

## Local polls

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contested in the polls while one of the mayors-elect is currently in jail on charges of corruption and other crimes. He was put behind bars by the current government itself.

One thing however is amply clear that the public is very enthusiastic about their right to franchise, but the government's inadequacy in providing ample opportunity for that has been proven once again through the problems of voter registration numbers and the subsequent return home of many voters from the polling stations without voting, despite the very expensive production of voter list with photographs.

Although the elections, a key step towards restoring democracy, are being considered by the government a highly successful event, if the problems that manifested themselves in Monday's polls are not solved before the all-important national election, there might be enough reasons to worry.

Legal confusions and disputes regarding electoral and political reforms that started with the coming of Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker government should not be overlooked before the national election. Otherwise the very democracy for which everything is being done might eventually become endangered again.

Monday's polls which are being considered as a dress rehearsal for transition to democracy, however came as a big boost for political parties, who also got a flavour of political rights since the state of emergency had been imposed in January last year.

Participation of a large number of voters, who came out amid a state of emergency and voted to elect their representatives, are a testament to the people's keenness to see restoration of democracy sooner than later.

It now seems that the political parties will reorganise themselves in the run-up to the parliamentary election the government promised to hold by the end of this year.

Although only 1.2 million of the country's 80.5 million voters were eligible to vote in Monday's elections, the ballots were largely seen as a testing ground for the government's reforms and the new high-

## Maiden AL

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Hasina and Khaleque got emotional at the time.

The AL chief asked him to oversee the development of Khulna in utmost honesty and sincerity in the greater interest of the people.

Khaleque bagged 1,57,812 votes while acting mayor and BNP leader Moniruzzaman Moni polled 1,31,976 votes, giving the AL leader a win by 25,836 votes. 77.8 percent of the city's 3,99,376 voters cast their votes. 2038 votes were cancelled.

He said his first job as mayor would be to root out corruption from the KCC, ensure proper accountability there and make the city corporation a non-partisan and neutral body.

"I want to work together with the councillors leaving behind political differences in a bid to make Khulna a modern city," he said.

City residents hoped that the next mayor would wash his hands of past mayors and implement his election pledges in full.

"We hope the new mayor would not resort to corruption, nepotism and politicisation. We hope he'd not harbour any criminal activities," Mohammad Shakil Hossain, voter from ward No 24, said.

Later, Khaleque went to the house of his defeated rival Moni to seek his cooperation.

Moni offered Khaleque sweetmeats and said he has no complaint against anyone. The BNP leader said he would help the newly elected mayor in carrying out development works in the city. Other defeated mayoral candidates have also pledged all help.

No procession was brought out in the city to celebrate Khaleque's victory due to the state of emergency.

### REASONS BEHIND KHALEQUE'S VICTORY

Many city residents and AL activists think that Khaleque, who hails from Bagerhat, won the KCC mayoral race due to full-fledged support from his party and Jatiya Party as well as the working class.

Khaleque's associates told The Daily Star yesterday that a number of AL leaders including Sheikh Helal and ex-mayor Kazi Aminul Haque contributed to Khaleque's poll campaign fund.

Sources said Jamaat-e-Islami, which extended its support to Moniruzzaman Moni, did not campaign against Khaleque on the polling day, hoping that if Khaleque is elected, he will not be able to contest the parliamentary election from his constituency Bagerhat-3 where Jamaat holds second position in terms of number of votes won in the last general election.

Khaleque campaigned in the city extensively to woo the voters that had helped him win the mayoral race.

Khaleque's polling agents think that Khaleque emerged victorious as both the civil and police administration remained neutral during the city corporation polls.

tech voter list.

This time around candidates were selected giving priority to local leaders and activists, resulting in the election of three new faces as city mayors.

During the days of traditional electioneering, nominations used to come from central levels of political parties paying the least bit of attention to the opinions and sentiments of local people.

The traditional practice would end up electing one person repeatedly failing to meet changing aspirations of the voters.

