



An idol of Saraswati -- the Hindu goddess of knowledge, music, and art -- is carried in a pick-up van across the city to a mandap. Saraswati Puja is being observed countrywide today, with the biggest event being at the Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University. The photo was taken near Farmgate.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## ‘Chinese returnees under observation’

*Quader says about coronavirus concerns over Padma bridge work*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday said some 35 Chinese nationals working on the Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project are under observation, as they returned to the construction site after outbreak of coronavirus in China.

Workers who returned to Bangladesh from coronavirus-stricken China since January 18 are now under observation, and will not be allowed to join work before a 14-day period is over, Quader said at a press briefing at his secretariat office.

Asked whether construction work of Padma bridge will be affected due to coronavirus, the minister replied in negative.

He said around 1,000 workers have been working under the project, and 150 of them usually go on “shifting leave”

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## EDUCATION FOR ROHINGYA CHILDREN

# UN, humanitarian bodies laud Bangladesh’s decision

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UN and global humanitarian community have lauded Bangladesh’s decision to expand the access to formal education for Rohingya children living in refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar.

The decision was taken on Monday at the meeting of the National Task Force on Rohingya crisis, chaired by Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen at the foreign ministry.

In line with the decision, the education sector for the humanitarian response in Cox’s Bazar now plans to pilot the introduction of the Myanmar curriculum in the Rohingya refugee camps starting in April. Initially, it targets 10,000 Rohingya students from sixth to ninth grade.

The use of the Myanmar’s curriculum will be expanded to other grades in phases.

To date, the education sector in Cox’s Bazar has provided informal education opportunities to 3,24,000 Rohingya children -- aged between four and 14 years -- based on the Learning Competency Framework and Approach.

In addition, over 10,000 Rohingya adolescents -- aged 15 to 18 years -- have received literacy, numeracy, life-skills and vocational skills training.

“We believe this is a positive step and a clear indication of the commitment by the Government of Bangladesh to ensure access to learning for Rohingya children and adolescents, as well as to equip them with the right skills and capacities for their

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## HURTING RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS

# Govt sincere in taking legal action: PM at JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told parliament that she keeps watch on everything that is happening in the city and the country, although she moves with security protocol.

The premier said this in reply to a supplementary question from BNP MP Harunur Rashid from Chapainawabganj-3.

Harunur, in his query, urged the PM to visit different parts of Dhaka city without security protocol team to know in person what the young generation wants and what they are thinking.

In reply, Sheikh Hasina, also the Leader of the House, said: “Yes, it is right that I move with security protocol...But it’s wrong to say that I don’t know the condition of the city and the country.”

“We keep watch on what is happening [in the country],” she said.

“He [BNP MP Harun] told me I should oversee everything properly. But questions are raised when I give directives; they say, ‘Why does the prime minister have to do everything?’,” she said, adding that she should oversee everything as she took the responsibility of the country.

About the young generation, Hasina said the government is taking proper

measures so that youths can lead a healthy life, shunning the path of drugs, violence and militancy.

In reply to a query from Opposition Chief Whip Moshir Rahman Ranga (Rangpur-1), the premier told parliament that the government always remains sincere in taking legal measures against any activity that hurts religious sentiment and norms.

“Bangladesh is an independent, sovereign and secular country. The Awami League government is determined to uphold the spirit and values of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and other religions. The incumbent government always remains sincere in taking legal measures against any activity that hurts religious sentiment and norms,” she said in a scripted answer.

Ranga, in his question, asked the Prime Minister whether it was true that Motijheel Ideal School and College banned girls from wearing scarf in classrooms.

Sheikh Hasina said the education ministry in its investigation did not find authenticity of the allegation of banning wearing scarves by girl students in the classrooms.

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The Daily Star and Igloo Ice Cream signed an MoU yesterday at The Daily Star Centre to organise the corporate grooming platform “Route to Corporate”. Graduates participating in the programme will be assessed and trained for three months, and in the end, 10 will get instant job offers from reputed organisations.

PHOTO: STAR

## DHAKA CITY

## POLLS 2020



# Rain can’t dampen Tabith’s confidence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although the weather was cloudy and foggy yesterday, election campaign of the city corporation polls continued in full swing amid enthusiasm and festivity.

BNP mayor candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Tabith Awal started his campaign around 11am amid drizzles, and he carried it out till the afternoon by covering several areas in the capital, including Gulshan, Shahjapur and Mohakhali.

The BNP leader exuded confidence as he said their party is getting more and more public support, and he is confident about victory in the polls.

He, however, reiterated his apprehension about a favourable polls environment and neutrality of Election Commission (EC).

“I have been going to people’s door to door amid rain and bad weather, and I have got a huge positive response. The voters have listened to me and gave assurances,” said Tabith at a rally in Shahjapur.

