

## AL candidates

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their choice'.

In Khulna City Corporation, AL backed Talukder Abdul Khaleque was leading with 1,18,829 votes in a close fight against BNP supported candidate Moniruzzaman Moni, who managed to get 99,556 votes in 182 centres out of a total of 239.

AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, who is backed by AL in Rajshahi City Corporation, was leading with 85,930 votes against his nearest rival BNP-Jamaat supported Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul who got 67,010 votes in 117 centres out of a total of 129.

The newly elected municipal mayors are Golam Kibria in Fulbaria of Mymensingh, Anisur Rahman in Sreepur of Gazipur, Rezul Islam Jorjard in Chuadanga of Chuadanga district, Nayek Shafiqul Alam Shafi in Sitakunda of Chittagong, Zakaria Ahmed Pablu in Golapganj of Sylhet, Abdul Rab Munshi in Shariatpur of Shariatpur district, Ramzan Ali in Manikganj of Manikganj district, and Abdul Gafur in Naohata of Rajshahi. All of them were AL affiliated candidates.

Only Jahangir Alam backed by BNP won in Dhupchahiya municipality of Bogra.

Voting in four city corporations and nine municipalities however ended peacefully with satisfactory turnout of voters yesterday, although widespread confusion over voters' identification numbers had caused a messy start in the morning slowing down the balloting.

A considerable number of voters also had to return home after spending hours in queues without having the chance to exercise their right to franchise because of polling officials' failure to determine many voters' identities despite having voter lists with photographs in their hands.

Although voters in great numbers lined up at all polling stations before voting started, their enthusiasm soon started to sap due to the voter identification chaos, which delayed the whole process of voting that finally dragged on in many places even after the deadline of 4:00pm.

Queues were seen in front of some polling stations in the city corporations of Rajshahi, Barisal, Sylhet and Khulna where voters were still casting their votes more than an hour into the deadline, reported our staff correspondents.

No major incident of violence was however reported, and the contestants, especially the mayoral aspirants, expressed their satisfaction regarding the overall voting atmosphere saying the polls were 'more or less' free and fair, except the lone incident in Barisal.

Law enforcers however arrested some people on charges of violating electoral rules by doling out money among voters.

The first elections under the military backed caretaker administration started at 8:00am amid heavy security with the Emergency Power Rules fully restored.

Some 1,600 contestants were in the ballot race seeking votes from a total of 13,661 lakh voters.

In the city corporations 46 were vying for four mayoral posts, 752 were contesting for 118 councillorships, and 194 were seeking votes for 39 reserved councillors' seats for women.

Fifty nine were competing for mayoral posts, 429 for 81 councillorships, and 120 for 27 reserved seats for women in Naohata, Dupchanchia, Chuadanga, Sreepur, Manikganj, Fulbaria, Shariatpur, Golapganj and Sitakunda municipalities.

Chaos reigned at every polling station immediately after voting started because of the confusion over voter registration numbers and national identity card numbers.

Voters who carried with them their national ID cards for voting and the ones who did not carry any card or number with them, both groups faced unexpected hassles in casting their votes, many of whom finally gave up and returned home disgruntled without casting their votes.

Those who brought the national ID cards, their numbers did not match the voters' numbers on the list in the hands of the polling officials, and they were barred from entering the polling booths until they were able to produce voter registration numbers which matched the numbers on the list.

Some of them actually traveled back home and returned with their voter registration numbers and finally cast their votes, while some

## 136 killed

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confirmed that fighters with his group had carried out the attack but claimed they had not suffered casualties.

The US military announced meanwhile it had killed 'several' militants elsewhere in Ghazni, a once quiet province that has seen a steep rise in Taliban activity in the past year.

In Pakтика province, which adjoins Ghazni, two men were killed when a waistcoat they were packing with bombs for use in a suicide attack exploded, the government said.

"Two mullahs (prayer leaders) were killed when a suicide vest they were building went off prematurely," the interior ministry's Zemarai Bashary said.

## Morshed Khan

FROM PAGE 1  
The commission served notice to the former minister on June 20 last year asking him to submit wealth statement, and he did so on July 10 through his representatives.

Mir Ahmed Ali Salam was the prosecution counsel in the case.

others, especially women, did not bother and left without voting.

