

## ELECTION fever

### C'nawabganj: 63 polling centres 'risky' in 4 municipalities

Sixty-three polling centres out of 80 in four municipalities of the district have been identified as 'risky', said Police Superintendent Sajjadur Rahman.

He said police, paramilitary troops, and Ansars will be deployed at the 'risky' centres during voting.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) K.M. Ali Azam said necessary steps have been taken to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections to Chapainabganj, Shibganj, Rohonpur and Nachole municipalities scheduled for January 12.

The Election Commission (EC) on Thursday announced deployment of army in Shibganj and Chapainabganj municipalities as the commission has identified the two municipal areas as vulnerable to poll violence.

### Noakhali: Candidates move door to door for vote

Election campaign is gaining momentum in seven municipalities of the district. Mayor and councillor candidates are going door to door to woo votes for them.

Besides visiting the voters, the candidates and their workers are distributing leaflets and holding public rally in different areas of Noakhali, Senbag, Kabirhat, Hatiya, Chaumohani, Chakhill and Bashurhat municipalities, reports our correspondent.

As many as 31 mayor aspirants, 300 councillor candidates and 71 women for the reserved seats are in the election race in the seven municipalities. They are making different pledges to the voters to get their support.

Nur Nabi, 56, a shop owner of Noakhali municipal area said, "We want development of the municipality, not relief. I will cast my vote for a competent and honest mayoral candidate."

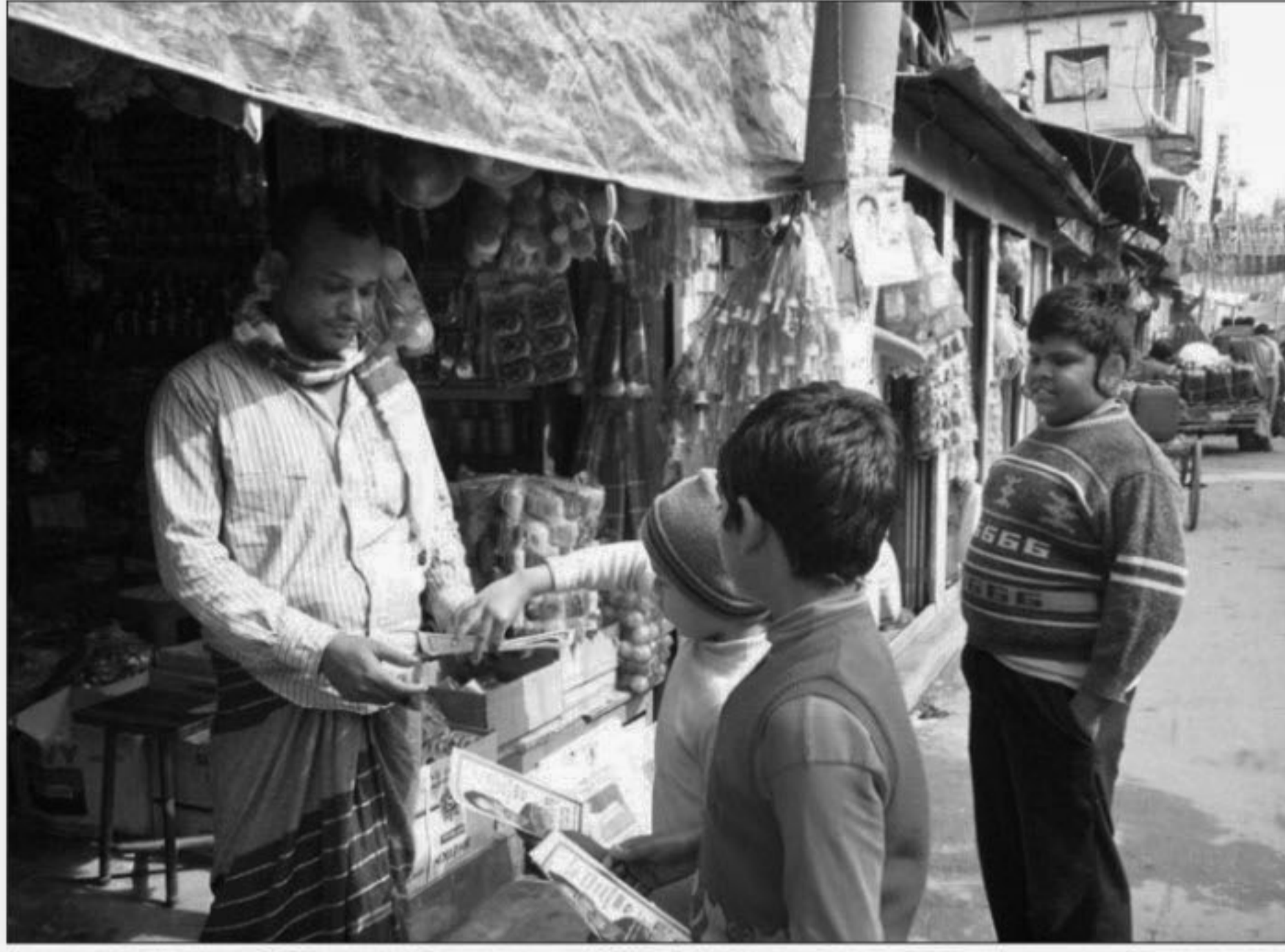
Satish Gupta, 65, a Hindu community leader of Bashurhat municipality, said he and his family members will cast their votes for those who are honest, sincere and hard working.

