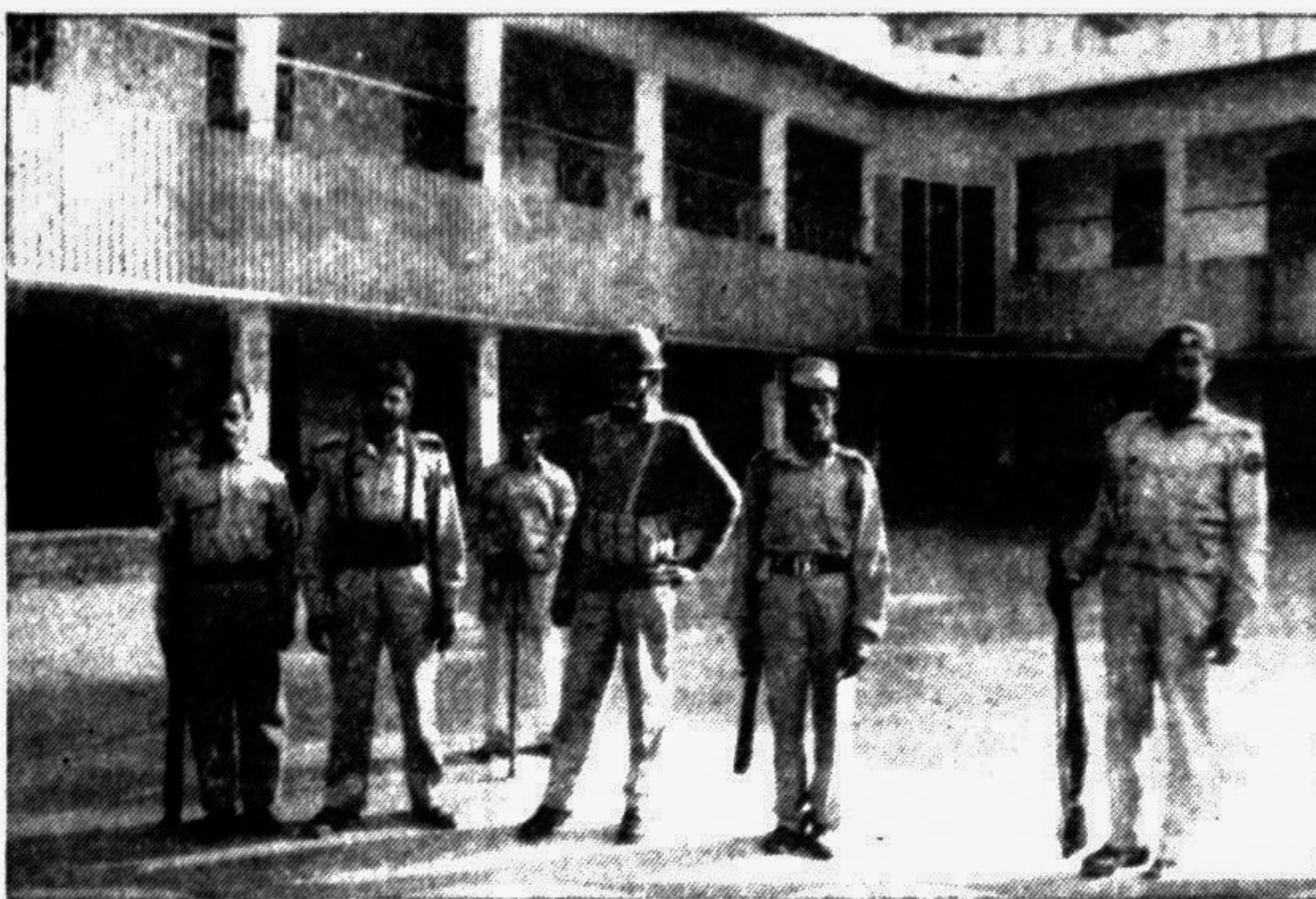




Female voters queuing at Batamuli High School polling centre in the city yesterday. — Star photo



A view of the polling centre at Kazi Alauddin Road in the city at 9 am yesterday. — Star photo

Snapshots from polling centres

From Page 1

even name his candidate when asked by The Daily Star mobile team at the Dhaka City College centre.

The Daily Star engaged three mobile teams of 30 polling stations in the capital during the polling.