Although, Awami League, one of the major parties in Bangladesh, got a landslide victory in the elections, it was however the current image crisis of its archrival Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the contradiction between the latter's statements and activities regarding participation in the elections, helped the former's victory to quite an extent.

The victories of AL-backed candidates in Rajshahi and Khulna, both of which are known as strongholds of BNP and Jamaat, underscore that nominating the right candidate still remains an important factor in elections.

Last but not the least, Monday's elections proved once again that AL and BNP still rules the world of politics in this country, in absence of a credible alternative yet.

## OMS of rice

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Food Adviser AMM Shawkat Ali chaired the meeting held at the secretariat, which also discussed progress of rice procurement, food stock position and various safety-net programmes.

The OMS will be operated in the capital and at upazila level six days a week for two months. Each individual will be allowed to buy 3 kg of rice a day, food ministry officials said.

This time 2.19 lakh metric tons (MT) of rice will be sold under the OMS programme. Of this, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) will sell 10,000 MT, while the rest will be sold through dealers.

Meanwhile, the government procured over seven lakh MT of rice until yesterday against its target of 15 lakh MT by August 31. There are 11 lakh MT of rice and two lakh MT of wheat in the government stock now, officials said.

The government has imported 2.68 lakh MT of rice from India and arrival of 2.32 lakh MT is expected within this month, yesterday's meeting was informed.

According to Trade Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), coarse rice now sells at Tk 34-38 a kg and fine rice at Tk 38-45 a kg.

## Police

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bringing changes in the traditional Annual Confidential Report (ACR) system and we already submitted a proposal in this regard to the home ministry for approval," added the IGP.

While talking to The Daily Star regarding the implementation of the new human resources policy, DMP Commissioner Naim Ahmed said, "We have formulated the new policy for the posting and promotion of the lower-ranked police personnel, mainly constables, so that they can be promoted to Nayek, assistant sub-inspector (ASI) and Habilder positions following due process under the newly formulated policy."

"In police history, there had never been any specific guideline for posting and promotion of the constables who represent over 71 percent of our total force," the DMP commissioner said adding, "The constables seeking promotion will have to take examinations on a first come first serve basis."

"In order to ensure fairness and transparency in the promotion process, a board has been formed to examine the exam papers," Naim said assuring that under the new policy, high police officials will no longer be able to engage the constables in household chores or make them run errands.

The DMP currently has 23,599 personnel including 16,720 (70.85 percent) constables.

## Parties stick

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demanded immediate withdrawal of the emergency.

Awami League acting President Zillur Rahman also demanded that the government completely withdraw the state of emergency before the parliamentary polls.

"The local body polls lacked enthusiasm as they were handicapped by the state of emergency and many voters did not go to the polling centres for fear of emergency," he said at a press conference at the party's Dhanmondi office yesterday.

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mojaheed said the government's claim of holding Monday's polls in a peaceful, free and fair manner is "one-sided".

"The national elections in 1991, 1996 and 2001 were also held peacefully but without the state of emergency," Mojaheed told The Daily Star, adding that everyone will say that election under emergency cannot be held in a free manner.

## Sylhet still hangs

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Monday night and through yesterday.

Despite Kamran coming out victorious in all polling centres, his family and close aides are cautious about his future.

Arman Ahmed Shiplu, Kamran's son, told The Daily Star, "We are not sure what will happen but the people of Sylhet needs a mayor. We hope the government will reconsider his cases."

He said the family would move for his bail.

Arrested May last year Badaruddin Ahmed Kamran currently faces four charges: kitchen-market scam (an eight-year old charge), possessing "foreign liquor", violating the Emergency Powers Rules, and illegally acquiring wealth, for which he was charge-sheeted Thursday.

He is likely to face the divisional special judge in connection with the illegal-wealth case within a week, according to Sylhet's public prosecutor.

But his political backers, especially the Awami League (AL), are confident Monday's huge victory over his rivals has given them a enough leverage in negotiations with the government to not only release Kamran, but also other detained AL leaders.

