

## AL leaders campaign for candidates

By Staff Correspondent

Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged upon the city dwellers to cast their votes in the forthcoming DCC polls in favour of her party candidates to protest against widespread terrorism and corruption, allegedly sponsored by the government.

Hasina, chief of the Awami League (AL), also observed that voters of the Dhaka city should reject the mayoral candidate of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) for his failure to protect the city people from the menace caused by mosquitoes.

The AL chief was addressing a public rally of several hundred people at Hazaribagh crossing of the city last night.

Visibly tired after much travelling across the country, Hasina addressed the Hazaribagh gathering for only three minutes.

She, however, addressed two more rallies in the city — one at Mohammadpur and the other Azampur in Uttara — in the afternoon.

While addressing these meetings, the AL chief called upon the people to remain alert against any fake voting or rigging of the polls. Party leaders Zillur Rahman and Abdul Mannan also addressed the rallies.

Tofael Ahmed, Amir Hossain Amu and Abdul Jalil addressed the Hazaribagh gathering.

Tofael, arguing the favour of the AL mayoral candidate, said Hanif was polite while his ruling party counterpart was an arrogant person.

Tofael, referring to the recent ten-day strike of the doctors and a three-day strike by the non-administrative government officials, alleged that the government was indifferent towards the problems of both the general people and the professionals.

The AL leader also accused the government of corrupt practices, particularly nepotism.

Amir Hossain Amu, told the rally that although the BNP exploited the religious sentiments of the people during the last parliamentary polls yet the party was not actually committed to the cause. Referring to an AL-sponsored bill seeking a ban on wine and gambling in the country which was rejected in Parliament in the face of opposition from the Treasury Bench, Amu claimed that the AL was committed to the Islamic faith.

The AL chief and many other central leaders of the party have performed the Hajj. Amu asserted in a bid to substantiate his claim.

All the leaders addressing the rally appealed to the people to vote for the fish, symbol of the party's mayoral candidate Hanif. They also sought the people's support for their commissioner candidates.

### Khulna

Meanwhile UNB adds from Khulna, Sheikh Hasina said yesterday people will reject the ruling BNP in the city corporation elections because they (BNP) plunged the country into terrorism, anarchy and corruption.

"The BNP government has failed miserably in running the administration and also polluted the administration with partisan activities," she said.

The Awami League chief was addressing several campaign meetings in favour of the party's mayoral candidate Mahbubul Alam Hiron at Mirzapur, New Market and Khalishpur in Khulna in the morning.

Hasina said no new taxes

would be levied on the city dwellers in the next five years if the Awami League candidate is elected as the Mayor. "We will also keep the administration neutral to give democracy an institutional shape."

She said the Awami League would continue their programmes to ensure education for all and for economic emancipation of the people.

The meetings were also addressed by Amir Hossain Amu, Salahuddin Yusuf, MP Abdul Jalil Talukdar, Abdul Khaleq, MP and Harunur Rasheed, MP.

Later in the morning, Hasina returned to the capital.

## DCC polls diary



By Staff Correspondent

The coming polls have proved a bonanza for the band players. Almost all the 675 commissioner candidates are using the musical men to make deafening noise in a bid to attract the ears of the voters.

The mercenary bandmembers, well versed in the hit tunes of Hindi and Bangla films, with their trumpets and horns have reigned the city roads, adding a musical touch to the city polls.

The slow moving but hard sounding musicians often cause traffic jams, not at all to the liking of the passersby. But one band player was heard saying, "I wish there were elections every month!"

He sure was thinking of the extra cash!

Like the band players, verse and slogan writers are also in great demand. Many of the ward commissioner candidates are hiring the slogan writers to make their electoral slogans more catchy and attractive.

And for the verse writers, using — rather parodying — popular television ads or drama dialogues, has become the easiest resort. Some of them were even using tips from the satellite TV programme. Wow! Kya Scene Hai (What a scene)!!

