



THE KANCHPUR-MEGHNA-GUMTI BRIDGES ARE BEING BUILT WITH HIGHLY DUCTILE GRADE 420 BSRM ULTIMA BARS



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EVM proves prone to abuse

Some voters find it convenient

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

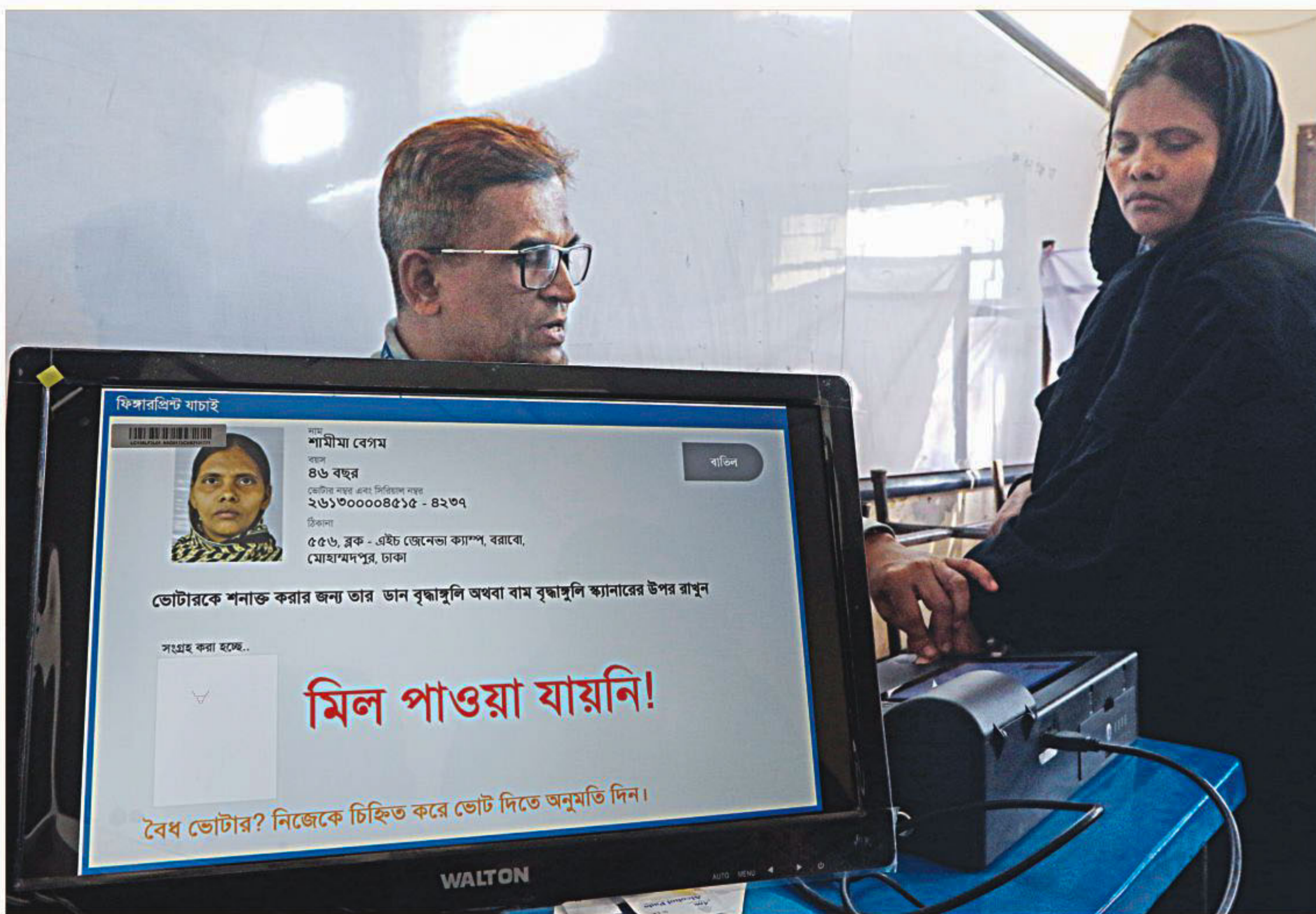
The Election Commission touted the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) as a foolproof alternative to the traditional method of ballot paper, but that too fell prey to sweeping abuse yesterday.

