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WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

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**THE GOOD NEWS**

Shipping cost to India to fall as Dhaka, Delhi sign draft agreement

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**NEW SUCCESSION LINE**

Saudi interior Minister Mohammed bin Nayef named as new crown prince

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## Morning promised good day for BNP

### EC results should make the party rue its early boycott decision

SHAKHAWAT LITON and WASIM BIN HABIB

The results of Tuesday's battle of ballots in three city corporations offer much food for thought.

Three BNP-backed mayoral aspirants together polled 9.24 lakh votes, around 35 percent of the total votes cast, even though they boycotted midway through the polls.

Their rivals -- the ruling Awami League-blessed candidates -- who won the elections obtained 14.70 lakh votes, around 55 percent.

The results prompted many to think that the fight would have been close if the polls had been held in a free and fair manner and the BNP-backed candidates had not pulled out early.

The victory the AL-backed mayoral hopefuls secured was tainted by widespread irregularities.

The presence of voters in polling stations was fairly good, but it started to grow thin after the BNP announced pullout of its mayoral candidates around noon.



But when the election results came at night, it surprised many as the numbers showed the BNP-backed mayoral aspirants were not lagging much behind their rivals.

In Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), BNP's candidate Tabith Awal bagged 3.25 lakh votes, some 1.35 lakh less than mayor-elect Annisul Huq. The difference of votes between the two contenders is not unusual as such gaps were also found in the previous city elections, which were highly competitive.

Take, for example, the Gazipur city corporation polls of 2013. It was the last city polls before Tuesday's. BNP-backed mayor candidate MA Mannan won the polls by defeating his AL-backed rival with a difference of 1.06 lakh votes. The total number of voters in Gazipur was 10.26 lakh.

The Gazipur polls saw a turnout of 63 percent whereas in the DNCC the turnout was 37 percent of total 23.44 lakh voters.

Vote casting in the polls to the two Dhaka

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina congratulates the mayors-elect of Dhaka north and south city corporations, Annisul Huq, right, and Sayeed Khokon, left, after the two had gone to meet her at Gono Bhaban in the capital yesterday.

## City polls free, fair

Claims PM, criticises media coverage

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday observed that Tuesday's city polls were very much fair, saying it was the victory of democracy and people.

"This is the victory of democracy, this is the victory of people... at least this is not the victory of militants, terrorists and those involved in subversive activities," she said.

The PM made the remarks when two mayors-elect of Dhaka north and south city corporations Annisul Huq and Sayeed Khokon and some councillors-elect met her at Gono Bhaban in the capital.

Hasina, also chief of the ruling Awami League, mentioned that the win of the AL-sponsored mayors and councillors was people's victory against militants and terrorists.

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**TOP QUOTE**

"There's no need for a democracy better than the one existing in our country where thousands of people take to the streets on rumours that Delawar Hossain Sayeede has been seen on the

AN AWAMI LEAGUE LEADER WHILE SPEAKING ANONYMOUSLY TO The Daily Star

## Only cheer from polls campaign

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and WASIM BIN HABIB

Political mudslinging has long been a key feature in Bangladesh politics, but the city polls have given people hopes that the culture of electioneering might see a change for the better.

The election campaigns, which began on April 7 in Dhaka and Chittagong cities, were different in many aspects from the ones the country witnessed in the past.

Almost all mayoral candidates and their supporters carried out electioneering, complying with the electoral code of conduct. But of course there were a few exceptions.

People saw new approaches from the mayoral aspirants: The candidates shared the same stage on a few occasions, had discussions and gave their views on solving the decades-long problems in the capital.

Some ran campaigns riding bicycles or public bus, cleaning roads with brooms or jogging with general people. They even used the social media in every way possible.

Holding each other's hands, they had their group photos taken. Some of them



Then DNCC mayor aspirants Mahi B Chowdhury, Annisul Huq, and Tabith Awal are all smiles at a views-exchange meet at Krishibid Institute on April 12.

## UN, EU for probe into election anomalies

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations has called for a probe into the allegations of irregularities in Dhaka and Chittagong city corporation polls by the competent authorities.

The European Union has made a similar call, urging all parties to shun violence.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon encouraged the competent authorities to investigate all the allegations and the opposition to use the democratic institutions to express its concerns, said Farhan Haq, deputy spokesman for the UN chief.