Former Sylhet MP and senior AL leader AMA Muhiut said, "We will soon move for his release at the High Court. He should come out and join his work. A number of laws are being distorted in the name of emergency and the rule of law is totally absent."

"We think that he is being harassed with all these false charges. He is detained while the Dhaka mayor is roaming free despite several more serious charges against him," he added.

Sylhet City AL Secretary Mesbahuddin Shiraj told The Daily Star, "We hope the people's overwhelming verdict will be acknowledged by the government and they will relieve him of the charges. We will also pursue the legal path."

Meanwhile, a number of AL workers told The Daily Star that there would be no alternative to street protests and "serious consequences" if Kamran is "robbed" of his mayoral victory through a court conviction on his four charges.

## Khaleda ill

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the court fixed the date after the defence side submitted a copy of the High Court order which had stayed the case proceedings for two months.

The HC delivered the stay order on July 15. Khaleda's lawyer advocate Masud Ahmed Talukder told The Daily Star that the jail authorities in its report to the court said it was not safe for the BNP chief to move as her pressure was fluctuating.

Khaleda's son Arafat Rahman Koko, who is on parole and enjoying exemption from court appearance on medical grounds in the case, was represented by his lawyer.

Among other accused in the case, former LGD minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, former land minister M Shamsul Islam, former agriculture minister MK Anwar and former industries minister Motur Rahman Nazami appeared in the court yesterday.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case against 13 people including Khaleda and Koko with Tejgaon Police Station on September 2 last year for awarding Global Agro Trade Company (Gatco) a container-handling deal through unfair means.

After investigation, the anti-graft commission indicted 11 others in the case and submitted a charge sheet to a court on May 13 against 24 people.

## Kuwait

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Affairs Faisal Al-Hajji in the meantime warned companies of stern action including freezing their recruitment files and referring them to court for legal action if they fail to abide by the decision.

Duwaitah vowed to wage a relentless war on visa traders, regardless of their social status. He also said a number of committees were formed to investigate abuse of expatriate workers.

Kuwaiti lawmaker Jamaan Al-Harbash called on the government to announce a comprehensive plan to end the visa trading, saying that the government measures has so far been ineffective in resolving the expatriate workers' issues.

Acknowledging the urgency to formulate a law to safeguard workers' rights, he said members of parliament will submit a request for holding a special session at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan to discuss government measures regarding labour issues.

Harbash also called on the government to take stern actions against individuals and companies that are involved in visa trade and violate workers' rights.

A group of influential people have been making money through illegal means with the connivance of officials in the ministries in exchange for favours, he observed.

Meanwhile, the parliament's human rights committee has introduced a bill laying down jail terms of up to 15 years for offences including forced labour, worker abuse or sexual exploitation of maids, reports the Kuwait Times.

Ali Al-Baghli, head of Kuwait Society for Human Rights, said there was a good chance the law would be passed. "It is a good idea to present a local law that prohibits human trafficking because Kuwait's reputation has reached a low level," he said.

In June, a US State Department report on forced labour and sex trade placed Kuwait in the 'worst offender' category alongside fellow Gulf states Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman.

## Vanishing forests

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The Last Bit' was organised by The Daily Star on July 30.

The speakers also proposed making amendments to the existing laws and policies regarding forest and wildlife, which are almost century old, with a view to bring about an attitudinal change in the colonial approach being practised to save forest by 'using rifle' or 'making fence around the forests'.

Citing examples from neighbouring countries like India, Nepal and Sri Lanka, the speakers observed that forest and wildlife cannot be saved if indigenous and local communities are not made a part of the conservation process, whatever might be the name of the process like social forestation, reserved or protected forest or wildlife preservation.

They also observed that different government initiatives taken up so far with the objective of making profit-oriented business out of forest have failed to yield success and destroyed the forest and wildlife instead.

The speakers said the present status of the forests and existing rules and policies reinforce the perception that the policy and rules the governments have so far taken have been anti-poor or pro-rich.