Thirsty? Need a cup of tea? Here is a way out. Rush to a nearby makeshift campaign stall. Pretend you are looking for your name in the voter's list, wait for a minute or so... zappy... you will get your tea or Coke.

Supporters of the aspiring candidates, however, are not always so cordial. Many of the ward commissioner candidates were reported to have dropped out of the race allegedly due to the pressure from their rivals. In some cases, however, the sound of the coin had to ring to avoid 'wasting of votes by a minor candidate'.

## Major parties

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The AL is pledging not to impose fresh taxes on the citizens during the next five years.

The Jamaat, in a bid to exploit the religious sentiments of the voters, is stressing that its candidates are honest, pious people.

The common issues which almost all the candidates are talking of include making the city corporation administration free from corruption, ensuring law and order and development of the cities.

However, the left-alliance mayoral candidate in the Dhaka city has spoken of different issues like the problems of women, environmental imbalance, welfare of the poor and protection of their rights.

Political identities of the candidates would play the most decisive role in case of the mayoral elections while the voters will consider, along with the candidates' political identity, many other things including the personal characters, manners, past records and commitments while electing the commissioners.



Industries Minister A M Zahiruddin Khan being shown an American product by the company representative on the opening day of the third annual US-Bangladesh Trade Show at the Hotel Sheraton yesterday.

## Saifur urges foreigners to exploit better investment climate

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has urged the foreign entrepreneurs to avail the opportunity of investment in Bangladesh where the economy was opened and the market freed, reports UNB.

"You should exploit the best structural conditions and climate of investment which is better than many countries in Asia," he told a reception in London on Friday.

The reception was arranged in his honour by the British-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce at a local hotel, according to a message received here yesterday.

Mark Lennox Boyd, British Minister for Foreign Affairs, members of the British-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and other dignitaries attended the reception.

The function was addressed by Sir Terence Streeton, former British High Commissioner to Bangladesh and now Director (Overseas) of Monno Ceramic in London.

Peter Shore, MP and Dr Kabir Chowdhury, Director General

of British-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce.

Later the Governor of Bank of England, Eddie George, called on the Bangladesh Finance Minister, and discussed cooperation between Britain and Bangladesh in the banking sector.

Addressing the British-Bangladesh Chamber members, M Saifur Rahman gave an outline of the Bangladesh's economy and investment opportunities.

Economic condition is ideal now for investment by the foreigners, he said adding, the new legislations and opening of the economy had removed the bottlenecks and red tapism in welcoming foreign investment.

"We have eliminated all obstacles and provided virtually everything for foreign investments barring one or two sectors," he said. Foreigners are now taking active interest in the stock exchange secured by proper legislations for their returns.

"I think Bangladesh has gone through the biggest dose of reforms in the present world," Saifur Rahman said.

Macro-economic management in Bangladesh has been rated as the best in South Asia. Welcoming the British-Bangladesh Chamber for taking a fresh look at Bangladesh, he

said trade is growing between the two countries. "You must strive further to expand it and invest in Bangladesh," he urged.

Peter Shore, MP, who is the Chairman of British-Bangladesh Parliamentary group, lauded the Bangladesh's growth in exports and Bangladesh's return to democracy to spur the economic recovery.

Shore also lauded the efforts of Saifur Rahman in the process and said his election as Chairman of the Board of Governors of the World Bank and the IMF came as a recognition of this.

## Salam asks BNP candidates to abide by EC rules

BNP Secretary General and Minister for LGED and Cooperatives Abdus Salam Talukder yesterday directed the party candidates in the four city corporation elections not to violate the election rules announced by the Election Commission, reports BSS.

A party press release said here last night the Secretary General gave the directive with a view to ensuring the holding of free and fair elections.

## Euro Union reaffirms support for Owen

ATHENS, Greece, Jan 22: Despite calls for his replacement, the European Union has reaffirmed its support for Lord David Owen as its chief mediator.

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tor in efforts to end the war in former Yugoslavia, reports AP.