### Benapole: Area wears a festive look as campaign is on

Electioneering in Benapole municipality has reached its peak as mayoral and councillor aspirants are visiting different areas of the municipality and seeking votes for them, according to a correspondent.

Besides visiting the voters, miking, postering and public meetings by the candidates and their workers have given the whole area a festive look.

A total of four mayoral candidates are in the poll race. They are Asrafal Alam Liton (AL), Nazim uddin (BNP) and independent candidates Sirajul Islam Siraj and Wahiduzzaman.



Kids distribute leaflets in favour of their candidates at Puratan Bazar of Gopalganj, right, a paid campaigner seeks vote using a megaphone at Lalmonirhat municipality.



PHOTO: STAR

# Biharis to play 'decisive role' at Saidpur town

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Urdu speaking voters, commonly known as Biharis, are likely to play the decisive role in the upcoming municipal election in Saidpur 'railway town' as the community constitutes about half of 70,706-strong electorate in the area.

This time seven candidates are contesting for the mayor post in Saidpur municipality comprising 15 wards.

They are Awami League leader Aktar Hossain Badal (symbol television), Awami League leader Hitler Chowdhury (symbol cup and plate), BNP leader Amzan Hossain Sarker (symbol pen and ink pot), JP leader Siddiqui Alam Siddique (symbol telephone), Jobaidul Islam backed by Muktiyoddha Purnabason Samity (symbol wall clock) and independent candidate Tawhid Imam Mukta (symbol spectacles).

Besides, 84 candidates are contesting for 15 councillor seats and 26 female candidates are contesting for five reserved seats for women councillors.



Shahin Akhtar Shahin, a ward commissioner for two consecutive terms, is an influential Urdu speaking candidate for the mayoral post. He is also organising secretary of Saidpur upazila unit of BNP. Generally Bihari voters have liking for BNP as political party.

In the circumstances, Shahin Akhtar is seen as a strong candidate for the mayoral post.

"We will cast vote unitedly for the candidate who would safeguard the interest of our community," said Abdul Rahim, 45, an Urdu speaking voter at Munshipara in Saidpur municipality.

On the other hand, Bangalee voters are divided into several groups, said Abdullah Kafi, a voter in Nayatola area.

During the British period, Urdu speaking people from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and other parts of undivided India came to work at the large railway workshop at Saidpur. Many of them

began to live in this town permanently even after their retirement.

A good number of Urdu speaking people also migrated from India, especially from Bihar, after partition of the sub-continent in 1947 to save their lives in the wake of violent communal riots there.

During our Liberation War in 1971, most of them supported the Pakistan government. Many of them even worked as accomplices of the Pakistan army in massacre, loot and rape against the Bangalee people.

After the independence, most of the Urdu speaking people at Saidpur declared themselves as Pakistani citizens and got their names listed with International Red Cross Society, indicating that they would like to go to Pakistan. They began to live in 21 refugee camps run by Red Cross at Saidpur, waiting for their repatriation.

