

## Polling centres under CCTV for three days: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has decided to monitor all voting centres with CCTV camera on the day of elections to Dhaka north and south city corporations, for increasing security.

"The secret room at voting booths will not be under CCTV surveillance on voting day," said an EC circular issued yesterday.

The polling centres will also remain under CCTV coverage on mock voting day (January 30) and the day before the polls (January 31).

EC senior secretary Md Alamgir said they have asked the authorities concerned to keep the CCTV camera active. "It will be helpful to identify culprits if there is any untoward incident," he said.

The commission asked the returning officers of DNCC and DSCC to take all necessary steps to use CCTV cameras in every voting centre on the three days.

### GENERAL HOLIDAY IN CAPITAL

The government has declared general holiday in the capital on February 1 for the polls. The Ministry of Public Administration published a circular, responding to a call of EC for holding the elections.

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A pickup truck carrying towering speakers ply Mohammadpur's Sher Shah Shuri Road around 12:50pm, blaring campaign slogans of a mayoral candidate. Using any form of loudspeaker before 2pm for campaigning is prohibited. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Cold doesn't necessarily mean coronavirus

Experts tell BSMMU seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Physicians at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) yesterday said common cold does not necessarily mean a "novel coronavirus" infection, but those with flu symptoms that have visited China recently or come in contact with someone who has -- require special care.

As there is yet to be any confirmed case of novel coronavirus infection in the country, people should not panic, but need to stay aware of it, they said at a scientific seminar on the emergence of the virus, held at a conference room of the university.

Despite "risky character" of transmission of this unknown virus, the mortality rate is lower than the SARS virus infection (mortality rate more than 10 percent) that broke out in 2003, they also said.

By the time the global SARS outbreak was contained, the virus spread to over 8,000 people worldwide and killed almost 800.

This time, China has confirmed more than 4,500 cases of this new virus, with 106 deaths.

Most have been in the central city of Wuhan where the outbreak began in December. More than 50 cases have been confirmed in other places with nearly all of them involving Chinese tourists or people who visited Wuhan recently.

Out of China, the coronavirus infection has been confirmed in 16 countries across Asia, Europe, Australia and Americas so far.

Three experts from BSMMU presented separate presentations on different aspects of coronavirus, in presence of a panel of discussants in the programme.

In her presentation, Dr Munira Jahan, professor of virology at BSMMU, spoke of how the virus spreads and infects humans.

In his presentation, Dr Shamim Ahmed, associate professor of chest

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## DHAKA CITY

## POLLS 2020



## Taposh runs into 'brother' Khokon

HELEMUL ALAM

Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sayeed Khokon yesterday termed Awami League-nominated candidate Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh his brother.

"We are two brothers, we will work for city dwellers together. I know if Taposh is elected mayor, he will continue the positive changes which started from us," Khokon said while visiting a shelter for climate refugees at Sadarghat yesterday.

Taposh, who is contesting the mayoral election with "boat" symbol at that time went to the area for his election campaign, and the two exchanged greetings at the surprise meet.

The mayor later said the candidate came to campaign, while he was there to visit a DSCC project.

"Two brothers met today. On this historic moment, I want to say to residents of DSCC that I have decided to cast my vote for Taposh, the Awami League-backed candidate," Mayor Khokon said.

Khokon said he would urge residents of Dhaka to cast their vote for Taposh, if there wasn't a bar from the Election Commission.

Taposh also termed Khokon his brother. He said during his campaign, he found that the mayor has taken a very nice initiative of setting up a shelter for those who have been uprooted from their homesteads due to climate change.

Taposh said he visited the shelter and found good arrangement for homeless children and elderly women.

"We will take more initiatives like this," he said. "If I am elected mayor, I will promptly complete the development works my brother Khokon has taken," Taposh added.

"The target which we have given to build modern Dhaka, Sayeed Khokon has already taken many initiatives in accordance with that," he said, pledging to build a developed Dhaka.

## Ishraque confident with momentum

ASIFUR RAHMAN

BNP-nominated mayor candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation Ishraque Hossain began his yesterday's campaign later than usual, around 2:30 pm, after unveiling his election manifesto at Jatiya Press Club.

Ishraque, accompanied by hundreds of BNP leaders and activists and local ward councillor contenders, started his electioneering from Dhanmondi 27, with his torso out of the sun-roof of an SUV, waving at the people.

In the 15 minutes that Ishraque was there, vehicles on adjacent roads were stuck in a gridlock as several thousand leaders and activists were shouting slogans in favour of "sheaf of paddy" and Khaleda Zia, blocking the road.

The campaign trail entered the road leading to Dhanmondi 8/A, as law enforcers cleared the road paving way for the procession.

BNP organising secretary Fazlul Huq Milan, publicity secretary Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annie and Juba Dal president Saiful Islam Nirab accompanied Ishraque in his car.

Other leaders including BNP standing committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, Jubo Dal general secretary Sultan Salahuddin Tuku, Swechasebok Dal president Shafiqul Bari Babu, general secretary Abdul Quader Bhuiyan Jewel took part in the procession.

A motorcade of some 30 people led the procession, with songs and slogans playing in loudspeakers simultaneously.

Some activists were distributing leaflets to people while Chhatra Dal leaders took part in the procession by wearing red sweater with its electoral symbol printed on it.

Ishraque and his rally subsequently went to Dhanmondi 7/A, interacting with people in Rabindra Sarobar, Labaid, Bata Signal and Hatirpul Bazar areas, before ending his days' campaign at Karwan Bazar at 4:30pm.

"If the mass-uprising that has been created in support of 'sheaf of paddy' in the last few days continues, our victory

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## Councillors to meet locals monthly: Atiq

MATHEWS CHIRAN

There will be monthly meetings between ward councillors and locals in each area every month if he is elected, so that residents can hold the councillor responsible for their work and also can talk about their problems, Awami League DNCC mayor candidate Atiqul Islam said yesterday.

"People allege that after the election, councillors get disconnected from people. If I am elected, I will arrange meetings in every area with councillors to hold them accountable of their activities. At the meetings, there will be journalists and locals as well," he told reporters in Pallabi before starting his campaign.

"If we do not hold the meetings, we will be detached from people. I want to build a city corporation based on accountability," he added.

After a meeting at Jatiya Press Club, Atiqul came to Pallabi (ward-2) to seek votes around 3pm. Local AL and Jubo League leaders accompanied Atiqul throughout the campaign in the area.

Replying to a question from journalists to compare his manifesto with other mayoral candidates, he replied, "I welcome all the manifestos [from mayor candidates]. They all are for the betterment of the city."

"But the manifesto that I revealed to public was based on my nine months of experience as mayor. There is nothing impractical in my manifesto," he said, adding that if elected, he will solve problems of the city in light of the manifesto.

Regarding the pledge of online tax facilities in his manifesto, he said, "There will be no increase of taxes. Instead, it will make the payment hassle-free for the people."

"With this online system, no city corporation officials can engage in corruption. Thus, the revenue will be higher for the city corporation automatically," he added.

Regarding the challenges if elected, Atiqul said preventing mosquitos is one of the major issues, and he will be active in driving mosquitoes away round the year.

## Don't let your vote be stolen: Tabith

ABDULLAH AL NAYEEM

BNP mayor candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation Tabith Awal yesterday called upon voters to cast their votes without fear, and stand against irregularities on polls day.

He also urged the Election Commission and law enforcement agencies to ensure a favourable polls environment, so voters can cast their votes freely and safely.

The BNP leader made the calls while carrying out his election campaign in Mohammadpur area.

As part of the campaign, he arranged several rallies, distributed leaflets of his electoral symbol "sheaf of paddy" among people, and sought votes with various promises, including that of making Dhaka a clean and modern city.

Speaking at one of the rallies, Tabith said only a few days are left to the election [scheduled to be held on February 1], so voters should remain aware and cautious.