In a statement issued late Friday evening, the 12-nation EU said it hoped Owen and UN negotiator Thorvald Stoltenberg would "continue their remarkable abilities" to the peace talks.

On Thursday, deputies in the European Parliament voted 160 to 90 to urge member governments to dismiss Owen.

Deputies in the EU's 518-member assembly criticised the "mandate and the strategy of EU and UN mediators, who have arrived at no result and who persist in wanting to cut

## Ershad's trial deferred

The hearing of the case against former president Hussain Muhammad Ershad and two others on a corruption charge was deferred yesterday until January 25, reports BSS.

## Lorena Bobbitt found innocent

MANASSAS, Jan 22: Lorena Bobbitt was found innocent by reason of temporary insanity Friday by a jury swayed by her tearful testimony that she cut off her husband's penis because of years of abuse, reports AP.

Mrs Bobbitt, who was ordered by law to a state mental institution for observation, had no visible reaction. Her supporters shrieked. John Bobbitt wasn't in the courtroom and had no immediate comment.

The jury decided that Mrs Bobbitt's mind was so impaired she couldn't resist the impulse to sever Bobbitt's penis.

Under state law, Mrs Bobbitt must undergo 45 days of psychiatric observation. Mrs Bobbitt had been told about



Lorena Bobbitt (R) leaving court

this before she used the temporary insanity defence.

Outside the courthouse, about 100 supporters of Mrs Bobbitt, some carrying signs in Spanish, welcomed the verdict.

Mrs Bobbitt, a 24-year-old manicurist, could have gotten 20 years in prison had she been convicted of the most serious charge, malicious wounding. The Ecuadorian-born woman could have been deported.

## Khalea

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uled meetings on the day but enthusiastic supporters blocked her way and requested her to address them.

The BNP chairperson, wearing a dark sky-blue chiffon with a matching scarf, acceded to the request of the supporters by speaking with a hand-mike from the open-roof jeep.

There was usual security for the Prime Minister but other things like the TV coverage were discarded as the tour was in connection with a party programme.

At the time of the sun set, the BNP chairperson made a stopover at the Baridhara residence of Kamrul Islam MP to offer Magreb prayers.

Security forces used a search light to watch the roadside highrise buildings when the PM's caravan squeezed through the residential areas.

The charismatic leader waved her hand all through her way greeting the public in a jovial mood.

A number of party colleagues and cabinet ministers accompanied her. The central leaders included Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam, Deputy Leader in Parliament Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, Food Minister Mir Shawkat Ali, State Minister for Planning Abdul Moeen Khan, State Minister for Women Affairs Sarwar Rahman, Salahuddin Ahmed MP and mayoral candidate Mirza Abbas.

Begum Zia said at her first meeting at the Mohakhali Para-Medical Maidan that the people of the area first elected her in the February 1991 election and later Kamrul Islam in a by-election when she resigned.

She hoped the people would again use their prudence and vote for Mirza Abbas during the up-coming mayoral election.

She said Mirza Abbas had already proved his honesty and efficiency in running the Dhaka city corporation during his more than two and a half years in mayoral office.

At a rally at Banani Bazar, the BNP chairperson said the BNP government switched over to the parliamentary system and also amended the law for direct election to the four city corporations.

"The BNP could have run the corporations by its nominees but as the party is committed to democracy it amended the laws providing for direct election," she said amid cheers.

She also said that if the BNP supported candidates for commissioner posts were elected they would strengthen the hands of Abbas and facilitate the development of their areas.

At her rally at Badda, Begum Zia the BNP government had already implemented a number of pledges made during the 1991 parliamentary polls.

"The development of the areas would continue if Mirza Abbas is elected mayor," she added.

At the meeting at Khilgaon Chourasta, Begum Zia said the people of Khilgaon and Sabujbag loved Abbas and elected him MP in 1991. Mirza Abbas also loved the people of the areas and so he did not go to live in the posh Mayor House in Gulshan, she added.

