

"Voters don't show any interest to go to polling centres if the election is not par-



"He didn't lie about one thing. He said, no collusion with the



"We only create election environment. We cannot bring voters [to polling centres] from their homes"



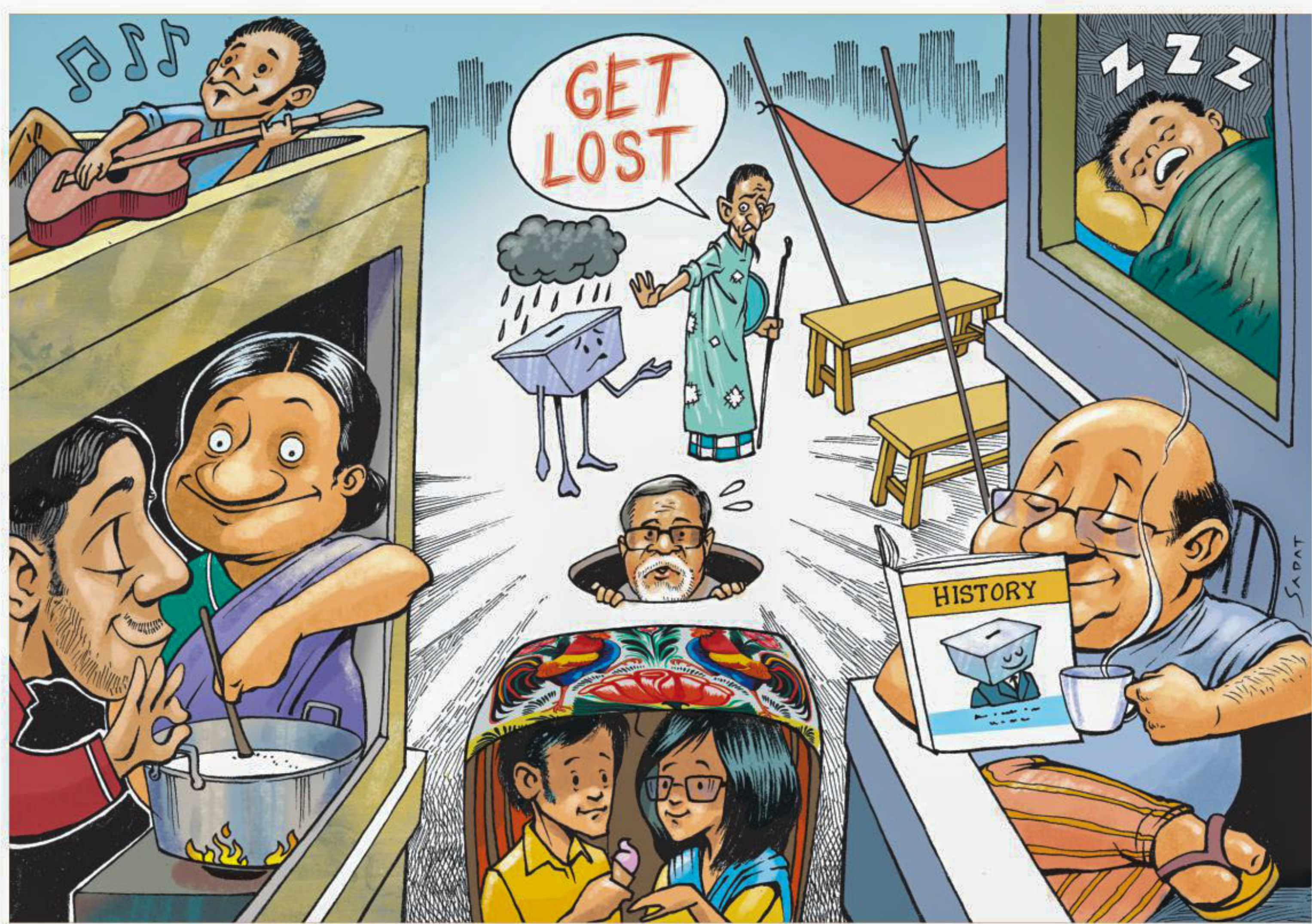
Voters not interested

Turnout 31.05pc; AL's Atiqul wins DNCC mayor polls, of course



Do they need our votes? Like they did in the December 30 election, someone will cast my vote. When Md Kamal told this to The Daily Star, he spoke for hundreds of thousands of voters in the city that went to polls to pick its mayor in the north. It was a bizarre picture. Logistically speaking, everything was in place for a successful election. The one thing missing was voters, who are at the heart of any election. Voters' turnout in yesterday's Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral by-polls was so low that election officials, polling agents, and members of the law enforcement agencies at many centres were seen sitting idle or even sleeping, especially for the first few hours after voting began at 8:00am.

