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Chittagong City Corporation mayoral candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury offers Juma prayers, left, and Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan joins ruling alliance candidate Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin in offering fataha at a shrine at Mohra in the port city yesterday.

PROPOSED MEGHNAGHAT-3 POWER PROJECT Move for unsolicited deal avoiding tender

Law ministry's legal opinion sought

SHARIEF KHAN

Contrary to the impression given by the state minister for power late last month that the proposed Meghnaghat-3 450 megawatt power project will be processed through open tender, the ministry last week sought the law ministry's legal opinion for an unsolicited deal for it with a US-Irish joint venture.

In the absence of proper policy support, the ministry is now trying

to put this unsolicited deal under the private sector infrastructure guideline instead of using the private power policy, which the government applied so far to process different power projects with 1,290 mw generation capacity.

On April 25, state minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud faced strong criticism from members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy, Power and Mineral Resources at its meeting for allowing

a secretive deal with US-Irish company Cadogan Manning violating the government's policy.

Committee members told the press that Iqbal promised them the Meghnaghat-3 project would go to open tender.

But the state minister now says the committee members did not understand him properly, and the unsolicited negotiation with Cadogan Manning is on 'in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Last-minute bid to woo voters

Campaign for Ctg polls ends tonight

RAFIQ HASAN and SHAMEEM MAHMUD, Ctg

A month-long campaigning for the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) elections draws to a close at midnight today with the two main mayoral candidates making last-minute bids to woo voters for Monday's polling.

The Election Commission (EC) has meanwhile completed all preparations to hold the polls in a free and fair atmosphere that included the

tightest ever security measures for any local body polls.

Over 18,000 security personnel from the army, paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles, Armed Police Battalion, Ansars and Coastguards will be deployed from this afternoon to maintain law and order during the polling.

"We have made all preparations under the rules and regulations of the Election Commission to ensure free and fair polls," said Golam Quddus, returning officer for the

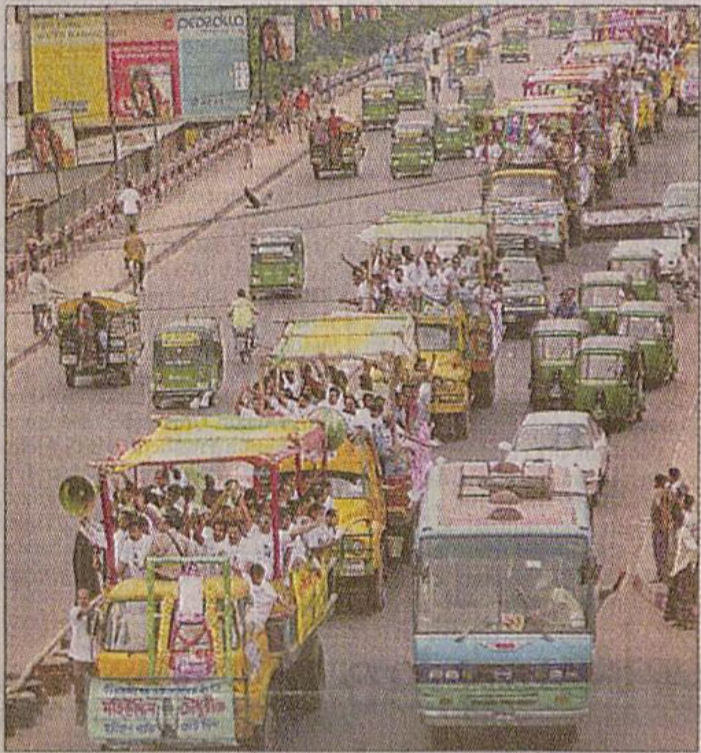
CCC election.

Army personnel will not be stationed at the polling centres but they will patrol the city streets and rush to any centre on call from its presiding officer.

Asked if there is any pressure from government high-ups or other quarters to manipulate the election, Quddus replied, "I didn't have any allegation of pressure."

According to EC sources, 80 teams comprising 800 army

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Sports organisers take out a truck procession in the port city in support of CCC mayoral candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, top, and the vehicles requisitioned by the authorities to use in Monday's polls are parked in the police lines ground yesterday.

Iraq war costs Blair about 100 seats

Labour Party wins historic 3rd term

AP, London

Tony Blair weathered a backlash over the Iraq war to win a historic third term as Britain's prime minister, but his Labour Party suffered a sharply reduced parliamentary majority that could weaken his mandate and force him to step aside before his term ends.

