

## Battle for Ctg city

CCC POLLS AT GLANCE	
Total Voters	11, 38, 318
Mayor Candidates	21 (for 1 post)
Ward Commissioner Candidates	304 (for 41 posts)
Ward Commissioner Candidates (Reserved for Women)	83 (for 14 posts)
Number of Polling Centres	577
Number of Vulnerable Polling Centres	557
Poll Conducting Officers	10, 210
Security Personnel	18,000

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prestige issue for both the BNP-led four-party ruling coalition and the opposition with Mohiuddin getting the opposition backing while Mir Nasir contesting the polls with the ruling alliance's blessing.

The main opposition Awami League (AL) and almost all mainstream opposition parties have thrown their weight behind long serving mayor and popular leader Mohiuddin, a nominee of Chittagong Nagorik Committee.

On the other hand, the ruling alliance wants to see ex-mayor Mir Nasir, also state minister for civil aviation and tourism, in the coveted position.

The CCC polls grabbed the media spotlight, as it is a crucial test of popularity of the government before the next general elections. The poll results may also shape the coming days' politics for both the government and opposition camps.

"We have made all-out preparations to hold the election in a free and fair manner," Returning Officer (RO) Golam Quddus told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the law enforcement agencies have been asked to take on-the-spot actions against the troublemakers on the voting day.

On apprehension of fake voters, the RO said, "Agents of every candidate have to be alert to identify fake voters. We have asked polling officials to take help of the law enforcement personnel in this regard."

Although formal campaign ended Saturday night, both sides continued their silent efforts to woo voters.

Opposition-backed candidate Mohiuddin at a press briefing yesterday raised a number of allegations against the administration and ruling alliance candidate saying that government high-ups have conspired to snatch people's verdict.

"I am confident to retain the mayoral post in tomorrow's voting, but circumstances in last few days are giving signals that the ruling alliance has planned to rig the polls by hiring criminals and fake voters from neighbouring places," Mohiuddin said.

Mohiuddin said he will surely win if people are able to cast their votes without difficulty.

Government-backed mayoral aspirant Mir Nasir however brushed aside the allegations and said the incumbent mayor has failed to live up to people's expectations in the last 11 years and people now want a change for the sake of city's development.

At least 14 local and some foreign observer groups will visit the polling centres to observe the much-talked-about polls.

**"FAKE VOTERS"**  
Today's CCC poll is going to be held amid much enthusiasm among the city residents. But there is widespread apprehension of fake voting by hired outsiders, alleged the Nagorik Committee candidate, local sources and observers.

They alleged hundreds of people have been hired in the last couple of days from nearby districts and outside the city area by Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islamic Chhatra Shibir to cast fake votes for Mir Nasir.

AL leader Suranjit Sengupta yesterday lodged a complaint to the RO alleging that cadres of Jamaat-Shibir, alliance partner of BNP, gathered fake voters from outside the city. He put the number of such people at nearly 70,000.

"The voter list has not been updated. Using its machinery the government has identified those in the list who will be absent on the polls day and the fake voters will cast votes against these people," Suranjit complained.

But alliance candidate Mir Nasir denied the allegation and said sensing defeat in the polls the incumbent mayor is plotting to create anarchy. "I have enough confidence in voters of Chittagong in the polls," he said.

Jamaat leader and lawmaker from Satkania Shahjahan Chowdhury also denied the allegation of hiring fake voters by his party men from outside the city corporation area and gathering criminals from neighbouring districts.

But locals said they have found many new faces gathering at Chittagong College, Mohsin College and many madrasahs controlled by Shibir. "These are all trained cadres of Shibir and they will cast fake votes and occupy polling centres," said a local resident.

"We have got partial proof of

hiring people by alliance candidate's loyalists in some local colleges and madrasahs," said Nazmul Ahsan Kalimulla, chairman of observer group Janipow which has been monitoring the election.

"Our observers have found a large number of women brought by a ruling party lawmaker from Comilla," he said. The hired people are reportedly residing at different dormitories, student messes and houses of ruling party leaders in Chittagong, he said.

Locals said the two main contestants have set at least 14 dummy candidate to get extra agents inside the booths. "Both have assigned agents of these candidates to take full control of the polling centres," said a local source.

**TIGHT SECURITY**  
EC officials said all preparations, including security arrangements, have been complete to hold free, fair and peaceful polls. The members of law enforcement agencies will work under magistrates to take action against troublemakers.

They said 80 striking teams comprising 800 army personnel will patrol the 577 polling centre areas. Of the total, 557 centres have been identified as vulnerable.

Sixty other striking teams comprising 600 BDR personnel will remain on duty at different important points in the city and patrol polling centre areas, EC officials said. Each of these teams will be led by a magistrate.

About 8,000 police and as many members of Ansar will guard the polling centres. Besides, 14 mobile courts will be operating to check election offences during the voting to be conducted by around 10,500 polling officials.

**LAST MINUTE VOTE BUYING**  
The key rival candidates wrapped up their election campaign Saturday midnight. After the month-long hectic campaign the port city yesterday wore a calm and quiet look as there was no campaign due to pre-poll restriction.

Locals alleged both the mayoral candidates yesterday in their final attempt to woo poor voters offered cash to buy their votes. Distribution of money by the alliance candidate's campaigners was little more than that distributed by the incumbent mayor's men.

Talking to The Daily Star, chief of an election observing body, which has been observing the CCC polls, said they have also found the trend of "buying floating votes." The election campaigners have allegedly distributed Tk 200 to Tk 500 in cash to each rikshawpuller and poor person in slums.

Both the main mayoral candidates have already crossed the EC ceiling of poll expenditure by spending over Tk 10 crore each, sources close to Mir Nasir and Mohiuddin said.

**Mir Nasir**  
**FROM PAGE 1**  
passed the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations from Chittagong College and had his graduation from Chittagong University. He earned his master degree from California University, USA.

Starting his career as an assistant judge, Mir Nasir joined politics with the then Jago Dal in 1978 and became the party's Hathazari unit convenor. In 1982, he was made the organising secretary of north district unit BNP and became its president in 1984.

The government appointed Mir Nasir mayor of the CCC in 1991, which he served for 31 months.

He became convenor of the city unit BNP in 1994 and has been its president since 1997 till date.

Following defeat to ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury in the 1994 CCC polls, Nasir was appointed by the government as chairman of the board of directors of the Janata Bank. Later, he served as the Bangladesh ambassador to Saudi Arabia till 1996.

He was made the state minister for civil aviation and tourism on October 10, 2001.

Mir Nasir has toured vastly and attended many international seminars and conferences on behalf of the government. He is also involved with many socio-economic and human rights organisations.

A good orator, Mir Nasir has a penchant for creative writings. His books include *The Judiciary in New China*, *High Court Bench at Chittagong* and *Some Relevant Facts in the Administration of Justice*.

## Shibir man

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Action Battalion (Rab) at Hathazari in the district earlier yesterday.

"Azraif" Delwar was one of the major accomplices of notorious criminal Gittu Nasir.

Members of Rab-7 picked up Delwar Hossain from Chittagong jail gate when he was going out on bail on Saturday, sources said.

Following Delwar's statement during interrogation, Rab members along with him went to Charia of Hathazari upazila and recovered three revolvers, four guns, two LGs and more than a hundred bullets.

As Delwar's accomplices opened fire on Rab members in a bid to snatch him away, gun battle ensued, Rab sources said, adding that the criminal fell on the line of fire, received bullet wounds and died on the spot.

Son of late Belal Uddin of Muradpur of Panchlaish upazila, Delwar was accused in 10 cases including the sensational eight-murder and commissioner Liakat murder cases.

## Black flag

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Mahmud Faizee continued his work.

