

## BNP's vote bank eroded since '91 JS polls

By Staff Correspondent

The results of Sunday's city corporation polls clearly demonstrated that the rich vote bank of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has been eroded to a great extent in all the four cities in comparison to the 1991 parliamentary elections.

The major opposition Awami League (AL) and the second largest opposition Jamia Party (JP) have gained considerable ground in all the four metropolitan cities while the position of the Jamaat-e-Islami appeared to have remained static.

The BNP had mustered 4,69,274 votes out of a total 20 lakh in eight parliamentary constituencies comprising the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) areas in the 1991 elections. But the number of votes received by the BNP in Sunday's polls declined to about 3,40,528, according to incomplete results.

On the other hand, the AL, which had secured 3,12,679 votes (including Saifuddin Ahmed Manik's 42,454 votes) in the 1991 election, this time got 4,16,153 votes (incomplete).

The Jamaat Party, which had received only 24,140 votes in the eight Dhaka constituencies in the general elections bagged about 60,000 votes in the DCC polls.

The Jamaat had finished third with 31,486 votes in 1991 in Dhaka, but now is in the fourth position with 34,465 votes in the DCC polls.

The BNP won 12 of the 14 parliamentary seats in the four cities. There are 11 parliamentary constituencies in Dhaka and Chittagong — eight in the capital and three in the port city.

**Nusrat to call PPP convention**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 2: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's estranged mother Tuesday launched a move to assert her role in the ruling party, reiterating that her ouster as its head was illegal, reports AFP.

"I remain chairperson of Pakistan People's Party (PPP)," Nusrat Bhutto, 65, told a press conference here.

Nusrat said she had decided to call a convention of PPP workers in Karachi, but gave no date.

The party will be reorganised in line with the wishes of its founder, former premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was overthrown by the military in 1977 and executed two years later, she said.

Observers said Nusrat Bhutto's plan could pose a serious challenge to her daughter within the PPP.

**Rabin, Arafat get Nobel nominations**

OSLO, Feb 2: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat are among candidates for the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize for their Middle East peace accord as the deadline for nominations passed on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

## Polls: Consequences

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real causes for its defeat, and not go for witch-hunting or populist explanations.

The ruling party missed an excellent opportunity of turning its defeat into a moral victory by not immediately congratulating the victors and holding back, for the better part of 24 hours, the announcement of the results on the state-controlled TV, and the radio. Valuable time was lost, during which the four major cities, especially Dhaka, were rife with all sorts of uncharitable rumours against the ruling party, that plans were being hatched to tamper with the results. Why otherwise, ordinary people poisoned, was the TV giving out results of 380-plus centres at 11:30 am on 31st January, while the EC had announced the results of 704 centres much earlier the same morning?

Much damage has also been done by the carnage in Nawabganj of the Lalbagh area of the city. The old town area of Dhaka may be lost to the ruling party for many years to come unless the government rebuilds its acceptability, by taking the sternest action against the trigger-happy killers, who did so much damage to the party's image.

The election result is good for the BNP in another, very important sense. The ruling party's democratic credentials stand greatly enhanced. It is for the first time ever — during

In Chittagong, the BNP secured 1,70,375 votes in the 1991 elections but that number came down to 1,63,713 during Sunday's polls. The AL's votes rose to 1,80,468 as against 1,39,149 in the last parliamentary polls.

Both the Jamaat and the JP have gained some ground in the port city bagging 28,888 and 23,008 votes respectively in the CCC polls. Their votes were 21,858 and 10,158 respectively during the 1991 elections.

In Khulna, the ruling party enjoyed the support of 80,467 voters out of 3,53,000 in the JS elections. In last Sunday's polls, it got 77,487 votes out of 3,28,766.

The AL garnered 63,654 votes as against 59,764 in 1991.

The JP polled 41,250 votes in Sunday's polls as against 16,304 in 1991 while the Jamaat managed 24,703 as against 18,659 three years ago.

