

# Criminal candidates dampen poll mood

**STAR REPORT**

Filing of nomination papers by a number of alleged killers, terrorists and other criminals seems to have cast a gloom on the minds of residents of 12 wards of Dhaka City Corporation and dampened their enthusiasm about the April 25 DCC election.

Many of the residents apprehend that these armed elements with 'strong political backing' would rig the election to emerge victorious. Thus they might turn out to be 'representatives of people' who hate them but do not speak out against them fearing 'dire consequences.'

This correspondent got this impression while extensively visiting DCC wards 41 to 52 in Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi thanas.

"We are poor people engaged in small business for our survival and we do not dare to make comments against those ward commissioner

candidates who are known criminals," said a tea stall owner at Noor Jahan Road in Mohammadpur area. "I know that if I brand a candidate as a good man and another as a criminal, things will be too bad for me."

A resident of Saat Masjeed Road in the same area, explaining why he is reluctant to say anything about ward commissioner aspirants, said, "many of the intending candidates are known criminals, but they have strong political links."

A middle aged man from Ward 49 said 'criminalisation of ward commissioner election' has created frustration among voters and they have virtually lost all interest in the polls. "I don't want to talk about these criminals for reasons known to you," he added.

"Around fifty per cent the commissioner candidates from Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi areas are either killers or notorious criminals, but they all now pose as social welfare workers or propo-

nents of terrorism-free society," said a resident of Mohammadi Housing Limited.

Earlier, press reports said these candidates include a number of accused in many cases including Zaman of ward 42, Abdul Motin alias Moti of ward 46, Shafiqul Islam Sentu of ward 44, Sohail Rahman of ward 47, Tannery Harun of ward 47, Bellal of Agargaon slum area, Jubayer Ejaj, Shams Sad Mahmud Palash and Salimullah Salu.

Meanwhile, a ward commissioner aspirant was gunned down by unidentified elements at Taj Mahal Road on Tuesday night. Local people suspected that the killing centred the coming DCC election.

Many of them apprehend more such incidents because of bitter rivalry among the 'criminal candidates'. In many cases, these candidates are using hired goons to face their opponents, they mentioned.



Pickers torched a double-decker in front of Rajuk building yesterday following police attacks on an Awami League rally.

# 20 Israelis killed in suicide blast

**AFP, Jerusalem**

At least 20 Israelis have been confirmed killed and some 100 others wounded in a Palestinian suicide bomb attack in northern Israeli coastal city of Netanya on Wednesday.

The attack on a hotel restaurant, packed with people celebrating the first night of the Jewish Passover holiday, is the deadliest suicide bombing since last June when 21 people were killed outside a Tel Aviv nightclub.

The suicide bomber walked into the restaurant of the Park Hotel and detonated a powerful bomb, gutting the room and wreaking havoc before ambulances and police screeched to the scene.

The radical Palestinian Islamic group Hamas carried out the attack, a Hamas official from the West Bank city of Nablus said.

The political official identified the bomber who blew himself up in a hotel as Abdelbaset Odeih from the West Bank town of Tulkarem.

Residents of Tulkarem told AFP that Odeih was on Israel's wanted list and had been in hiding for the past year.

The attack in the northern coastal resort threatened to wreck flagging US efforts to reach a ceasefire and kept Israeli forces on high alert.

While the radical Islamic group Hamas, which claimed responsibility for the bombing, threatened yesterday to launch a "wave" of attacks, Israeli officials

signalled they were preparing to avenge the "Passover massacre".

"We are not going to wait for long. There will be a response, I can't say how strong or where," Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nachshon told AFP.

"If the Palestinians want war, then we will have to take all the necessary measures to win this conflict," he said, adding that the bombing in Netanya had "crossed a red line that has never been crossed before".

Palestinian chief Yasser Arafat expressed fears for his own safety, warning of an Israeli invasion of the West Bank city of Ramallah where his Palestinian Authority asked its workers to evacuate their offices.

Many schools also sent their students home and people were seen scurrying to stock up on food and other necessities. Some Palestinian and UN officials were also leaving offices in Gaza City.

Arafat was under mounting US pressure to halt the violence in the Palestinian intifada after the Netanya attack brought the overall death toll in 18 months of bloodshed to more than 1,600.

The Palestinian leadership condemned the attack and vowed to punish those responsible. But Israel put little stock in the pledge.

