

CITY CORPORATION

ELECTIONS 2015

DNCC, the biggest city corporation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With more than 23.45 lakh voters, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) turned out to be the biggest city corporation in the country in terms of population.

The DNCC, which has posh areas like the diplomatic zones, the Prime Minister's Office and residence, and the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, goes to polls today for the first time after the Awami League-led grand alliance government had split the Dhaka city into two in November 2011.

Dhaka was just a thana having only 3,000 people with an area of 2 square kilometres in the 16th century during the reign of Mughal Emperor Akbar and it was made the capital of the eastern province in 1608 by Subedar Islam Khan. Dhaka municipality was established on August 1, 1864.

After the partition of India, Dhaka became the provincial capital of the then East Pakistan in 1947. It became the capital of Bangladesh with the independence in 1971.

The corporation was formed with the introduction of Dhaka Municipal Corporation Ordinance, 1983, repealing the application of Pourashava Ordinance, 1977. In 1990, Dhaka Municipal Corporation was renamed Dhaka City Corporation and was divided into 10 zones.

The election to the undivided DCC

was held in January 1994, and Mohammad Hanif became the first elected Mayor. In April 2002, Sadeque Hossain Khoka was elected mayor of the DCC. After 13 years, Dhaka dwellers will exercise their franchise today.

After the bifurcation of the DCC, the DNCC got six administrators with six months tenure to run the corporation.

DHAKA NORTH CITY CORPORATION (DNCC)	
General ward	36
Reserved ward (women)	12
Mayoral aspirants	16
General councillor aspirants	281
Women reserved councillor aspirants	89
Polling stations	1,093
Polling booths	5,892
Voters	23,45,374
Presiding officers	1,093
Assistant presiding officers	5,892
Polling officers	11,784
Law enforcers	30,764

DSCC holds the city's golden past

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation mainly gives the flavour of ancient or original Dhaka, having most of the historic sites, renowned educational institutions and the centre of the country's administration.

The city's existence as a major urban agglomeration has been consistent over a period of 400 years.

From its beginning as a small city with a few thousand people, the old part of Dhaka gradually expanded in the course of time. The DSCC has an area of 45 square kilometres, with more than 18.70 lakh voters.

Suhrawardy Udyan, Lalbagh Fort, Ahsan Manjil, Hoseni Dalan, Bara Katra, and Balda Garden, among others, are some historic places in the DSCC.

In 1990, Dhaka Municipal Corporation was renamed Dhaka City Corporation and administrators/mayors were appointed by the government until 1994.

The first ever election to the undivided Dhaka City Corporation was held in 1994 and Mohammad Hanif became the first mayor beating his rival BNP leader Mirza Abbas who was a selected mayor of the DCC for two years during the then BNP government in 1991.

After 21 years, Abbas is contesting the mayoral race in the DSCC with his main rival -- Sayeed Khokon, son of late Hanif.

After Hanif's era ended in 2002, BNP leader Sadeque Hossain Khoka became the mayor of the undivided DCC and continued to hold office until the DCC was split into Dhaka south and Dhaka north in 2011.

The government then appointed administrators to run the two city corporations.

DHAKA SOUTH CITY CORPORATION (DSCC)	
General ward	57
Reserved ward (women)	19
Mayoral aspirants	20
General councillor aspirants	390
Women reserved councillor aspirants	97
Polling stations	889
Polling booths	4,746
Voters	18,70,753
Presiding officers	889
Assistant presiding officers	4,746
Polling officers	9,492
Law enforcers	26,496

CCC, the lifeline of economy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong City Corporation is the third largest among 11 city corporations in the country in terms of voters.

Dubbed as the commercial capital of Bangladesh, the port city has more than 18.13 lakh voters.

The CCC descended from the name of Chittagong Municipality, which was founded on June 22, 1863. The initial area of the newly formed municipality was only six square miles.

There were five wards at that time. Khan Bahadur Abdus Sattar was the first elected chairman of the municipality, according to the website of the CCC.

On June 27, 1977, Chittagong municipality was renamed Chittagong Paurashava and Fazal Karim was its first elected chairman.

The paurashava was upgraded to Municipal Corporation on September 16, 1982, and Brig Mofizur Rahman Chowdhury was appointed as its administrator.

The municipality was renamed Chittagong City Corporation on July 31, 1990, and the then government appointed Jatiya Party leader Mahmudul Islam Chowdhury as mayor.

BNP leader Mir Mohammed Nasiruddin ascended as mayor and continued until the first election in 1994.

Awami League leader ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury became the first democratically elected mayor of

the CCC. He was re-elected in the next two consecutive elections held in 2000 and 2005.

However, M Manjur Alam was elected mayor with support from the BNP in the last city corporation polls held in 2010, defeating Mohiuddin.

Manjur is contesting today's election with his main contender AJM Nasir Uddin.

CHITTAGONG CITY CORPORATION (CCC)	
General ward	41
Reserved ward (women)	14
Mayoral aspirants	12
General councillor aspirants	213
Women reserved councillor aspirants	62
Polling stations	719
Polling booths	4,906
Voters	18,13,449
Presiding officers	719
Assistant presiding officers	4,906
Polling officers	9,812
Law enforcers	21,470

The same old face-off

FROM PAGE 1

In reality, the city corporations to be formed through people's mandates will not be able to solve many of the city dwellers' decades-long problems due to constraints of jurisdiction.

Yet, much heat has been generated in the run-up to the polls.

People's verdict today will have a huge impact on politics of the two archrivals in the coming days. The polls appear to be a referendum on their politics to an extent.

The ruling AL wants to prove its popularity by winning the mayoral battle. A win will give the party political mileage, as it came to power a year ago through a one-sided parliamentary election.

The policymakers in the AL and the government hope people will vote against the BNP-backed candidates for what they say is the party's violent street agitation for around three

months since January.

With support from the party high command, the ruling party-blessed mayoral and councillor hopefuls have made extensive efforts to defeat their BNP-backed rivals. They dominated the three-week election campaigns.

The situation in the BNP camp was the opposite.

The party stepped into the battle of ballots, postponing its three-month anti-government agitation that lost momentum because of violence.

BNP-backed mayoral and councillor aspirants couldn't carry out vigorous campaigns as many of them face criminal cases filed over street violence during anti-government agitation in the last three years.

Party-endorsed mayoral aspirant in Dhaka south Mirza Abbas didn't appear in public even for a day during electioneering to avert arrest. His wife Afroza Abbas conducted campaigns



Annisul Huq Tabith Awal

throughout on his behalf.

Most of the BNP-blessed councillor aspirants refrained from taking part in campaigns for fear of arrest.

Yet, the party hopes people will vote against the ruling party-endorsed candidates for its "misrule" and "denying people their voting rights" in the January 5 parliamentary election last year.

Encouraged by the results of the previous mayoral polls, the BNP high command is hopeful that the candidates they are backing will emerge victorious this time as well.



Sayeed Khokon Mirza Abbas

In 2013, the BNP-blessed candidates won all five mayoral posts in Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet, Barisal and Gazipur by defeating their AL-backed rivals.

In the Comilla city polls in 2012, the AL-backed mayoral aspirant had lost to the BNP-backed candidate.

In another battle of ballots in 2010, the BNP-blessed candidate secured the mayoral post in Chittagong.

In 2011, the AL backed mayoral aspirant suffered a humiliating defeat in the Narayanganj city polls.

People are eagerly waiting to see



Manjur Alam AJM Nasir

who win the mayoral posts this time in the two major cities.

In Chittagong, BNP-blessed Manzur Alam seeks re-election as mayor. In the mayoral race in 2010, he defeated AL-backed candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury who had been elected mayor thrice since 1994.

The situation in Dhaka is interesting. The first election to undivided Dhaka City Corporation was held in 1994 and the second one in 2002. No election was held in the last eight years after the corporation's tenure expired in 2007.

The government in 2011 split the DCC into two but there was no election.

Political analysts say the city polls appear as a test for both the government and the Election Commission.

If the city polls are held in a free and fair manner, the government can claim that a free and fair national election is possible under the AL-led government.

The EC led by Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad will also be able to reap some benefits of a fair election though it has yet to demonstrate any sign of playing a strong role in holding a free and fair election.

If the opposite happens, it will give the opposition camp political mileage to voice its demand for a non-partisan government for holding the general election.

Moreover, if the fairness of the election is called into question, the country may again experience political unrest. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has already threatened to wage move-



An elderly man walks next to collapsed houses in Bhaktapur, on the outskirts of Kathmandu, yesterday, two days after a 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit Nepal.

PHOTO: AFP

Aftershocks continue

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka Meteorological office said at 6:35pm yesterday a 5.3 magnitude aftershock hit Siliguri near Bangladesh-India border. The epicentre was only 413km away from Dhaka.

Meanwhile, an aircraft of Bangladesh Air Force brought back 85 more Bangladeshis from Nepal.

There were around 100 Bangladeshi families living in Nepal and an unknown number of Bangladeshi tourists in Kathmandu, embassy sources said.