The decision came at an emergency SCBA meeting at the South Hall room of the Supreme Court Bar building.

SCBA President Advocate Mahbubey Alam chaired the meeting that decided to take out the procession at 1:15pm.

The meeting reiterated the SCBA demand that Chief Justice Syed JR Mdassir Husain does not allow Faizee, who allegedly doctored his LLB result, sit a bench.

The lawyers will continue with their agitation programmes if the chief justice did otherwise, participants in the meeting vowed.

"Since Faizee appealed for justice by filing a writ petition with the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, this meeting considers his sitting in the same bench as a justice as immoral and indecent and against the transparent judicial system," reads the resolution of the meet.

The meeting also asked Faizee to resign immediately.

Barrister Shawkat Ali Khan, Barrister Amir UI Islam, advocates Ojayer Faruq and Fazle Rabbi and SCBA Secretary Enayetur Rahim, among others, addressed the meet.

Earlier on April 30, the SCBA took out a black flag procession, the first its kind, on the SC premises.

## Nagorik Committee

**FROM PAGE 1**  
cadres, have captured a number of vulnerable polling centres and blocked about 50,000 voters' way to those.

Suranjit cited the centres as Chandanpura Darul Ulum Aliya Madrasa, Mohsin College, Chittagong College, Polytechnic Institute, Bakalia Teachers Training Centre, Kasheful Ulum Madrasa, Prabartak Bidiyapith, Saleh Jahur High School, Chittagong Medical College, Kazem Ali High School (near Chittagong College), Lalkhan Bazar Jamiyatul Madrasa and Jamal Khan Shah Waliullah Institute.

He said using the national flag mounted vehicle of Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury during an election campaign for Nasir was a clear violation of the electoral code of conduct.

Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Committee candidate for the Chittagong City Corporation polls, alleged at the conference that Nasir's men continued intimidating minority voters and ordered some of them to quit the country.

He claimed even BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami sympathisers are inclined vote for him and he will win if the elections are free and fair.

## Sure of winning

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The spontaneous participation of thousands of people at our rallies and gatherings was an indication of our victory in the polls," he added.

Hoping that today's polls will be held in a free and fair way, Nasir (he) called the Election Commission (EC) decision of keeping Chittagong city area out of cellular phone network during the polling hours and asked for restriction on use of walkie talkie also.

Asked about his rival Nagorik Committee candidate's allegation of his gathering cadres from outside the city area, Mir Nasir said, "The allegations were completely baseless and aimed at preparing field for creating anarchy in case of defeat."

He alleged that it was rather the Awami League (AL) candidate who gathered armed cadres and terrorists. "The cadres of Mohiuddin Chowdhury are now roaming the Forest Research Institute, Islamia College and Majirghat area openly brandishing firearms," he said.

Mir Nasir said he has not yet received any response from the EC regarding his three-point complaint against the AL candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

Mir Nasir said he will cast his vote at the nearby polling centre at Salima Siraj Madrasa immediately after the polling starts at 8am.

## Factory owner

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Judge Mohammad Rafiqul Islam of the District and Sessions Judge's Court issued the order when Shahriar, the managing director (MD) and also one of the owners of Savar Spectrum Sweaters Industries Ltd., as well as director Hashem Fakir, alias Abul Hashem Fakir, appeared before the court for bail.

The two accused, along with their lawyers, advocates Abdus Sabur, Khorshed Alam and Sanaulah Miah, appeared before the court at about 10:30am seeking bail.

Moving the bail petition, the lawyers told the court that the building collapse was merely an accident and that the owner paid Tk 20 lakh to the victims' family members. Moreover, the charges brought against the accused are all bailable, the lawyers said.

