

Stand against terrorism

PM urges countrymen

UNB, Faridpur

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the country's people to stand against terrorism, militancy and drug addiction.

Speaking at a rally on the ground of Faridpur Government Rajendra College, she also urged all, including guardians, teachers, imams, law enforcement agencies and the administration, to remain alert so that no one could get involved in these menaces.

"All will have to resist terrorism, militancy and drug abuse. Be sure that not a single child resorts to terrorism,

militancy and drug addiction. The path of terrorism and militancy isn't ours," she said.

Mentioning that study was the first and only duty of students, the PM said, "They have to shun the path of militancy, drug addiction and terrorism."

She also asked teachers and guardians to make sure that no student remained absent in any educational institution and took account of whom they befriend.

Hasina said the government had taken various programmes to ensure higher education of students. "We're

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina unveils stone plaques of different development projects before speaking at a rally at Faridpur Government Rajendra College ground yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO

Bogra OC's body found hanging

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The body of a Bogra police station's officer-in-charge was found hanging by the neck from a ceiling fan hook inside his residence yesterday morning.

ANM Abdullah Al-Hasan, 50, met two visitors in his office at Gabtoli Model Police Station and left for his residence nearby around 10:30am. Inspector (Investigation) Nuruzzaman Mia told The Daily Star.

Passers-by noticed the body through the residence's open front door around 10:45am, he added. The body was sent to Gabtoli Upazila Health Complex for an autopsy.

Son of Hazrat Ali of Kodomtola village in Natore, Abdullah left behind his wife and two children who live in Rajshahi.

Rab arrests 4 'JMB men'

Says they are members of 'Sarwar-Tamim group'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday claimed to have arrested four suspected members of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) from Dohar on the outskirts of the capital.

The arrestees, who belong to JMB's "Sarwar-Tamim group", were planning to carry out subversive activities around the country. They were waiting for instructions from a "big brother", said Jahangir Hossain Matubbar, Rab-10 commanding officer, at a press briefing at the force's media centre in the capital's Karwan Bazar.

He, however, did not name the "big brother".

Of the detainees, Faisal Ahmed Sanil, 19, a student of Ispahani Degree College, left his Keraniganj home on Sunday to join a so-called jihad, the Rab official said.

The other arrestees are Misbah, 19, a student of Sonahazra Madrasa, his younger brother Mahfuz, 16, who sat for this year's SSC examinations, and Taibur Rahman, 18. They are from Dohar upazila.

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CLEANERS GO ON STRIKE

Garbage collection in Barisal stopped

City corporation unable to pay dues of 1600 workers

HELEMUL ALAM and SHUSHANTA GHOSH

Many areas of Barisal city have the horrible stench of rotting garbage as the waste has not been collected in three days.

At least 1,600 temporary workers, who are supposed to collect the city's garbage, and 541 class-II and class-III staff of the Barisal City Corporation went on strike on March 27 demanding arrears.

They have five months' salaries due, said Dipok Lal Mridha, conservancy officer of the BCC.

The BCC had promised to pay them two months' arrears by March 20, following the workers' strike in February, but did not live up to it.

Dipok said garbage collectors had to suffer due to this as even a day without pay puts them in trouble.

The agitated staff closed the BCC main gate and disconnected electricity supply to the BCC building.

The BCC authorities have virtually failed to take any effective steps to solve the problem.

BCC Mayor Ahsan Habib Kamal said they provide staff salaries from revenue income but it has become difficult for them to pay salaries regularly due to poor earnings.

BCC Chief Executive Officer Wahiduzzaman said the corporation needs Tk 3 crore to pay the salaries every month but it only earns Tk 2 crore in an average month.

He said after the implementation of the new pay scale around six months ago, staff salaries have become almost double which was one of the main reasons for the deficit.

Wahiduzzaman claimed that the problem could have been solved through discussions with the workers but the workers went on strike without giving any scope for that.

Skips and bins on the city streets are

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Bangladeshi

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The US has appreciated it, which is why she is on the list of the award's recipients put up on the US State Department website.

Sharmin is now studying at Jhalakathi Rajapur Pilot Girls High School and dreams that she would become a lawyer one day to fight against the harmful tradition of early and forced marriages that threaten health, safety, and education of millions of girls and undermine the country's progress.

The Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Award annually recognises women around the globe who have demonstrated courage and leadership in advocating for peace, justice, human rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment, often at great personal risk.

Since the inception of this award in 2007, more than 100 women from 60 different countries have been honoured.

From April 1, the awardees will travel across the US to engage in an International Visitor Leadership Program with American people. They will visit Atlanta, Denver, Des Moines, Minneapolis, New York, Pensacola, Pittsburgh, Portland, San Diego, and Tampa and then will gather in Los Angeles to share their experience and discuss ways to work together to improve the lives of women and girls around the world.

