

# BNP favourites

**FROM PAGE 1**  
municipalities with BNP-blessed aspirants bagging 25 mayoral posts and their rivals from AL21.

Pro-BNP contestants performed better in AL's stronghold Sylhet division by winning nine out of 16 mayoral posts. Rebel candidates from AL caused defeat of the party-backed ones in several municipalities in the division.

In yesterday's polls, rebel candidates from AL got two and BNP rebels got two.

The polls began on January 12 with voting in 72 municipalities of Rajshahi and Rangpur divisions. BNP-backed favourites dominated the battle of ballots in the two divisions winning 33 mayoral posts while AL-blessed ones bagged only 18.

A day after suffering setback in the two northern divisions, AL-backed candidates fought back by winning eight more mayoral posts than their archrivals from BNP in Barisal and Khulna divisions. In the 49 municipalities of the two divisions, AL-supported candidates secured 22 mayoral posts and BNP-blessed ones 14.

AL-backed contestants performed very poorly in Khulna division bagging only four mayoral posts out of 30, but their landslide

victory in Barisal division securing 18 out of 19 mayoral posts helped them fight back in the battle.

Out of 121 mayoral posts in the four divisions, AL-backed candidates won 40 and pro-BNP ones 47. Rebel candidates from AL bagged 13 and those from BNP six. The results reflect a close fight between the two parties.

Before the municipalities of Dhaka divisions went to polls on January 17, the AL high command had made hectic move to persuade the party's rebel candidates to back the party-blessed ones in the remaining polls. But the results in Dhaka, and Sylhet and Chittagong divisions showed that the rebels finally caused defeat of many of AL-backed contestants.

Though non-partisan in nature, the local body elections see political parties pick candidates and throw their weight behind them.

The Election Commission had announced the schedule for polls in 243 municipalities but one of those -- Brahmanbaria municipality-- could not go to polls yesterday due to the High Court's stay order. Of the 242 municipalities, results of 236 were available while the election process including voting in six other was not completed.

# Calm broken

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Citing an atmosphere adverse to free voting, the Election Commission suspended the election to Senbagh municipality and 17 out of 25 polling stations in Noakhali.

BNP will today enforce a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Noakhali town and a half-day hartal in Laxmipur, demanding cancellation of the polls there.

Opposition-backed mayoral candidates in around a dozen municipalities in Noakhali, Feni, Laxmipur, Habiganj, Chandpur, Moulvibazar and Comilla districts have accused the ruling Awami League men of snatching ballot boxes, intimidating voters and assaulting election officials, report our district correspondents.

Voting in the other municipalities of the two divisions were relatively peaceful.

Earlier on January 12, 13 and 17, the polls in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Barisal, Khulna and Dhaka divisions were peaceful and fair except a few irregularities. The EC was widely lauded for the way it conducted the elections in those five divisions.

Briefing journalists at its headquarters in the capital yesterday afternoon, BNP demanded re-election to all 14 municipalities in Feni, Noakhali and Laxmipur districts; Kachua, Faridganj and Chhengar Char municipalities in Chandpur; and Swandip in Chittagong district.

Nazrul Islam Khan, standing committee member of the party, alleged that supporters of the AL-backed candidates had taken control of the polling centres in all municipalities of the three districts.

He termed yesterday's situation dreadful compared to that on the previous three election days.

He also questioned the role of the law enforcers and the administration.

A six-member BNP delegation led by Senior Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir went to the EC to demand cancellation of the elections in the three districts. But the election commissioners were at a meeting then.

Contacted, AL presidium member Obaidul Quader said ensuring a free and fair local government election was a challenge and the government came through with flying colours.

He claimed the elections were free and fair save three or four incidents of violence.

Meanwhile, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbul Alam Hanif blamed the BNP men for the untoward incidents during yesterday's polls.

Talking to The Daily Star, he said cadres of BNP lawmakers Zainul Abidin Faroque, Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anee and Mahbul Uddin Khokan resorted to violence to foil the elections.

Stern actions would be taken against those found to have been involved in unlawful activities to tarnish the government's image, added the AL leader.

The EC was not fully satisfied with the polling yesterday. Referring to the stray incidents of violence, Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussein said, "We will investigate why this happened."

