Gunman opens fire on anti-CAA demo in Delhi

One student hurt

AFP, New Delhi

A suspected Hindu nationalist yesterday live-streamed himself minutes before opening fire on university students protesting against India's new citizenship law in Delhi.

One student was reportedly shot in the hand before police arrested the alleged gunman, who timed his attack to coincide with the anniversary of the assassination of independence hero Mahatma Gandhi in 1948 by a Hindu radical.

Video circulating on social media showed the man brandishing a handgun and confronting protesters while shouting "Yeh lo azadi" ("Here is your freedom") and "Long live Delhi police".

In the background, dozens of police can be seen watching proceedings

The highly charged word "azadi" was previously associated with Kashmiri separatists, but has been used widely in the past more than a month of protests against the citizenship law.

The law makes it easier for persecuted religious minorities from three neighbouring countries to get Indian citizenship, but not if they are

Critics say this forms part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's master plan to remould India as a purely Hindu nation, marginalising its 200 million Muslims, something Modi

yesterday's incident, the alleged gunman went live on Facebook as he walked around the

"On my last journey, take me draped in saffron and shout slogans of Hail Lord Ram," one post on his page read -- a popular chant for Hindu nationalists.

Saffron is a colour associated with Hinduism -- and with Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party while Ram is an important deity.

"Shaheen Bagh, Game Over," read another, referring to massive protests against the citizenship law taken up by women and children in the Indian

Afterward the shooting several thousand people gathered at the site, an AFP reporter said.

Some pushed against barriers, and police responded with water cannon, media reports said.

Candidates trade blame

Bhasantek slum, alleged that his opponent was trying to bring outsiders into Dhaka to foil the voting atmosphere.

"I want to say no evil forces can stop the mass upsurge," he said.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, speaking during a press briefing at the party's Nayapaltan headquarters, alleged that the AL was bringing in criminals from outside the city to create terror and that voters were threatened and discouraged to go to polling centres.

He also alleged that police were raiding the councillors' houses and arresting them to create panic.

AL candidate for Dhaka South Noor Taposh alleged that there was a conspiracy to occupy 170 centres in the city corporation areas to influence the mayoral race.

While campaigning at Gopibagh, he requested the Election Commission and law enforcement agencies to take necessary steps to maintain a congenial atmosphere conducive to fair voting on election day.

However, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal told journalists that the law and order situation was under control and there was no risk.

appoint polling agents and if law enforcers do not obstruct, agents will be at the polling stations on

They said unlike the last city polls, they will stay in the battle till the end.

The AL said they would guard polling centres on election day to thwart any unwanted incidents

China, killing about 800 people

and costing the global economy an

estimated \$33 billion, or 0.1% of world

Economists fear the impact on

global growth could be bigger this time

as China now accounts for a larger share

of the world economy. One Chinese

economist has forecast the crisis would

lop a percentage point off China's first-

while the yuan hit its lowest this year,

oil prices slid again and safe haven

Hubei province - of which Wuhan is

the capital - where 60 million people

are now living under virtual lockdown,

Australia, South Korea, Singapore,

New Zealand and Indonesia were

quarantining evacuees for at least

two weeks, though the United States

and Japan planned shorter, voluntary

on Wednesday, were infected, and

worryingly two of them had not

shown symptoms, Tokyo said. A

second Japanese flight included nine

people showing fever or coughing

India was the latest nation to

report a case, a student of Wuhan

University. And South Koreans

protested at facilities earmarked as

quarantine centres, throwing eggs at

studies yet published on the deadly

exposure to the new coronavirus and

symptoms is 5.2 days on average, but

While admitting that the estimate

"imprecise," the Chinese team

behind a paper published in the New

England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)

on Wednesday said their findings

support a 14-day medical observation

period for people exposed to the

varies greatly among patients.

According to one of the largest

the period between

a minister.

pathogen.

symptoms, broadcaster NHK said.

Three Japanese, from 206 evacuated

only venturing outside with masks.

Global stocks tumbled yesterday,

Almost all the deaths have been in

GDP, in 2003.

quarter growth.

assets like gold gained.

Coronavirus cases

while the BNP urged voters to guard the polling stations till the vote counting would end.

Meanwhile, Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda told journalists that 75 platoons of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) were deployed in the capital yesterday ahead of the February 1

Shariful Islam, public relations officer of BGB headquarters, said 65 platoons would work in the field while 10 other platoons will be kept as reserves.

The prevailing atmosphere has wondering whether they would be able to cast their votes.

