



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

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JAMADIU SANI 8, 1441 HIJRI

20 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



REGD. No. DA 781

Vol. XXX No. 21

MAGH 20, 1426 BS



The Bangladeshi returnees from China's Wuhan yesterday idle away their time in Ashkona Hajj Camp, where they are being kept in quarantine. Of the 304 in the camp, 25-40 are kept in single rooms. Inset, a woman brings food for her brother in quarantine.

PHOTO: COLLECTED/ANISUR RAHMAN



## CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC

### First foreign death reported

Another Chinese city locked down; India reports second case; death toll 304

AGENCIES

China yesterday imposed a lockdown on a major city far away from the epicentre of a coronavirus epidemic, as its death toll from the disease soared to 304 and the first foreign fatality was reported in the Philippines.

The events added to deepening concerns about the potential for the virus to spread, as more governments around the world closed their borders to people from China.

Since emerging out of the central Chinese city of Wuhan late last year, the coronavirus has infected nearly 14,500 people across China and reached 24 countries.

Many of the infections overseas have been of people who had travelled from Wuhan, an industrial hub of 11 million people, or surrounding areas of Hubei province.

The person who died in the

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## RETURNEES FROM WUHAN

### In quarantine, but not ideally

25 to 40 kept in one room in Ashkona Hajj camp; ventilation, other arrangements not in line with WHO guidelines

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sadman Sakib, 19, one of the 304 who returned from China and now quarantined in the Ashkona Hajj camp, was not very comfortable inside his two-bed dormitory room in Wuhan University.

Fearing he could get infected, he returned. But now, like many others inside the camp, he is crammed into a hall room with poor facilities.

"My son was better quarantined in China. Now he is staying with over 40 people in a room. It makes me worried," said Nasima Begum, mother of Sakib. She went to the camp from Dhaka's Mirpur.

In quarantine, movement of people and goods are restricted to prevent the spread of diseases or pests.

As a provisional measure, the authorities kept the returnees from the coronavirus-hit Chinese city of Wuhan inside the camp.

The authorities said most of them went through a quarantine period in China and none of them had any symptoms. They said they were keeping the returnees there for good measure.

Experts, however, recommended maintaining the standard practice for quarantine.

They suggested that the government plan for a "one-stop centre" for the suspected cases of coronavirus infections.

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## COUNCILLOR RACE

### Tainted figures, rebels fare well

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

At least 17 controversial ward councillor candidates, all backed by the Awami League, emerged victorious in Saturday's Dhaka city polls.

They have drawn a lot of criticism in recent times for their alleged involvement in various illegal activities, including land grabbing, extortion and use of muscle power to establish supremacy in their areas.

The ruling party lent its support to them though it had decided not to back 19 incumbent councillors in Dhaka North City Corporation and 23 incumbent councillors in Dhaka South City Corporation for their alleged links to illegal activities.

The party picked a number of new faces in both the city corporations. But in the DNCC, only five of the 19 new ones won the polls, according to party insiders.

The picture, however, was different in the DSCC where most of the new faces emerged victorious.

Party insiders said the new ones in the DNCC performed poorly as many of the party activists did not wholeheartedly take part in their polls campaigns.

According to analysts, the results indicate that support from political parties was not

the biggest factor for the councillors in winning the polls. Rather, those who have strong base and influence in their localities secured victory in Saturday's polls.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shushasoner Jonno Nagorik Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said, "Saturday's elections were ruling party-controlled polls. People's

DSCC (Total wards 75)	DNCC (Total wards 54)
AL-57	AL-41
AL Rebel-9	AL Rebel-10
BNP-7	BNP-2
Others-2	Others-1

wish was not reflected in it. The Election Commission has not taken any meaningful steps to keep the election free from interference..."

"These controversial persons, who won the elections, were the key figures in controlling the polls in their localities."

"They are wealthy and influential in their areas. This is unfortunate that they won the polls," added Badiul.

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## BNP observes subdued hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The dawn-to-dusk hartal enforced yesterday by BNP in Dhaka city, protesting "widespread irregularities" in the city corporation elections, ended peacefully with little impact on public life.

BNP activists and supporters were largely absent on the streets.

Traffic was light in the morning but became heavier later.

Intercity buses left and entered the capital ignoring the hartal.

Law enforcers set up checkpoints at city entrances and checked vehicles, mostly motorcycles.

However, almost all educational institutions remained closed.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir called for the shutdown Saturday evening and Jatiya Oikyafront extended its support to the hartal.

Bangladesh Road Transport Owners' Association kept its vehicles

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## Organisational weaknesses exposed again

Say BNP insiders after city polls debacle

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP's organisational weaknesses were exposed once again as the party leaders and activists failed to show up at the polling centres on Saturday, said party insiders.

During the Dhaka city polls campaign, party leaders and activists were on the streets, but they were hardly visible on election day, they added.

BNP's south and north mayor candidates lost to their Awami League rivals.

BNP leaders said the main reason behind the poor show was the party being disorganised for a long time in Dhaka. Besides, many leaders and activists were facing cases, many were fearing "arrest", and many were "intimidated" by law enforcers and ruling party men.

"I can take the risk but would the party

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## Lamination woes won't go away soon

Authorities face an uphill battle to remove and recycle laminated posters put up for electioneering in Dhaka city polls

WASIM BIN HABIB and NILIMA JAHAN

There is a major concern over the disposal of tonnes of laminated campaign posters without causing further damage to the environment and public health.

The city corporations yesterday started taking down the posters, most of which contain a non-degradable laminating film. Officials at Dhaka north and south city corporations said it would take them well over a week to remove the posters that are quite an eyesore.

The DSCC plans to dump these in Matuail landfill while the DNCC is looking for organisations interested in recycling them, officials said.

But experts said it would not be possible to fully recycle the laminated posters.

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An election poster covered in plastic floats on an open drain. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



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