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Empty yet not empty!

Empty! Emptiness, everywhere across Dhaka North yesterday. Empty voting centre, empty ballot box and empty look in the faces of polling officials. As if the word empty personified the city elections of yesterday, the day when over 30 lakh voters were supposed to elect the mayor of their region. Where have the voters gone? Why no one seemed to care about this election? But it should be their day to choose. Were they barred from choosing? No. Not a single complaint of intimidation came up so far. The situation was rather eerily peaceful. There was no campaign in the run-up to polls that could create the slightest chance for tension in the locality. Only two of five mayor aspirants occasionally came up in the public domain. Television viewers saw at times Atiqul Islam,



PHOTO: MUNTAKIM SAAD

'Ominous' for democracy

Experts react to city polls

Poor presence of voters in yesterday's Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral by-polls has demonstrated that people have lost confidence in the country's electoral system, experts said. This is because many people were deprived of their voting rights in some previous elections, the experts said, adding that this was an "ominous sign" for the country's democracy. They also said people did not find any rationality behind

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Questionable numbers

It was around 10:45am, nearly three hours into the beginning of yesterday's Dhaka North City Corporation by-polls. The two buildings of Tejgaon Model High School that housed four polling centres were expected to be crowded with voters by that time. But, the scene there was totally different. An Ansar woman was seen sleeping on a bench in front of a polling booth. Near another polling centre, on the second floor of the same building, several polling agents of Boat, the electoral symbol of the ruling Awami League, were seen chatting over phones. Downstairs, in the corridor, a policeman was listening to music on the speakers of his phone and some other polling agents of the ruling party were

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CHEMICAL WAREHOUSES, FACTORIES Crackdown begins in old town

Taskforce in Shaheednagar finds those previously fined still running. It seems nothing has changed in West Shaheednagar area of Old Dhaka. On March 12, 2017, a drive led by the Dhaka South City Corporation fined several chemical and plastic warehouse owners for not moving out of the area in Old Dhaka. Almost two years later, a taskforce yesterday found many of the same warehouses there. The taskforce comprising of 14 government agencies disconnected the utility lines -- electricity, water and gas -- of 13 warehouses and factories in the area on the first day of its month-long drive following last week's fire in Chawkbazar that killed at least 69 and injured scores. Similar actions were taken yesterday against eight factories and warehouses in Islambagh, only about 1km from

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INDO-PAK TENSIONS Sign of thaw

Islamabad to free Indian pilot today as 'peace gesture'; Delhi cautious. Pakistan yesterday said it will release a captured Indian pilot as a "peace gesture", taking a step towards rapprochement as clashes between the nuclear-armed rivals ignited fears of a disastrous conflict. The pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, has become the face of the crisis since he was shot down in a rare aerial engagement between the South Asian neighbours over the disputed region of Kashmir on Wednesday. With anger boiling over his capture in India, analysts have touted him as a potential trump card for Islamabad. "As a peace gesture we are releasing the Indian pilot tomorrow," Prime Minister Imran Khan told a joint session of parliament. Parliamentarians stamped their feet in approval at his statement, the first sign of a potential thaw after a dangerous sequence of events between the two countries sent tensions soaring. Tit-for-tat raids across their hair-trigger border have alarmed world powers including China and the US, who have urged restraint. Russia, Saudi Arabia yesterday offered



Abhinandan

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Tamim Iqbal, the only Bangladesh batsman who showed that the New Zealand attack could be dominated, acknowledges the cheers after reaching his ninth Test century on the first day of the first Test in Hamilton yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

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Tigers surrender advantage

Bangladesh got off to a promising start but could not make the most of it as they folded for just 234 runs, despite a resplendent Tamim Iqbal century, in the first innings of the first Test against New Zealand in Hamilton yesterday. All 11 members of the national team were sporting black armbands to mourn the tragedy of the recent Chawkbazar fire that claimed 69 lives on the night of February 20, as well as to condole the passing of Syed Altaf Hossain -- widely acknowledged to be the first cricket coach of independent Bangladesh -- on February 26. It was the green-top at the Seddon Park that was

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