

Dateline Chittagong

Voters hope polls will be free, fair this time

CHITTAGONG, Feb 2: Voters of different age groups in rural areas of the district are taking mental preparation to exercise their franchise with the expectation that the parliamentary election this time would be free, fair and impartial. A BSS Correspondent while going round Chittagong-six constituency (Hathazari) witnessed much enthusiasm among the voters for the election and their favourite candidates. Majority of the voters he came across were optimistic about a fair election. The voters said they could not cast their votes during the last nine years and that even they dared not go to polling centres because of musclemen and armed terrorists. They said they were expecting a terror-free election this time. They seemed to be convinced that the coming election might be held peacefully as the individual candidates were making house-to-house contact which was absent during past elections. The voters interviewed by this correspondent includes teachers, doctors, traders, peasants and students. Mr A K M Fazul Haq, Headmaster of Fateyabad Adarsha Bohumukhi Uchha Biddalaya who was a presiding officer of his school centres in last two parliamentary elections said, in the past they could not perform the duty entrusted on them due to interference by armed mastsans hired by the candidates of the ruling party. We have no other alternative but to do what was dictated by mastsans. We handed over the entire ballot papers to the mastsans who sealed them and then poured into the ballot boxes, he said adding "we were silent spectators at the polling booth." He urged all concerned to abide by the code of conduct and norms of democracy to ensure a fair election. Mohammed Golam Sobhan (60), a retired bank officer of Fateyabad said, he would cast his vote in the early hours to avoid frustration of the earlier years when he could not exercise his franchise as his vote was already cast by someone else. He said he lost interest in election because he could not exercise his franchise in the past. This time I will cast my vote as the caretaker government has pledged a fair and impartial election. This election, if held peacefully, would be a historic one under a neutral government, he said. Kazi Jafar Ahmed, a trader of Chikhandandi said, arms were introduced to kill opponents and terrorise voters since the assumption of power by the past autocratic government which was toppled by a mass upsurge in late December. He expressed optimism for fair elections saying, "We must avail this chance to form a government through ballots". Alhaj Nurul Haq, a social worker and businessman said, if the candidates and their parties maintain their pledges and government remains firm against the law-breakers then the election would be free and fair and "We all would go for voting". Hajji Jafar Ahmed of Fatikhari and Hajji Abdur Rashid of Khandakia also expressed similar views. Mohammed Sayedul Haq, a farmer of Dewan Nagar said, if there was no terrorism in the centre he and his family members would cast their votes in favour of their favourite candidate in the next election. "We could not go to polling centre in the past as mastsans occupied them", he said. Mohammad Harun, a peasant and a homeopath practitioner, pointed out that local leaders, particularly candidates of the ruling party, were responsible in the past for supplying arms to youths to use against their rivals and such things should not be repeated during the coming election. He called upon the government to recover illegal arms and arrest mastsans to ensure a free election. Krishna Kanta Mahajan, a degree student of Hathazari College, said the caretaker government and the leaders are serious to hold a fair, impartial and terror-free election then they should take necessary steps to root out vote dancists and terrorists. The voters in general expressed dismay at the failure of law enforcing agencies in recovering arms. They said, no arms were either recovered by law enforcing agencies or surrendered by the known criminals who were at large mastsans who were engaged by candidates who want to win by hook or by crook. Mastsans must be eliminated to ensure a free election, they said.



Shah Alam and Tuli in Maharani Kechcha performed at the Central Shaheed Minar on the second day of the observance of the Ekushey. -Star photo

4 country-made guns recovered in N'ganj

By Staff Correspondent Narayanganj police on Friday recovered four country-made guns and arrested one person. Ismail Hossain, 26, of Mirpur, Section 13, Bloc-B was boarding a launch bound for his home town Chandpur. The 'coolie' who was carrying his bag informed the river police on duty. The river police recovered one cut rifle and three pipeguns from his bag. Three accomplices of Ismail managed to escape. On interrogation, Ismail told police that he and his accomplices were taking the guns to Chandpur with the intention of committing dacoity. A case has been registered with Narayanganj police.

Woman run over by train in Tongi

By Staff Correspondent An unidentified woman was run over by a Dhaka-bound local train from Akhaura near the Tongi bridge Friday morning. A case was filed with government railway police in this regard. One pipe-gun with five bullets were recovered from a compartment of the Dhaka-bound Mahua express train between the Dherasram and Tongi railway stations on Thursday at 2 am, railway police said. None was arrested in this connection.

122 kg explosive recovered : 4 arrested

By Staff Correspondent Police recovered 122 kg explosives and arrested three persons on Thursday. Police recovered the explosives from two grocery shops at 100 Sher Shah Shoori Road, Mohammadpur and Mukim Karta Bazar, Lalbag and a house at Haji Bablu Road, Rahmatganj. Mazanur Rahman Mizan, Sirajuddin and Iqbal were arrested in this connection. Sutrapur police on Friday also recovered four cocktails and a big knife from an old building in Forashgonj. Police arrested Md. Abul Kashem from 15, Chamartooly on Thursday. Later acting on his confession police recovered the arms.

78 Bangladeshis due in city today

Aeroflot carrying 78 Bangladeshis from Aqaba is due to land in Dhaka today (Sunday) morning. Foreign Office sources said on Saturday, reports UNB. They crossed into Jordan from Iraq since the outbreak of the Gulf war. The flight chartered by International Organisation for Migration (IOM) is scheduled to take off from the Jordanian city of Aqaba at 6 pm local time on Saturday, the sources said.

