

Big promises beyond candidates' capacity

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president of Comilla Sammilito Sangskritik Jote.

Locals and members of civil society tell The Daily Star they are "disturbed" also due to the fact that the two leading mayoral aspirants, who are among those making big promises, have a "past tainted with corruption and criminal records".

Nine candidates are vying for the mayoral post in the January 5 polls. Afzal Khan and Monirul Hoque Sakku -- the leading contestants -- face a number of graft cases each.

"Transformation of a district town into a city corporation is a good thing and it creates great opportunities for the people. But unfortunately, we're not optimistic about the ability of the would-be leaders of the city corporation to

deliver," said Shah Md Alamgir Khan, convener of the Transparency International Bangladesh's Comilla chapter.

"Most candidates have records of corruption and criminals activities. The problems they are now promising to solve were in the first place created either by themselves or by their party colleagues," he added.

According to the locals, unplanned construction of high rises is among some new problems in the city already faced with worsening law and order, illegal drugs, severe traffic jam, water-logging and shortage of power, gas and water.

"Comilla is going to be a city of high rises and it'll create acute crisis in utility supplies," said Abdur Rashid, a resident of the

city's Bagichagaon. "It's a business and none of the mayoral candidates have the guts to stop it."

Asked about the existing problems, Nazmul Alam Chowdhury, Comilla chapter president of Bangladesh

M a n a b d h i k a r Bastabayan Sangstha, said the candidates themselves and their party leaders are to blame for those.

"They've allowed thousands of rickshaws and auto-bikes without licence, which are responsible for the gridlock. They're now promising to solve the traffic congestion," he added.

But Sakku, the immediate past mayor of Comilla municipality who is now running for the office of the city mayor, said illegal vehicles were allowed during the military-backed caretaker government when he was on the run.

"They had even suspended me from the post so that they can do those," he claimed.

City corporation officials say the city has more than 6,000 auto-bikes. Of them, about 300 have licence. And out of some 50,000 rickshaws that ply the city roads, around 12,000 are licensed.

The ruling Awami League-backed candidate Afzal Khan said he would make a plan to rid the city of the traffic congestion.

According to the affidavit submitted to the Election Commission, Afzal, an advocate, faces at least three graft cases.

His main rival Sakku, who is backed by the Sammilito Nagorik Committee, fights two corruption cases. Sakku gave up studies after Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination.

tions, his affidavit shows. Meanwhile, Noor-ur-Rahman Mahmud Tanim, an AL rebel candidate for the post of mayor, yesterday alleged armed criminals were still roaming the city and that police did not take action against them.

SAKKU MEETS BNP LEADERS

In another development, central leaders of the main opposition BNP yesterday held a meeting at a Comilla hotel to discuss preparation of the party's road march towards Chittagong on January 8.

Sakku, who has recently been relieved of the party for contesting the polls, met the BNP leaders, including standing committee member MK Anwar, there.

BNP sources said Sakku "sought their blessings" to win the polls.

Christmas celebrated

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celebration of rebirth, new beginning, forgiveness and peace. For the believers, it is an occasion to renew relationship between God and humans.

According to Christian belief, Virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus Christ in the city of Bethlehem on this

In rural areas, the Christian community members prepared and distributed traditional winter cakes while they provided money for poorer people of the community through churches to enable them to join the festival with equal festivity.

Christmas was also celebrated in Chittagong, Rangamati, Khagrachhari, Satkhira, Narayanganj, Nilphamari, Habiganj, Patuakhali and Laxmipur with various programmes that included prayers, singing of Christmas carols and banquets.

Marking the carnival, Christians were seen offering special prayers at the churches.

The prayer houses and adjoining areas decked out with colourful tiny blinking lights. Illuminated Christmas trees were placed with a star standing right on top. Santa Claus handed out Christmas gifts to the children on the occasion.

National dailies published special articles, while Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and private TV and radio channels broadcast special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

President Zillur Rahman hosted a reception for the Christian community at Bangabhaban yesterday on the occasion of Christmas.

A r c h i b i s h o p o f Bangladesh, ambassadors and representatives from different foreign missions, distinguished persons of Christian community, religious leaders, and professionals joined the reception.

The president welcomed the guests and exchanged greetings with them and inquired about their wellbeing.