They did not have voting rights in independent Bangladesh as they were not

citizens of the country. On the other hand, a good number of Biharis who accepted Bangladesh as their own land and became citizens here started enjoying voting rights as well as other rights like Bangla speaking citizens of the country.

Meanwhile, almost all successive Pakistani governments showed reluctance to repatriate the Urdu speaking community to that country, much to their frustration.

With the passage of time, the once adamant Urdu speaking people, especially their descendants, changed mind and started movement to be citizens of the country.

In connection with a writ petition filed by some Urdu speaking young men a couple of years ago, the High Court declared that Urdu speaking people who were born in this country after independence should be recognized as Bangladeshi citizens. Their voting rights were also granted.

Since then, the number of Urdu speaking voters in Saidpur municipality increased greatly and they emerged as the decisive force in any kind of election -- parliamentary or local government.

## VIOLATION OF POLL CODE Three mayor, eight councillor candidates fined

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Three mayor and eight councillor candidates have been fined in Gaibandha, Kishoreganj, Sunamganj and Lalmonirhat districts.

In Gaibandha, an electoral summary court led by judicial magistrate Azizur Rahman yesterday fined 11 people including two mayor and four councillor candidates.

The court fined Awami League (AL) backed mayor candidate Shah Masud Jahangir Kabir Milton Tk2,000 for hanging oversized posters and JSD backed mayor candidate Shah Shariful Islam Bablu Tk500 on charge of pasting posters on walls, reports our correspondent.

Besides, four councillor candidates were also fined. They are Md Shaheed (Tk2,000), Abdul Aziz (Tk1,000), Jahangir Hossain (Tk500) and Nurul Islam (Tk100). The fines were slapped on charge of pasting poster on wall violating election code.

The court also fined five traders Jahidul Huq, Shahidul Islam, Abdul Gafur, Mahbubur Rahman and Ameer Hossain on charge of pasting posters on the wall of business houses.

In Kishoreganj, a mayor and two councillor candidates were fined by a mobile court for violating electoral code of conduct during campaign, reports our correspondent.

A mobile court on Friday fined BNP mayoral candidate of Kishoreganj municipality Majharul Istam Tk2000 for using loudspeakers after 9:00pm during a street meeting at Kalibari crossing.

The court led by assistant commissioner (land) Aminur Rahman also fined councillor candidate of ward no 5 Ashrafur Alam Shamim Tk



2000 for organising procession and councillor candidate of the same ward Masudur Rahman Pallab Tk2000 for staging big showdown.

A mobile court in Derai municipality of Sunamganj yesterday fined six people including a councillor candidate for violating electoral code of conduct, reports our staff correspondent in Sylhet.

Md Shamsul Haque, the returning officer for the municipal election fined Joinul Haque, a councillor candidate from ward no. 1 and five other people for violation code of conduct. They were fined for pasting posters on public buildings and other places.

In Lalmonirhat, a councillor candidate of Patgram municipal election was fined by a mobile court on Thursday night.

Accused Rakin Hasan Ripon of ward 8 had to pay a fine of Tk5000.

Patgram upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) and upazila returning officer Harunur Rashid said, as per electoral code of conduct, a councillor candidate can open one electioneering office. But the accused councillor candidate opened three electioneering offices in the ward for campaigning in favour of him.

In Jhenidah Sadar, acting mayor Abdul Malek was fined by executive magistrate Abu Jafar due to breach of election code on Thursday evening reports our correspondent.

He was fined Tk 3000 for using government jeep for conducting election campaign on behalf of BNP backed mayor candidate Khalilur Rahman under Shaikupa municipality.

## Mayor candidates in Bakerganj, Narail face voters

STAR NATIONAL DESK



Mayor candidates in Bakerganj and Narail have vowed to keep themselves free from corruption and work for development of their respective municipalities, if voted to power.

They also promised to fight against drug, stalking and extortion, ensure supply of safe drinking water, preserve communal harmony and beautification of the municipality.

Four out of five mayor aspirants in Bakerganj municipality made their electoral pledges and responded to voters' queries in a 'face-to-face with people' programme organised by Sushashoner Jonno Nagarik (Sujan) on local shaheed minar premises on Saturday afternoon, reports our correspondent.

Mayor candidates in Narail municipality responded to voters' queries in a 'face-to-face with people' programme at Narail town intersection at 5:00pm on Saturday.