At one stage, the judge asked the lawyers whether their building plan had been approved by the Rajdhani Unnayan Katiripakha (Rajuk). The lawyers replied that the factory is out of the jurisdiction of Rajuk and therefore needs no approval from it. When the court then asked whether they received approval from the municipality, the counsels replied that the factory is outside the jurisdiction of the municipality. The court finally asked how the owners constructed the factory, but the counsels failed to explain. The court said that nobody can construct a building without an approved plan from the authorities concerned.

Citing decisions from the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), Advocate Khorshed Alam told the

court that if the charges are brought against anyone, the court shall be bound to grant bail to him or her.

The judge then overruled their submission, saying the court would give a decision on any issue on the basis of allegations brought against the accused.

The court also asked the lawyers why they did not surrender before the lower court as the case is now pending there. The counsels replied that they feared the lower court would not grant bail to their clients.

Opposing the bail petition, Dhaka District Public Prosecutor (PP) Mohammad Mohsin Jaiil prayed for sending the two to jail custody, telling the court that the Savar tragedy is the deadliest such incident in living memory. The charges brought against the accused are heinous offences, he added, saying the accused constructed the factory without receiving any approval from Rajuk.

After hearing both sides, the judge rejected the bail petition and sent the two to the Dhaka Central Jail. The court also fixed May 12 for a hearing on the bail petition.

In the case filed with the Savar Police Station, Officer-in-Charge (OC) Inspector Mohammad Nazrul Islam alleged that at about 1:30am on April 12 he came to know over the telephone that the nine-storey Savar Spectrum Sweaters Industries Ltd. at Palashbari in Savar collapsed, trapping up to 400 workers. Later, he also came to know that the owner constructed the factory without an approved plan from the authorities concerned.

## Govt, Tata

**FROM PAGE 16**  
pressure, coal mining and exploration, cross border railway transportation, customs regulations, freight charge and investment incentives will be the key issues during the negotiations with the government, said Tata Sons Limited Executive Director Alan Rosling.

State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud urged the Tata representatives to make an equity partnership with the stock market, saying this will help decrease pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserve after the investment.

The government will form four core teams a Coordination Team headed by the prime minister's principal secretary, a Negotiation Team headed by the finance secretary, a Bilateral and Customs Team headed by the foreign secretary and a Team for Talk with Development Partners headed by the planning secretary to maintain the timeline set by Tata, said Board of Investment (BoI) Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman.

Tata group intends to set up a 1,000MW power station, a steel mill with an annual capacity of 420,000 tonnes and a one million-tonne fertiliser unit.

Tata group proposed their investment plan, the second highest after Singapore among the company's overseas investment programme, after a six month feasibility study.

Ratan N Tata, chairman of the Indian conglomerate, visited Bangladesh in mid-October when the group signed an expression of interest agreement to set up gas-based industries in Bangladesh.

The one million tonne fertiliser unit and the 1,000MW power plant

will use natural gas as a raw material, and the steel unit will also be gas-powered.

Bangladesh has an abundance of gas reserves and simultaneously faces demand for power, fertiliser and steel, with no domestic iron ore required for the latter.

The country enjoys the status of a least developed country and in the foreseeable future, this ensures preferential duty access in third country markets. Besides locational advantages, Bangladesh has flexible labour laws.

Bangladesh received foreign investment of nearly \$600 million and \$441 million in 2004 and 2003 respectively.

State Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources AKM Musharraf Hossain, State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Siddiqui, Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, Shipping Secretary Rafiqul Islam, Planning Secretary Akhter Hossain Khan, Power Secretary Nazrul Islam, Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin, BoI Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman and BoI Executive Member Nazrul Islam attended the meeting.

Tata Power Managing Director (MD) Firdose Vandrevalla, Tata Chemicals MD Prasad R Menon, Tata Steel MD B Muthuraman, Tata Steel General Manager Sukaran Singh, Tata Group Bangladesh Resident Director Manzer Hussain, chief of Tata Steel project in Bangladesh Indranil Sengupta, and chief of the Tata Power project in Bangladesh N Suresh represented the Tata group.