Some others managed to find their registration numbers from the lists hanging outside the polling stations, spending additional hours in yet another queue.

The sheer hassle of voting caused frustration among the voters discouraging many of them from casting votes, officials said adding that identifying voters was a problem as many of them showed up without their voter identification numbers with them.

Both voters and polling officials said in the past candidates and their supporters used to help the voters collect their numbers, but this time around the practice was absent due to a new electoral system which slapped numerous restrictions on electioneering, including a very short campaign period.

"We are facing problems in identifying voters as most of them don't know their registration numbers," said Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, presiding officer (PO) of a polling centre in Barisal, adding that the problem was slowing down the voting process.

Voters said there should have been sufficient campaign by the authorities on the voting system prior to the polls for preventing such confusions.

"I didn't vote and am returning home after not being able to find my voter registration number," said Yusuf Ali, a voter at Government Pilot Boys High School in Sylhet. The PO of the centre said providing voters with their registration numbers is not their duty.

Over 5,500 local and international observers monitored yesterday's polls, which is widely considered as a litmus test of the Election Commission's (EC) preparations for the all-important parliamentary election planned for the third week of December. Many observers termed yesterday's polling as free, fair and credible.

The strict electoral rules bar any rally or procession till August 7, meaning the winners will not be able to do much in victory celebrations.

The EC and some advisers to the caretaker administration expressed their satisfaction over the elections to the local governments and the voter turnout, terming those free, fair and neutral.

For the first time in the country's election history, a large projection screen was set up in front of the Khulna office of the Election Commission to provide live update of the poll counts to the public, causing enthusiastic local people to crowd there.

## Barisal drama

FROM PAGE 1  
From there the applications will be sent for verification to the law cell in the building called Uttarayan.

If the corrupt suspect is found eligible to get mercy in the verification, Tac will provide him/her with a form to be filled up with necessary information regarding their graft.

Finally the applications would be forwarded for consideration of the commission to the office in the building called Tanmoy, officials say.

The commission has not yet finalised the form, sources say. Tac officials, however, said the form is almost completed and will be finalised any time.

FROM PAGE 1  
release of the external publicity wing of the foreign ministry.

The ministry requested the deported workers to submit photocopies of their passports and civil identity cards they used in Kuwait, and other documents mentioning their names, workplace in Kuwait, date of joining work and deportation, and the amount of outstanding salaries to the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) at Karkhal in the capital.

BMET will prepare a list of deported workers and send it to the Kuwaiti authorities, which will realise the arrears from the companies concerned, said acting Foreign Secretary MA Mahmud.

Meanwhile, labour rights and citizens' organisations continued condemning the deportation of Bangladeshi workers from Kuwait.

The Nagorik Sanghati and Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE) at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity said as per the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention, a country can take legal actions against workers if they cause deterioration in law and order but it cannot resort to torture.

In a written statement, Nagorik Sanghati President Dr ASM Atiqur Rahman said Bangladeshi workers are being repressed in the Middle East.

Columnist Syed Abul Maksud said the demonstrations by the Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait were just and if they did anything wrong it could be settled in court.

Dhaka University Prof Rubayet Ferdous said it is important to find out what role the Bangladesh Embassy in Kuwait played in protecting the rights of Bangladeshi workers.

Prof Hafizur Rahman Curzon said Bangladesh should take measures to make sure that its workers in the Middle East can enjoy rights as per the UN convention.

The speakers also demanded that the government hold talks with the Middle East countries to solve the problems of Bangladeshi workers, and punish the corrupt recruitment agents and officials.

Nagorik Sanghati General Secretary Sharifuzzaman Sharif, trade union leader Dr Wazedul Islam Khan, OSHE Executive Director Ripon Chowdhury, AR Aman of ActionAid and deported worker Didar Hossain Majumder also spoke.

## Observers give

FROM PAGE 1  
society organisations in its 'quick impression' survey said the voting process was peaceful with some irregularities.

Many of the election observers were denied access to observe the ballot counting process, it said.

"Only about 4.3 percent of 116 polling centres experienced any problem related to security forces on Election Day. Observers in three-city corporation reported no security concerns. However, in Sylhet, in 14.8 percent of polling centre observers reported that security officials were not performing their duties in a neutral way," an EWG statement said.

