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"We hope our development partners will continue to extend their assistance by not giving so many conditions ..."
 PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA AT BANGLADESH DEVELOPMENT FORUM



"We have information that on election day, these armed goons can hamper free and fair election in the name of guarding polling stations."
 AL GENERAL SECRETARY OBAIDUL QUADER AT A PRESS BRIEFING



"Our armed forces will not take more than 7-10 days to make Pakistan bite the dust."
 INDIAN PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI
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DHAKA CITY POLLS 2020



Not a city of fear

What women voters want of Dhaka mayors, councillors

HELEMUL ALAM and MALIHA KHAN

A 21-year-old DU student was raped and tortured in a notoriously dark stretch of the Airport Road in Kurmitola on the evening of January 5. The lone suspect, who was arrested a few days later, had allegedly raped and mugged other women near the spot in the past.

It might have worked as a wake-up call for the authorities as, after the incident, out-of-order street lights were fixed and new ones added to make the place properly lit.

However, there are numerous other places in the capital that lack adequate lighting as well as security, making women, in particular, vulnerable to sexual harassment and mugging.

This is what makes Noor Jahan Khatun, from Gandaria in Old Dhaka, feel insecure while moving around at night, especially when violence against women, particularly rape, is on the rise.

"I want a women-friendly Dhaka so we can move around without fear," she told The Daily Star when asked what she wants of the custodians of the capital city.

She is one of 50 women voters The Daily Star talked to about their expectations from the aspiring mayor and councillor candidates for the two city corporations.

The elections to the posts of two mayors and 111 councillors will be held on February 1. According to Election Commission data, out of a total 5,463,467 voters in Dhaka South and Dhaka North city corporations, 2,620,459 are female.

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Women struggling to get into a bus in the late afternoon rush hour at the capital's Farmgate yesterday. Due to inadequate public transport, many commuters, especially women, fail to get into buses during rush hours and end up waiting, *Inset*. Secure and hassle-free public transport has been one of the major demands of women voters.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Ex-bureaucrats move to form a pro-govt think tank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 42 former top civil servants have decided to form a think tank to assist the government in formulating and implementing various policies.

It will be a non-political and service-oriented research organisation devoted to the welfare of the country, said former senior secretary Hedayetullah Al Mamoon.

The decision was made during a meeting at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy on Monday. Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman and former secretary Iqbal Mahmud convened the meeting by inviting the participants.

The retired officials agreed to form the platform with the belief that they, with their experience and knowledge, can serve the country.

Ali Imam Majumder, a former cabinet secretary, however, raised question

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DSCC will be a tourist destination

Pledges Taposh in his manifesto

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League mayoral nominee Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh plans to turn Dhaka south into a tourist destination.

There are potentials that need to be explored, he said while revealing his election manifesto at AL headquarters on Bangabandhu avenue yesterday.

The old central jail will be turned into an amusement park featuring theatres, he said.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council in September 2018 approved a Tk 607-crore project to set up an amusement park and a mall on around 22 acres of land of the former central jail in Old Dhaka.

Breaching the electoral code of conduct

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'They're bringing in thugs, outsiders'

AL, BNP accuse each other two days before city polls, raising fears of violence

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

With the Dhaka city corporation election just two days away, many fear law and order in the capital may deteriorate.

The fear stems from Awami League and BNP men accusing each other of bringing in "outsiders" to create chaos during the polls.

AL leaders alleged outsiders and criminals, hired by the BNP, were gathering in the city to impede a free and fair election. BNP leaders, on the other hand, said the ruling party has "brought 30 lakh outsiders as well as arms" to Dhaka.

Some recent incidents of polls violence add to the fear.

For example, supporters of two AL-backed councillor candidates clashed in Gulshan area yesterday.

On January 26, a clash broke out in Wari between supporters of Ishraque Hossain, BNP's mayor candidate for the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), and those

of Rokon Uddin, an AL-backed councillor aspirant.

Earlier on January 21, Tabitha Awal, BNP's mayor pick for Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), came under attack from supporters of another AL-supported councillor candidate. The incident happened while Tabitha and his supporters were electioneering in Mirpur area.

Law enforcers have informed the returning officers of the two polls that about two-thirds of the voting centres are vulnerable to violence. The highest number of such centres are in the DNCC areas.

In this situation, additional law enforcers would be deployed this morning to maintain law and order in the city.

Talking to The Daily Star, returning officers for the DNCC and DSCC elections, Abul Kashem and Abdul Baten, said there was nothing to worry about the law and order.

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'Occupy, control' polling centres

AL leader Abdur Rahman asks BCL men at DU

DU CORRESPONDENT

Awami League presidium member Abdur Rahman yesterday asked Chhatra League leaders and activists to "occupy and control" the polling centres on election-day morning.

"You will go to the polling centres early in the morning, cast your vote and keep the centres under your control," Rahman said while speaking at a discussion at the TSC of Dhaka University.

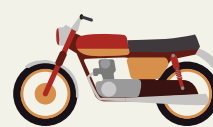
"Many detective agencies have already reported that Barrister Taposh is leading the polls with 57 percent votes. Knowing about Taposh's imminent victory, the BNP-Jamaat candidate has been involved in a conspiracy to make the election questionable," the former BCL general secretary said.

"You all have to be prepared to drive them out."

DU Teachers' Association and several other organisations of DU employees organised the programme in support of Taposh.

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VEHICLE RESTRICTIONS DURING POLLS



No motorbike from midnight today (12:00am) till 6:00am on Sunday



Autorickshaw, car, bus, truck, pick-up truck, microbus, SUV, tempo, taxicab and other motorised vehicles restricted from tomorrow midnight (12:00am) till 6:00pm on Saturday

EXEMPTION

Vehicles for emergency services including ambulance, fire service, electricity, gas, postal and telecom

Candidates, their agents, journalists, election observers can use vehicles with approvals from the EC

Passengers with valid tickets/other documents can use vehicles to go to airport, rail station, bus and river terminal



Pedestrians in the capital's Shahbagh area are seen donning masks as Bangladeshis strive to adopt preventive measures in the face of the growing threat from the coronavirus outbreak in China.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

CORONAVIRUS IN CHINESE CITIES

US, Japan evacuate their citizens

Airlines halt China flights as death toll hits 132; UAE reports ME's first case

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE	132 DEATHS (ALL IN CHINA)	9,239 suspected cases
	5,974 confirmed cases	The virus spread to at least 16 countries

AGENCIES

The United States and Japan evacuated their nationals from a quarantined city while a number of airlines suspended flights to mainland China as deaths from a new virus leapt to 132 and a government economist predicted a huge hit to the economy.

Beijing's pledge to slay the "devil" coronavirus has won the trust of the World Health Organisation (WHO) but confirmation of another 1,459 cases - taking the total to 5,974 in China - only fuelled public alarm around the world.

Deaths from the flu-like virus also rose by 26 to 132. Almost all have been in the central province of Hubei, the capital of which is Wuhan, where the virus emerged last month in a live wild animal market.

The situation remained "grim and complex", Chinese President Xi Jinping acknowledged.

In the first known cases in the Middle East, the United

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LOOKING FOR WAYS TO REVAMP YOUR HOME?

KEEP YOUR EYES ON TOMORROW'S

LIFE
Style

