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Your Right to Know

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"Many people still think that freelancing is not a job despite their earning and this mindset needs to be changed."
 PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA WHILE GIVING NATIONAL YOUTH AWARD 2019



"Take visible and effective measures to ensure security of our party agents and voters on the day of the Dhaka city elections."
 BNP CHAIRPERSON KHALEDA ZIA'S ADVISER ABDUS SALAM ASKS EC

"It is a great moment for our country ... a moment of hope and opportunity."
 UK PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON AFTER EU PARLIAMENT APPROVES BREXIT (PAGE 9)



CITY DEVELOPMENT

Attention not same for all

All the neighbourhoods see similar election fever but not equal infrastructural upgrade

ZYMA ISLAM

A mess only five years ago, the sidewalks in Gulshan-2 residential area now make for a streamlined jogging track, with dips in front of the gates of people's homes.

Stepping out of a gate, joggers can immediately pick up pace on the smooth pavement below, go all the way up to Banani's Kemal Ataturk Avenue and return. There will be fine tactile pavings under their feet all the time, except when the joggers will have to cross the Banani Bridge.

One may wonder in how many other areas in the city people can start jogging right in front of their home and cross such a long stretch of pavement without hindrance.

They certainly cannot do so in Khilkhet for instance.

There is no sidewalk from Bastola Road area to Karuna Garments on Lake City Road. There is a pavement from near the factory, but it is so narrow that two people can hardly walk on it side by side.

Despite the fact that these two neighbourhoods are under the same city corporation -- DNCC -- the scenario seems different when it is about infrastructure development.

It appears some areas are more important than others.

Ahead of tomorrow's city corporation polls, campaign posters have been hung in all the alleys in the capital. Not all roads in the city, however, were given the same treatment.

It raises one question: Isn't every voter equal?

One might not think so taking a look at the spending by the outgoing city corporations.

THE PUZZLING MATH

The Dhaka north and south city corporations have taken up large government-funded development projects to improve roads, sidewalks, SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



DHAKA CITY POLLS 2020
 Officials demonstrate how to use electronic voting machines to a woman during mock polling at Dhaka Residential Model College in Muhammadpur yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



Poor show of voters in mock EVM voting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only a few voters turned out at polling centres for mock voting using electronic voting machines (EVMs) yesterday.

The voting was organised to familiarise people with the new system, ahead of Dhaka north and south city corporation polls tomorrow.

In the first three hours of the voting yesterday, The Daily Star correspondents visited 18 centres, but they did not find a single voter in 11 centres. The highest number of voters at a single centre was seven.

The mock voting began around noon and continued till 7:00pm at 2,468 polling centres.

After visiting a centre set up at Sher-E-Bangla Nagar Government Girls' High School, Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukdar said he did not want to make any comment on the turnout.

"You know the reason better than me," he said at

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'Want to see democracy in action'

Diplomats say; foreign minister not happy with their 'intervention'

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Diplomats from various western countries in Dhaka said they wanted to see democracy in action in tomorrow's city polls.

"The Dhaka City Corporation elections on February 1 are an opportunity for the citizens of Dhaka to exercise their democratic rights," said nine diplomats on the Facebook page of UK High Commission yesterday evening.

"We look forward to seeing democracy in action in polling centres across

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AL for watch on polls observers

BNP alleges harassment, arrest of its activists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League yesterday urged the Election Commission to keep an eye on the observers and prevent them from exerting influence.

But a BNP delegation alleged that AL men were looking forward to win by taking control of the polling centres.

The AL election coordination committee co-chairman HT Imam yesterday said, "Observers should abide by the laws and regulations. No country should exert influence."

After meeting the election commissioners at the EC Secretariat, Imam told reporters that on some occasions, the observers made comments that were tantamount to hurting the country's sovereignty.

"We want the observers to observe the elections properly and freely. We also hope that they will follow the electoral code of conduct," he said.

In the last parliamentary election, the ambassador of a country entered a polling booth with a camera, breaching the conduct, he said.

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COMMENTARY

The farce of the manifestos

Do voters' reactions matter?

MAHFUZ ANAM

On January 29, about 36 hours before campaigning stopped, and two days before the election itself, the ruling party mayoral candidate for Dhaka south, Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, made public his election manifesto.

A day earlier the BNP candidate for Dhaka south, Ishraque Hossain gave his. Tabith Awal (Dhaka north, the BNP) and Atiqul Islam (Dhaka north, the AL) did somewhat better by making their manifestos public on January 27 and 26 respectively.

We have two overall comments about their manifestos -- first the timing and

second the bundle of promises made.

First, the timing. Manifestos are programmes that candidates present to the public revealing their visions, specific programmes and detailed workings of how those ideas will be implemented. With their respective manifestos, candidates face their constituencies, the media and the general public on the viability of their projects and how they will implement them. Not solely but to a large degree, the voters are supposed to choose their favourites from such interactions.

So the question is where is the time to do all that? How do these candidates expect the voters to, first read, and then examine,

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LAST DAY'S ELECTIONEERING

Candidates trade blame over 'bid to create trouble'

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

On the last day of polls campaign, mayor candidates of both the Awami League and the BNP yesterday accused each other of attempting to harm the election atmosphere.

Tabith Awal, BNP's mayoral candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation, expressed concerns over the arrest and "intimidation" of party leaders and activists in the lead-up to the polls.

He said the role of the EC was still a questionable one, but he would make a final comment on it after the election.

"Fear is rising as the election draws nearer. We are not yet certain about whether agents of all the candidates will be able to go to the polling stations," Tabith told journalists at the National Press Club.

He urged voters to cast their votes without any fear and stay in the polling stations to guard them.

Tabith's rival Atiqul Islam, speaking to journalists near

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341 stranded in Wuhan to return home tonight

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Some 341 Bangladeshis stranded in the Coronavirus-hit Chinese city of Wuhan would be brought back home in a special flight tonight.

They would be kept at a makeshift hospital in Ashkona hajj camp in the capital for 14 days for observation, the health ministry's public relations officer said last night.

The decision was made in a Directorate General of Health Services meeting after the foreign ministry got the nod from the Chinese authorities.

"We were notified of the decision in the evening. Then we held a meeting at the DGHS. We are now preparing the Ashkona hajj camp to quarantine all returnees," Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research told The Daily Star last night.

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People wearing protective face masks are seen next to a pharmacy in Wuhan, in Hubei province, yesterday. Coronavirus has claimed more than 170 lives in China and it continues to spread.

PHOTO: AFP

Coronavirus cases surpass SARS

India reports first case; WHO to decide on global emergency

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE	170 DEATHS (ALL IN CHINA)	9,239 suspected cases
	8,100 confirmed cases	The virus spread to at least 16 countries

AGENCIES

Infection from China's coronavirus spread to more than 8,100 people globally yesterday, surpassing the total from the 2002-2003 SARS epidemic in a fast-spreading health crisis forecast to deal a heavy blow to the world's second-largest economy.

The vast majority of infections are in China where the virus originated in an illegal wildlife market in the city of Wuhan and has also claimed 170 lives, latest official data showed.

More than 100 cases have emerged in other countries, from Japan to the United States.

The World Health Organization (WHO), which has so far held off declaring the flu-like coronavirus a global emergency, began another meeting in Geneva to reconsider.

Such a declaration would trigger tighter containment and information-sharing guidelines, but may disappoint Beijing, which had expressed confidence in defeating the "devil" virus.

It could also further spook markets, already shuddering at the ripple effects of damage to China's economy.

The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome also came from

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