A decorated Christmas tree was set up while a group of young singers performed the Christmas carol at the reception. A Santa Clause was roaming and distributing chocolates among the children.

Later, President Zillur Rahman cut a big Christmas

cake with the members of the Christian community.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Advocate M Shahjahan Miah and State Minister for Cultural Affairs Promode Mankin were present on the occasion.

VIRGINIA PRIMARY POLLS
Gingrich, Perry fail to qualify

AFP, Washington

US Republican presidential candidates Newt Gingrich and Rick Perry have failed to qualify for the party's Virginia primary election, the state party reported.

"After verification, (the party) has determined that Newt Gingrich did not submit the required 10k signatures and has not qualified for the VA primary," the Republican Party of Virginia said in a tweet.

It had previously tweeted that Perry would also not qualify.

The Republican primary is scheduled for March 6 in Virginia, a key swing state in the November 2012 election pitting the Republican nominee against President Barack Obama.

According to The Washington Post, the Perry campaign told state election officials it had submitted 11,911 signatures, while the Gingrich campaign said it had provided 11,050 signatures.

But state party officials contested the claim.

The rejection was a blow to Gingrich, a top contender for the nomination who has been leading the polls in Virginia.

Poor show in communications

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A few of the projects did indeed kick off, but their progress has been frustrating. At the same time, major projects like the Padma Bridge, Metro Rail and the elevated expressway are yet to get underway and in all probability their implementation seems a distant reality.

However, Abul, who is now in charge of the ministry of Information and Communications Technology, said he should be given the credit for taking so many projects in just three years.

"No minister before had taken up so many important projects in such a short period," he said, adding that none of the major projects are stalled and all are making slow progress due to various reasons.

He said the previous BNP government had also tried to get Metro Rail and the elevated expressway projects going but they failed.

Communications ministry records show that the preparation of the Greater Dhaka Sustainable Urban Transport

Corridor has so far been completed. The project is perhaps relatively less important than others. Two more projects - Pabna-Pakshi EPZ link road and Kashinathpur-Kazirhat road improvement with Kazirhat ferryghat road construction - are on the list of completed projects of the ministry. But officials say that those were taken up at the fag end of the caretaker government in 2008.

The inefficiency of the former communications minister as well as of the communications ministry officials, bureaucratic infighting and lack of funds are widely blamed for the dismal performance of the communications ministry.

Experts believe that the poor performance of the communications ministry means that the country's communications system will deteriorate further, which in turn will greatly hamper the transportation of people and goods and disrupt development activities.

The ministry's Roads and

Highways Division chalked out a total of 122 projects worth Tk 12,400 crore in the past three years. Although projects like improvement of Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Mymensingh highways were set in motion, they have made little progress so far.

The status of 17 projects undertaken by the ministry's Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) is also very disappointing. The estimated cost of the projects is worth about Tk 34,000 crore.

Bangladesh Railway's "achievements" in the last three years include the signing of two deals with companies to upgrade Tongi-Bhairab Bazar and Laksham-Chandpur rail tracks, an agreement to buy 20 diesel-electric trains, and the purchase of nine locomotives.

The biggest failure of the communications ministry has been in repairing and maintaining roads and highways, which placed the government in an embarrassing situation ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr in September. Road communications on some major routes nearly collapsed. The then communications minister came

under heavy criticism from inside and outside the ruling party over his perceived lapses in leadership.

The only success of Abul Hossain and the communications ministry in the last three years has been in importing 275 Chinese and 255 Korean buses, which has slightly reduced the crisis of transport in the city and its suburban districts.

Against this backdrop, the government had little choice but to remove Abul from the communications ministry and separate the railway sector to form the railways ministry.

Newly appointed communications minister Obaidul Quader and railways minister Suranjit Sengupta said they would focus on short-term measures and try to implement some of the projects before the tenure of the government expired.

However, neither of them seems optimistic about making any big difference owing to constraints of time and funds.

Light bulbs made

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plastic bottles filled with a solution of bleached water, installed into holes made in shanty towns' corrugated iron roofs, which then refracts the equivalent of 55W of sunlight into the room -- during the day, at least.

It takes five minutes to make, and using a hammer, rivet, metal sheets, sandpaper and epoxy, it costs \$1 to produce.

The Liter of Light project was launched six months ago by the My Shelter Foundation, a Philippines-based NGO which aims to provide light to 1 million of the roughly 12 million homes who are either still without light or live on the threshold of having their electricity shut down.

Eduardo Carillo, a resident in one of Metro Manila's many impoverished areas, said: "Before we had the bottle light, the walkways to our house were so dark and going inside made it even darker. The children are no longer scared -- they are happy now and they laugh because they can play inside during the day instead of playing in the streets."

The idea of using plastic bottles as a light source is not a new one -- it was developed in Brazil by Alfredo Moser in 2002. But with the help of a group of MIT students, the solar bulb used in the Philippines has been modified to meet local needs.

My Shelter Foundation Founder and social entrepreneur Ilac Diaz explains: "We basically did a cheap kind of one-way lock using the metal sheet. Once you put in the bottle, it will not slip down anymore. That way even if the roof expanded or contracted with the heat, it would not affect

the waterproofing and would keep the bottle intact for many years to come."

Diaz believes in the importance of using "appropriate" green technologies for poorer countries.

"The challenge is how the developing world can come up with its own model to limit emissions of carbon -- we can't afford to buy imported, patented or manufactured solutions from the developed world and can't afford to wait until they become affordable."

The programme is also creating jobs. What began with teaching and contracting one unemployed man to make the first 1000 bottles has evolved into an ongoing program that has created more than 20 jobs in installing the bottles. "We wanted to prove one man could change his village," said Diaz.

The programme is also

MEGHNA LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD.

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Invitation For Tender

01	Division/Authority	Meghna Life Insurance Company Ltd.		
02	Entity District	Dhaka		
03	Tender Package Name	Construction of Single Storied Meghna Life Complex at Ashrafpur, Comilla.		
04	Invitation Ref. No.	Memo No.: MLI/HO/Engg./2011/24		
05	Date	: 22 / 12 / 2011		
06	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method.		
07	Budget and Sources of Funds	Own fund of Meghna Life Insurance Company Ltd.		
08	Tender Package No.	Package No.-1		
09	Starting of Tender Selling	Date: 08/01/2012		
10	Ending of Tender Selling	Date: 15/01/2012		
11	Tender Closing	Date: 16/01/2012		
12	Tender Opening	Date: 16/01/2012		
13	Name & Address of the office(s)	Selling, Receiving and Opening of Tender Documents Managing Director, Meghna Life Insurance Co. Ltd, Head Office: Biman Bhaban (2nd Floor), 100, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.		
14	Eligibility of Tenderer	Enlisted Contractor's of the Govt./Semi-Govt. Organizations.		
15	Brief Description of Works	a. Civil Works, b. Sanitary & Plumbing Works, c. Electrical Works.		
16	Price of Tender Document, Security Money, Location, Completion Time, etc.	Price of Tender document (Non-refundable) Tk.2,000/- (Two Thousand) only	Tender Security Amount (Tk.) Tk.1,50,000	Completion Time in Weeks/Months 8 (Eight) Months (One lac fifty thousand) only
17	Name and Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Managing Director, Meghna Life Insurance Co. Ltd, Head Office: Biman Bhaban (2nd Floor), 100, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000. Phone: 9558297, 9558993, 9556204 Fax: 7171942, E-mail: info.meghnalife.com, Web: www.meghnalife.com		
18	Contractor or their authorized representative may attend in the tender opening.			
19	The Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reasons thereof.			

Managing Director

Saiham Textile Mills Ltd.

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PRICE SENSITIVE INFORMATION

This is for information of all concerned that Securities and Exchange Commission has kindly accorded its approval for issuance of Rights Offer of Saiham Textile Mills Limited vide their letter no. SEC/CI/RI-65/2011/905 dated 20/12/2011 for 5,00,00,000 ordinary shares of Tk. 10.00 each at an issue price of Tk. 25.00 per share (including a premium of Tk.15.00 each) totaling Tk. 125,00,00,000.00 (taka one hundred twenty five crore) only at a ratio of 2R:1, i.e. two rights shares for one existing share for setting up a new 100% Export Oriented Melange Spinning Mill.

Record Date for entitlement of Right Share : 17th January, 2012
Subscription Opening Date : 5th February, 2012
Subscription Closing Date : 19th February, 2012

Date : December 26, 2011

By the order of the Board
Abu Bakar Siddique
Chief Financial Officer