All Bangladeshis living or staying in Nepal are safe as far as the Bangladesh embassy in Nepal is concerned, Shamshee Binte Shams, the Bangladesh ambassador to Kathmandu, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"All the Bangladeshis I could reach so far are safe," she said. Cracks had developed in many

buildings of educational institutions in the country, including Dhaka.

A student of Eden Mohila College said cracks were discovered Sunday night in at least 29 rooms of the newly constructed Bangamata Fazilutunnessa dorm. Between 300 and 400 students were moved to other dormitories.

"We have moved students to the other five dormitories as they were panicked by the cracks found in the walls of the rooms," Prof Hosne Ara, principal of the college, said yesterday evening.

An expert team of the Ministry of Education visited the dormitory which was opened only two years ago.

Our correspondents in Patuakhali, Rajshahi University, Moulvibazar, and Dinajpur reported about cracks in buildings of educational institutions there.

Panicked students of Dinajpur

Polytechnic Institute spent a sleepless night as the authorities asked them to vacate Kazi Nazrul Islam Hall around 10:00pm Sunday finding cracks in the building, our Dinajpur correspondent reports.

At least 123 students spent the night in a mosque, the TSC building and under the open sky.

A team of the Public Works Department had visited the dorm and advised vacating the hall.

At least seven cracks were discovered in an under-construction building of Motihar Hall in Rajshahi University, our Rajshahi University correspondent reports.

Students formed a human chain in front of the dorm claiming that the authorities had been using low-quality construction materials.

The Pathantula campus of Scholars Home School in Sylhet city was closed

for a day after parents of students complained that the school was kept open despite cracks in the building, reports our correspondent there.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday directed the government to submit to it a report by May 12 on the rescue equipment necessary for saving lives in case an earthquake occurs.

The bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman passed the order following an application filed by Supreme Court lawyer Manzill Murshid.

Murshid told the court that Bangladesh was in danger of being hit by earthquakes and rescue equipment should be collected for saving lives.

He also reminded the court of the July 29, 2009, order it had issued to the government to collect necessary rescue equipment.

76 observers

FROM PAGE 1

elections in the two major cities, which is a significant move. Several ambassadors and heads of missions are also likely to visit some polling centres in the capital.

US Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Bernicat will visit the Banani Bidyuniketan polling centre this morning, sources said.

None of these missions and organisations observed last year's January 5 parliamentary election as it was boycotted by major political parties, including the BNP.

According to the EC's list of foreign observers, highest 49 cards were issued to the US embassy in Dhaka. They received 25 cards for foreign observers and 24 for local interpreters.

The British High Commission got 31 cards, including 16 for foreign observers.

Other missions and organisations that received observer cards are European Union, High Commission of Canada, embassies of Japan, France, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany, the UNDP, Democracy International, Asia Foundation, NDI Bangladesh, World Human Rights Service Council and International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, several diplomats said though they had no plan for a full-scale monitoring, they would keep their eyes on the elections.

The foreign missions will watch the polls activities through their internal mechanism and want to see free, fair and transparent elections, they added.

Seeking anonymity, one diplomat said, "Off course we will watch the polls, but it will be informal.

"Remember that the missions will send their reports to their respective headquarters after the elections."

Earlier, the UN, the US, the European Union, the UK and Japan urged all sides to ensure free and fair polls.

In a Twitter post, US Ambassador Bernicat said, "Fair, free and credible elections are the cornerstone of a healthy democracy. Hope tomorrow's [today's] elections are an example of that spirit."

British High Commissioner in Dhaka Robert Gibson tweeted, "Hope tomorrow's [today's] election in Dhaka and Chittagong take place without violence or intimidation and allows opportunity for democratic choice."

No power

FROM PAGE 1

Alam Majumder, a local government expert, told The Daily Star.

Ward councillors do not have that much job to do other than issuing certificates, he added.

Asked about illegal benefits, Ariful Islam Arif, a councillor of ward-19 (now in Dhaka south) for the last 18 years, said, "If a councillor belongs to the party in power, he has much scope to exert influence and gain many benefits. But it is not possible if he is from the opposition parties."

In today's polls, 289 councillor candidates are running in the 57 wards of Dhaka South City Corporation and 390 aspirants in the 36 wards of Dhaka North City Corporation.

A number of sitting councillors and contesting candidates said councillors' main source of income was development activities in their areas, as no contractor can implement any development programmes without their consent. Another source of making money is construction work since it is almost impossible to do that without making them "happy".

Councillors in commercial areas make way more money than those in non-commercial areas, they added.

Mokhesur Rahman, an AL rebel councillor candidate for ward-35 under DNCC, said he wanted to be councillor as people respected and honoured him.

"Besides, if you are a councillor, everybody knows you," he added.