"Cast your vote without fear and guard it so that nobody can steal it. If you don't go to the polling centres, other people will cast your vote and stealing will be much easier," he said, addressing voters.

"We all should go to the polling centres early and stand against all irregularities together," he added.

The BNP candidate alleged that their party has so far submitted more than 140 complaints -- regarding attack on them and electoral code violation by opponents -- to the EC, but the commission rejected about 102 of those.

"If the EC plays such a role, the ongoing festivity entering the election will go to waste... You [EC] should play a neutral role and ensure an environment so that voters can cast votes without fear and intimidation," said Tabith.

About deploying BNP polling agents during the election, he said nobody will be able to oust their agents from the polling centres, if law enforcement agencies play a neutral role.

He also opined that the Awami League-led government has become "frightened" seeing massive public support for "sheaf of paddy" -- BNP's electoral symbol.

## Int'l conference on diarrhoeal disease kicks off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 15th Asian Conference on Diarrhoeal Disease and Nutrition (ASCODD) kicked off yesterday at a city hotel, hosted by icddr, b.

The three-day international conference will include a series of scientific sessions, where around 450 public health experts from 18 countries will speak on the latest developments in tackling public health challenges.

The theme of the conference is "Typhoid, cholera, other enteric diseases and their relationship to nutritional disorders: Persisting challenges for low- and middle-income countries in an era of humanitarian crisis".

Speaking as chief guest, health Minister Zahid Maleque, said, "This conference will help achieve global goals to address major public health challenges."

In his speech, Dr Firdausi Qadri, Senior

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## Committed to ensuring human rights: Momen

Says Bangladesh remains engaged with UN mechanisms

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Bangladesh will continue to work towards promoting universal human rights.

He also said Dhaka remains "robustly engaged" with various UN human rights mechanism, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

"As a responsible member of the international community, Bangladesh also maintains a strong relationship of cooperation and collaboration with its international partners, including the United Nations and its human rights mechanism," he said.

Momen said Bangladesh is committed to preventing any attempt to violate human rights besides ensuring universal human rights.

The foreign minister made the remarks at the inaugural session of a workshop on "Implementation of the 3rd Universal Periodic Review of Bangladesh" at a city hotel.

Law Minister Anisul Haque, National Human Rights Commission Chairperson Nasima Begum, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, European Union Ambassador to Bangladesh Rensje Teerink and UN Resident Coordinator in Dhaka Mia Seppo were also present at the event.

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## All Padma bridge spans to be installed by July

Quader informs House

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All spans of the Padma bridge will be installed by July, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader told parliament yesterday.

In reply to a query from Awami League MP Didarul Alam, the minister said among the total 41 spans, 20 have been already installed. "The rest 21 spans will be installed within July this year," Quader said.

The minister also informed the House that the total progress of the project is 76.5 percent as of December last year. He also said progress of the main bridge is 85.5 percent and the river training is 66 percent.

"We can hope that the bridge will be opened for vehicle movement in June next year," the minister also said.

About the ongoing metro rail project, Quader said the progress of metro rail on Uttara-Motijheel route is 40.2 percent as of December last year.

In reply to a query from AL MP Rubina Akhter, he said printing of driving license cards could not be possible at the expected rate at present, due to scarcity of cards.

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## POLLUTING BURIGANGA HC fines 4 factories Tk 5 lakh each

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday fined four dyeing and textile factories in Shyampur area of Dhaka -- on the bank of river Buriganga -- Tk 5 lakh each for running those without effluent treatment plants (ETPs), polluting the river and suppressing information about it to the court.

The court ordered the owners of Mita Textiles, M/S Ovijay Dyeing, Chandpur Textiles and Dyeing, and Sharmim Textile and Dyeing to pay the fine to the Department of Environment (DoE) in 15 days, after receiving a copy of the verdict.

The DoE has been directed to use the money to free the Buriganga of pollution, Advocate Manzill Murshid, a lawyer for DoE, told The Daily Star.

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