He, however, said they are happy with the overall conduct of the municipal elections.

Sohul was talking to reporters after the voting closed.

The returning officer for the municipalities in Noakhali said he postponed the voting in 17 centres after some people stormed the polling stations, beat up officials and took away ballot papers, boxes, seals and other materials.

In a circular ordering the postponement, he said, "When we along with the police and the vigilant teams went to Arunachandra High School polling centre, the unruly

people vandalised our vehicles."

Earlier, the presiding officers of the centres concerned informed the returning officer over the phone that people had beat up polling officials and were stuffing ballots in the box.

Similarly, election officials in Senbagh too were forced to suspend the polling there.

Clashes between AL and BNP supporters left at least 10 people injured in the municipality.

Harunur Rashid Azad, BNP-backed mayoral candidate in Noakhali, withdrew from the race alleging that the ruling party men captured at least 25 centres, reports our district correspondent.

At a press conference around 2:30pm, Azad on behalf of his party called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Noakhali for today.

Locals said ruling party men snatched ballot boxes in Pilot High School centre in Senbagh around 12:30pm and beat up presiding officer Ferdous Ahmed for trying to prevent them.

Incensed, BNP supporters later vandalised the AL office and some minibuses and covered vans.

Around 11:00am, AL adherents snatched a ballot box from Noakhali Primary School centre. They broke open the box and threw the ballots in the air.

FENI  
BNP-picked mayoral candidates in two municipalities here accused the AL men of snatching ballot boxes, seizing the polling stations and driving their polling agents out.

At separate press conferences, BNP-backed candidates Faruk Harun and Nurul Absar rejected the polls and demanded re-election.

LAXMIPUR  
AL-backed mayoral candidate Abu Taher and his supporters allegedly drove out the agents of BNP-

backed candidate Hasanuzzaman Chowdhury Mintu from 18 polling centres and took control of those, reports a correspondent.

Addressing a press conference, he claimed that Taher and his men seized the centres around 10:00am. He said he does not accept the vote and demanded re-election.

BNP announced a half-day hartal today in the district.

CHANDPUR  
The supporters of AL and BNP backed candidates fought pitched battles in Chhengar Char municipality, leaving at least 10 people hurt.

Alleging irregularities at different centres, BNP-backed mayoral candidate Amena Begum boycotted the polls and lodged a complaint with the upazila returning officer.

Voting at a few stations here was halted for some time. But it resumed with the help of the law enforcers.

COMILLA  
Polling in Dhatisyay Government Primary School of Nangalkut municipality was postponed as some miscreants allegedly beat up the presiding officer and tried to snatch the ballot box around noon.

Police fired four blanks and rescued the ballot box. They arrested Chhatra League leader Shahjahan Saju on the spot. Saju was sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment and sent to Comilla jail for terrorising voters.

HABIGANJ  
Around 25 activists of Chhatra League snatched ballot papers from the presiding officer at Habiganj Town Model Govt Primary School centre around 10:15am, reports our Sylhet correspondent.

Voting at the centre was suspended for one and a half hours following the incident.

Though the polling started around 11:30am, it again stopped for half an hour as the presiding officer was assaulted and the

snatched ballot papers could not be recovered.

Mahmud Hasan, Habiganj deputy commissioner, suspended the polling there citing instructions of the Election Commission for such cases.

Election officials said some 48 ballot papers might have been snatched.

MOULVIBAZAR  
Shaswati Nath, 55, a female councillor candidate in Srimangal municipality died of cardiac arrest at her Dhanshiri residence around 8:00am. The election, however, went ahead.

Meanwhile, mobile courts fined four persons for breaching electoral code of conduct, our Moulvibazar correspondent reports.

# Pirate kidnappings hit 'alarming' record

*Chittagong among the haunted spots*  
AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Pirates kidnapped a record number of seafarers in 2010 in an "alarming" escalation of the crisis centred on Somalia, a maritime watchdog said yesterday.

Across the globe, pirates hijacked 53 ships and kidnapped 1,181 seafarers last year and eight sailors were killed by the increasingly heavily armed attackers, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) said in a report.

"These figures for the number of hostages and vessels taken are the highest we have ever seen," said Pottengal Mukundan, director of the IMB's Piracy Reporting Centre, which has monitored incidents worldwide since 1991.