A chastened Blair acknowledged the setback and appealed for unity.

"Iraq has been a divisive issue in this country but I hope now that we can unite again and look to the future there and here," he said Thursday as results trickled in. He spoke from his home constituency of Sedgfield, northern England, where he retained his seat.



Labour needed at least 324 seats to form a majority in the 646-seat House of Commons. With 618 seats

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Oona King defeated

AFP, London

Muslim voters delivered a stinging rebuke to British Prime Minister Tony Blair yesterday over the Iraq war, voting a loyal member of his Labour Party out of office in favour of an anti-war candidate.

In a major upset, Blair loyalist Oona King -- who strongly backed the March 2003 conflict supported by the prime minister -- lost her Bethnal Green and Bow seat in east London to George Galloway from the left-wing Respect Party.

"Mr Blair, this is for Iraq. All the people you killed, all the lies you told have come back to haunt you and the best thing the Labour Party could do is sack you tomorrow morning as soon as they get back to work," Galloway told cheering supporters following the announcement.

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600 JCD men watch Ctg election

Alleges Nagorik Committee, asks EC to ensure fair polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

With a bombardment of allegations, Nagorik Committee leaders yesterday asked the Election Commission (EC) for taking measures by today to ensure a free and fair Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) election.

The alleged BNP leader Assaduzzaman Ripon has engaged 600 Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders and activists from his NGO, National Democratic Front, to watch the polls as observers. Ripon is also a consultant of the IGRD

ministry and former JCD president. The leaders told a press conference at Chittagong Press Club that they had filed an objection to the issue but the EC turned it down.

JCD men's presence as observers will surely hamper the prospect of a free and fair election, they added.

The leaders however hailed the EC decision to withdraw Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) commissioner Arjad Hossain.

But they alleged the EC at the same time violated its own directive

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4-party rally at Laldighi today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The local unit of four-party alliance holds a public meeting at Laldighi Maidan in the afternoon today in support of Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin as the last show down before the Chittagong City Corporation mayoral polls on May 9.

To carry out campaign for the BNP led four-party alliance candidate Mir Nasir, BNP senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman arrived in the Port City on a three-day visit yesterday afternoon and will be the principal speaker at today's meeting. BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan

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Dr Kamal visits Hasina after 12 years

Reach consensus on caretaker govt, EC reforms

BDNEWS, Dhaka

After more than a decade, Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday called on Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina at her Shudha Sadan residence and discussed a range of political issues.

In the nearly one and a half hour meeting from 7:30pm, the eminent

lawyer and the Awami League president talked about the upcoming Chittagong City Corporation polls, caretaker government and electoral reforms, unity of pro-liberation forces and united movement against the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government.

"My visit follows the April 30 declaration of unity made at the

convention of Peshajibi Samannaya Parishad (co-ordination council of professionals)," Dr Kamal, also the convenor of Jatiya Oikya Mancha, told newsmen after the meeting. He said people are now united and they want a meaningful change in a democratic way.

The Gono Forum chief said he

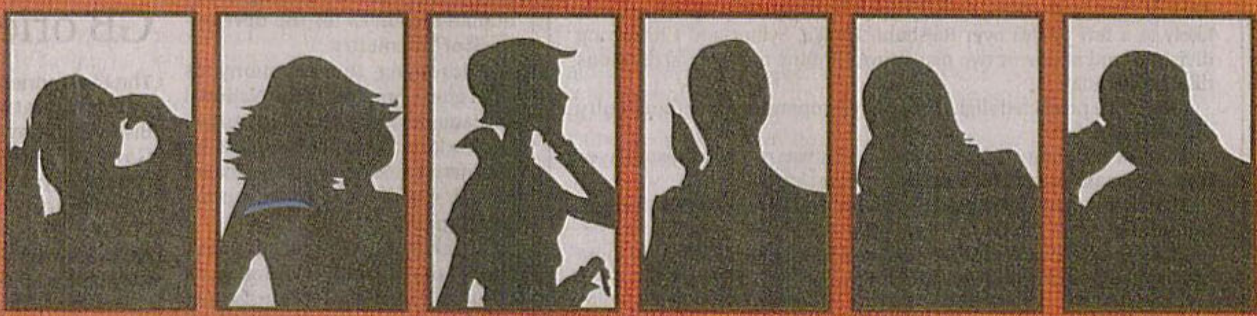
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