Interior Minister Uzi Landau called it a "war crime" and said late Wednesday "it is not sufficient to simply respond. The Palestinian Authority has to be destroyed."

# EC to tighten security on Mar 30

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The Election Commission (EC) has planned to tighten security on March 30, the deadline for withdrawal of candidatures for the elections to three city corporations.

The commission has thought of such a move to avert possible untoward incidents on the day, said an EC official, referring to the jittery situations in Dhaka, Khulna and

# Log-in hitch

**MUSTAK HOSSAIN**

Log-in failure hit the city's Internet users yesterday as they faced snapped connections to the Internet service providers (ISPs).

"Mysteriously, only those ISPs, which earlier lodged complaints with the Bangladesh Telecom Regulatory Commission (BTRC) against the BTTB [Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board] for hiking monthly telephone line rent, have been facing the problem," said an official of a leading ISP.

The subscribers of all the members of the ISP Association (ISPA) including those of Information Services Network Limited (ISNL), Bangladesh Online Limited (BOL), Aftab IT Limited, Agni Limited, BDCOM Limited, Global Online service Limited, and Grameen Citechco Limited faced the problem most.

The ISPA has already written to the chairman of the BTTB to look into the problem.

"As soon as a subscriber logs in, the line is disconnected. Also, abrupt disconnection and fluctuation in data transfer speed have upset our subscribers. Even calls to our PABX and fax lines get disconnected," the ISPA said in the letter.

It also said the subscribers of the BTTB's Internet service and ISPs, which are not members of the ISPA, are not facing this problem.

Some ISPs alleged that the BTTB is deliberately creating the hitch to harm private ISPs' business.

They said the BTTB was irked by the ISPA's complaint with the BTRC.

But BTTB Chairman SATM Badrul Haque categorically denied the allegation of tampering with the incoming calls to the ISPs.

"I don't know of any such thing. Why should the BTTB do this?" he asked.

# Ban on yarn import thru' land ports may be revoked

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The government may revoke the ban on import of yarn through land ports considering the plight of garment exporters.

In a meeting with representatives of garment manufacturers and exporters yesterday, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman assured them of considering the withdrawal of the ban on import of yarn against back to back letter of credit (L/C).

Sources said a high level delegation of garment exporters met Saifur yesterday urging him to lift the ban for the greater interest of the ready made garment (RMG) sector, the largest foreign currency earner in the country.

They said the ban on import through the land ports would seriously affect the sector, as shipment of raw materials through seaports would take much longer, forcing the lead-time for export to be increased.

The minister told the delegation that the withdrawal of the ban, if approved, would only apply to garment export but otherwise the ban on commercial import of yarn through land port would remain in place, meeting sources said.

He said he would talk to the Prime Minister about the matter and then inform them about the decision within three days.

The ban on import of yarn through all land ports was imposed through a Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) by the National Board of Revenue on March 11.

The ban came in response to complaints by Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), a platform of private textile mills, that huge quantities of local yarn remained unsold due to cheaper low quality yarn imported from neigh

# Fighting mosquitos high on Khoka's agenda

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Sadeque Hossain Khoka has pledged that his prime tasks would be to control mosquito menace and save the Buriganga River, if he is elected mayor of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

Khoka, a mayoral candidate for the upcoming DCC election, has also promised to save the city's ever-dwindling greenery from influential developers.

Khoka was addressing the inaugural session of the two-day 13th biennial national conference and annual general meeting-2002 of the Zoological Society of Bangladesh (ZSB) at the TSC auditorium yesterday morning, with its theme -- "Community Participation in Renewable Natural Resources Management".

Infrastructures would be developed for the city's millions of residents, he promised.

About biodiversity, the fisheries and livestock minister said people should preserve the natural resources for the generations to come.

The loss of biodiversity, a major concern around the world, will jeopardise human existence, he said.

Presided over by Prof. Mahmud-ul-Amin, the inaugural session was addressed by, among others, State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Hoque, DU Vice-Chancellor Prof. Anwarullah Chowdhury, Dr. AR Mollah and Prof. MMA Qudus.

Prof. Mahmud-ul-Amin said that the prudent, sustainable management could keep natural resources on tap.

Bangladesh is rich in biodiversity. The IUCN-

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 29		6-13 pm
Mar 30	5-53 am	

## Prayer Timings

**Mar 29**

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-30
Juma	12-15	1-20
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

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