: If you know of any private candidate(s) or school(s) that may be unaware of this, please pass on the above information to them so that we may include them in this ceremony.

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