"In the last parliamentary election, City Corporation Sheikh Fazle I could not cast my vote. Only if the situation is calm I will think of casting my vote," Akram Hossain, a private service holder from Jigatola, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Election Commission will employ EVMs as the sole voting method for the first time, a move that has been opposed by all mayoral candidates except the ruling party contenders.

VEHICLE MOVEMENT

RESTRICTED Meanwhile, the EC imposed a 54hour ban on the movement of motorcycles in the capital, which BNP's mayoral candidates said came into effect from midnight

> n place until Sunday morning For 18 hours from midnight on January 31 to 6:00pm on February 1, the movement of motorised vehicles have also been restricted in election areas.

> Motorcycles and vehicles with EC stickers, vehicles of emergency services, including ambulance, fire service and postal department, will be out of the ban's purview.

And an Italian cruise ship's 6,000

passengers were kept on board while

tests were held on two Chinese travellers.

China sentiment around the globe,

from shops barring tourists to online

The crisis has stoked a wave of anti-

In the corporate world, Alphabet

Inc's Google and Sweden's IKEA were

the latest big names to close China

operations. South Korea's Samsung

Electronics extended holiday closure for

Airlines to suspend flights to

mainland China include Lufthansa, Air

Canada, American Airlines and British

were demanding the same, sources

said, though the company has already

allowed pilots and crew to opt out of

Fuelling concern over damage to

productivity, thousands of Chinese

factory workers on Lunar New Year

holidays may struggle to get back to work

Policymakers are anxious, with

China dominating US Federal Reserve

Chair Jerome Powell's news conference

on Wednesday. "China's economy is

very important in the global economy

now, and when China's economy slows

largely deserted and tourist attractions

shut. Starbucks coffee shops were

requiring temperature checks and masks.

transmission outside China are of

particular concern to medics, but it is

too early to determine how lethal the

coronavirus is, as there are likely to be

many cases of milder infections going

It has an incubation time of between

With local officials facing a backlash

from China's public, especially over

their early response, the health chief of

Huanggang city - also in Hubei province,

with a population of 7.5 million - was

dismissed, authorities said.

No explanation was given.

human-to-human

Streets in many Chinese cities were

down we do feel that," he said.

next week, due to travel restrictions.

China flights.

undetected

one and 14 days.

Airways. Air France cabin crew unions

some Chinese production facilities.



The squeaky clean Gulshan avenue, left, is in sharp contrast to almost inaccessible Badda high School Road, which is not far from Gulshan. The authorities, obviously do not give the same attention to all the areas in the city corporations. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Attention not same for all

FROM PAGE 1

storm drainage, parks playgrounds.

But whether the corporations would focus on just the main arteries and its immediate connecting roads, or give the facelift to the entire area apparently depends on the average income of the people living there, documents suggest.

Areas in Gulshan, Banani, and Baridhara were shaped up under a Tk 70 crore project since 2015-2016. City corporation officials call it late mayor Annisul Hug's capstone project and a model to be imitated in other city areas.

Uttara residential area has got a similar treatment for Tk 85.9 crores, since 2015, shows documents of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).

Even though Khilkhet is situated near the city's main thoroughfares, such development work never seemed a priority.

As per DNCC budget documents, the area stretches over 15sqkm but facelift work is going on on three

A quick scan of the real estate websites suggests property prices in Uttara and Gulshan are approximately three and five times higher than that of Khilkhet.

Mirpur is another area where the DNCC spent money on such work even though the area isn't stereotypically well-off.

Mirpur is a vast area consisting of seven wards, and flat prices varying from Tk 19 lakh to Tk 2 crore.

City corporation officials, however, say that road improvements were done there keeping in mind it will be the starting point of the first metro rail line, making it one of the best connected areas in the city in the near future.

"The entirety of the locality got a thorough facelift worth around Tk 700 crores, with nearly all roads they have enough manpower to yesterday. The restriction will remain | covered, and no stone left unturned. We worked on building sidewalks and drains, in addition to roads," stated Faruk Hasan Md Al Masud, deputy project director of an infrastructure project.

This makes Mirpur the area where the DNCC spent the most money.

Overall, the DNCC has undertaken over a thousand crores' worth of government-funded projects to improve city streets. A majority of this went into Mirpur and adjacent areas, Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara, and Uttara, leaving a minor share for Rampura, Khilkhet, Joar Sahara, Kalachandpur, Jagannathpur, Kawran Bazar, Mohammadpur, Kafrul, and Shyamoli.

Many DNCC areas were left out

altogether. Meanwhile, the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has not undertaken any projects on the same scale as the DNCC. Their total expenditure comes to an approximate figure of Tk 300 crores over the last five years, according to budget documents.