Six students

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not to go to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) event.

Mahfuzur Rahman, team leader of AIUB Robotic Crew Legacy Reloaded, said their designed human-powered rover weighed over 100kg and had the ability to traverse rough and rocky terrains, like in Mars.

The 7-foot-by-3.5-foot rover has two seats and is 5 feet high when folded, said Mahfuzur, a student of AIUB's Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE) department.

Mainul said they made an 8-foot-by-4-foot rover capable of travelling on rocky and sandy terrain.

Ninety-nine teams were supposed to take part in the competition. Most of the teams are from the US. Teams from India, Mexico, Bolivia, Peru, Lithuania and Brazil were also taking part.

At the competition, student teams would be required to design, build, test and race human-powered rovers, driven by one male and one female team member, according to NASA.

The challenge highlights NASA's goals for future exploration to Mars and beyond. Inspired by the lunar vehicles of the Apollo moon missions, the competition challenges students to solve engineering problems, while emphasising NASA's commitment to inspiring new generations of scientists,

engineers and explorers.

The AIUB team, which has previous experiences of participating in the University Rover Challenge 2016 in Utah and had secured 8th place beating 63 teams from 12 nations, was more confident of winning the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge 2017, Mahfuzur said.

It took them some three months to make the rover and they had to spend Tk 1.5 lakh. Nearly same time and money was spent for the CUET team.

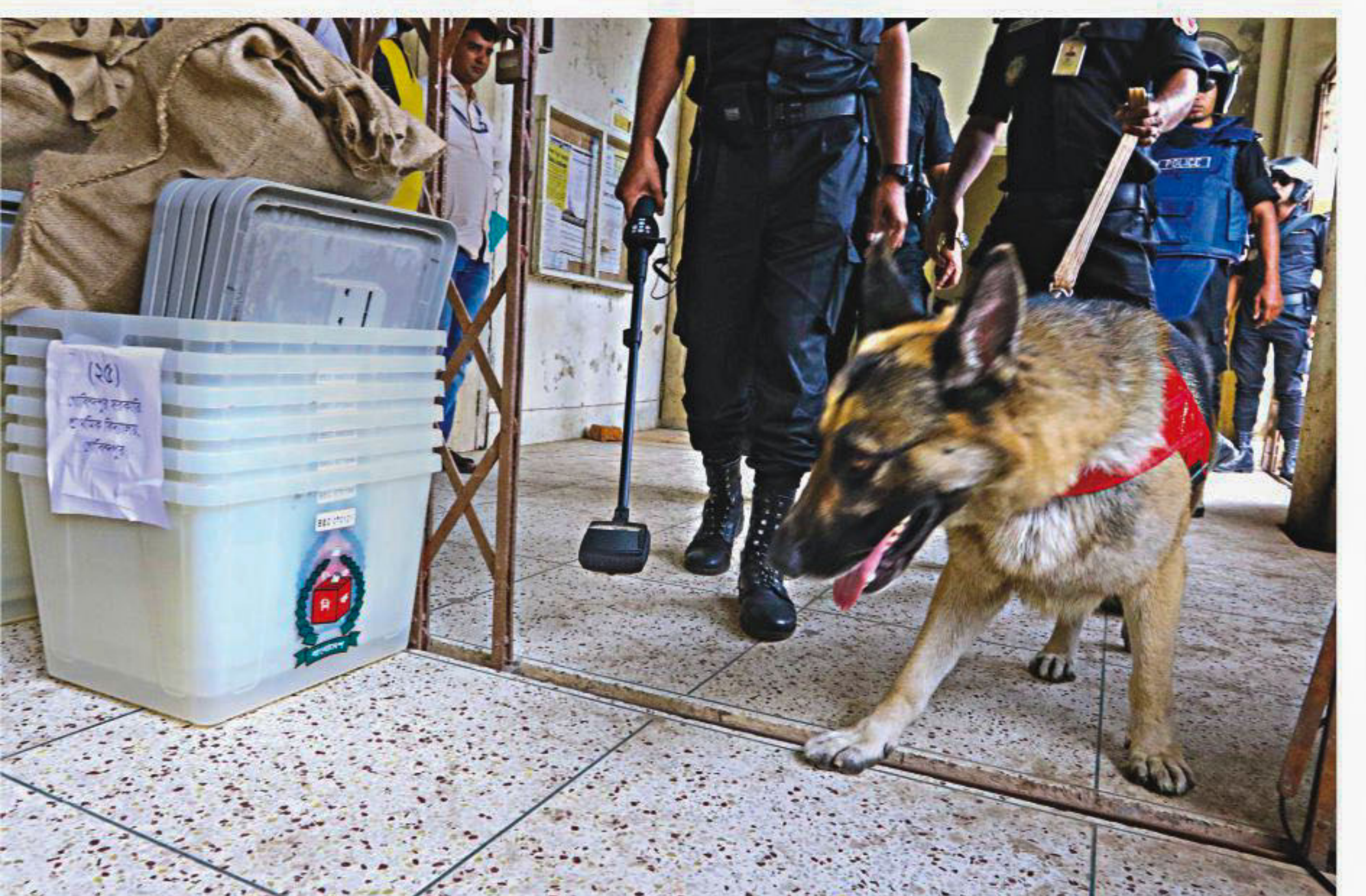
Things have changed for them with the visa refusals. The students were the kind that sees silver linings around clouds.