"Observers were prevented from entering 17.5 percent of polling centres in three city corporations," it added.

Fema in its preliminary findings said, "Voter turnout was satisfactory despite the prevalence of inclement weather in some areas, but the polling process was rather slow."

Fema has observed problems faced by some voters due to the confusion related to voter list with photo kept by polling officials and voter list without photo used by candidates," it added.

"The poll by and large ended under peaceful atmosphere and no major untoward incident was reported. The poll in a broader sense was free and fair, though a few cases of impersonation came to the notice of the Fema observers."

Brotee said their observers so far reported no case of violence or conflict.

"Since the voting environment was favourable for the voters, they participated willingly," said Brotee. "Electoral candidates were found to tolerate to the electoral rules," it said adding, "Most of the voters expressed their satisfaction regarding the overall environment in the centres."

"The overall security condition was also very satisfactory," Brotee said.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion personnel brutally beat up agitating voters at Ward 6 during the Barisal City Corporation polls, injuring women and elderly, said a Brotee statement.

On an average, 60 percent vote had been cast at the centres until 2:15pm... it is projected that it would reach 80% in the end."

## ACC chief

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## Kuwait to pay

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## Code of conduct

FROM PAGE 1  
front of the Abu Hanif Keratul Nurani Madrassa polling centre trying to influence voters by distributing money.

Police arrested five people for violating the electoral code of conduct and three others for distributing money in the early hours yesterday.

Fake votes were also cast at a few polling centres although in a very small number.

Coming to the polling centres, Tanzila Sultana Mitu and Nazma Begum of ward-19 and Mohammad Zainal Abedin of ward-21 found that their votes had already been cast. "It was the first vote in my life but I could not cast it," a frustrated Mitu told The Daily Star.

Presiding Officer Kazi Jahangir Hossain blamed the casting of fake votes on polling agents' failure to recognise the voters. Candidates should nominate agents who know everyone, he said.

Many voters could not cast their votes because of mismatching national ID numbers and numbers on the voter lists although vote taking was peaceful, free and fair with satisfactory voter turnout.

Amid the state of emergency and huge security measures voters waited in long queues braving torrential rains to cast their votes.

But thousands of them, mainly women, were frustrated after failing to find out their names on the voter lists at several polling centres and returned home without casting their votes.

Except for these cases, most voters expressed satisfaction about the overall arrangement for holding the polls and the law and order situation.

The main KCC mayoral contenders, Moniruzzaman Moni and

Talukder Abdul Khaleque, also expressed satisfaction about the poll and law and order.

Talking to The Daily Star at 5:45pm, they said the election was held in a free, fair and peaceful manner despite a few flaws.

Admitting the flaws, Returning Officer and Khulna Deputy Election Commissioner Mohammad Mohsin Ali gave the same views.

Khulna Metropolitan Police Commissioner Helaluddin Badri told The Daily Star that the overall law and order situation was under their control.

Visiting a number of polling centres, The Daily Star correspondents saw voters expressing resentment for not finding their serial numbers on the voter lists.

Golam Dastagir, Mohammad Daud, Abdul Jabbar and SM Aslam of ward-28, Rubina Khanam of ward-14, Phul Banu of ward-24, Jebunnissa, Nawshad Hossain, Nazma Begum and Shakil Hossain of ward-19 spent three-four hours to find their names on the voter lists at their polling centres but returned home disheartened.

"The candidate who could possibly win might lose because of this," said Jabbar. Nikhil Chandra Halder, presiding officer of a polling centre in ward-21, told The Daily Star that a number of voters returned after failing to find their names on the voter list.

Ward-27 councillor candidate Mohammad Hasan Mehedi Rizvi alleged that votes were cast at a few centres through forgery at the Primary Training Institute centre.

Meanwhile, for the first time the vote counting update was being displayed live through a projector in front of the Khulna Election Commission office.

## Confusion

FROM PAGE 1  
bubble burst. He was told by the polling officer that the voter registration number, not the NID number, is required to cast vote.

It took an hour and a half for this elderly person to go home and get back to the polling centre with the voter registration number. He had to spend the next half hour in the queue again.