DSCC officials refused to confirm the exact figure, despite repeated attempts by this correspondent.

"The city corporation worked on roads in Doyaganj, and are currently repairing sidewalks, drains, and roads in Shahjahanpur, Banasree, Meradia, Lalbagh, Kamrangirchar, and Shahidnagar," said DSCC's public relations officer, Uttam Kumar Rov.

SOME MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS In addition to fixing the roads, the DNCC is also working to upgrade 20 parks and playgrounds. Nine of these are in Gulshan, Banani, and Baridhara

The rest are near Town Hall, Tajmahal Road, Humayun Road and Iqbal Road in Mohammadpur areas, and one each from Rayerbazar, Shyamoli, Moghbazar and Kawran Bazar areas.

This still deprives the residents in

DNCC areas of new and improved parks. In fact, the city corporation does not hold data on what other parks and public spaces there are out there, officials said. By DNCC's own statistics, only 25

or in areas adjacent to the parks.

owners of parks [like housing us. Those that were handed over, we worked on them," said Tariq Bin Yusuf, executive engineer of a to phone calls and text messages.

Once completed, the parks promise to be delightful places. As Yusuf explained, "The parks are being fitted with lit walkways so that they are safe at night, children's zones, security cameras, canteens, public toilets, and more." Gulshan Central Park, for example, will have a beautiful lake surrounded by a promenade, and floating platforms.

"We hope to take a look at public spaces in Mirpur in the upcoming years," said Yusuf.

The city corporations have also taken up projects to develop the 36 wards newly added. There are 129 wards under the two city corporations.

EXPERTS' TAKE

Sultan Hafeez Rahman, eminent governance expert and former executive director of Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), sees the risk of interference by local-level elites as a barrier to general development processes.

"The appearance of elite influence pervasive in decision-making processes, which may explain why certain areas are given priority over others," he stated.

'Given the limitation of resources, the city corporation must prioritise. It also makes sense because Dhaka needs development. The question is, how and where would you begin? It is difficult to understand why certain residential neighbourhoods being chosen over others."

Ward meetings between the councilors and constituents need to happen, and in a structured, active manner, he added.

Adil Mohammad Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, reiterated the same view, adding that development expenditure should truly reflect the relative needs of a ward.

"There is a discrepancy in how percent of its households are in areas long it takes for a road in a highwhere these new parks are located, income neighbourhood to get fixed compared to one in a low-income "We had asked the respective neighbourhood," he stated.

The Daily Star repeatedly tried societies] to hand over the parks to to contact the CEOs of the city corporations for comments on the spending, but they did not respond

Poor show

FROM PAGE 1

about 3:00pm.

DNCC Returning Officer Abul Kashem said the turnout was very low because it was a workday.

Replying to a query, he said, "Most of the Dhaka citizens are educated. They will easily be able to cast their **DNCC**

A correspondent of this newspaper found that 48 polling officials were waiting for voters at the Sher-E-Bangla Nagar Government Girls' High School, which had four polling

All poling officials refused to talk with this journalist when he asked why people were not showing up.

At the Government Music College, which had two polling centres, no voters came to centre number 889 while only one turned up to cast a vote, till 2:30pm. There were about 20 poling officials present at the No voters went to Dhaka YMCA

School, which has two poling centres.

At the three polling centres in City College, no one turned up to vote till 1:30pm.

"We were expecting voters, but nobody has come as of now," Ariful Islam, presiding officer of the centre number 269, said. Most of the poling officials were seen siting together and chitchatting.

During the visit, it was found that seven voters cast votes in centre 76 at Basabo Girls High School. Three turned up to cast votes at centre 77 and two voters voted at centre 78 - all housed in the same school

No voters turned out at centre numbers 79 and 75 at the school.

Asked why there were so few voters, Md Nasir Uddin, presiding officer of centre 76, said: "There was I don't know why people are not coming. But the voting will continue till 7:00pm."

341 stranded

'Ashkona is our primary option. If we need, we will also prepare Kuwait-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital.

"The foreign ministry is coordinating everything. We are now taking preparation to receive them safely," said Prof Flora. An inter-ministerial meeting is

scheduled to be held this morning at he airport. Health Minister Zahid Maleque

vill brief the media after the meeting. Earlier in the day, Foreign

Minister AK Abdul Momen said the Chinese government would bear the medical cost of Bangladeshis if they get infected with the coronavirus in China. yesterday,

Bangladeshis in Wuhan city have agreed to return to Bangladesh, he told reporters after attending the closing ceremony of the Bangladesh Development Forum at the city's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

However, 15 other Bangladeshis said it won't be good for the country if they were infected by the virus and returned home. "There might be some more

who would like to come home. We will repatriate them as soon as the Chinese authorities allow. They are now in quarantine," Momen said.

