



As the long-due elections to Dhaka north and south city corporations are likely to be held within two months, mayoral aspirants have launched their campaigns through billboards, festoons and posters. The photos were taken at Ramna, Mirpur, Banani and Uttara yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Killed for ransom

## Boy whose body found in bag identified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A boy whose body was found inside a travel bag on Monday was abducted from Joydevpur area in Gazipur a day earlier.

Rafiqul Islam yesterday identified the body as his nephew, Emon, a six-year-old boy, who went missing while playing in front of his house on Sunday.

"We could not find him the entire evening until a woman called on the cell phone of the landlord's son, Shakil, around 9:40pm Sunday and asked for Tk 2 lakh as ransom for Emon's release," Rafiqul said.

The family informed local police about the abduction after receiving the phone call.

Rafiqul said his brother Aktar Uddin, who hails from Gafargaon in Mymensingh, had been residing at the rented house.

Police have detained Shakil in connection with the incident.

Aktar identified his son at Dhaka Medical College morgue after learning



Emon

from news reports that a body has been discovered.

A vegetable trader in Joydevpur, Aktar was sleeping at home while his wife Rina Akter, a garment worker, was at her workplace when the abduction took place. Emon's elder sister Shukhi was at school.

Neighbours saw him playing with other children near their house but no one could tell how he went missing, Rafiqul said.

Bhuiyan Mahub Hasan, officer-in-charge of Banani Police Station, said three women and two men boarded the bus with the bag in question from a bus stop at the airport intersection.

The Desh Bangla Paribahan bus was heading towards Savar from Uttara via Gabtoli, the OC said.

Police later recovered the body of Emon, a first-grader, from a travel bag abandoned in the bus in the city's Kakoli area on Monday.

He had been strangled, police and DMC morgue sources said.

# Aspirants seven, party one

FROM PAGE 1

On Monday evening, the advertisements were mostly covered by giant posters of mayoral aspirant Haji Mohammad Selim, joint general secretary of Dhaka city AL.

Similarly, many more billboards were grabbed by other mayoral and councillor hopefuls in different parts of the capital, mostly from Bijoy Sarani to Gulistan.

"Nobody took our permission to use those... It is causing us huge losses. We don't know where to go or whom to complain to," Shahidul Islam, treasurer of the Billboard Owners' Association, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The trend of grabbing billboards on a large scale was first seen after Bangladesh won a maritime boundary dispute with Myanmar in an international court in March 2012, he said.

Asked about the grabbing of billboards, Selim, a mayoral aspirant in Dhaka South City Corporation, said he was unaware of it.

He said his well-wishers might have put the posters on the billboards ahead of the city polls.

Selim, also an independent lawmaker from Dhaka-7, said all his posters and banners would be

removed from the billboards within 24 hours of the announcement of election schedule.

Apart from him, AL leader Sayeed Khokon and Jatiya Party leader Haji Saifuddin Ahmed Milon are to contest the polls for the mayoral post in Dhaka South City Corporation.

In Dhaka North City Corporation, former FBCCI president Annisul Huq, AL lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Majumder, Jatiya Party leader Bahauddin Ahmed Babul and AL leader Ekhlash Uddin Mollah are to vie for the mayoral position.

It is still uncertain whether Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna will be able to contest the polls as a mayoral candidate in the northern part, as he is now under police custody. He faces two lawsuits -- one for sedition and the other for "trying to instigate revolt in the armed forces".

As part of election campaign, followers of Kamal Majumder distributed food among bus passengers from Shyamoli to Kalyanpur yesterday. They also brought out a procession in Mohammadpur to drum up support for him.

Meanwhile, Selim distributed food among destitute people at Bir

Shreshtha Motiur Rahman High School while Sayeed Khokon conducted election campaigns in Old Dhaka.

Another mayoral aspirant, Annisul Huq, attended the launching of a survey by "Amra Dhaka" that will identify problems of the residents in the city's northern part.

The ruling AL on February 26 decided to back Annisul Huq and Sayeed Khokon as mayoral candidates.

On November 29, 2011, the government split the DCC into two -- Dhaka north with 56 and Dhaka south with 36 wards -- and appointed two government officials as administrators for six months. The last DCC election was held in 2002 and BNP leader Sadeque Hossain Khoka was elected mayor.

Sources in the AL told this correspondent that the party wants to see a participatory city election to divert people's attention from the ongoing political crisis.

But the campaigns by mayoral and councillor hopefuls have so far generated little enthusiasm among the city residents.

Mohammad Nayan, an elderly shopkeeper in Eskaton area, said he saw posters of the candidates but

didn't see much of interest among people in the area about the upcoming city polls.