They came down heavily on the government for planting alien species of trees including Acacia, Eucalyptus, oil palm and rubber in the name of different projects and plantations that they said is causing damage to the environment, and the forests.

Prof Dr Reza Khan, noted wildlife expert and head of the Dubai Zoo, Inam Ul Haque, eminent bird expert and photographer, Prof Anwarul Islam, bio-diversity expert, Prof Farid Ahsan, chairman of Zoology Department of Chittagong University, Raja Devasish Roy, special assistant to the chief adviser on Chittagong Hill Tracts, advisor leader Sanjib Drong, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, director, programme, Bela, and journalist Pinaki Roy, among others, attended the roundtable while news editor of The Daily Star Inam Ahmed moderated the discussion.

The speakers made several proposals to ensure preservation of forest and wildlife. These include no-settlement in the forest area, effective and strengthened governance, mobilisation of forest officers, no-demarcation in forest, handover of forest land to local or indigenous people community forestry, no plantation in natural forest, national level committee with equal participation from forest officials, NGOs and local people.

**DR REZA KHAN**  
"Forest department cut down trees, and may be it is needed to collect revenue. But it has to be taken into account that wildlife is related to the forest. And nowadays it has become a dire necessity to create a separate wildlife department to save the wildlife," Dr Reza said.

He said many countries in the world have introduced wildlife departments that do not have the power to cut down trees. The departments are entrusted with the job of preserving soil, water and air given under its jurisdiction.

"Means of earning can also be introduced using wildlife. The earning can be made by collecting flower or fruits or honey or cultivating leech and different other worms," Dr Reza said.

He said creating a separate department of wildlife will also be helpful for the forest department as donors are willing to grant money for dealing with issues regarding wildlife. But they do not grant money for issues regarding forest.

"Whatever you mean by saying Chittagong Hill Tracts or whatever you name that area, the fact is that around 90% forests have just disappeared gradually since 1970. Only 10% forest might be found existing at this moment and even these forests are not virgin or primary and created by plantation," said Dr Reza.

"Now we do not have a piece of forest left that can be called natural forest except for the Sundarbans," he said. "Even in the Sundarbans you are not going to find trees above the height of 70 feet, indicating that, most probably, ages of the trees in Sundarbans are less than 30 years."

Dr Reza said, "We are very much unfortunate as the forest is going down with our forest department only watching that their area is reducing. And even the truth of the declining forest is not reflected in the statistics forest department publish."

**INAM UL HAQUE**  
"We are lucky that we have such a good piece of forest like Sundarbans, the biggest and the finest mangrove forest in the world. It is an excellent piece of forest. But I wonder as I find no friend for the forest," said Inam.

"But we do have enemies of forest like syndicated loggers and gangs, poor people who scavenge in forest and do not have adequate knowledge about forest and lastly the forest department," he added.

Inam Ul Haque said, "People do not know about forest and we could not make it clear to them that we are friends of forest. It would be the best to create a separate wildlife department. Few pieces of forests must be given to another department who would care for wildlife. At least 20% forests be given to the

wildlife department and 80% can remain with the forest department."

"The concept of wildlife department will be useful as it will come up with a new agenda. A new department with new agenda will save the wildlife and boost people with the spirit to work in favour of wildlife and forest," he said.

Citing example of Tanguar Haor where the government is facing difficulties to preserve wildlife, Inam said, "Unless we have a department, we cannot function with issues like this. And we cannot develop capacity to carry out that kind of work unless there is a department to look after the task."

"All the wildlife centres, zoos, safari parks and captivating centres must be brought under the wildlife department and its jurisdiction should not be restricted merely to forests but to wildlife," he added.

"And right of the people living in or around the forests comes first. And we should be weariless when there are indigenous people as they are willing to listen to us. They do cause damage to the forests, but, of course, less than we do," Inam observed.

**PROF ANWARUL ISLAM**  
The wildlife department introduced in Sri Lanka two years back operates smoothly now. Protected forest is not the only place where animals inhabit. There are animals living beyond the protected area of forest, said Prof Anwarul Islam.