"He wants to serve the people," she said adding "the politics of BNP aims at serving the people, not to be in power only."

"Give him a chance to fulfil his unfinished tasks," Begum Zia urged the voters.

She said the people of the capital did not make any mistake during the election in 1991 when they elected all the eight BNP candidates from Dhaka.

"I hope the people will not make any mistake this time also," the BNP chairperson said.

## 2 hijackers get 20 yrs RI each

Two young men caught by a woman at their hijacking bid were each sentenced to 20 years rigorous imprisonment yesterday by an Anti-terrorism Tribunal, reports UNB.

The court also fined the convicts Suraj Mia, 26, and Shariful Islam, 24, Tk 10,000 each, in default to suffer another 2 years' simple imprisonment.

The convicts, who hail from Manikganj, on July 25, 1993 stopped complainant Monwara Begum at the North Shajahanpur area on her way home in a rickshaw from Fakirapool and demanded her gold ornaments. On refusal the accused opened fire from revolver but luckily the bullet missed the target.

A brave housewife Monwara, who is in her early 30s, clutched one of the accused and raised a hue and cry. The passersby rushed in and caught hold both the accused. They were handed over to police.

The court examined nine prosecution witnesses.

Monwara Begum was earlier awarded Tk 10,000 by police authorities for her act of bravery.

## The Midnight File

### Arafat to visit S Arabia

JERUSALEM, Jan 22: In a step toward reconciliation, PLO chief Yasser Arafat will visit Saudi Arabia this week for the first time since the 1991 Gulf War, an Arafat aide said Saturday. Arafat had been ostracized by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries because of his support for Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein during the war. Arafat's visit is a very important step in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the Palestinian leadership and we are looking forward to seeing this relationship improve," Tibi told The Associated Press.

### Kurds kill 20 in Turkey

ANKARA, Jan 22: Rebel Kurds have killed 20 people — 16 women and children and four village guards — in a raid on two villages in southeast Turkey, officials said today. The attack, which officials said was carried out by the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), was the bloodiest on civilians in the region this year. In a statement, the regional emergency rule governor's office in Diyarbakir said PKK guerrillas raided neighbouring villages of Ormanicik and Aktyurek, in Mardin province, about 85 km (55 miles) southeast of Diyarbakir, on Friday evening, reports Reuter.

### Taiwan suspends purchase of 200 US tanks

TAIPEI, Jan 22: Taiwan has suspended the purchase of up to 200 tanks from the United States due to budget difficulties and parliamentary opposition, local media reported today. It is the first time in several decades that Taipei has shelved arms purchases with the United States, its main weapons supplier, the media quoted unnamed sources as saying, reports Reuter.

## US trade show opens

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the US government through the Asia Pacific Council of the American Chamber of Commerce.

Speaking at the inaugural function, the Industries Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to promote the private sector in the country, and also reduce the government's regulatory intervention.

The present government, he said, was now planning new strategies to attract foreign investments.

Khan emphasised the need for increased use of computers and other information technologies for speedy exchange of trade information.

Referring to paper and pulp production in Bangladesh, the minister said the products have been able to create a good demand in the US market.

The Prime Minister's special envoy Morshed Khan in his speech said the export processing zones could be immensely benefited by the opportunities provided by the ABEF.

James Nach hoped the US Trade Show '94 would further cement the economic ties between Bangladesh and the US and increase the volume of bilateral trade.

The second exposition, which took place in June last year, had attracted more than 17,000 visitors many of them doing on-the-spot business worth US Dollar 4,00,000, he informed.

ABEF president Forrest Cookson in his speech referred to policy reforms in

## Grameen Bank

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"Our department in the government of India is keen to induce a few non-governmental organisations or voluntary agencies to set up few Grameen Banks in the country. The government will be extending all assistance to these agencies for the experiment," Dr Srivastava said in the letter.