## Unqualified polling

**FROM PAGE 1**  
allegation against them arises," he said.

Sources said that so far 16 fourth-class employees have been removed from the polling centre at Police Lines Institute.

Quddus claimed that according to electoral rules fourth class employees could be appointed polling officials.

"It is tough for us to scrutinise the list of as many as 10,210 people to find out whether any fourth class employee or a person with mental disorder is among them," he added.

The RO said that so far he has got names of some 123 fourth-class employees who had been made polling officers.

**EC DENOUNCED RO**  
The EC yesterday denounced the RO's appointing unqualified persons as polling officials, and directed him to replace those officials with the eligible ones.

The EC also cautioned the RO against making any further mistakes. If he failed to carry out directives, the EC will take disciplinary actions against him, said sources.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed from the meeting called the RO and talked about the controversial appointments. "Why have you appointed the unqualified persons as polling officials?" a meeting source quoted the CEC as asking the RO over phone.

An election commissioner told the meeting that people laugh at the appointment of the mentally deranged and office bearers as polling officials.

"We expressed our dissatisfaction over the appointments," Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star after the meeting.

The EC at yesterday's meeting also discussed the candidates' concern over election day violence and vote rigging.

The EC directed the Chittagong

## FATULLAH GAS LEAK Probe body to submit report in a week

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj**

Narayanganj district administration yesterday formed a committee to investigate the incident of toxic fume emission from a fertiliser factory that left 25 people sick in Madhya Dharmaganj of Fatullah on Friday and Saturday.

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Narayanganj said the committee headed by Additional District Magistrate Azharul Islam has been asked to submit in seven days a report identifying causes of the emission of poisonous substances.

Representatives of the Department of Environment and Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation will be included in the committee, said the DC.

Hossain Chemical Complex started emitting gases immediately after it went into operation at mid-night Thursday. Many people and livestock fell sick the same night after inhaling the polluted air.

Locals incensed at the emission stormed the factory Saturday morning leaving some 20 people including a Chinese engineer injured.

The factory authorities filed a case on Saturday night with Fatullah Police Station accusing 200 unknown people for vandalising the factory. The First Information Report of the case noted that the ransacking cost the fertiliser company up to Tk 3 crore.

Locals of Madhya Dharmaganj filed a General Diary (GD) the same night with the same police station blaming the factory authorities for causing damage to the environment by toxic emissions.

Meanwhile, six Chinese engineers yesterday left the factory for security reasons.

## EU grants

**FROM PAGE 16**  
opposition's demand for reforms in the caretaker government system and the Election Commission, the Netherlands envoy said, "These are domestic issues."

However, he noted, "From our election observations in the past, we consider the caretaker government in Bangladesh a unique system." But it is for the people and the political parties here to decide how they want to change it to make it better, he said.

On the 'extra-judicial killings' by the Rapid Action Battalion, Beemsterboer said they are still concerned about such killings.

On EU-Bangladesh trade relations, Head of Delegation of the European Commission Ambassador Esko Kentrschynsky said Bangladesh enjoys the advantage of preferential access to EU market, with exports worth euro 4 billion against imports valued at euro 1 billion.

He said the EU has launched several projects, including an euro 49 million technical assistance programme and an euro 10 million quality support programme, to enhance Bangladesh's trade capacity and diversity in the post-MFA era.

British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, German Ambassador Dietrich Andreas and diplomats representing Denmark, France, Italy, Greece, Australia and Malta were present at the conference.

## \$300m WB aid

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nutrition status of its people.

He added that the HNP Strategic Investment Plan 2003-2010 will support the government's social development goals as outlined in the draft Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and assist in attaining the HNP-related MDGs.

## Wasa to restart

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Organising a press tour yesterday, Wasa officials told journalists that their eviction drive, which began on March 29 on a total of 15 canals including main and branch canals, has been able to improve the drainage flow in several canals.