They started visiting polling centres both in the old and new parts of the city as voting began. Some centres on the outskirts of the city were also covered.

Some of the centres were visited more than once to have a first-hand information on what happened when people went there to cast votes.

During the day-long visit, The Daily Star team generally found that voters turn out at these centres was very poor.

Stuffing of ballot boxes with ballot papers and under-age voting were seen rampant in the afternoon. Gross violation of polling rules and helplessness of polling officials at some of the centres were also observed. Unsealed ballot boxes were seen in a number of booths.

Violation of rules such as campaigning inside the polling stations, repeated voting by the same persons, non-marking of the thumbs of voters, posting inside polling centres, taking ballot papers out of the centres were typical of the scenes at the polling centres.

Govt Titumir College

A group of youths was found stuffing ballot-papers into ballot boxes at the Presiding Officer's (PO) room at the Government Titumir College centre in the city yesterday. The door of outer entrance of the PO's room were shut.

The grim-faced Presiding Officer (PO), seated at the corner of the adjacent room, was seen putting his signatures on the ballot papers produced before him by the youths.

A three-member mobile reporting team of The Daily Star witnessed this while visiting the polling centre at Mohakhali under Gulshan thana at 3 pm.

The PO repeatedly requested The Daily Star reporters to leave the place and in a low voice said, "I'm in trouble and under tremendous pressure."

Avoiding questions from the correspondents, he said, "Do whatever you think best for me."

When he was asked about the turnout of voters in his centre, one of the youths asked the PO to say, "It would be some 60 per cent."

The youths, who identified themselves as voters, became angry when the reporters team entered the presiding officer's room where they were sitting around several tables put together and stamping the ballot-papers and stuffing those into ballot boxes.

"Where have you come from? Why have you entered this room? Whom do you want?" shouted one while another pointed his finger at the adjacent room and said, "Leave this room. The Presiding Officer is there."

Earlier, an assistant presiding officer, who was chatting with his colleagues, told correspondents that the presiding officer was not available. Asked about the PO's whereabouts, he suggested a search around.

The Daily Star newsmen, guided by another polling official, however managed to get into the PO's room through the connecting door from the adjacent room, the main door of which was found shut, but not locked.

Later, the reporters rushed to the Gulshan police station to inform the Titumir College authorities.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Police, Ashraf, on hearing the incidents picked up his telephone and said, "See what action I take." The reporters then left.

While contacted again at night, the AC was not available at the Gulshan thana. A duty officer said, "We can't take any action unless the Presiding Officer concerned lodges a formal complaint."

The Election Commission was also informed of the Titumir College incident but till late night, none could say whether any action was taken.

Central Women's College

Pintu, who claimed to be a student of class VIII had to return from the Central Women's College centre at Gopibagh in the city after The Daily Star reporters challenged him.

Pintu, aged about 14, admitted that he had cast vote once and returned to the centre for voting again.

He was whisked away by his companions when the Presiding Officer, being informed of the incident by the newsmen, made a search for the boy.

The Daily Star reporters also found that some of the voters were getting into the polling booths in a group, taking ballot papers, stamp and ink of their own and dropping the ballots into boxes, not sealed and kept open near the entrance.

When his attention was drawn to the incidents, the Presiding Officer, Nazrul Islam Bhuiyan, got perplexed and took refuge in his room avoiding the journalists. He only said, "Government officials have limitations... please come tomorrow."

Earlier when asked he said that eight out of 22 officials were absent from polls duties at his centre.

Monija Rahman Girls High School

The helpless PO at the Monija Rahman Girls High School at Gendaria in the old part of the city, when asked about the voting said, "You yourself see the free style voting here."

"Only six out of 16 officials turned up for their duties," said Sharifuddin Ahmed, the PO.

Some youths were seen campaigning inside the centre when the reporters visited it around 12:30 pm.

General Scenario

During the day-long visit, the mobile team generally found that the polling officials were not available in a reasonable strength to manage the elections.

The mobile unit of The Daily Star visited polling centres during the day which included Aijami Government Primary School, under Patuli thana, Bakhara Ideal High School, under Demra thana, Faridabad High School under Sutrapur thana and City College under Dhanmondi thana.