In Rajshahi, the ruling party had bagged 81,014 votes out of 2,51,150 in the last parliamentary polls. The figure came down to 58,532 in the RCC elections. The number of voters, however, was also reduced to 1,51,683 in the city corporation because of delimitation of the city wards.

The AL, which got 24,047 votes in 1991 bagged 23,001 votes in the city corporation polls, making the position of the party static in the city.

The Jamaat, which had placed second in the parliamentary polls with 40,141 votes, this time got only 17,692. The position of the JP has also improved slightly in this northern city since the general elections.

**Nayar meets Huda**

**'Freedom of press strengthens democracy'**

Information Minister Barister Nazmul Huda yesterday said press freedom and free flow of information in Bangladesh have strengthened democratic practice in the country, reports BSS.

Huda was talking to renowned Indian journalist Kuldeep Nayar, who made a courtesy call on the minister at his office, an official handout said.

In reply to a question, the minister said the present government has ensured the fundamental human rights and freedom of expression for every citizen and made the entire election process free and fair in order to carry forward the march of democracy and give it an institutional shape. As a result, people can now spontaneously exercise their right to franchise freely and without any fear, he said.

Nayar was all praise for freedom of the press, free flow of information and freedom of expression existing under the democratic system in Bangladesh.

He expressed the hope that the hard-earned democracy would be institutionalised through proper development of democratic institutions.

the BNP's rule — that Mayors were being directly elected. Again, proving false all claims and fears that the BNP will not allow free and fair elections, the government of Begum Zia has shown that she, and her party, can and did, deliver highly credible, free and fair elections.

The election result is good for the AL because the party needed a victory of this sort to bolster its flagging self-confidence that it can turn the electoral tide in its favour. This confidence-building was necessary for many reasons. The party needed to feel confident that the election 'playing field' was even, and whatever tilt there was, could be neutralised through efficient campaigning and sheer hard work.

The rank and file of the party cadres, especially the post '73 entrants, for whom the talk of the glorious past of the AL are nothing but mere stories, will feel more confident of the electoral process and take democracy, and especially its institution of election, much more seriously than ever before. The result was good for the party's leadership. They got their old touch back again, and was able to prove that they can, working planfully and in a well-organised manner, bring the voters back to its fold.

So, we all stand better off, because our voters — the so-called illiterate masses — voted so wisely and decisively.

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Awami League leaders leading a procession in the city yesterday mourning the murder of six of its activists in a post-polls carnage at Lalbagh on Monday. — Star photo

## CMM orders

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salvation of the departed souls.

Abdul Aziz, a BNP backed commissioner candidate, was defeated in Sunday's polls. The next day Aziz allegedly led an armed attack on the supporters of the Awami League-backed Humayun Kabir, the commissioner-elect of Ward No 59, which left six people dead and many others injured.

A Detective Branch team yesterday raided several places but failed to arrest any of the absconders.

After the killings, police on two consecutive days arrested nine suspects including Abdul Majid, the 66-year-old father of Abdul Aziz. Five of them were remanded to the Detective Branch office Tuesday for questioning while four others were sent to the Dhaka Central Jail.

The 15 other absconders are: Shaheed (Aziz's brother), Moti Mia, Mohammad Selim, Zahed Hossain alias Latha Babu, Monir Hossain, Swapan, Selim Hossain, Javed, Munna, Ashraf Hossain, Mohammad Faruk, Moti, Mahtab, Delwar, and Abdul Hossain.

Newly elected ward commissioner Humayun Kabir has lodged a case with the Lalbagh police station accusing 19 persons of their complicity in the post-polls killings in the city.

## BNP workers asked to maintain peace

The Dhaka city unit of the BNP at a meeting yesterday urged the party leaders and workers to maintain peace and discipline in their respective areas despite provocations, reports BSS.

Held at the BNP central office here with president of the city unit, Food Minister Lt Gen (ret'd) Mir Shaukat Ali in the chair, the meeting discussed the post city corporation elections situation.