During the tour, it was found that drainage flow has improved in the Kalyanpur branch canals in the Janata Housing area in West Kafrul, as well as the Katarus and the Ramchandrapur canal in Mohammadpur.

Locals of those areas thanked the effort taken by Wasa and urged proper protection for the newly drained waterways.

After the tour, Wasa Managing Director ANH Akhtar Hossain said at a press briefing held at the Wasa office that any illegal structures on the canal lands would be removed. He also ordered his officials to demolish the remaining encroachments.

Hossain added that, beginning in November next year, his office will begin work on properly demarcating the canals and making walkways for the pedestrians.

Wasa's drives on the city's canals, whose total length is about 140 kilometers, have to date targeted the Kalyanpur main canal and branch canals, the Begunbari canal, Mohakhali canal, the Zirani canal in Rampura, the Katarus canal in Mohammadpur, the Ramchandrapur canal in Mohammadpur, the Ibrahimpur canal and a cross-dam barrier on the Gulshan-Banani Lake.

## Labour MPs ask

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Downing Street has said there is "no change" from Blair's statement last year that he would serve a full third term.

Some MPs have suggested the prime minister should step down within a year to 18 months, with Chancellor Gordon Brown tipped as the most likely successor.

Dobson, who served as health secretary in Blair's first Cabinet, told GMTV's Sunday programme the prime minister had been an "enormous liability" in this election who had cost the party seats.

"I don't think we can go into important local elections next year... with Tony Blair as leader and expect to keep many of the councillors we've got now," he said.

John Austin, MP for Erith and Thamesmead, told The Sunday Times the prime minister had been "a liability and not an asset during the election".

He said: "You can't beat about the bush. Blair was a negative factor on the doorstep, time and time and time again."

Jeremy Corbyn, MP for Islington North and a fierce critic of the Iraq war, predicted Blair could be out of Downing Street within a year.

He told Channel 4's Morgan and Platell Programme: "I think he might well decide that the end of the G8 presidency (at the end of 2005) is the time to go. I don't think he would want to go in the middle of it."

Desmond Turner, the Brighton Kempton MP, said: "It would be nice to see Brown crowned as early as the next party conference."

"There is only one choice for leader. I don't think anyone else needs apply for the job."

However ex-Labour minister and government critic Frank Field warned "gang warfare" between Blairite and Brownite factions could lead some MPs to look elsewhere for leadership contenders.

He acknowledged Blair's election successes but dismissed his reshuffle as "like a Cabinet for Toy Town" and lacking "substantial" figures apart from Blunkett.

Field said: "He (Blair) is clearly the best we've ever had at winning elections. The trouble with that of course is what we do after we've won an election."

Blunkett, the new Work and Pensions Secretary, told the BBC's Breakfast with Frost the Iraq war had been a "major factor" in eroding confidence in the prime minister but said people had to move on.

"We now - all of us - have to build that confidence behind our prime minister who, after all, not only got a historic third term but got the kind of majority in that third term that we expected in 1997."

Blunkett urged MPs to back the manifesto on which they were elected and "get stuck in... and deliver to the British people".

Otherwise, he said, they were being "as self-indulgent as the better-off who voted Lib Dem".

Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell also defended the prime minister, saying "serving a full term doesn't mean leaving office after a year or two".

The new Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Hain said the idea that the public would welcome Blair's immediate replacement as leader was "fantasy".

Blair's ex-communications director Alastair Campbell said people underestimated the prime minister's achievement in securing a third election victory.

The Observer reports that within Blair's own private circle the timetable being discussed would involve him triggering a party leadership contest in July 2008.

He would then remain as prime minister while the succession was resolved, allowing the new leader to take over that autumn.

A Downing Street spokesman declined to comment on the reports other than to point to Blair's statement of last September in which he said that if re-elected he would serve a full third term.

"There has been no change," he said.

## Top two rivals

**FROM PAGE 1**  
held in a free, fair and neutral manner," ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, candidate of Awami League-backed