China has informed Bangladesh that it won't allow the Bangladeshis to leave before February 6, when two weeks of quarantine expires.

He said Bangladesh has commercial planes with 419 seats, and those can be sent to China to bring back the Bangladeshis. Asked if there were any plans for

mposing a travel ban, he said there was no such plan. So far, no Bangladeshi has been

infected with the coronavirus.

If anybody is found having symptoms, they would be kept under special observation at hospitals, and the health ministry has already made the arrangements, he said.

The farce of the manifestos

and then question, then judge and finally to make up their minds about who their favourites will be with such limited time at their disposal? For most voters manifestos would be mere sheets of paper with promises galore. Only the media could have done a thorough job of dissecting their proposals but sufficient time was not there to do a thorough job.

So the inevitable conclusion is that candidates present manifestos merely as a formality and we, the voters, also take it as such. Hence no analysis and no debate about the practicality of their proposals. This takes away a very exciting

aspect of the election. There could have been a genuine competition among candidates to deeply interact with voters and attempt to argue about the merits of their respective proposals and the demerits of that of their opponents. Even if the elections are preordained -- as is widely suspected -- the debate could have been interesting and exciting as they would have revealed the depth of knowledge and capacity for articulation of the candidates.

All contestants, even those who have very little chance of winning, campaign vigorously. So also they would have debated enthusiastically only if the manifestos would come on

Thanks to global TV, we see how seriously moderated face-to-face debates captivate audiences in other countries. Here also our TV channels could have organised similar debates if the manifestos came out on time. There were some attempts but nothing compared to what could have been done. "Talk shows" are hardly any substitutes for genuine debates.

Couldn't the Election Commission do something in this area?

Second comes the question, what's in the manifestos that four mayoral aspirants gave to the public at the last emphasising anti-mosquito and anticity", scientific waste management and introducing a farmers' market.

Ishraque promised to turn Dhaka into a top-class metropolis safe for women and fight corruption firmly. Barrister Taposh said he would turn Dhaka south into a tourist hub and turn the premises of the old jail into

these promises would be like a dream come true for every Dhaka resident. However, experiences tell us nothing much is likely to happen for the pledges we hear today are the same we had heard 25 years ago.

first elected mayor, promised to set up a permanent mechanism to eradicate mosquitos from the city. This particular pledge was repeated by all his successors and is being repeated even in this election.

The fact that every year since then mosquito menace got increasingly more lethal with dengue and chikungunya devastating our urban life in the last few years speaks volumes of his and all subsequent mayors' "success". Hanif also promised to improve

the slums and solve waterlogging in the city. His successor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, who was mayor for an unprecedented nine years (due to no election being held) promised to solve our traffic problems. He also promised to make Dhaka a "digital city" (only God knows what he meant), develop the slums and provide quality education for all the poor children in Dhaka.

Hanif's son Sayeed Khokon, who succeeded Khoka (as mayor of Dhaka south), made the same promises whose fate was also similar. Nothing much really happened but a huge amount of money was spent.

why our mayors fail to keep their promises is that they do not have the legal authority to do much. To start with, the role of the office of mayor remains largely undefined. In fact, the main function of a mayor's office is to keep the city clean and lighted, and lease out "cow-market" locations during korbani. It also issues rickshaw licences and birth and death certificates and does some such other chores. For practically everything else the mayor has to seek the help of bodies that are not under his control.

We all remember with admiration how late Annisul Huq, our most successful mayor, ran from pillar to post just to find ways to improve the garbage disposal system. He had to lobby with numerous ministries, seek the PM's blessings whenever he got stuck and personally plead with all concerned during his very short tenure (cut short by untimely passing away) to get anything done. Crucial was the PM's support.

Dhaka is one of the toughest and most difficult of cities to govern. It has all the problems that a modern urban centre has, and more. On top of it all, Dhaka experienced exponential population growth in the last two decades not faced by cities of similar landmass.

This city needs good governance like nothing else. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina divided Dhaka into North and South principally to address the issue of running the city properly. It was a timely decision. However, it was implemented hurriedly and without the type of advance planning that was

All said and done, given the present realities, no mayor can implement anything of substance on his own. Much will depend on his abilities to lobby with relevant bodies, which will only be effective if the PM gives her blessings. On its own, the promises made in their respective manifestos are nothing much to write home

air pollution drive. Tabith talked about making Dhaka an "Intelligent

an amusement park.

Implementing any one or all of

Mohammad Hanif, who was our

One important reason as