He also proposed to send a four-member delegation headed by a Joint Secretary of the ministry to Bangladesh to gain a "keen insight into the functioning of these banks and have first-hand knowledge". The team is expected to be here during the first week of February.

A number of Grameen Bank replication projects have already been started by NGOs in the Indian states of Manipur, West Bengal, Karnataka and Maharashtra.

## Stock market

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this opportunity to keep up with the interests of the foreign investors as more overseas investors are likely to be attracted by the performance of those who are already here," he added.

The unprecedented surge in the stock market is evident from the volume of transactions since the beginning of the year. The total turnover in value at the DSE stood at Tk 31.5 crore since January 1 as against a total turnover of only Tk 57.88 crore during all of 1993.

Presently there are 153 listed securities at the DSE at a total issued capital of Tk 820 crore, while the market capitalisation of the listed companies stands at Tk 2350 crore.

## Attorney-Gen

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Aminul Haq, who took over as Attorney General in early January 1991, earned reputation from many and brickbats from Ershad's Jatiya Party activists for his successful prosecution of three cases against the deposed president. Ershad was convicted in all the three cases and jailed for 20 years.

Bangladesh over the past three years and said the fruits of the reforms have now begun to ripen with expanding incomes and greater foreign trade.

The business organisations participating in the trade show include: Desktop Computer Connection Ltd, Air Alliance Ltd, Greenland Engineers, and Tractors Co Ltd, Anwar and Brothers Group, American Life Insurance Company, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel, Krishok Bandhu, Systematique Computing Ltd, Nathan Associates, Inc, Sakaimex Ltd, Kalam Enterprise, the US Embassy, Prince Corporation Ltd, W W Crains Corporation, Skyways Techno Services Ltd, International Office Equipment, Tabani Beverage Co Ltd, Orbit International Ltd, Comptech Centre, Applied Computer Technologies Ltd, Sams International Marketing Ltd, Flora Limited, Megacorp Ltd, Radionics (Pvt) Limited, Singer Bangladesh Limited, Aviana Transport and Travel Limited, Multilink International Company Ltd, Abacus and Automation Ltd, CITech Co Ltd, IBCS-Primax Software (Bangladesh) Ltd, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, IBM World Trade Corporation, Leads Corporation Ltd, Bangladesh Express Co Ltd, T H Corporation (BD) Ltd, Beximco Computers Ltd, Antorik International Corporation, and the Avanti Ltd.

## AL rally attacked

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pelting stones and bricks at the AL meeting. At one stage, hundreds of unruly youths carrying sticks and other lethal weapons zeroed in on the meeting venue, which caused panic at the scene.

Hasina returned to the city where she attended two other poll rallies at Mohammadpur and Rayerbazar.

Party sources said, Rami was earlier refused an AL ticket for the commissioner post because he had worked for Major (Retd) Qamrul Islam, MP, in a parliamentary election in 1991. Dr Jinnat Ali was nominated as the AL candidate instead of Rafiq.

Later, in the city meetings, the AL leaders hinted at the involvement of the ruling party in the violence that disrupted their meeting at Khilkhet. But no senior AL leaders, were available for comments over telephone when contacted till midnight last night.

## Remove stalls

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A unanimous decision to this effect was taken on January 13 at a joint meeting of the Chief Election Commissioner and leaders of the major political parties.

The DCC authorities had, meantime, talked to the high officials of the DMP on their combined tasks, conferred by the EC, official sources said, adding that the city corporation might seek police help in forcing the candidates to abide by the EC order only when the current persuasive bids failed.

As per the election rules, a candidate can set up at best four campaign stalls in a ward, but the rule restricts setting up of any ramp on the roads and pavements while under the DCC rules, writing graffiti is a punishable offence.

Meanwhile, election camps were seen being dismantled at some places in the city yesterday following separate calls from the two top parties — the BNP and the Awami League — to their candidates and activists for withdrawing the additional camps, erasing graffiti and abiding by all election rules and the code of conduct.

However, no move to erase wall-writings was reported from any part of the city until yesterday.