In Aijami Government Primary School 6 out of 22 polling officers did not turn up, while in Faridabad 7 out of 13 officials were not available. In Manjira Rahman Girls School 6 out of 16 were present and in Central Women's College 8 out of 22 were absent.

Generally the polling agents of candidates excepting the BNP candidates were not present. The polling officials complained that they received documents for the polling agents of the BNP from the Election Commission offices.

The secrecy of balloting was not seen to be maintained, ballot boxes were found here and there of the booth.

One Mohammad Sentu claiming himself as the polling agent of an independent candidate could not even name his candidate when answering the questions of The Daily Star mobile team at the centre of Dhaka City College.

Voters' Comments

Arts Building Centre, DU

Only one voter, out of 1998 registered with the Arts Building Centre at Dhaka University, cast his vote till 11 am.

However at about 11:35 am, a group of 10 to 12 youths arrived and after that the number of votes cast increased to 500.

At 3:30 pm, half an hour before the closing time, number of votes cast was only 510.

When the Presiding Officer was asked about the rate of vote cast, he replied, "You are observing everything. So, why are you asking me how these votes are cast? If you want, you can also cast a vote."

Udayan school centre

Twentyfive votes out of 5263 registered were cast at the Udayan School centre till 3:45 pm, according to the presiding officer.

The presiding officer told The Daily Star correspondents, "We have nothing to do here. You have come from a newspaper. Why did you not bring a newspaper with you?"

University Lab School and College

Till 3:30 pm 1500 votes were cast at the University Laboratory School and College. Most of the voters were from nearby slums, according to witnesses. Some 5400 voters were registered with the centre.

The presiding officer was not present. Some youths were seen in the centre during most of the voting time, the witnesses claimed.

City College Centre

A total of 245 votes out of 4273 registered cast their votes at the City College centre till closing time, according to the presiding officer.

When two correspondents of The Daily Star visited the centre at 4:28 pm, the ballot papers had already been counted.



The Prime Minister casting vote

Khaleda thanks people

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday congratulated the countrymen for casting votes in the general elections of the sixth Jatiya Sangsad peacefully and spontaneously, reports BSS.

In a statement, she said, "I sincerely congratulate the people of Bangladesh for their courage and firm determination in maintaining democracy and continuity of the Constitution."

A good number of people cast votes: B Chy

BNP leader AQM Badrud-dozza Chowdhury yesterday said that a good number of people cast their votes in the 6th parliamentary election, braving the threats and intimidation by the three main opposition parties, reports UNB.

He claimed that turnout of the voters would have been higher if there was no violence and acts of terrorism.

The former deputy leader of the House was briefing newsmen on general election at Hotel Sheraton soon after the voting closed.

Chowdhury informed the newsmen that out of the total 21,000 polling centres, voting could not be held in 306 centres due to violence let loose by the opposition activists.

Referring to oppositions' harial and 'people's curfew', the BNP leader said that the three main opposition parties did not only boycott the election but tried to disrupt the polls process.

"The people have expressed their will through the election that they love democracy and want to continue the constitutional process," Chowdhury said.

He added: "This election was essential to maintain the democratic and constitutional process and we, by no means, could avoid it."

The BNP leader congratulated the 'courageous voters' who defied the opposition intimidation and turned up to vote facing 'many odds and obstacles'.

"It's a disappointment for the three parties who were out to disrupt the polls," Chowdhury said.

Responding to a question about the exact turnout of the voters, he said the Election Commission would be the competent authority to give the figure.

In this context, the BNP standing committee member said that the turnout of the voters in an election in Bangladesh in normal times is around 52 per cent.

Garments trader shot dead in city

From Our Medical Correspondent

A ready-made garments trader Rintu Mia (42) was killed allegedly by the friends of his son in the city yesterday.

He was shot dead at around 9 pm while walking along the Distillery Road at Dhupkhola, Gendaria.

All about a centre

From Page 1

Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs), 16 Polling Officers.

Number of candidates with symbols: 1. Md. Rahman (ladder), 2. S M Ahmed Ali Joy (moon), 3. Mahbubul Islam (mango), 4. Mrs Parveen (bus), 5. Major (ret'd) A Mannan (sheaf of paddy), 6. Md Ismail Hossain Badal (pineapple), 7. Fakrul Hasan (axe) and 8. Shamsuddin (candle).