"Now the protected area of forest stands less than 2% of the total forest though the government in the last convention on Conventional Bio-diversity pledged to raise protected forest area by 10% by 2010," he said.

"Though we say that 35 species of amphibians, 650 species of birds and 112 species of mammals are available in our country do we actually know how many of a species have survived?"

Prof Anwar said, "The ecological and cultural erosion we are causing to the forests can not be reversed in a thousand years as ecological engineering is so slow. If action is to be taken in this regard it should be taken right now."

"We have to understand that if a gibbon survives, the forest will survive with it and the people living there will also survive. But we did not get any fixed opinion or agenda or mission from any of our earlier ministers in this regard," he added.

He said, "We must look for a way to make political commitment regarding all these issues. There must be a national accounting system."

"It is a mystery that once harmful cultivation of rubber has become profitable and non-harmful and rubber plantation in private arrangement is going on in the hills," he added.

**FARID AHSAN**

"All the forest we have now are secondary forests and it has become a necessity to set up wildlife management. It is unbelievable that the wildlife advisory board of the forest department did not hold its meeting in the last three years," said Prof Farid Ahsan.

**RAJA DEVASISH ROY**  
"I wonder what difference wildlife department will bring if it is introduced comprising the same persons from the forest department. In it we must ensure presence of those people who really love wildlife," he added.

"Forest department thought that they would preserve forests with rifle and I fear if changes cannot be brought in the attitudes of forest department officials the new department will come in no help," he added.

"Jhum cultivation is neither harmful nor non-harmful to the hills and forests. Nowadays hill people get rice in only four months from Jhum cultivation and who will provide them with rice if Jhum cultivation is stopped. A Jhum farmer knows how to cultivate in the hills and forests and he has every reason to cultivate," said Raja.

"You have to have viable alternative livelihood for hill people if you want to stop Jhum cultivation and managing a viable alternative livelihood is not that simple," he added.

"The forest policy we have at present was formulated in 1994 while our forest master plan will expire in 2013. The present caretaker government cannot take such big decisions regarding forests. But we can begin with some work. Let the elected government come and talk and let them say if they have clear idea about these issues or not," Rajasaid.

"If we follow the yellow stone model of preserving forests introduced by the British colonizers it will violate human rights and continue widening the gap between people and forest department officials. We have to recognise rights of indigenous people with a holistic view," Rajasaid.

"The people who have been surviving in a forest using its land and produces will never cut down trees risking existence of the forest as they have to hand the forest over to next generation," he added.

"It cannot be happened in this way that you announce an area as reserve forest and do not allow people to cultivate. We cannot think of forest as an industry. We must recognise the knowledge of local or indigenous communities," he added.

**SANJIB DRONG**  
"Who lives out there on the hills or in the forests are human beings. What you call or name as 'resources', we call that 'our land'. The people have been living in the forest for thousand years," said Sanjib Drong.

"If you want to preserve the forests, it must be done by recognising knowledge of those people who have been protecting forests for thousand of years. The most important point for preserving forest is to pay heed to the people who live there. You cannot preserve forests by 'fencing around' or 'using rifle'," he added.

"Government must think before establishing an eco park. If the government must establish an eco park, then do it on empty land where people do not live. I do not find any reason why the government is unwilling to share the issues regarding forests with local people or why the government do not want to use knowledge of the people?" Sanjib Drong added.

"The way the forest department treat indigenous people seems that they are not human being. If you want to run a project in forest, talk with indigenous people and involve them with it. Give local people a partnership in it," Sanjib Drong added.

**SYEDA RIZWANA HASAN**  
"The forest law was formulated in our country with the objective of collecting revenue using forest and through profit-oriented business in forest. Recently, India has brought amendment to their act acknowledging that historical injustice has been done to their forests. If India can confess to their fault, then why should we not follow them," said Rizwana.

"But we are wearing the same shoe we wore during the period of British colony. Our forest act was amended only once in the last 81 years since 1927 and that was for incorporating social forestation which was opposed in almost every area in Bangladesh," she added.