After all this, who would have thought that more shocking discoveries awaited the 52-year-old? After Amjad's voter registration number was verified, he found it hard to believe that someone else had already cast this vote.

"How could the polling officer allow someone else to cast my vote when there's my photograph printed on the new voter roll?" he said while lodging a complaint with Rajshahi regional Election Commission at around 2:00pm.

"The government spent a lot of public money on the NID, but now it is useless for voting purposes," said a disgruntled Amjad.

Several other voters complained about their votes having been cast by others at different polling centres in the city including the centres at Institute of Health Technology (IHT) and Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industries (RCCI).

A number of other voters left the polling centres without casting their votes as they failed to provide their voter registration numbers to be verified with voter rolls kept at the polling centres.

Sayed Muhammad Musa, the regional deputy election commissioner of Rajshahi and also the returning officer for Rajshahi City Corporation polls, told The Daily Star that the voter registration number on the voter roll is required for casting a vote, not the NID number.

## Niko graft case

FROM PAGE 16  
produced before the special court on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises yesterday. The jail authorities submitted a report to the court stating that she was not physically fit to appear in court.

Defence counsels said eight of the accused including former ministers Moudud Ahmed and AKM Mosharraf Hossain were brought to the court. Two others are absconding.

The court witnessed a brief row with the defence asking the prosecution to explain why Khaleda was not produced before the court.

Defence lawyers also demanded proper treatment of the former premier.

On December 9 last year, the ACC filed the case with Teigaon Police Station for abuse of power in awarding a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko when Khaleda was the prime minister.

## MiG-29 case

FROM PAGE 1  
On July 20 this year, former premier Hasina filed the writ petition with the HC challenging the legality of MiG-29 corruption case against her. She also pleaded for quashing of the case proceedings in the same petition.

Hasina's counsel barrister Shafique Ahmed told journalists that the HC rejected the writ petition on the ground that the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court (SC) had earlier upheld an HC judgement rejecting a separate petition filed by Hasina for quashing the proceedings of the same case.

"The HC bench did not want to interfere with the Appellate Division decision in this case. The court, however, asked us to move another application if the charge is framed in the case," he said adding that proceedings of this case would now be conducted in trial court.

The case, now handled by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC), is pending at the court of Golam Mortuza Majumder, the special divisional judge, Dhaka.

Now defunct Bureau of Anti-corruption (Bac) filed the case with Teigaon Police Station during the last term of the BNP-led alliance government, accusing seven individuals.

## 16 policemen

FROM PAGE 16  
militant Muslim group has vowed to disrupt. Xinhua, citing local police, called it a "suspected terrorist attack."

Meanwhile, about 20 people angry about being evicted from their homes in central Beijing demonstrated Monday not far from Tiananmen Square, saying the Olympics should not curb their legal rights.

## Nasim gets

FROM PAGE 16  
Nasim was shown arrested in this case on February 28, 2007. He recently filed a petition with the High Court seeking bail.

Advocate M Enayetur Rahim, counsel for the petitioner, yesterday told the court that there was no specific allegation against Nasim and the police could not submit charge sheet in the case even after the lapse of 23 months.

He also said BNP-led alliance government had filed the case with mala fide intention in order to politically harass Nasim. So, he should be granted bail.

Assistant Attorney General (AAG) Iqbal Kabir opposed the bail.

Nasim was arrested under the emergency power rules (EPR) on February 2, 2007.

## Voters defy rain

FROM PAGE 1  
Although there were no reports of vote rigging, there were scattered reports of names missing on the voter list and fake votes being cast despite heavy presence of police, anar and the Rapid Action Battalion personnel.

Long queues of voters snaked out of polling centres as soon as the polls opened at 8:00am with many lining up since 7:00am. Voter turnout was high with some centres reporting higher women turnouts than men.

Heavy downpour kept a large number of voters at home early yesterday but those who did ignore the rain faced confusion over their national ID cards and voter serial numbers.

A large number of voters left the polls without casting their ballots after spending hours trying to find out their voter serial numbers while others were simply turned away.