Following is a chronological account of what The Daily Star team saw:

8:30 am: The Presiding Officer said, "Only four votes have been cast till now."

No Polling Agent of any candidate was found present.

Posters of two candidates — Md Rahmani and Maj. A Mannan — were seen on the wall and gate of the polling centre.

A number of youths aged between 15 to 25, were seen sitting with voters list kept on two tables inside the centre.

Taking that 30 people had already gone inside the centre through its only gate on the main road before 8:30 am, The Daily Star's counting started from 31.

The Daily Star team counted the persons who entered the centre. The number of votes cast was collected every two hours from the polling officials and was compared with our tally.

9:30 am: The number of people who entered the centre's gate was 50.

Volunteers of a particular political party were seen hiring a rickshaw to bring people to the centre from their houses to cast vote.

Some volunteers brought some posters of Maj Mannan and pasted those over all the posters of Md. Rahman at 9:40 am. Some posters were pasted in walls inside the centre.

A police jeep arrived at the same time and one Police Officer was overheard saying to the volunteers, "More voters should be brought here."

10 am: As per polling officials count, votes cast were 116, 112 male and 4 female while The Daily Star counted 132 people entering the centre.

Two army jeeps came to the spot at around 10:20 am.

11:05 am: Daily Star counted 250 people entering the centre. An old lady, Ferdous Akhter Jahan (60) commented to The Daily Star, "I have cast my vote since 1974. This time they sent me a rickshaw and here I am."

11:35 am: A car, packed with young people, stopped and checked with the volunteers if everything was in order and left.

12 Noon: Official figure-338 (males-317 and females-21). The Daily Star tally: 383.

12:10 pm: A microbus carrying newsmen of KBS TV of Korea arrived at the centre. Seeing them, the volunteers promptly made a queue from the gate. The KBS journalists took a video, went inside and talked to polling officials and left after 10 minutes.

12:15 pm: BNP candidate Maj. Mannan came to the spot in a jeep. Almost all the volunteers entered inside the centre with him. When he came out after 10 minutes, he said, "I am expecting a good turnout of voters. I have visited many centres. All are peaceful and a good number of voters are casting their votes. I expect there will be 50 per cent turnout of voters. Non-partisan voters are not coming because they are not taking risk. Only party followers are coming."

One person accompanying Maj Mannan was heard calling someone in a cellular phone saying, "Start from now."

One volunteer was seen asking a youth to come to the centre to cast his vote. The youth replied, "I can only come if you give me 500 taka."

1:45 pm: Four army vehicles arrived. All volunteers came out from the centre. The Daily Star tally was 700 then.

2:30 pm: Official figure-1334 (1237 male and 91 female). Daily Star tally-690 persons. This is the first time that significant difference showed up between The Daily Star tally and the official figure.

When one Daily Star reporter went in to collect the official figure, he saw that on one table of an APO in booth No. 3, a ballot book was ready with voters' names and numbers while the voters were not there. The reporter also saw one youth stamping two ballot papers in front of the polling officials, who looked shaky.

3:10 pm: Daily Star tally-755 persons.

The flow of people entering the centre decreased further.

3:25 pm: Our reporter went in to collect the official figure. He saw one person stamping a thick bundle of ballot papers in front of polling officials. The reporter brought this to the notice of the Presiding Officer, who looked nervous. Immediately, the volunteers rushed there and gheraoed the reporter and began interrogating him while the police remained indifferent. Before things could go worse, two polling officers intervened and the volunteers withdrew.

One officer was telling the reporter, "Please cool down. You understand, they are young people... we can not do anything although we understand what is going on here."

4 pm: Official figure showed 2010 votes cast: 1884 male and 126 female. Daily Star tally: 837 persons entered the centre.

The official figures showed that 26 per cent votes were cast, but as per The Daily Star count, the turnout was 11 per cent.

The Midnight File

60 killed in Kabul ammunition depot blast

KABUL, Feb 15: Up to 60 people were killed and scores injured in Kabul late today when a huge blast at ammunition depot ripped through the war-torn city, defence and hospital officials said, reports AFP.

Election results

From Page 1

Sarker (BNP) — 27844 — elected; and his nearest rival — Md Salmuddin (Ind) — 2042.