"The continued increase in these numbers is alarming."

Hijackings off the coast of lawless Somalia accounted for 92 percent of all ship seizures last year, with 49 vessels captured and 1,016 crew members taken hostage, the IMB report said.

Somali pirates were still holding 28 vessels and 638 hostages for ransom as of last December.

The IMB said the number of pirate attacks on ships globally has risen every year for the past four years, with 445 incidents reported in 2010, up 10 percent from 2009.

In 2006, 188 crew members were taken hostage, rising dramatically to 1,050 by 2009 and 1,181 in 2010.

In the seas off Somalia, heavily armed pirates were overpowering ocean-going fishing or merchant vessels to use as bases for further attacks, Mukundan said.

"They capture the crew and force them to sail to within attacking distance of other unsuspecting vessels," he said.

While attacks off the coast of Somalia remain high, incidents in the Gulf of Aden more than halved last year to 53 due to the presence of international naval forces, the IMB said.

"The continued presence of international navies is vital in protecting merchant ships along these important trade routes," Mukundan said.

However, Somali pirates have responded by travelling further afield including venturing to the Mozambique Channel and the Indian Ocean, an operating range which "is unprecedented."

Mukundan said the key to defeating the Somali pirates lies primarily on land.

"All measures taken at sea to limit the activities of the pirates are undermined because of a lack of responsible authority back in Somalia from where the pirates begin their voyages and return with hijacked vessels."

Elsewhere, the number of maritime armed-robbery incidents in Bangladesh rose for the second successive year. Twenty-one vessels were boarded, almost all anchored in the port of Chittagong.

# Mugger shot in 'gunfight' with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An alleged mugger was shot in a "gunfight" between Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and a gang of muggers early yesterday at Basila of the city's Mohammadpur.

The mugger Mohammad Alal, 32, of Tajmahal road of Mohammadpur was shot in his left leg and was admitted to Pongu Hospital.

Police said a gang of three muggers stopped plain-clothes members of Rab-2 in front of MD Motor Workshop at Basila when the team was patrolling the area on a rickshaw at 1:10 am.

"Suspecting they were law enforcers, muggers opened fire at them and Rab retaliated," said Sub Inspector (SI) Siraj Ud Dowla of Mohammadpur Police Station.

Later, "Rab found the injured Alal while his cohorts managed to flee," he added.

"Rab found a shotgun and a cleaver on him. Later they admitted him to Pongu Hospital", the SI said.

The SI claimed that there were outstanding warrants against Alal for two cases filed with Mohammadpur Police Station.

Meanwhile, a youth was injured in another "gunfight" between a group of alleged muggers and members of Rab at Aftabnagar in the city's Badda around 10:30pm yesterday.

Md Siddique, 18, of the area was hit in the leg during the gun battle, Rab-1 personnel said.

# 4 die

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Lokman, 48, Rois Uddin, 35, Azizur Rahman, 48, Shahjahan Ali, 50.

Arifur Rahman Mondol, assistant superintendent of police (A Circle) in Bogra, said Shahjahan and Azizur died immediately after taking the toxic liquor on Monday night.

Lokman died around 12:00 midnight while Rois Uddin in early hours yesterday at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital.

However, police arrested Tuku Mia, 30, a drug peddler in the area yesterday afternoon on charge of selling liquor illegally.

# 6 killed

**FROM PAGE 1**  
circle) AFM Nizam Uddin said the gun battle might have occurred over establishing supremacy in the area.

Locals said the gunfight ensued when a gang led by Mia Shikdar attacked the rival gang of Giasuddin when the latter was holding a meeting with his cohorts at Purbo Faridpur village under Chandi union around 3:00am yesterday.

Police said they recovered one revolver, one homemade light gun, two magazines, and 10 used cartridges from the scene.

# Zia's

**FROM PAGE 20**  
Nationalist Party (BNP).

Ziaur Rahman was born on this day in 1936 at Bagbari under Gabtoli upazila in Bogra.

BNP and its associate organisations have taken up several programmes including rally, discussions, and milad mehfal to observe the day with due respect.

BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia along with leaders and workers of the party will place wreaths and offer special prayers at the grave of Ziaur Rahman at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city at 10:00am today.

The party flag will be hoisted at the BNP offices across the country. BNP will hold a meeting at 2:00pm at Mahanagar Natyamach in the city in observance of the day.

Jatiyatabadi Olama Dal will also arrange a milad mehfal at Zia's grave.

# Blast kills 4

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Mak Corporation was the first on the list of 20 yards that the government provided conditional environmental clearance certificates in a hasty move in October last year. Officials of the Department of Environment also claimed these yards had taken up adequate safety measures.

"I don't have any idea how the explosion occurred. My officials are investigating it," said Jafar Ahmed, director of the Department of Environment, Chittagong. He claimed they regularly visited the ship-breaking yards and were happy with their progress regarding safety measures.

Deputy Director of Chittagong fire service Ruhul Amin told The Daily Star last night the firefighters brought the fire under control by the evening.

Locals said the explosion was so huge that it could be heard from two miles away.

Owner of the yard and also Vice-President of the Ship Breakers Owners Association Master Abul Kashem said the ship in which the accident occurred was "not being scrapped".

But pictures taken soon after the accident clearly show dismantling activities amid billowing smoke.

"We have reports that our night guards lit a fire to escape from the cold that caused the fire. But we cannot confirm anything now," Kashem said.

Three workers were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital with severe burns around 2:00pm and two of them died, said Dr Mohammad Ayub, head of Burns and Plastic Surgery Unit, CMCH.

Dr Ayub said Miraj, 18, with 100 percent burns died at 2:30pm, while the other worker Rubel, 25, died 15 minutes later with 50 percent burns.

Nur Mohammad, OC of Sitakunda police, said the bodies of Liton, 35, of Noakhali and Jubayed, 22, were recovered after the firefighters left the scene.

The injured worker is undergoing treatment with 50 percent burns. Another victim with minor injury was released after giving first aid, doctors said.

Casualties at the Sitakunda ship-breaking yards are frequent and some even remain unreported at times.

The owners have yet to take adequate safety measures despite the HC orders, exposing hundreds of workers to life risk.

The MAK Corporation imported the exploded Pranam (IMO registration 8321383) along with two other ships -- Sea Pearl and Norsul -- in the end of 2010. Though the DoE was served legal notice for violating the court order, it let Kashem to import those ships.

# PM invites

**FROM PAGE 20**  
The prime minister witnessed the signing ceremony.

Hasina said both local and foreign investors could avail of the investment opportunity in Bangladesh as the government has offered various incentives for them.

"The government has announced tax holiday for foreign investors, while the labour is very cheap in Bangladesh in comparison to other countries of the region," she added.

The PM said the domestic market in Bangladesh is huge as there are 160 million people in the country which can attract more foreign investment.

"The government would extend all sorts of cooperation to the entrepreneurs so that they can invest in Bangladesh in a bigger way," the premier said.

BAN MEETS HASINA  
UNB adds: UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has expressed his satisfaction for Bangladesh's progress towards achieving of the MDGs.

Ban Ki-moon expressed this while paying a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Hotel Emirates Palace yesterday. He also praised the gov-

Kashem claimed the three ships were "put on line for scrapping" at his yard with authorisation from relevant departments including the DoE.

The HC in March 2009 directed the government not to allow any ship in Bangladesh without cleaning its in-built toxins.

In its order the HC on March 17, 2009 directed the government to close operation of all ship-breaking yards in two weeks for running without environmental clearance.

Later the Supreme Court stayed the HC order for closing the yards, while all other verdicts sustained.

During that time only 36 ship-breaking yards were in operation. The number has now shot up to over 100 despite the court directed the government not to allow any new yards to start operation without clearance certificates.

In the order the HC considering the country's environmental degradation also ordered that no ship would enter Bangladesh territory for scrapping without cleaning its hazardous materials at source or outside the territory.

The court also directed the Ministry of Environment and Forest to frame necessary rules on ship-breaking within three months relying on the obligations of Bangladesh under the Basel Convention, 1989, the Environment Conservation Act, 1995 and the Environment Conservation Rules, 1997.

According to the existing environmental law, the ship-breaking yards are identified as category Red [extremely dangerous] and environmental clearance certificate is mandatory for them although ship-breaking yards had been operating without clearance.

Presently, there are 50 ship-breaking yards that have applied for clearance certificates without proper structures or modern facilities of dismantling ships.

Almost all of the yards scrap vessels on open beach and dismantle them manually, which is extremely risky for the workers. Each year many die and scores more suffer injuries in this industry.

# PM to visit

**FROM PAGE 20**  
However, her visit to Canada has been postponed, they said.

Following the UK visit, Hasina was scheduled to fly to Canada on January 30 for a week-long visit, the officials said.

The agenda for discussion during her UK visit has not been finalised yet, as both the countries are still discussing the issues to be highlighted at the meeting between the two Prime Ministers.

ernment's efforts at facing the adverse impacts of climate change and the contribution of Bangladeshi contingents in UN peacekeeping missions across the globe.

Press Secretary to the PM Abul Kalam Azad briefed reporters after the meeting.

The PM is on a four-day official visit to attend the fourth World Future Energy Summit (WFES) 2011 in UAE.

The UN Secretary General gladly accepted Bangladesh's offer of committing more forces to the UN peacekeeping missions.

Bangladeshi peacekeepers are "very much cordial" about their duties, and "contribute a lot" to the missions, he mentioned.

Bangladesh is the largest contributor, in terms of troop numbers, to UN peacekeeping, concentrated mostly in war-torn African states.

Ban Ki-moon also praised the initiatives taken by the government for the socio-economic development of the people.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Ambassador-at-Large M Ziauddin and Principal Secretary MA Karim were, among others, present at the meeting.

## MUNICIPAL POLL RESULTS 2011 CHITTAGONG DIVISION

MUNICIPALITY	WINNER	AFFILIATION
Noakhali Dist		
Noakhali	Voting Suspended Partially	
Senbagh	Polis Suspended	
Choumuhoni	Mamunur Rashid Kiron	AL
Chatkhil	Sirajul Islam Chowdhury	AL
Kabirhat	AL-backed Mohammad Raihan leading	
	Counting of one polling centre suspended	
Basurhat	Abdul Kader Mirza	AL
Matiya	Yusuf Ali Member	AL's rebel
Borura	Jasim Uddin Patowary	BNP
Chandina	Alamgir Khan	BNP
Daudkandi	Nasir Uddin	BNP
Horna	Harun Mian	Independent
Laksham	Mafizur Rahman	Independent
Nangalkot	AL-backed Shahsuddin Kalu leading	
	Counting of one polling centre suspended	
Chudagram	Mizanur Rahman	AL
Shahrasti	Mostofa Kamal	BNP's rebel
Matlab	Enamul Haque Badal	BNP
Chhengarchar	Billal Hossain	AL
Hajiganj	Abdul Mannan Khan	BNP
Kachua	Mumayyuz Kabir Pradhan	BNP
Faridganj	Manzil Hossain	BNP's rebel
Brahmanbaria Dist		
Akhaura	NM Hasan	BNP
Laxmipur	Abu Taher	AL
Raypur	ABM Jilani	BNP
Ramganj	Belal Ahmed	AL
Ramgati	Shahed Hossain Patu	BNP

Feni	Nizamuddin Hazari	AL
Sonagaji	Jamaluddin Senta	BNP
Parshuram	Nizamuddin Chowdhury	AL

Baroarhat	Mohammad Abu Taher	AL
Mirsharai	Mohammad Shahjahan	AL
Raujan	Abdullah AL Hasan	BNP
Rangunia	Khalilur Rahman Chowdhury	AL
Swandip	Jafrullah Titu	AL
Patia	Harunur Rashid	AL
Chandranab	Mohammad Ayub	LOP
Satkania	Md Mohammadur Rahman	BNP
Banshkhali	Sheikh Fakaruddin	AL

Khagrachhari Dist		
Khagrachhari	Rafiqul Alam	Independent
Matiranga	Abu Yusuf Chowdhury	BNP
Bandarban Dist		

## MUNICIPAL POLL RESULTS 2011 SYLHET DIVISION

MUNICIPALITY	WINNER	AFFILIATION
Sylhet Dist		
Jokiganj	Anwar Hossain	AL
Kanaighat	Lutfur Rahman	AL
Sunamgan		