“The way we are getting more and more support from the voters, victory of ‘sheaf of paddy’ [electoral symbol of BNP] cannot be resisted,” he added.

About the role of the EC, the BNP candidate said the commission knows what to do and what to deal with to ensure a free and fair election.

“So, the commission should ensure that all voters can cast their votes without fear,” he said.

He also said no attack or violence will be able to resist him from participating in the polls.

Meanwhile, at another rally of Tabith’s campaign in Noyatola, BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed said people have lost their confidence in the Awami League-led government.

He also said people want to see young leadership. “That’s why, they will vote for an honest and eligible candidate like Tabith.”

BNP councillor candidates in those areas and several other leaders of the party were also present during the campaign.

# Councillor aspirants clash in front of Atiquel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

AL supporters of two DNCC councillor candidates engaged in a clash in Gulshan-1 area yesterday, while mayoral candidate of the party Atiquel Islam was present.

Supporters of AL-backed councillor Md Nasir of ward-20 and the “rival AL” candidate Jahidur Rahman Dulal hurled chairs at each other at around noon, injuring several activists.

The incident happened while Atiquel was talking to journalists regarding the upcoming election, before starting his campaign from Shaheed Dr Fazle Rabbi Park in Gulshan.

Supporters following Nasir, the AL-backed councillor and also the incumbent, started gathering around the park amid rain at 11am during Atiquel’s campaign. Meanwhile, the rival group -- led by Dulal -- joined, chanting slogans for “boat” (AL’s electoral symbol) and at one point, the two groups locked in a scuffle. The incident lasted around 10 minutes.

Atiquel Islam was escorted by his supporters from the park, who then started moving towards Mohakhali Saattola Slum via Niketon, to continue the campaign.

According to local AL leaders, the

party gave a list on December 29 last year endorsing its councillor candidates at different wards. Dulal’s name was on the list at first, but later, AL gave support to incumbent councillor Nasir, and this triggered the rivalry.

Contacted, Dulal, also the general secretary of ward-20, said, “We were chanting slogans from the audience in one side, and supporters of Nasir were at the other end. They surrounded the stage where the mayoral candidate Atiquel Islam was present.”

“We could not go close to the stage. At one point, they came attacking us with chairs. Ashraf Ali Sarder, Banani thana Awami League vice president, sustained head injuries and broke his fingers. At least three of our men got severely injured and hospitalised, including Asraf,” he alleged.

Contacted, Nasir said, “Dulal and their supporters joined the programme at the last minute, and they were the ones who started throwing chairs to create a scene. At least three men from our side also got injured.”

Talking to journalists regarding the matter at Mohakhali area, Atiquel said, “This is not expected at all. People will not see this in a positive light.”

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# Level playing field on Ishraque’s mind

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With only two days to go for Dhaka city corporation elections, BNP’s mayoral nominee for Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Ishraque Hossain spent a hectic day of electioneering, raising a strong demand for establishing level playing field.

“There is no level playing field ahead of the elections. Because of this, we are afraid that this city corporation elections will be another joke, like all previous elections [during the incumbent government’s regime],” Ishraque said.

He was speaking at a mass rally in front of Jubo Dal’s office at Bangshal, before starting his yesterday’s campaign in different parts of Old Dhaka.

“A mass uprising has spread across the country in favour of us, so none could stop such public spirits,” said Ishraque, son of former undivided Dhaka City Corporation mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka.

Calling upon people to cast their votes on election day, he said, “Don’t be afraid, don’t feel threatened; all of you are the owners of this country, so you will have to cast votes on February 1, to restore democracy again in the country -- which was the spirit of our Liberation War.”

After ending the rally at around 3pm, Ishraque went door-to-door for over six hours in different areas amid inclement weather, including Wari, Sutrapur, Gendaria, Laxmi Bazar, Jagannath University and Ray Shaheb Bazar intersection consequently.

In the evening, his campaign gained momentum with the participation of an increasing number of BNP leaders and activists, halting traffic on many spots.

Ishraque, holding a sheaf of paddy [BNP’s electoral symbol], shook hands with people, hugged them, exchanged greetings, and distributed leaflets.

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Electioneering for Dhaka city polls was at fever-pitch yesterday and last-minute processions blocked roads and slowed down traffic all over the city, with all campaign activities set to end when the clock strikes 12 tonight. This photo was taken from a procession in support of AL’s DSCC mayoral candidate Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Bangla Motor.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Mock voting to be held today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mock voting using electronic voting machines (EVM) will be held today at all voting centres of Dhaka.

Since EVMs have not been used before, the mock voting is being held to familiarise voters with the machines, said an Election Commission statement. The campaign will take place from noon to 7pm.

CEC KM Nurul Huda will visit Dhaka Residential Model College polling centre, while EC Mahub Talukdar will visit Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Government Girls’ High School centre to oversee the campaign.

The EC had earlier held EVM exhibitions in all centres on January 28.



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