Naogaon-1: Dr. Md Saleh Chowdhury (BNP) — 38,268 — elected and his nearest rival — Nazir Uddin Ahmed (Ind) — 1936.

Tangail-1: Md Abdus Salam Talukdar (BNP) — 66412 — elected; and his nearest rival — Nazrul Islam Khan (Freedom Party) — 1983.

Manikganj-1: Khandaker Delwar Hossain (BNP) — 43,189 — elected; and his nearest rival — Tozammel Haq (Ind) — 2035.

Gazipur-4: Brig (rtd) ASM Hannan Shah (BNP) — 45,722 — elected and his nearest rival — Md Nazimuddin Sheikh (Protagisth Ganotrik Shakti) — 677.

Mymensingh-11: Alhaj Amanullah Chowdhury (BNP) — 26,112 — elected and his nearest rival — S M Nazmul Haq Tara (Ind) — 5262.

Satkhira-1: Md Habibul Islam Habib (BNP) — 40,482 — elected; and his nearest rival — Md ABM Altaf Hossain (Ind) — 16,845.

Noakhali-2: Mohd. Barkatullah Bhulu (BNP) — 82,858 — elected; and his nearest rival — Chowdhury Mohd Faruq (NDA) — 8974.

Naogaon-5: Alhaj Shamsuddin Ahmed (BNP) — 50,070 — elected and his nearest rival — Atiqur Rahman (Freedom Party) — 890.

Patukhali-3: Alhaj Md Shahjahan Khan (BNP) — 30,058 — elected; and his nearest rival — Adv Afzal Hossain (NDA) — 2472.

Cox's Bazar-4: Shahjahan Chowdhury (BNP) — 34,003 — elected and his nearest rival — Abdur Rahman (Ind) — 26294.

Narsingdi-2: Dr. Abdul Moyeen Khan (BNP) — 46,200 — elected; and his nearest rival — Kazi Abu Imran (Gano Adhikar Front) — 769.

Pirojpur-3: Alhaj M A Jabbar Engineer (BNP) — 23,573 — elected; and his nearest rival — Dr Rustom Ali Faraze (Ind) — 14,381.

Chittagong-3: Mostafa Kamal Pasha (BNP) — 38,763 — elected; and his nearest rival — AKM Nurullah Chowdhury (Ind) — 6,910.

Rangamati: Parijat Ku-sum Chakma (BNP) — 35,905 — elected; and his nearest rival — Aungshu Dui Marma (Ind) — 4,163.

Panchagarh-2: Mohammad Mozahar Hossain (BNP) — 15,496 — elected; and his nearest rival — Abdur Rahim Miridha (Bangladesh Jatiya Islami Janata Party) — 674.

Khulna-4: M Nurul Islam (BNP) — 48,410 — elected; and his nearest rival — Advocate SM Moslehuddin (Muslim League) — 1,044.

Faridpur-2: Abul Hossain Miah (BNP) — 29,479 — elected; and his nearest rival — AKM Khairuzzaman (Ind) — 7,169.

Manikganj-2: Harun-ar-Rashid Khan (BNP) — 40,918 — elected; and his nearest rival — Golam Mostafa Khan (7-party alliance) — 971.

Cox's Bazar-2: ATM Nurul Chowdhury (BNP) — 43,975 — elected; and his nearest rival — Md Helal Uddin (7-party alliance) — 588.

Dhaka-9: Khondaker Mahbub Uddin Ahmad (BNP) — 33,443 — elected; and his nearest rival — Humayun Kabir (Humayun) (Freedom Party) — 772.

Khulna-5: Prof Dr Gazi Abdul Hoq (BNP) — 38,074 — elected; and his nearest rival — SM Amzad Hossain (ML) — 2,131.

Noakhali-3: Salauddin Kamran (BNP) — 11,767 — elected; and his nearest rival — Noor Mohammad Khan (Jatiya Mukti Dal) — 122.

Khulna-2: Shaikh Razzak Ali (BNP) — 43,651 — elected; and his nearest rival — Abul Hossain Sikder (Ind) — 1,032.

Khulna-3: Mohammad Ashraf Hossain (BNP) — 26,600 — elected; and his nearest rival — Ruhul Amin (Ind) — 1,640.