Sixty-five-year-old Mohammad Sohel Mia, owner of a tea stall on Nazimuddin Road, thinks the government is holding the city election only to divert people's attention.

It is certain that someone from the AL-led combine will be the mayor in the city's southern part as all the candidates belong to the ruling alliance, he said.

"Only the boatman will be changed, but the boat will be there," said Sohel.

The AL men aspiring to become councillors are not lagging behind the mayoral hopefuls in lobbying for the party's blessing. In every ward, several councillor aspirants of the party have been running campaigns.

On February 23, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave directives to pick a single councillor candidate to be backed by the party in each ward. The party, however, is yet to take any step to that end.

Asked, Food Minister and AL Joint General Secretary Qamrul Islam said they would select a single candidate from every ward at "the right time".

# No more death

FROM PAGE 1

getting a proper education, obtaining knowledge about rich tradition and taking part in sports and cultural activities.

"You'll groom up yourselves in such a way so that we could move ahead at the global stage keeping our head high," she told the rally.

The country's future leadership would come from the children and the youth as someone from among them would become the prime minister, minister and assume positions in various important fields, Hasina said.

On this birthday of Bangabandhu, she said, it should be the pledge of all to build Bangladesh as a nice abode alongside making it a hunger and poverty-free 'Sonar Bangla'.

Terming the assassination of Bangabandhu on August 15, 1971 a disgraceful day for the whole nation, the PM said with his death the nation had not only lost the Father of the Nation but also the history and ideology of the Liberation War.

"I'll urge the children, teenagers and the youth to build Bangladesh in light with the spirit of Liberation War and ideology of the Father of the Nation. No child would remain without education on Bangladesh's soil and they all lead a nice life," she added.

Hasina also urged them to study with rapt attention and be careful and passionate about the poor, hapless and disabled.

Bangabandhu made primary education free for children and framed the Children's Act in 1974 to ensure their welfare, she said, adding that following the footprint of Bangabandhu, her government formulated National Children's Policy in 2011.

After the rally, she handed over prizes among the successful participants of various schools in different competitions held in the district.

She also witnessed a colourful cultural programme and inaugurated a book fair there on the occasion.

# 2 bus staff suffer burns

FROM PAGE 1

Ahmed who has been missing since March 10.

Like on previous occasions, the announcement of the extension of the shutdown came in a statement issued by BNP Joint Secretary General Barkat Ullah Bulu. It also said the alliance will hold protest rallies and processions across the country tomorrow.

In Jamalpur, at least 10 people were injured when a chase and counter-chase took place between some Awami League and BNP activists in Aramnagar Bazar of Sarishabari upazila.

Witnesses said BNP activists were picketing at the bazar around noon and assaulted Sujon Miah, vice-president of Sarishabari poura unit AL, when he was passing through the area.

On information, some AL men, armed with sharp weapons, reached the spot and clashed with the pickets.

Law enforcers fired six rubber bullets to drive away the troublemakers, said Sarishabari police.

In Kurigram, a clash between Jamaat-Shibir men and police left at least eight people, including three policemen, injured in Bhogdanga of Kurigram Sadar upazila, reports a correspondent.

It all began after activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir, the pro-Jamaat student body, brought out a procession from Bhogdanga. As it reached Pateshwari bazar area, police intercepted it.

At one stage, the Jamaat-Shibir men started hurling brick chunks at police. Law enforcers fired retaliatory rubber bullets and tear gas shells, said Morshedul Karim Md Eshtesham, OC of Kurigram Sadar police station.

Abdul Haque, a Jamaat activist and teacher of a local madrasa, received a rubber bullet while three cops sustained minor injuries, added the OC.

Cops yesterday noon detained 16 women activists of Jamaat-Shibir at a house in Rowmari upazila of the district on suspicion of planning sabotage attacks.

Rabiul Islam, OC of Rowmari Police Station, said they launched a drive in the area on information that around 50 Jamaat-Shibir activists were in a meeting at the house of Jamaat leader Umar Ali in Uttarbaguya village.

Cops detained the 16 while the others managed to escape before police arrived there.

Alleged pro-hartal pickets blasted a crude bomb at Khulna Press Club around 8:30pm on Monday. The blast shattered the glass windows of the VIP lounge and IT room of the club.

Subir Roy, general secretary of the club, said they saw in a CCTV footage that two people blasted the crude bomb and left the scene immediately.

Police in a drive yesterday rounded up 35 Shibir men near Deana South Para High School in Daulatpur of Khulna city and seized desktop computers, laptops, cameras, and mobile phones from their possession.

Our correspondents from Moulvibazar, Jamalpur, and Khulna contributed to this report.

# Death toll in central Nigeria clashes rises to 82: police

AFP, Kano

A weekend attack by suspected Fulani herdsmen on a farming village in central Nigeria's Benue state left 82 dead, a police spokesman said Tuesday, giving an updated toll from the earlier figure of 45.

"From the latest report available to the police command, 82 people were killed in the attack on Egba village by suspected Fulani herdsmen", Austin Ezeani told AFP.

"Twenty-five people were also injured and are receiving treatment in hospital."

"Initially 45 people were reported to have been killed in the violence but the death toll kept mounting as rescue search progressed," he added.

No arrests have been made following the violence on Sunday, which saw large numbers of gunmen storm the village armed with AK47 assault rifles.

# Hartal entangles

FROM PAGE 1

managing the schedule," said an official of the Dhaka Education Board. He did not wish to be named as he was not authorised to talk to the media on the issue in advance.

"We hope that there would be no political crisis during the examination period," said Dr Srikanta Kumar Chanda, exam controller of the board.

Education ministry officials said if the tests are deferred, it will have a domino effect. The admission in the higher education institutes depends on the publication of HSC results.

"There would be a delay in publishing the results if we have to reschedule the exams. And if there's a delay in publishing the results, the university admission processes would be delayed too," said a high official of the ministry, preferring anonymity.

"We would not be able to maintain our academic calendar," he said.

But it's the HSC candidates who are the most worried.

"I am puzzled and uncertain about my exams. Though I am taking preparations keeping the existing schedule in mind, I am not sure whether the

tests on the subjects I am preparing to take will be held on time," said Anayna Rashid, an examinee in the capital.

"If the examination schedules change frequently, it will demoralise us," she said.

Her mother, Rumana Rashid, thinks the children are losing interests in studying due to their growing disappointment over the political impasse and all those uncertainties caused by the situation.

"If my daughter cannot perform well in the exams and do not obtain desired results, she would not be able to apply for medical or engineering admissions. Who will take the responsibility?"

"They [the politicians] do not know what damage they are doing," she added.

Equally concerned are the teachers as it would not be possible for them to start taking classes for the freshmen from July 1 if the HSC examinations are deferred.

"We all are anxious. If we face similar problems like those during the SSC exams, everything will be deferred," said Shahan Ara Begum, principal of Ideal School and College, Motijheel.

# WORLD'S ARMS TRADE

## India remains as top importer

TNN, New Delhi

India continues with its embarrassing trudge on the world stage as the largest arms importer, which also makes it strategically vulnerable. A global thinktank on Monday said India's weapons imports are now three times larger than its neighbours China and Pakistan as well as cash-rich Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The latest data on international arms transfers released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) shows India accounted for 15% of the global arms imports from 2010 to 2014. "Between 2005-2009 and 2010-2014, India's arms imports increased by 140%. In 2005-2009, India's imports were 23% below China's and just over double those of Pakistan," SIPRI said.

There is nothing new in India's dubious distinction of being the largest arms importer due to its abject failure to build a strong defence industrial base (DIB), as repeatedly reported by TOI earlier. But the figures do show how China has got its act together to assiduously build a stronger DIB, often by reverse-engineering, to also emerge as the third largest arms exporter. While Pakistan (41%), Bangladesh (16%) and Myanmar (12%) are its three biggest clients, China also exported arms to 18 African countries.

with a fledgling DIB, importing 65% of its military hardware and software. India has spent Rs 1,03,536 crore (\$16.72 billion) in direct payments to foreign armament companies in the last five years, while exporting arms worth a paltry Rs 2,644 crore (\$426 million) in the same time.

Military supplies and infrastructure-building are key to China's expanding strategic footprint in both India's immediate neighbourhood as well as in Africa. India, however, cannot even equip its own armed forces properly, leave alone use military aid to influence others.

India has spent over \$120 billion on arms acquisitions over the last 15 years, and will spend another estimated \$120 billion in the coming decade, as reported by TOI earlier. Despite the Modi government's tom-tomming of the 'Make in India' policy over the last 10 months, there is little to show on the ground in terms of concrete action till now.

The SIPRI figures show India is the largest arms client for both Russia and Israel. The three largest suppliers to India are Russia (70%), the US (12%) and Israel (7%). But government figures show the US has actually overtaken Russia as the largest defence supplier in the last three years, notching sales worth Rs 32,615 crore as compared to Russia's Rs 25,448 crore.