Some 5,045 EVMs were deployed in 845 polling centres in six constituencies -- Dhaka-6 and -13, Chattogram 9, Rangpur 3, Khulna 2 and Satkhira 2 -- and the common complaint of voters was that their ballots were cast by someone else in their presence.

This was feared by 40 of the registered parties, including the BNP and its allies, who said the deployment of the instrument would facilitate "the government's plan for election engineering".

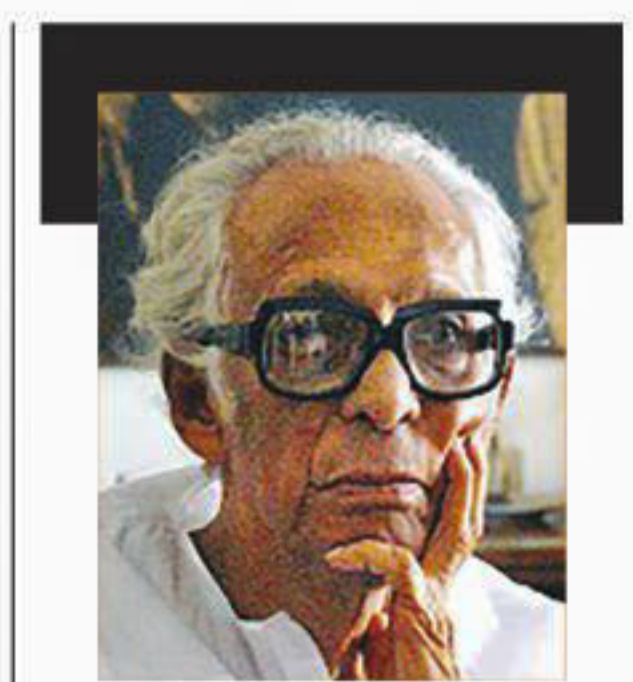
Another problem with the new voting method used during the 11th general elections was that polling was halted for several hours at many booths for malfunctioning units.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



This woman could not vote because her fingerprint did not match at Dhaka Residential Model School polling centre. The photo in the database clearly indicates her. She was a voter of Dhaka-13 where Electronic Voting Machines were used.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



'A loss to the world'

Iconic Mrinal Sen passes away at 95

AGENCIES

Mrinal Sen, one of the towering figures of Indian cinema, passed away yesterday morning at his south Kolkata residence. He was suffering from age-related ailments and suffered a heart attack at 10.30am, his family physician said. He was 95.

Last of the triumvirate of legendary filmmakers from West Bengal comprising Satyajit Ray and Ritwick Ghtatak, Mrinal Sen was recipient of various awards including Dada Saheb Phalke award, India's highest

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

TO USE QR CODE ON YOUR SMARTPHONE, INSTALL FREE QR READER SOFTWARE FROM GOOGLE PLAYSTORE OR APPLE STORE. TURN ON THE SOFTWARE AND HOLD THE PHONE CAMERA OVER THE QR CODE TO GET THE VIDEO LINK.

No privacy while voting

Ruling party men posing as BNP polling agents dominate centres in Natore-2, alleges BNP candidate

BULBUL AHMED and PORIMOL PALMA, Natore

Jamshed Ali had to cast his vote for "boat" openly in front of the polling officials and agents, which is a blatant violation of the electoral code of conduct.

"Awami League agents forced me to do it," he told The Daily Star after casting his vote at 60 Bakshor Government Primary School polling centre under Dighapatia union in Natore Sadar around 10:30am yesterday.

He said he could not vote for "sheaf of paddy", the electoral symbol of BNP candidate Sabina Yasmin Chhobi, who is the rival of AL candidate Shafiqul Islam Shimul in Natore-2 constituency (Natore-Naldanga).

At the polling centre, there were four polling booths. As per the electoral rules, each candidate is supposed to have one polling agent in each booth. But, these correspondents found two agents of the ruling party and two agents of BNP in each of the booths.

Sabina Yasmin said she has not signed any list of polling agents. The lists were signed by her main polling agent Aminul Islam.

Therefore, she said, a lot of the polling agents were not from their party and were using false identities.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Son casts vote on behalf of sick father!

BULBUL AHMED and PORIMOL PALMA, Natore

It was 2:42pm when these correspondents entered a voting booth at Lalbagh Government Primary School in Natore sadar. A voter named Mobarak Hossain, 35, told the polling official his serial number -- 169 -- and his name.