Jessore-6: Moulana Shakhawat Hossain (BNP) — 18,921 — elected; and his nearest rival — Mesbahul Huq (7 party alliance) — 478.

Munshiganj-2: M. Hamidullah Khan (BNP) — 44,821 — elected; and his nearest rival — Md. Ali Akbar (Jatiya Palli Dal) — 657.

Rajshahi-4: Abdul Sattar Mondal (BNP) — 21,098 — elected; and his nearest rival — Sirajul Huq (Jatiyatabadi Awami League) — 3,444.

Narsingdi-3: Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan (BNP) — 42,978 — elected; and his nearest rival — Nasiruddin Ahmed (Freedom Party) — 844.

Bogra-2: Rezaul Bari Dina (BNP) — 39,446 — elected; and his nearest rival — Raihan Nabi Badesha (Ind) — 5,387.

Faridpur-5: Mohammad Sarwar Jan Miah (BNP) — 19,988 — elected; and his nearest rival — Abdur Rob Bhuiyan (Ind) — 5,721.

Dhaka-12: Mohammad Niamatullah (BNP) — 41,095 — elected; and his nearest rival — Delwar Hossain (Bangladesh Jatiya Islami Janata Party) — 3,570.

Habiganj-3: Mohammad Ahsanul Haq (BNP) — 20,951 — elected; and his nearest rival — Abdur Raquib Chowdhury (Ind) — 847.

Bogra-4: Dr Zaitul Huq Molah (BNP) — 29,468 — elected; and his nearest rival — Md. Saidul Islam Talukder (Ind) — 525.

Khulna-1: Profullah Kumar Mandal (BNP) — 23,163 — elected; and his nearest rival — Santosh Roy (Bekar Samaj) — 1,770.

Bogra-6: Mojibur Rahman (BNP) — 79,018 — elected; and his nearest rival — Mirza Selim Reza (Bangladesh Gano Adhikar Front) — 1,555.

Natore-3: Advocate Abul Kalam Azad (BNP) — 18,364 — elected; and his nearest rival — Advocate Nazrul Islam (NDA) — 459.

Tangail-6: Khondakar Abu Taher — (BNP) — 19,463 — elected; and his nearest rival — AKM Anwarul Islam (Ind) — 4,374.

Mymensingh-5: Adv. Abu Reza Fazul Haq (BNP) — 40,476 — elected; and his nearest rival — Ishaq Ali Sarker (Ind) — 1124.

Chuadanga-2: Md Mozammel Haq (BNP) — 38,898 — elected; and his nearest rival — Khodadad Hossain Molla (Khalifa Andolan) — 440.

Noakhali-5: Col Rtd AFM Enamul Haq (BNP) — 2001 — elected; and his nearest rival — Adv. Md. Zakir Hossain (Ind) — 1197.

Jessore-3: Tariqul Islam (BNP) — 91838 — elected; and his nearest rival — Md Ishaq Ali (Ind) — 2314.

Jhalakathi-1: Shajahan Omar (Bir Uttam) (BNP) — 45,053 — elected; and his nearest rival — Md Nurul Haq Khalifa (Ind) — 997.

Bhola-1: Mosharraf Hossain Shajahan (BNP) — 65,203 — elected; and his nearest rival — Abdul Hadi Masud (NDA) — 1519.

Rajbari-1: Prof Jahanara Begum (BNP) — 60,692 — elected; and his nearest rival — Habibur Rahman (Freedom Party) — 1830.

Incomplete

2431 centres

From Page 1

Our Correspondent in Gaibandha reports, anti-election activists brought out protest processions in the town despite army patrol. A polling centre was arsoned when the officials attempted to open. The anti-election activists exploded several crackers and ransacked six telephone exchanges.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner of Sherpur, when contacted, said that polling could not be held in 101 centres out of 307 of the districts as those were under the control of the anti-election agitators.

In Dinajpur, District Returning Officer postponed voting in all the centres in Birganj thana under Durgapur district following the killing of an anti-election activist in the morning, according to UNB report.

Besides polling in 88 centres of Rangpur 3 constituency and 72 centres of Rangpur 6 constituency remained suspended as the concerned Presiding Officers were not functioning because of poll violence, said a report of BSS news agency.

The report added that 30 polling centres in Rangpur district were also set on fire before noon by the anti-election activists.