Yusuf Ali, a voter at Government Pilot Boys High School polling centre in Kalighat, said, "I am going home and I have not cast my vote. I have been turned away four times from the booth because I did not have a voter serial number and then when I got it, they could not find it on the list."

Presiding officer of that polling centre Md Mossabir Chowdhury told The Daily Star, "It is not our duty to provide the serial numbers."

Outside the polling centre a number of electoral campaign workers for mayoral and councillor candidates said security officials prevented them from setting up camps to help voters. "It was a fault in their [the Election Commission] preparations and not ours," said an AL leader also a campaign worker.

They added that given the short campaign period before the elections, they were not able to go door to door and provide these details to voters.

Three voters at the Khashdabir Government Boys School polling

centre lodged formal complaints that somebody else had cast their votes.

Belal of Gowaripara, voter ID number of 91962051447131, said he found somebody had already cast his vote at 2:00pm. Jahangir, voter ID number 9196205144588, and Mosammat Rahima Khatoun, voter ID number 9196205145799, also faced similar problems.

Meanwhile, several presiding officers cited difficulty adapting to the new voter identification system, voter lists with photographs and ID cards for the delays.

A number of presiding officers also feared that they might not be able to accommodate all the voters who had queued up because the voting was so slow.

The delays also caused a number of voters to leave without casting their ballots; many of them were women.

Mayor candidate, BNP-backed MA Haque, told The Daily Star "Voters suffered because of mismanagement and slow vote-casting but the voter turnout was good."

Meanwhile, councillor candidate Selim Ahmed Roni was picked up and arrested by police after he had a heated argument with a presiding officer.

About 250 people were seen in queue in front of the Bilash Community Centre at 6:00am. The picture was the same at Prijon Community Centre.

Voting continued till filing this report at 6:00pm as voting was slow. Prijon Community Centre and Bilash Community Centre at Chowkidekh, Kazi Jalal Uddin Government Primary School at Kazitola, Ambarbhana Government Colony Primary School at Ambarbhana, Jalalia Government Primary School at Dargah Mohalla and Shah Mir Primary School at Shahi Eidgah are the polling centres where voting could go on till 7:00pm, sources said.

## CEC sees JS polls

FROM PAGE 1  
yesterday said it is no more an issue now.

"I know of no obstacles to polling today [yesterday]. We won't have any difficulty conducting the general election under the state of emergency if the government can ensure an atmosphere like today's," he told reporters after the end of polling.

Earlier in the day, he visited Manikganj municipality to observe the election situation there.

Meanwhile, Home Affairs Adviser Major General (ret'd) MA Matin and Communications Adviser Major General (ret'd) Ghulam Quader said they are satisfied with the way the polls were held.

Speaking to reporters at the Secretariat, Matin termed the elections a test case and said, "It has been pretty successful."

Still, he noted, the government will decide later whether to withdraw the emergency reins for the parliamentary polls.

Another adviser Ghulam Quader said yesterday's polls have proved that a free, fair and peaceful election is quite possible under the state of emergency.

The polls chief on several occasions last year said holding elections with the emergency power rules (EPR) is not a practicable idea.

But he was quite surprised, he said yesterday, to see how fair voting marked the city corporation and municipality elections.

He added that the polls to other local bodies might as well be held under similar conditions. In that case too, the contestants will be granted complete freedom for electioneering by relaxing the EPR.

On June 20, the EC announced the polls schedules while the government eased the EPR to allow processions and rallies for election campaigns.

Queried if the EC would ask the government to lift or relax emergency rules for the polls to come, the CEC replied, "We'll only want an environment conducive to holding free and fair election. If the state of emergency will be lifted or not rests with the government."

About suspension of funda-

## ADB grant

FROM PAGE 1  
Mission Nurul Huda signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

In order to save the poor people from soaring food price, the government requested ADB to provide \$200 million as emergency support for implementing expanded safety net programmes for the poor and vulnerable.

In response, ADB conducted the need assessment jointly with IMF, World Bank and JBIC to determine the country's safety net requirement.

The proposed loan, being a concessional nature, will have a term of 32 years, including a grace period of eight years, with an interest rate of 1% during the grace period and thereafter 1.5%.

The focus of the project will be on improving access of the poor to food, income and livelihood support. Emergency assistance for food security will assist in relie