Mainul of CUET said they now plan to take part in national or international exhibition with the rover they have built.

Mahfuzur of AIUB said they were thinking of taking their rover to the beach. "As tourists go there, they can have a taste of riding the rover that can travel on sandy and rocky terrain," he told this correspondent.

In an email response to The Daily Star queries, US Embassy Information Officer Nancy VanHorn said consular officers review each case carefully and make their decisions based on US laws.

"Bangladeshi students, business owners, and tourists receive visas every day to travel to the United States," she said.



Rab personnel with a sniffer dog search voting materials at Town Hall Auditorium in Comilla city yesterday. The city corporation goes to polls today.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Raid on 3 more 'militant dens'

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around 6:30pm. During the 70-minute raid, more than 300 shots were fired but police could not confirm if any of the suspected militants were neutralised, report our correspondents, who were about 300 metres from the scene.

Police did not allow reporters or locals to go near any of the hideouts while the district administration clamped Section 144 around 2km radius of the two dens in Moulvibazar. Section 144 prohibits gathering of more than five people.

"We did not enter the house as dark fell. We could not see anything inside it," said a police officer who took part in the operation. "There was no response from inside the house during the assault."

Earlier in the morning, however, when law enforcers tried to approach the two houses, the militants charged bombs and opened fire at them, police said.

Through loudspeakers, police also asked the militants to surrender in vain.

The operation at Nasirpur will resume this morning, Deputy Inspector General of police in Sylhet Kamrul Ahsan told The Daily Star.

Two to three militants may be hiding in the Borohat den while eight to nine in Nasirpur, said Mohibul Islam, deputy commissioner of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit (CTTC) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Earlier, a CTTC official said their teams were working in Moulvibazar on information that there were one or more terror dens.

Talking to reporters in Dhaka, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said there might be one or two top militants in Moulvibazar hideouts.

Only on Tuesday evening, army Para Commandos ended their anti-terror assault codenamed "Operation Twilight" on a house called Atia Mahal at Shibbari of Sylhet. Four militants, including a woman, were killed during the operation.

Also, four civilians and two police

officers were killed in a twin bombing on Saturday night near Atia Mahal. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the bomb attack.

All this comes in the wake of two suspected suicide bombings in Dhaka -- one inside a Rab barrack and another near a police checkpoint close to the airport.

In recent months, police and Rab conducted several raids in Dhaka and Chittagong, killing or arresting some top militant leaders belonging to what they call "Neo JMB", an offshoot of the now banned JMB which carried out several high-profile attacks in 2001-2005.

MOULVIBAZAR HIDEOUTS

Police cordoned off the house in Borohat around 1:30am yesterday. A few hours later, they sealed off the other house in Nasirpur.

Police said one Belal Ahmed rented the ground floor of the Borohat house in January, identifying himself as an employee of a private company. Later, he told the caretaker, Azir Mia, that some of his relatives wanted to stay in the house. The caretaker told him that the relatives could rent the Nasirpur house, which they did.

Jewel Ahmed, caretaker of the Nasirpur house, said a man named Kamrul Talukder alias Mahfuz rented the house in February.

The man identified himself as a manager of a private company and said that his wife, parents-in-law and sister-in-law would stay with him.

Police later found he gave a fake identity.

Jewel said that Azir Mia, the caretaker of the house in Borohat, informed him about the police raid on that house.

Jewel then knocked on the door of Mahfuz's flat in the early morning and someone opened it. When he asked whether they were militants, the person shut the door and a few minutes later hurled a bomb, police said.

Till afternoon, the militants hurled bombs at the law enforcers, police said.

Police first tried to close in on the Borohat den around 6:30am, but backed

away as the militants opened fire. Since then there were occasional exchange of gunshots throughout the day, according to police.

Sporadic explosions rocked the area throughout the day, but the source of the explosions was not clear as journalists were not allowed to go near the building, our district correspondent said.