He was addressing the daily press briefing at the UN headquarters in New York on Tuesday.

Responding to a query, Farhan said the secretary

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## City election: Things we have lost

NEWS ANALYSIS

INAM AHMED

There is a sea difference between the election that was and the election that could have been.

It could have been an election in which people could merrily walk to the polling centres and pick their mayors. It could have been a return to true democracy. We could have run pictures of the winners and the losers embracing each other, the victors saying they want support of the losers and the losers promising their best for building a better city.

Instead, what we saw is the crudest form of an election.

It seemed the government was afraid to test its popularity in an election that had actually no effect on power change. And it showed the government was in the "I could not care less" mode to have an election in this fashion.

And through this farce we have lost quite a few things. Let's count them.

First, we have lost the faith of our citizens, especially the youngsters who were the first-time voters in the democratic process that the government so staunchly preaches.

There was this young nursing student who recounted her polling centre experience. She almost danced to the polling centre, the first time in her life, and then the polling officer gave her a smile and said, "Well, since you have come to

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## Not credible

Observes Election Working Group about city polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The city corporation polls held in Dhaka and Chittagong on Tuesday are not credible by any standard, says Election Working Group (EWG), a platform of 28 non-partisan civil society organisations.

The EWG at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday presented their preliminary observations of 619 out of 2,701 poll centres in Dhaka North, Dhaka South and Chittagong city corporations.

"Numerous incidents of ballot stuffing, intimidation, booth capture and violence were reported," said Md Abdul Alim, director of EWG Secretariat.

"Based on the extent of malpractice and irregularities observed, EWG evaluates these elections to be not credible," he added.

The summary of their findings shows that ballot

## Nepal quake victim rescued after 82 hours

Tells horror tale

AFP, Kathmandu

As he lay trapped for some 82 hours under the rubble of his Kathmandu hotel after Nepal's devastating earthquake, Rishi Khanal knew what he must do to survive: drink his own urine.

After a painstaking rescue effort, Nepalese and French emergency workers finally pulled the 28-year-old alive late Tuesday from the wreckage, from where he had been desperately calling relatives on his phone for days.

Dazed and caked in dirt, Khanal was carried out of the wreckage on a stretcher before being taken to hospital where doctors said he was lucky to be alive, suffering a leg injury.

Brother-in-law Purna Ram Bhattarai, 32, described how Khanal was left helpless when his leg was pinned under debris during Saturday's quake

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Residents carry their belongings taken out from their destroyed houses in Harisiddhi on the outskirts of the Nepalese capital Kathmandu yesterday. Rescuers are facing a race against time to find survivors of a mammoth earthquake that hit Saturday and killed more than 5,000 people.

DEATH TOLL 5,057

## JP candidates stage poor show

PANKAJ KARMAKAR

All three mayor aspirants blessed by main opposition in parliament Jatiya Party could not even bag one-eighth of the votes cast in Tuesday's city polls, resulting in the forfeiture of their security deposits.

All of them put together bagged only 13,600 votes from the 26.53 lakh people who voted, according to the results released by the office of the returning officers.

A high number of councillor aspirants even bagged more votes than the three JP leaders had got together.

"This humiliating result has tarnished the image of the party," JP lawmaker Ruhul Amin Hawlader told The Daily Star yesterday.

Hawlader, also former secretary general of the party, blamed the process of endorsing the mayor candidates in the polls.

"We hope we will work to strengthen our party with the lesson from the mistake," he added.

The JP leaders' poor performance caused forfeiture of their security deposit. According to electoral laws, an individual needs to deposit Tk 1 lakh to become a mayor aspirant in Dhaka North City Corporation while the amount is Tk 50,000 for Dhaka South City Corporation and Chittagong City Corporation.

If a candidate fails to get one-eighth of the total vote cast in an election, the candidate does not get the money back.

In DNCC, JP-backed mayor hopeful Bahauddin Ahmed obtained only 2,950 votes out of 8.74 lakh vote cast.

JP blessed mayor aspirant in DSCC Mohammad Saifuddin bagged 4,519 out of 9.05 lakh vote cast.

In Chittagong, JP supported candidate Solaiman Alam

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