Three mayoral candidates--Jahangir Biswas, Asok Kundu and Julfikar Ali Mondol pledged to fight against crime and corruption, ensure civic amenities for the townspeople, if elected, reports our correspondent.

BNP-backed candidate Julfikar Ali Mondol said if voters elect him, he will develop drainage system the roads of the town.

Jahangir Biswas said he will ensure people's participation in implementing development schemes and set up a shishu park, if voted to power.

in development work. They said they will follow the code of conduct to ensure a free, fair and transparent election in the municipality.

Addressing the function, Sujan Bakergani unit president Swapan Kumar Das urged the voters to elect an honest and competent candidate as their mayor.

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Kazi Hafizur Rahman, president of Sujan Narail unit, presided over the programme.



PHOTO: STAR

The dying Gorai awaits a new lease of life as re-excavation of the river began recently.

## Giving the Gorai a new life

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

The ongoing excavation of the Gorai River bears bright prospect of ensuring natural flow of freshwater to the country's south-western region and saving the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest, from salinity.

Under a Tk 942 crore project, huge amount of silt from the riverbed will be removed and a 2,200 metre flow-divider and Ganga-Gorai guide embankment will be built in the 31 kilometres of river way from Kushtia Sadar to Khoksha upazila, project sources said.

During the first phase of the work till April this year, silt from 12 kilometres of the riverbed from the main flow will be removed while maintenance dredging will be done during the one-year-long second phase till April 2012.

China Harbor Engineering Company is conducting the work that started on December 1 last year.

The 386-kilometre-long Gorai River, an important source of fresh water in the south-western region, depends on the Padma for its flow.

As the Padma itself remains lean in the dry season (December-May), its main branch Gorai also sees gradual decline in flow during the period. Consequently, intrusion of increased saline water in the coastal areas in greater Khulna region poses a serious threat to the Sundarbans and leaves an adverse effect on water quality, nature, fishery, agriculture, navigability and trade in a vast area.

Seven of the 15 rivers dependent on the Gorai River are now nearly dead while eight others are following. The nearly dead rivers include Hisna, Kaliganga, Kumar, Hamkumra, Harihar and Chitra.

In 1996, the then government took a large-scale dredging scheme on the Gorai and 34 km river was dredged in two phases. But before its maintenance dredging started, the project work was abandoned in 2001 when the BNP-led government took over.

To keep Gorai River alive, around 50,000 to 55,000 cusec of water is necessary in the Padma.

But the river in Bangladesh gets on an average 38,000 to 42,000 cusec water in last three months of dry season although it was supposed to get 55,000 to 70,000 cusec as per the India-Bangladesh agreement signed in 1999, WDB sources said.

Due to withdrawal of Ganges water by India at Farakka in the upstream, the Padma sees scanty flow, affecting the GK (Ganges-Kobadak) project, which has been used to irrigate around 1.16 lakh hectares of land in the region since 1959.

After assuming the office in 2009, the present government initiated resumption of excavation of the Gorai River and donors assured necessary assistance for it.

A joint team of Bangladesh and India started recording the water level at different points of the Ganges and the Padma on January 1 and the work will continue till May this year.

## PRE-POLL CLASHES IN BHOLA 12 including two candidates hurt

UNB, Bhola

Two councillor candidates and 10 others were injured in pre-election clashes between Awami League and BNP supporters in the last two days over municipal election in Borhanuddin and Lalmohon upazilas.

Three including a councillor candidate were admitted to a local hospital.

Witnesses said the clashes took place when Awami League mayor candidate Emdadul Islam Tuhin's supporters attacked the supporters of BNP mayor candidate Enayet Kabir in Ward No. 9 in Lalmohon municipal area on Saturday afternoon.

The injured include



Maron Ali Hawlader, Rafiq, Nasim, Shah-e-Alam, Babul Dhali, Sabu and Habib. A case was filed.

On Friday night supporters of BNP mayor candidate Moniruzzaman Moni attacked the supporters of rival mayoral candidate Enayet Kabir. UP chairman Akhtaruzzaman Tito and several others were injured in the attack. Police charged batons to control the situation.

Awami League mayor candidate Emdadul Islam alleged that workers of two BNP candidates are fighting with each other to establish their supremacy while trying to put the blame on Awami League workers.