

A Farce it Really was

RULING coalition candidate Mossaddak Ali Falu was declared elected with 78,727 votes in Dhaka-10 by-polls amidst unprecedented intimidation of voters and a free-style vote rigging.

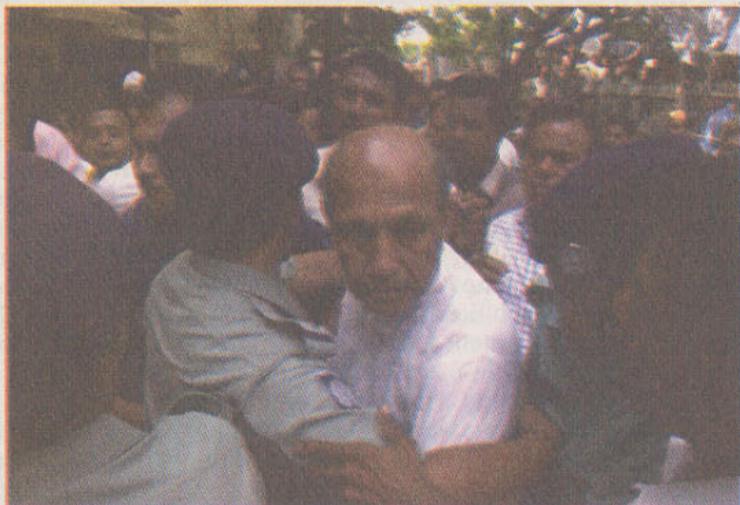
The fight for the capital's most prestigious seat in the national parliament turned into a farce immediately after it started in the early morning. The government made a mockery of a High Court

ruling that ordered the government to deploy members of the army in every polling centres. Instead of manning the polling booths, members of the army kept themselves busy patrolling on the street. Hordes of young Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) supporters captured most of the polling booths even before the battle royal saw the light of the day. "Fake voters from Demra, Lalbagh, Kamrangir Char, Motijheel and Sabujbagh 'cast' votes mostly between 8 am and 10 am. Later they hung around at different polling centres," a Daily Star report says.

In fact, most of the voting centres were off limits to the opposition Bikalpa Dhara



Mass impersonation: Hired voters being herded on to a bus in front of Bishal Centre in Moghbazar.



Mannan: Losing the battle to rigging.



Ballots galore: Two voters put the seal on ballot papers out in the open at Curzon Hall Centre of Dhaka University.

Bangladesh candidate's polling agents; Falu loyalists even chased Major (retd) Mannan, the BDB candidate, out of Hossain Ali Primary School in Nakhalpara, where he went to observe the polling. "Our voters and polling agents were driven away. I had no option but to boycott the election and appealed to the Election Commission to cancel it," Mannan told the reporters who were accompanying him.

However, the Election Commission office in Sher-e-Bangla Nogor witnessed another act of Victorian farce. Acting Chief Election Commissioner (ACEC) was not present in the office