



PHONE RECHARGE CAPPED

Pre-paid mobile users can't refill more than Tk 500 a day

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SHAHADAT CHARGED

Police press charges against the cricketer for abusing maid

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GRAFT CHARGES

Former Israeli PM Ehud Olmert to serve 18 months in jail for bribery

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MUNICIPALITY POLLS TODAY

Credibility test for EC, govt

SHAKHAWAT LITON and PANKAG KARMAKAR

Elections are test times. Today, it's a crucial credibility and popularity test for the major political players.

People, who are usually ignored over the years, will cast their votes today in 234 municipalities deciding the fate of Awami League, BNP, Jatiya Party and other parties contesting the mayoral battle of ballots.

The daylong polling environment will also show if the efforts of the AL-led government and the Election Commission have restored people's confidence in them in being able and willing to ensure a free and fair election.

Their credibility took hits due to the last faulty parliamentary election and the widespread anomalies in the polls to upazila parishads in 2014 and three city corporations in 2015.

This time around, their role is already being questioned. In the last one month, after the announcement of the poll schedule, field level government administration officials engaged in electoral duties could not take effective measures in most cases to prevent electoral anomalies and

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MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS 2015

Total Municipalities	323
Voting at	234
Mayoral Aspirants	945
Councillor Aspirants	12,171
Polling Centres	3,555
Voters	70,72,511
Polling Officials	66,768
Law Enforcers	1,17,304

● SEVEN MAYORS ELECTED UNOPPOSED
● POLLS TO REST 89 MUNICIPALITIES WILL BE HELD NEXT YEAR



Officials taking polls materials from the returning officer's office in Bogra town yesterday to send them to polling stations ahead of today's municipality polls. For the first time ever municipal elections are being held on partisan lines.

PHOTO: MAMUN-UR-RASHID

CONTENDERS FOR MAYOR POSTS

AL	234
BNP	223
JP	74
Islami Andolon Bangladesh	57
JSD	21
NPP	17
WPB	8
JP-Manju	6
CPB	4
12 other parties	16
Independent	285
TOTAL	945

NEWS ANALYSIS

'No' is tradition

History says ruling parties faced debacles

SHAKHAWAT LITON

There is no doubt that holding a fair and free election in a democratic manner brightens a ruling party's image. Why, then, do the parties in power seldom follow the path to take its image to new heights?

It is a paradox that a free and fair high-voltage election held in a democratic manner never went in favour of the party in power in this country.

Consider the history of election for the last two and a half decades. Neither the Awami League nor the BNP, when in power, has ever demonstrated political goodwill by holding free and fair parliamentary polls. They were only able to set examples of some good elections in the local government bodies.

The results in those good local elections however have disappointed them all the time as people cast ballots saying "NO" to the ways the party in power governed the country.

During the BNP-led government, elections to Dhaka and Chittagong City Corporation in 1994 and polls to Chittagong City Corporation again in 2005 were largely free and fair.

In those battles, the BNP-backed mayoral candidates faced humiliating defeat to their opponents supported by the then opposition AL.

Those two polls signaled that BNP's popularity had taken a nose dive and it faced defeat to the opposition AL in the subsequent parliamentary elections in June 1996 and in December 2008.

The AL-led government had brightened its image by demonstrating its political will to have free and fair polls to Chittagong City Corporation in

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CEC talks tough on anomalies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad yesterday directed polling officers and law enforcers to take action against those involved in irregularities during the voting today.

"If any candidate or his supporters try to commit irregularities during voting, polls officials will take stern action against them," he told reporters at the media centre of the EC secretariat.

He hoped the voting would be festive. He also warned polling officers and law enforcers of action if anyone of them got involved in anomalies.

"I am instructing polling officers and law enforcers to perform their electoral

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BNP men come under attack

Face intimidation from rival AL nominees; 3 hurt in clash over ballot-stamping rumour

STAR REPORT

Clashes, and attacks and arrests of BNP men marked the day before the much-hyped municipality polls today, casting doubt over the election's being free and fair.

In some places, rebel candidates too reportedly came under attack and were being "intimidated to quit" the mayoral race.

In most cases, supporters of the ruling Awami League candidates were blamed.

The BNP even alleged that the government had drawn up a "blueprint" to take the election results in all 234 municipalities in favour of the AL-nominated candidates.

The AL on the other hand asked the party-men to assist the Election Commission and the local administrations in making the elections fair.

Against this backdrop, both parties sent delegations to the EC and sought its interference in the alleged anomalies that may raise questions over the elections' credibility.

The BNP told the commission that three of its men were killed and over 3,000 injured in pre-election violence and

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MG!
"Don't mind. I know that you have taken up journalism as a profession as there is not enough employment opportunity in the

OPPOSITION LEADER RAUSHAN ERSHAD AT A PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY

There might be int'l incitement

President on recent attacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There might be "international instigation" behind the recent rise



in militant activities in Bangladesh, President Abdul Hamid told BBC Bangla at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

The recent attacks on mosques or the threats to and assaults on non-Muslim people were unfortunate for the country, he said.

"It is unexpected. This cannot happen in Bangladesh because we all - Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists and Christians -- fought together to liberate this country."

Hamid also mentioned that a number of Muslim-majority countries are in a state of unrest, and the

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All smiles and on time, headmasters of government primary schools collecting books from the warehouse of Sundarganj Upazila Parishad in Gaibandha. The books would be given to students for free. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: STAR

Textbooks on time

Govt hopes to provide free books to 4.4cr students on first day of 2016

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 44 million primary and secondary level students are set to receive new textbooks on the first morning of 2016, as around 33 crore copies of textbooks are ready for free distribution.

"I'm telling you with conviction that all textbooks have been printed and dispatched to the doorways of the respective education institutions. All arrangements have been made to distribute the books on January 1," Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told reporters at a press briefing at his Secretariat office yesterday.

The minister added like the previous years, the first day of the New Year would be celebrated as the "Textbook Festival" day across the country.

"All education institutions will remain open that day with books to be handed over to the students," Nahid said.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to formally

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TOTAL TEXTBOOKS 33,37,62,760

TOTAL STUDENTS 4,44,16,728 FROM PRE-PRIMARY TO CLASS-X