Moinuddin, a grocer, said, "When I came to my shop around 6:30am, I saw many policemen in the area. I heard sounds of gunshots and then police asked us to shut our shops. Then I shut down my shop."

MOULVIBAZAR HIDEOUTS

Amid the raid in Moulvibazar, police in Comilla cordoned off an under-construction three-storey building around 2:00pm following information from the Police Headquarters that some suspected militants were hiding there with explosives.

The house at Gondhomoti is owned by Delwar Hossain, 42, who lived in Saudi Arabia for several years, said his father Ahmed Ali.

Police detained his younger brother Saddam Hossain for interrogation.

Law enforcers evacuated 10 residents, including women and children, from the building.

Residents of six houses close to the building also left for safety on police instructions.

"We are sure four to five militant suspects are inside the building. There are bombs powerful enough to bring down the building," said Shah Abid Hossain, superintendent of Comilla police.

Police sealed off half a kilometre radius of the building.

Delwar, the house owner, said two youths, aged about 22, rented a flat on the ground floor early this month identifying themselves as clothes traders. They, however, did not provide copies of their identity cards.

Some students and a border guard member with his family were staying in different units of the first floor, Delwar said.

AL, BNP battle for Comilla pride

FROM PAGE 1

a revenge for her father's defeat.

If elected, she would become only the second woman mayor of a city corporation after Selina Hayat Ivy in Narayanganj.

For Sakku, a win would brighten his political career and earn him a fresh five-year term as mayor.

In 2012, he had to resign from BNP to run in the non-partisan election as his party decided not back any candidate. The then main opposition party was in a movement demanding restoration of the caretaker government system.

Sima and Sakku are contesting the elections with their parties' electoral symbols "Boat" and "Sheaf of Paddy". Senior AL and BNP leaders recently took part in electioneering for their camps.

INFIGHTING CONTINUES

Internal feuds within the AL and the BNP remained a big headache for the two leading mayor hopefuls.

Central leaders of both the parties tried to damp down the infighting to make sure that grassroots leaders worked together to ensure win for the party candidates.

Intra-party conflict was largely blamed for Afzal's defeat in 2012. The problem was still there in the

Mayoral candidates	4
Councillor aspirants	154
Wards	27
Voters	2,07,384
Polling stations	103
Polling hour	8:00am to 4:00pm

ruling party's Comilla unit, said local AL leaders.

Many BNP men alleged that former mayor Sakku did not maintain good relations with them in the last five years.

In terms of area, CCC is the country's smallest city corporation with around two lakh voters. There are over 10 crore voters in the country.

Yet, Comilla city polls drew much public attention due to the battle between the two archrivals. A victory would boost up the morale of the winning party ahead of the next parliamentary elections scheduled for early 2019.

The AL and the BNP last faced off in a national election in December 2008. The BNP later boycotted the January 2014 parliamentary polls.

However, grassroots leaders of the two major parties fought some elections to local bodies in the last few years.

In the latest battle of ballots

between the two parties, AL's Narayanganj mayor candidate Selina Hayat Ivy sealed a landslide win against BNP nominee Shakhawat Hossain Khan in December last year.

CRUCIAL TEST FOR EC

The Comilla city polls were being seen as a crucial test of capacity for the Election Commission led by KM Nurul Huda.

Members of the law enforcement agencies, including police and Border Guard Bangladesh, started patrolling city streets yesterday to thwart any untoward incident.

Constituted last month, the EC is holding its first competitive election in Comilla. The district administration has taken all out preparations in line with the EC's directives to maintain law and order to hold a free and fair election.

CEC Huda on several occasions assured that the Comilla city polls would be held in a free and fair manner.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, he said voters should not be worried about the law enforcers' raid on a suspected militant den in Comilla.

He urged the voters to go to the polling stations and cast their votes.

Rab official flown back from S'pore

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Rab officials say his condition has remained unchanged. Specialist doctors in Singapore suggested he be brought back and the medicine prescribed is available in CMH, said Rab's legal and media wing Director Mufti Mahmud Khan.

Abul Kalam was flown to Singapore on Sunday night. The explosion in

which he was hit occurred around an hour after another bomb went off around 7:00pm some 400 metres north of Atia Mahal in Shibbari where militants were holed up since the early morning of March 24.

The explosions left two police officials and four civilians dead and injured 40 others. Army commandos later on killed four militants in the building.

Abul Kalam began serving as a commanding officer in Rab-12 from October 26, 2011 on deputation from Bangladesh Army.

He served as a deputy director in the intelligence wing (TFI Cell) of Rab Headquarters from December 31, 2011 to December 7, 2013. His dedication was recognised through Bangladesh Police Medal (service) in 2016.