Youths urged to establish social values

Speakers at a meeting held in Dhaka on Saturday, called upon the youths to come forward with zeal and sincerity for establishing social values and upholding national identity, says a press release. Organised by the International Pen-Pals Club arranged on the occasion of its sixteen founding anniversary at club office, the meeting was presided by Mahbubuddin Chowdhury, founder President of the club.



Lions Club of Dhaka Golden and Lioness Club in cooperation with Manehar Kishor Mela organised a week-long eye-camp at Arahazar Upazila in Narayanganj recently. An eye patient is being operated upon by Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed while the club President Lion Lailun Nahar and District-315B Governor Lion M.-A. Malek were present.

Centres for Bangladesh Bank exam shifted

The written test for direct recruitment of Bangladesh Bank officers will now be held at Ideal College and Lalmatia Women's College on February 8, reports UNB. The exam was earlier scheduled to be held at City College and Dhammond Govt. Boys College the same day, but the centres were changed for unavoidable reasons. A BB press release said today that all other schedules and centres for the test would remain unchanged.

Dateline Khulna

Gulf war overshadows colourful poll posters

KHULNA, Feb 2: With 24 days left for the Parliamentary polls of February 27 election campaign is yet to get usual momentum as it should have been, sensibly due to the outbreak of the Gulf war for which people are also deeply concerned, reports BSS. This port city is yet to catch up with the electrifying fever with other parts of the country despite wall writing and multicoloured posters in the city. The major campaign in the city took off only Thursday with the holding of a series of election meeting by Begum Khaleda Zia the BNP Chief. Who addressed the biggest ever meeting at the Circuit House Maidan. Thousands of people thronged the Circuit House maidan to hear the Seven-Party Alliance leader who caught her audience by rapt attention. Scores of people in the city who were interviewed by this correspondent about their reaction for the Parliamentary polls expressed their positive feelings and enthusiasm about the prime necessity of holding the polls fairly and freely and without fear or coercion. Most people were optimistic about the holding of election on schedule while some expressed doubts and

said that unless the unauthorised arms and ammunition could be fully recovered free and fair elections would be difficult. Mr Shamsur Rahman, a former political activist now leading a retired life, told this correspondent that he had doubts about the holding of election peacefully unless unauthorised arms were recovered. Although the people would extend full support to fair polls, it is the armed miscreants who will try to foil the polls, he remarked. Mr M Abdullah, a former college teacher, expressed concern about the Gulf war and its adverse effects on National Economy. He said instead of going for the polls the present Government and the people should untidely strive to face the possible disastrous effects of Gulf war on our economy. Most of the people representing various shades of opinion asserted in favour of holding fair and free polls and said election is a mist for the initiation of a democratic process. These people also expressed doubt about holding of free and fair polls as the government is yet to fully recover unauthorised arms and round up miscreants. Both pose a definite threat to peaceful election, they said.

Mr Shajjadur Rahman, a businessman who has been closely following the political events said the need of the hour is to forge unity of all political parties with the sacred objective to help hold the polls on schedule in a peaceful manner in order to consolidate the process of democracy earned through much sacrifice and shedding of blood. He also said that the business and trading communities in the city were in favour of holding an impartial parliamentary polls on February 27. A housewife in the city Begum Gulshanara despite her concern about the price-hike of essential commodities said a welfare and democratic government be installed through peaceful election in the country where people could live in peace and happiness. Meanwhile, the political parties and their nominees are trying to gear up their respective political campaign for the forthcoming polls. Rival political parties campaigning for their candidates in the city area have been showing political tolerance at each other thereby avoiding any clash. The local administration including the Metropolitan Police are trying their best to recover unauthorised arms and ammunitions and round up the anti-social elements, they said.

Here and There

'Islamic rule can ensure exploitation free society'

CHITTAGONG, Feb 2: Jamaat-e-Islami Mohila Secretary Ms. Hafsa Asma Khatun Friday called upon the women to cast their votes in favour of Jamaat candidates in the coming election, reports BSS. Addressing a meeting of women workers of the party at the Muslim Institute Hall here in the afternoon, she said, Jamaat is striving to introduce Islamic rule to put an end to all social injustice in the society including economic imbalances. Islamic rule, he added, based on the Quran and sunnah can ensure an exploitation free society which no other Islam can do.

Concern over situation in Azad

By Staff Correspondent The daily Azad unit of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) on Saturday held a meeting at the daily office to press the demand for payment of salary to the journalists working with the newspaper immediately, to enforce Wage Board award and to solve the present crisis affecting the publication of the daily. The meeting presided over by unit chief Amena Nawazi, was addressed by Mr Zahirul Haque, president of DUJ, Mr Ruhul Amin Gazi, general secretary of DUJ, Mr M A Aziz, joint secretary of DUJ, former DUJ president Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, former general secretary of DUJ Mr Abul Kalam Azad, news editor of daily Azad Mr M A Karim and others, a DUJ press release said.

Ban on JP demanded

By Staff Correspondent Bangladesh citizens' committee has demanded ban on Jatiya Party. The Steering Committee of the Citizens' Committee in a press release on Saturday said, the participation of the Jatiya Party in the coming elections were contrary to the aspirations of the recent mass upsurge.

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