One of the officials found the number and put a tick mark beside it. The official next to him handed Mobarak a signed ballot paper. Mobarak stamped the "boat" symbol right in front of the officials, folded it and inserted it into the ballot box, whereas the stamping must be done inside polling booths in secrecy.

This suspicious behaviour urged these correspondents to check the photo of the voter numbered 169 on the voters' list. What they found was the face of a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Tearful Salma quits race



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around noon yesterday, Salma Islam was wiping away tears while her husband and campaign manager Nurul Islam Babul announced they were boycotting the election.

He said their agents were driven out of polling centres and ballot boxes were stuffed by Awami League men to such an extent that made staying in the race pointless.

Salma, an incumbent lawmaker from the Jatiya Party, ran as an independent in Dhaka-1.

She is the publisher and former acting editor of the daily Jugantor. Her husband Babul is the chairman of Jamuna Group, which owns the Jamuna TV.

She and Babul announced their decision to quit the race

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

ANFREL gets flak from foreign affairs ministry

UNB, Dhaka

The foreign ministry has described the joint statement of ANFREL-affiliated organisations, issued on Saturday, as "premature" and criticised it for comments based on "misinformation and premeditated assumptions".

In a statement around noon yesterday, the ministry said the 11th national election was being held in a free, fair, festive and peaceful manner in full exercise of the people's voting rights despite "biased speculations" by many quarters, including Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL).

"Odhikar", an NGO of Bangladesh, is the founding member of the ANFREL.

Earlier, the ministry said,

SEE PAGE 13 COL 2

VOTING IN LALMONIRHAT-3 First 3 hours peaceful, then come AL men

JEJUN NESA ALO and S DILIP ROY from Lalmonirhat

The first three hours were peaceful, even festive at times as people came in to cast their vote at the polling centres in the Lalmonirhat 3 constituency since early morning.

The presence of female voters was notable, all queuing up in front of polling centres around sadar upazila waiting for their turn.

Polling agents of BNP and Jatiya Party candidates Asadul Habib Dulu and Golam Mohammed Quader respectively were there.

But the scenario started changing radically from 11:00am as Awami League (AL) activists began to arrive. They started calling out to voters, telling them to leave while forcing out BNP agents. No BNP worker or leader returned fearing attacks.

In some centres even police carried out such acts, snatching voter lists from BNP agents.

A correspondent of The Daily Star was present in a polling centre set up inside Lalmonirhat Government High School.

The presiding officer there, Rakibuzzaman, had locked himself inside a classroom after suspending voting around

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Coast Guard happy with election duty performance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Director General of the Bangladesh Coast Guard Rear Admiral Aurangzeb Chowdhury yesterday said this force had discharged its duties in a manner so that the people of the coastal areas can cast vote in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere.

The role BCG played this time during the election was unique in the history of Bangladesh, he said in a press statement that was sent through an email at 6:16pm.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 3



Voters gather at the closed gate of Kalachandpur High School and College and Kalachandpur Primary School polling centres around 10:00am yesterday while the polling booths, inset, inside are devoid of voters.

PHOTO: KAZI TAHSSIN AGAZ APURBO

3 journalists beaten up

Reporters, photojournalists face obstruction of duty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least three journalists, including a photojournalist of this paper, were assaulted during parliamentary polls in Dhaka and Chattogram yesterday, while a number of journalists covering polls for this paper faced obstructions from activists of political parties and law enforcers in the capital.

Kazi Tahsin Agaz Apurbo of The Daily Star and Al Amin, a staff reporter of Chattogram-based online news portal Cvoice24.com, came under attack by alleged ruling party men while covering election proceedings.

Meanwhile, senior reporter of Bangla daily Manab Zamin Kafi Kamal was assaulted while returning from a polling centre after casting vote in Moghbazar.

Apurbo was assaulted by five to six men in front of Shahjadpur Model Government Primary School in Gulshan around 12:05pm.

The attackers, wearing badges of Awami League electoral symbol "boat", came out of a crowd and started questioning him while he was taking photographs well outside the polling centre.

At one point, they swooped on him and beat him up indiscriminately. The attackers broke his spectacles and took away his cell phone.

However, with help from on-duty police personnel, he got his cell phone back, on condition of deleting some photos of polls atmosphere from it.

Al Amin alleged he was injured in his forehead by some

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 31
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-00 5-27 7-00
JAMAAT 6-05 1-15 4-15 5-30 7-30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION