

MELTDOWN ALARM

Star prints a speech Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das delivered in Calcutta in 1917

DNA REVELATION

Prince William will be the first king to have Indian ancestry

Spielberg, Lucas see danger looming over US film industry

Das delivered in Calcutta in 1917

Prince William will be the first king to have Indian ancestry

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# Polls of pride

## Voters of 4 cities pick their representatives today

SHAKHAWAT LITON and WASIM BIN HABIB

In an election of prestige for archrivals Awami League and BNP, over 12 lakh voters in four city corporations cast their ballots today to resolve which camp will have the last laugh.

Voting in the four city corporations -- Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet -- begins at 8:00am and will continue till 4:00pm without any break.

In the high-voltage battle of ballots, voters will elect four mayors and 157 councillors to run their cities for the next five years.

All the four mayoral posts are now held by AL men.

Local leaders of both the parties are seeking people's mandate to "serve them better" and run the corporations in a transparent manner, keeping those free from corruption.

Both the AL and BNP-led alliances have given full support to their party leaders vying for mayor's office. Stalwarts of the two camps along with their local leaders and supporters have campaigned hard for their party pick.

Thus the polls, although non-partisan in theory, have become an important issue for the AL and the BNP ahead of the parliamentary election.

Today's polls will also test the Election Commission's credibility and efficiency to hold major elections on the same day, as this is the first time that the five-member commission is going to hold such polls since its formation in February last year.

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MAYORAL CANDIDATES' PROFILES -- PAGE 3



A presiding officer (centre) receiving electoral materials from the Election Commission office at Alampur in Sylhet under the surveillance of Armed Police Battalion yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## WINNING CITY POLLS

# Both camps confident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both the rival camps, Awami League and BNP, are confident that their favourites will win today's vote battle in four city corporations.

Senior leaders of the camps at the last moment, however, expressed differences about deployment of army for making the polls free and neutral.

The BNP camp is for army deployment as it thinks the local administration may back the ruling party-blessed candidates.

"Besides, we apprehend local ruling party-backed goons will use fear as a tool to gain votes for their candidates which will deteriorate law and order," BNP standing committee member Goyeshwar Chandra Roy told The Daily Star yesterday.

Another BNP leader Selima Rahman, who had been campaigning for her party favourite in Barisal, said law

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## Slum dwellers lured by money

M RAHMAN and IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, from Sylhet

Both the mayoral frontrunners have adopted a new strategy for dishing out money to lower income earners in the city to buy votes.

Locals complained that campaign workers of both Awami League favourite Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran and BNP-backed Ariful Haque Chowdhury have distributed money to slum owners instead of slum dwellers to keep it secret.

An elderly slum dweller in Kalapara area said, "In the past campaign workers used to dole out money directly in slums. But this year our slum owner has given me Tk500 to cast my vote for his favourite candidate."

The amount paid to each voter ranged between Tk500 and Tk1000.

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## Aspirants meet voters at Juma

PANKAJ KARMAKAR and ZAHID HOSSAIN, from Khulna

Even though electioneering for the city polls was over at midnight Thursday, supporters of the two leading mayoral aspirants sought votes from people yesterday after offering Juma prayers at mosques.

Candidates have also run campaigns through mobile phone and email flouting the electoral code of conduct.

Witnesses said over 100 campaign workers of BNP favourite Moniruzzaman Mony chanted slogans for his election symbol "pineapple" outside the Darul Ulum Jame Mosque in the city's Musalman Para area. Mony himself was present there.

At the same place, dozens of supporters of Awami League backed mayor hopeful

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## Polls campaign goes digital

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and ANWAR ALI, from Rajshahi

Although the official election campaign ended at midnight Thursday, mayoral hopefuls used email, text messages, phone calls and social media to reach voters yesterday.

An email of the 14-party-backed candidate AHM Khairuzzaman Liton reads: "Good day to you. To build a better Rajshahi together, I ask for your support in the upcoming mayoral election."

This email was sent to hundreds of voters' addresses.

A text message of the 18-party-backed candidate Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul says: "Vote for me for real development."

Well-wishers of the mayoral aspirants were also active in social media, Facebook and Twitter, to blast out messages to voters.

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## BNP supporters 'harassed'

HASAN JAHID TUSHER and SUSHANTA GHOSH, from Barisal

Allegation of law enforcers harassing opposition BNP men came to the forefront ahead of the Barisal City Corporation (BCC) elections.

For the last couple of days, law enforcers have been raiding houses, mostly those of BNP supporters, in different areas of the city. This has created panic among the opposition men.

BNP has repeatedly made formal allegations to the returning officer about the harassment.

The Daily Star has talked to at least 50 local activists and leaders of BNP and they said police had raided their houses several times and that they had been living elsewhere rather than at their houses fearing political harassment ahead of the city

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## Khaleque's name comes in school exam questions

PANKAJ KARMAKAR & ZAHID HOSSAIN, from Khulna

Class-X students of Pioneer Secondary Girls School and their guardians were bewildered seeing questions on former Khulna city mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque in the Islamic Studies quiz on Thursday.

"What other virtues of Khalifa Hazrat Omar does Talukder Abdul Khaleque need to follow to establish himself as an ideal mayor?" is a question the students were asked to answer elaborately.

The question paper had a paragraph about

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The last moment preparation for today's city corporation polls in Sylhet. The set up of first EVM system is done in the Roshomoy High School centre yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Security remains a big concern

### 20,000 law enforcers deployed in 4 cities

PRABIR BARIUA CHOWDHURY

Law enforcers fanned out across four cities on Thursday to ensure voters can smoothly exercise their franchise in today's city corporation polls.

As part of the government's security measures, around 20,000 law enforcers including members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), Coast Guard and RAB have been deployed in the four cities -- Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet.

Of them, 21 platoons of BGB were working as striking force aiming to monitor the security at all the electoral areas till June 16. Five platoons of coast guard were deployed in the two cities of Khulna and Barisal as additional striking force, according to home ministry's circular.

These forces will be ready to take immediate action in case of any urgency.

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## 'VOTE BUYING' Councillor candidate, 4 others held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers last night arrested five people, including a councillor candidate in the polls to Sylhet City Corporation, in connection with distributing money among voters.

Police had arrested Towhidul Islam, a pro-Jamaat councillor candidate from ward-25, and two of his aides with Tk 10,000 when they were allegedly distributing

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## Anti-terror law draws flak

### Rights activists, jurists decry sweeping powers given to cops, central bank for confiscating properties

RASHIDUL HASAN

The recently amended anti-terrorism law has received flak from human rights activists, jurists, security analysts and civil society leaders for having provisions that could violate human and constitutional rights.

The provisions include sweeping power to law enforcers and the central bank to confiscate and seize properties and bank accounts of a suspect without prior permission from the court.

Law enforcers have also been empowered to instantly start investigation and file a case against a suspect. Besides, videos, photos and audio clips from social media and the

Internet could be considered as evidence against a suspect disregarding the Evidence Act.

The amendment was passed by the House on June 11 amid parliament boycott by the opposition parties.

Talking to The Daily Star, experts Shahdeen Malik, Sultana Kamal, M Sakhawat Husein unequivocally expressed their concern that people might be harassed by the misuse of the law.

They said it was clear that citizen's democratic, human and fundamental rights, mentioned in the constitution, might be seriously affected.

The law was enacted first in 2009 aimed at curbing various terrorist activities, including killing of any person for endangering Bangladesh's sovereignty, security, integrity and unity.

The latest amendment to the anti-terrorism law was made for keeping up with contemporary UN resolutions on terrorism, Home Minister MK Alamgir claimed in a statement attached to the bill.

However, experts say that the amendment was done by adding controversial provisions and deviating from a number of UN resolutions that protect human rights.

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## Mob beats six thugs to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Six members of a pirate gang, including its ringleader, were killed and four others injured in a mob beating in Subarnochar upazila of Noakhali district yesterday.

Four of the dead were identified as Selim alias Jaillago Selim, 45, chief of the Selim gang, Shankar, Delwar and Maksud while the rest could not be identified.

Chairman of Charclerk union Shahab Uddin said Selim and his gang secretly took position in Selim Bazar area on Thursday night to commit robbery.

Sensing their presence in the following morning, locals chased the fleeing criminals and caught several of them from different shoal areas adjacent to the bazar.

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