"And we could not have village forestry rules by this long period though there is provision in the forest act for introducing village forestry," she added.

"The act does not tell anything like 'compassion to wildlife' while the constitution of India has this mentioned in particular. Both of our forest and wildlife acts must be amended," she said.

"The indigenous people are preserving forest in Nepal while community forestry has become successful in India. On the other hand, in Bangladesh, Eco-parks are being built by replacing indigenous people," she added.

"Forest department must be open to the people in maintenance of forests and wildlife. The settlement policy must be changed as lands on char are being given to shrimp business while landless are being forced to move in forest for habitation. Forest officials must be aware of compassion to wildlife," she added.

## 10 months

**FROM PAGE 16**  
adding some kerosene spilled on her body as she was holding the stove.

"He emptied the stove on me, lighted a matchstick and threw that at me. But I dodged it and tried to run away," she said.

But in the end she could not escape.

While screaming, Arzina started rolling on ground to douse the fire. She managed to put out the flames seconds before neighbours stormed in for help.

After she was rushed to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, the neighbours turned to Kamu, beat up him and handed him over to police.

She was shifted to DMCH the next day.

Liton Sheikh, her brother, filed a case against Kamu under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act with Boalia Police Station.

Talking with The Daily Star over phone, a next-door neighbour, who desired not to be named, said the marriage fell apart as the husband did not want it to continue. "He used to torture her at times."

"Neighbours say they rushed there hearing her screams and rescued her. They will give statement against the husband," investigation officer Shamsuddoha Sarker told The Daily Star.

Kamu denies the charge against him and claims Arzina accidentally caught fire while cooking.

## Babar

**FROM PAGE 16**  
whose body was found outside a building in Bashundhara residential area on July 5, 2006, in exchange for Tk 21 crore.

The hearing of the petition moved by advocate MA Malek was held yesterday in the HC.

## Dr Mosharraf

**FROM PAGE 16**  
collecting taxes, and it does not provide for prosecuting and sending anybody to jail. The case against him was filed under this law and it was later brought under the EPR to keep him in jail.

He also said the case was filed with mala fide intention of harassing him and that initiation and continuation of proceedings of the case are without lawful authority.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq assisted by barrister Mahbubuddin Khokon and advocate AHM Mizanur Rahman moved the petition for Mosharraf.

## Voters stay loyal

**FROM PAGE 1**  
"The Election Commission did look to have honest and competent candidates in the polls. However, we must accept the voters' verdict," he said.

Huda said the EC would now work to correct whatever problems it faced Monday to ensure fairness of the parliamentary election is beyond question.

Meanwhile, political analysts said the peaceful conduct of Monday's polls, first since reconstitution of the EC in February last year, is a demonstration of the commission's capability to hold elections in a free and fair manner.

In analysis of election results, some of them noted that the abysmal performance of BNP even in its traditional strongholds might be a reflection of public disapproval of the way it ruled the country between 2001 and 2006.

**FROM RESULT SHEETS**  
In Rajshahi City Corporation, the total number of votes cast was 2,11,231. As per the election laws, a contestant had to win 26,403 votes to avoid forfeiture of deposit.

Only two of the 15 candidates have been able to escape the loss. The winner, AL-backed AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, bagged 98,360 votes while his nearest contender Mosaddek Hossain of BNP got 74,550.

Of those who lost deposits, Akhtaruzzaman Bablu polled 883 votes, Nasir Ahmed Bidet 1,008, Farman Ali 351, Abul Kalam Azad 376, Abdul Khaleq 299, Abdul Matin Khan 1,161, Enamul Haque 841, Durul Huda 1,789, Masudul Haque Dulu 5,404, Raihanur Rahman 1,457, Ruhul Quddus Tunu 404, Rezaun Nabi 12,721 and Siddiqur Rahman got 9,406 votes.

In Khulna City Corporation, the votes cast totalled 3, 10,742 and candidates there had to get 38,842 to get back their deposits.