Party secretary general and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Barister Abdus Salam Talukdar, State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadek Hossain, Mirza Abbas, MP, Salauddin Ahmed, MP, Amanullah Aman, MP, State Minister for Textiles Major (ret'd) MA Mannan, State Minister for Forest and Environment Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, and Haris Chowdhury were present.

The meeting was adjourned after a three-hour discussion.

## Healthy gesture

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celebrate Hanif's election to the august office of the Mayor of Dhaka. Abbas presented to Hanif a set of pens, he used during the time he held the office of the mayor — from May, 1991 until last December when he resigned to contest the DCC polls.

They also talked on issues relating to the just-held elections to remove misunderstandings between the two big parties. The newly-elected mayor sought active cooperation from his predecessor, who gladly agreed, to provide all-out help.

While the two mayors were chatting, their spouses also spent a good time in conversation.

During the happy occasion, State Minister for Youth and Sports Sadek Hossain, Major (ret'd) Quamrul Islam, MP, and Mohammad Haris of the BNP and Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Akhterul Alam of the AL were present.

To reciprocate Abbas' courtesy, Hanif also went to the Shahjahanpur residence of Abbas at 6:30 in the evening and exchanged greetings and bouquets.

The two mayors spent sometime together.

Hanif was accompanied by his wife and AL leaders including Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Nurul Majid Humayun and Hashimuddin Haider Pahari.

On both the occasions, dozens of photographers were at hand to capture the historic moments in their cameras.

## Technological gap stifles progress: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday identified technological backwardness as the reason for the tardy progress of the country's industrial sector, reports UNB.

Despite having all other ingredients like adequate manpower, natural resources and a congenial investment atmosphere, the country failed to make any headway in industrial development because of lack of modern technology.

Begum Khaleda Zia made the remarks while inaugurating the 17th Science and Technology Week at the Science Museum here in the morning.

Underlining the imperatives for developing science and technology, she reminded that the world has moved into the age of computers. "We have to lay emphasis on the application of science and technology for the sake of country's development."

Begum Zia said the government wants to spread science and technology to all spheres

of life. "We have to innovate sustainable technology to apply it for the development of the country," the Prime Minister told the scientists.

Bangladesh is a disaster-prone country, she reminded, pointing out that science and technology should be utilised to face calamities and reduce the loss wrought by such natural visitations, Begum Zia said.

The four-day exhibition is aimed at encouraging young scientists of the country and inspiring them in research and innovation. Begum Zia hope that the young scientists would be able to help the country in making it self-reliant through innovating sustainable technology.

One hundred and thirty-six competitors are taking part in the four-day exhibition where about 100 projects are on display. The Bangladesh Science and Industrial Research Council, SPARSO, Environment Directorate, Fisheries Department, Jute Research Institute and Mymensingh Agriculture College have put up special projects at the show.

## Class IV employees' ultimatum

The Bangladesh Class Four Government Employees Association yesterday demanded fulfillment of its 3-point demand, including minimum salary of Tk 1050, by March 31, reports UNB.

It warned of a greater agitation if its demands were not met within the deadline.

The Association also demands 40 per cent dearness allowance and selection grade equivalent to 75 per cent of the basic salary after 3 years of service along with 5 special increments.

The demands came from a meeting held at the temporary office of the association at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar



COLD COMFORT: An invalid beggar woman and her child hide under a polythene sheet pulled over their push-trolley to avoid the chill caused by intermittent drizzles in the city yesterday. — Star photo

## Cold wave to sweep country

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and Sathkira 11 mm each, Tangail 10mm, Dhaka and Peral 8, Patuakhali and Rangpur 6 each, Jessore, Comilla and Sylhet 4 each, Srimangal and Majldi Court 3 each and Iswardi and Rajshahi 2 mm of rainfall each.

The country's lowest temperature yesterday of 14.4 degrees Celsius was recorded in Iswardi and Dinajpur and the highest 28.6 degrees in Cox's Bazar.

The monthly forecast of the Met Office says, Dhaka Division

would experience between 20 and 30 mm rain in February while it would rain for two to four days.

The Chittagong and the Khulna Division would experience between 15 and 25 mm of rainfall in the month. It would rain for one to three days in Chittagong and two to four days in Khulna.

The Rajshahi and Barisal divisions would experience between 10 and 20 mm of rain while it would rain for one to three days in the month in both the divisions.

## Ekushey programme

## Children's art contest held

By Staff Correspondent

On the second day yesterday of the month-long Amar Ekushey programme organised by the Bangla Academy, some 700 children took part in the drawing competition.

The subject of drawing was the rural Bangladesh.

Prof Kazi Abdul Baset attended the function as chief guest while the Director General of Bangla Academy Harun-ur-Rashid delivered the welcome address.

In the evening, eminent singers, Nilufar Yasmin, Sadi Mohammad, Dill Afroz Reba and Kiron Chandra Ray rendered popular songs at a function.

## Rabindra Sangeet confce Feb 4-5

By Staff Correspondent

The 13th annual conference of the Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sammelan Parishad will be held on February 4 and 5 at Kushtia and Shilaidaha.

Artist Quaiyum Chowdhury will attend the function as chief guest while artist Rathindranath Ray will inaugurate the conference.

Artists and representatives from 25 districts are likely to take part in the conference.

A seminar on the occasion will be presided over by Dr Anisuzzaman. The keynote paper will be read by Dr Ataur Rahman.

Eminent singer Sohrab Hossain will be accorded reception in the conference.

## BSRS clarifies position

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Shipila Rin Sangstha (BSRS) clarified its position yesterday regarding rehabilitation of sick industries in response to a statement issued by the BSRS Entrepreneurs' Forum Tuesday.

The Forum, in its statement, had protested the BSRS' news item in which the BSRS claimed that it had rehabilitated 79 industrial units as per the direction of the Ministry of Finance.

But the BSRS, in its clarification yesterday, said the BSRS Board has only approved rescheduling or restructuring of 79 projects under the government guidelines with a view to rehabilitating the sick or stuck up projects. Of the 79 projects some have completed the required formalities and some are in the process of completion of the formalities, the clarification said.

## Tk 14.5 cr Dutch aid for FAP project

The Netherlands government will provide an additional Tk 14.5 crore (Dfl 7,080,000) for the Compartmentalisation Pilot Project, FAP 20, said a press release of the Netherlands Embassy here yesterday, reports UNB.

The FAP 20 Project studies under field conditions the possibilities of controlled flooding and improved drainage in two pilot areas on the right and left banks of the Jamuna river, in Sirajganj and Tangail respectively.

## Rivals beat up CMC student

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 2: Hundreds of students of the Chittagong Medical College this evening demonstrated to protest the assault on a student by the supporters of a rival faction.

According to police and witnesses, a 3rd year medical student, Hasnat Ahsan, reportedly belonging to the pro-BNP Chhatra Dal was allegedly assaulted by some activists of a rival group at the GEC crossing. Hasnat was admitted to the students ward of the Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

## Hasnat condemns Lalbagh carnage

By Staff Correspondent

Former mayor and leader of Jatiya Party Abul Hasnat in a statement yesterday demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the persons involved in the killing of six persons in Lalbagh on January 31.

Hasnat strongly condemned the incident and said that the government measures taken after the incident did not prove that it has any desire to punish the killers.

## Repolling

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3 pm without any break.

Polling on January 30 was suspended in 25 centres and results of three other centres were cancelled following disturbances there, the Election Commission said.

## The Midnight File

### Another Algerian politician killed

ALGIERS, Feb 2: Suspected Islamic fundamentalists have killed a fourth Algerian politician in six days, Attahadi (Challenge) Party worker Mohammed Touali, his former communist party announced today. The body of Touali, who was employed by a state-run company in the eastern city of Constantine, was discovered after he was kidnapped overnight Tuesday, the Attahadi Party said, without giving further details, reports AFP.

### Rao arrives in Bonn

BONN, Feb 2: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao arrived in Bonn today for a three-day visit aimed at strengthening economic ties and cementing the bond between the two regional heavyweights. Economic issues will top the agenda with Rao informing German Chancellor Helmut Kohl about reforms that India has undertaken to open itself to foreign investment, officials said, reports Reuters.

### Rebels ask foreigners to leave Egypt

CAIRO, Feb 2: Egypt's main Muslim militant group today warned foreign investors and tourists to leave the country, saying its next attacks would be "extremely tough." The Jamaa Islamiya said in a statement sent to AFP that it would have to retaliate against the "massacre" of seven of its members late Tuesday by police in Cairo.

## UN-JCGP meet Feb 5

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for this summit reflected the commitment of the JCGP towards working closely in partnership with developing countries to promote sustainable human development.

The briefing was also participated by UNICEF Officer-in-Charge Dr Dilawar Ali Khan, UNFPA Country Director S K Alok, WFP Director of Operations Gaston Eybert and consultant to the IFAD A Q Siddiqui.

The top UN officials, during

environment, poverty alleviation, food and other sectors — for which the JCGP would continue its support for this country.

The UNDP runs programmes in collaboration with the government in Bangladesh worth about US \$30 million dollars annually.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) annually provides support worth US \$6 to 10 million dollars, the World Food Programme (WFP) provides 100 million, the UNFPA between 4 and 6 million and the UNICEF provides some 53 million dollars annually.

The UN-JCGP was set up in 1981 to promote more effective and efficient use of resources by jointly addressing common issues of policy programming and management.

The JCGP high-level meeting will also be attended by 13 senior officials of the UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP, and IFAD.

"The meeting is also an acknowledgement of the progress that Bangladesh has made in protecting and promoting the well-being of women, children and the poor, particularly through a number of internationally acclaimed interventions," Ms Watanabe said.

The JCGP had so far taken initiatives such as identifying common areas of collaboration at the field-level to achieve greater complementarity and synergy.

Also, it had taken initiatives in promoting the involvement of small-scale producers in economic advancement, advocating and supporting environmentally sound approaches to development by aiding projects in the areas of social forestry, watershed management and balanced management of natural resources.

## BNP leaders get flak

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Sugandha office premises for want of better accommodation.

BNP Secretary General and LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukdar, State Ministers Sadeq Hossain, Major (Ret'd) Abdul Mannan and Gayeshwar Chandra Roy attended the meeting while MPs elected from the city — Mirza Abbas, Salahuddin Ahmed, S M Mohsin and Major (Ret'd) Quamrul Islam were also present. Amanullah Aman, another

MP elected from the outskirts of the capital, was also present.

During the three-hour meeting, the participants discussed in detail the mayoral polls as well as the party's performance in the elections for the posts of ward commissioners.

Meeting sources said the aggrieved and agitated party workers criticised the policy-makers in the government for certain steps, particularly in the economic sector which according to them, had alienated a large number of voters. Some speakers specifically held Finance Minister Saifur Rahman responsible for the disenchantment of the voters and alleged that the minister's move to appease the foreign donors had affected the party's popularity to a large extent.

Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury was also castigated for police excesses against the street vendors just ahead of the city polls. The speakers by and large were unanimous that such police action had damaged the ruling party's image among the low-income people in the city.

Some of the speakers did not hesitate to even demand the resignations of both the Finance and Home Ministers, meeting sources said.

S M Mohsin, elected an MP from Mirpur in a by-election, was also severely admonished by a group of workers for his alleged inaction during the election campaign. Ultimately, the MP had to leave the meeting venue in the face of ceaseless tirade against him.

During the heated discussions, the ruling party's Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar remained almost silent, giving a patient hearing to the party workers. However, Mirza Abbas and Sadeq Hossain tried to calm the agitated workers and urged them to exercise restraint in the face of all provocations from their political opponents.

The meeting was declared adjourned to meet again soon.

The meeting further decided that it would demand the distribution of the DFP controlled advertisements through the agencies.

The meeting, in another resolution, said the order of the Information Minister to distribute advertisements of certain government departments through the DFP instead of advertising agencies, should be annulled. The meeting said the government should again introduce the distribution of advertisements through advertising agencies.