

## DNCC mayor-elect meets PM

BSS, Dhaka

Mayor-elect of Dhaka North City Corporation Atiqul Islam called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday evening.

The mayor-elect greeted the premier by presenting her with a bouquet.

During the meeting, the prime minister congratulated Atiqul on being elected as the DNCC mayor and wished him success in performing his responsibilities.

AL nominated candidate Atiqul was unofficially elected mayor to the DNCC mayoral by-polls Thursday night.

He secured 8,39,302 votes with Boat symbol while his nearest contestant Shafin Ahmed of Jatiya Party bagged 52,429 votes with Plough symbol.

AL advisory council members Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed and Rashidul Haque, presidium members Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Dr Abdur Razzak and Muhammad Faruk Khan, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, AL Joint Secretaries Mahbulul Alam Hanif, Dr Dipu Moni and Abdur Rahman, Organising Secretary Barrister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury, Office Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap and

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Mayor-elect of Dhaka North City Corporation Atiqul Islam, second from left, greets Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with a bouquet at the Gono Bhaban yesterday

PHOTO: PID

## Voter awareness

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previous elections might have lost interest in polling. Many voters expressed similar sentiments to reporters.

Delivering his speech as the chief guest at a "National Voter Day" programme organised by the Bangladesh Election Commission on its premises, the president said, "We have to choose appropriate leadership from the grassroots to the national level. The most acceptable method of leadership selection is the voting system."

The EC observed National Voter Day for the first time with the theme "I will be a voter, I will cast vote."

Although holding election is the constitutional responsibility of the EC, everyone irrespective of their party and opinions have to extend cooperation to make the election fair and acceptable, he said.

"Celebration of the National Voter Day is very important. If the day is observed properly at the grassroots level, it will create a positive impact on the democratic culture of the country. "Then the political culture of peace, harmony, sympathy and tolerance would be developed instead of the blame game in politics. Democracy and development will advance to the desired goal."

He called upon journalists, teachers, members of civil society, Imams of mosques and all dignitaries of the society to come forward so that people could be enlisted in the voter list.

"Nearly a million people of Bangladesh live abroad. They are playing an important role in the country's economy by sending foreign currencies. But many of them do not have a national ID card. I think the Election Commission should take special initiative so that the expatriates could get national ID cards."

**QUADER DEFENDS LOW TURNOUT**  
Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the country's major political parties would face a huge setback if they refrain from taking part in the local government elections.

"BNP will plunge into a crisis in the next general election as it has started boycotting election deceptively," he said while addressing a press conference at party Chief Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi political office.

In his reaction over DNCC by-election, Quader said BNP leader Sadeque Hossain Khoka was elected as a mayor of then undivided city corporation in 2001 when "only 10 percent votes were cast."

Responding to a query, the Awami League leader said earlier the BNP had taken part in the city corporation elections and secured victory in four cities. "It means BNP takes part in polls upon sensing favourable time."

Asked about poor turnout of voters, he said a major political party did not participate in the election, and moreover, it was a holiday which is why most of the voters went to their village homes.

Meanwhile, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud claimed that by-elections usually witness lower rates of participation than that of the fresh ones, and that is why there was a low voter turnout in DNCC mayoral by-poll.

He came up with the remarks yesterday while addressing a seminar on "Children's Right" at the Shilpakala Academy in Chattogram.

He claimed that 32 percent voters had casted their votes in the election.

Mahmud also opined that BNP did not join the poll as it lost people's support.

BNP's activists also lost trust on their leadership, forcing the party not to take part in the election after their landslide defeat in the December 30 election, he added.

## Won't take any more Rohingyas

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very generous, we cannot expect this to continue indefinitely," she said.

Peace remains fragile as Myanmar continues to wrestle with the legacy of decades of military rule and fundamental human rights issues, said a UN press release quoting Christine.

The Bangladesh foreign secretary further accused Myanmar of "hollow promises and various obstructionist approaches" during negotiations on returns, according to reports of AP, AFP, Reuters and others international media.

After a renewed flare-up in violence in Rakhine, new refugees are still crossing the border to Bangladesh, Shahidul said. "As far as repatriation is concerned, the situation has gone far from bad to worse."

"Not a single Rohingya has volunteered to return to Rakhine due to the absence of a conducive environment there," he said, adding that Bangladesh wanted nothing but a safe, voluntary, sustainable and dignified repatriation of the Rohingyas.

"We expect the Security Council's continued guardianship to resolve the crisis," he told the meeting.

A Bangladesh foreign ministry press release said the foreign secretary questioned whether the country

was "paying the price for being responsive and responsible in showing empathy to a persecuted minority population of a neighboring country". He categorically said the root of the Rohingya crisis lies in Myanmar and so does its solution.

Shahidul urged Myanmar to ensure full implementation of the MoU among Myanmar, UNDP and UNHCR as well as the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

The foreign secretary also placed a three-point proposal before the Security Council.

The proposals are: Full implementation of the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Advisory Commission as well as bringing again the resolution before the table of the UN Security Council to facilitate the investigation on violation of human rights and thus ensure an international supervision for safe repatriation; visit to the Rohingya refugee camps by the Security Council again; and setting up "safe zones" for people of all backgrounds in conflict-ridden parts of Myanmar as proposed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Approving a resolution in December last year, the UN General Assembly strongly condemned

"gross human rights violations and abuses" committed against Rohingyas.

"We're very disappointed ... that there hasn't been more progress on getting the refugees back and that obviously includes creating the conditions where the refugees feel able to go back," British Ambassador to the UN Karen Pierce told the council.

Several council members from western countries stressed that the return of refugees needed to be safe, voluntary, dignified and secure, and pushed for the Myanmar government to allow the UN widespread and unconditional access to Rakhine, reports Reuters.

"The scale of what has been done to the Rohingya Muslims and the allegations of crimes against humanity really mark this out as one of the most terrible events of this century so far," Pierce said.

The 15-member Security Council has been split over how to deal with the crisis, with western powers pitted against Russia and Myanmar ally China.

Myanmar Ambassador Hau Do Suan insisted his government was taking steps and appealed for patience.

China, which has close ties with Myanmar's former military junta, insisted that development aid could help ease tensions in Rakhine and made clear the council should not get involved in addressing the refugee crisis.

China's Deputy UN Ambassador Wu Haitao said it was mainly an issue between Myanmar and neighbouring Bangladesh "and as such it is up to the two countries to work out a solution".

Russia's Deputy UN Ambassador Dmitry Polyanskiy agreed.

**SHAHIDUL MEETS GUTERRES**

Earlier, the Bangladesh foreign secretary had a bilateral meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres when they discussed the Rohingya issue, among others.

Expressing concern over the long-standing Rohingya problem, the UN chief highly praised the generosity and humanity extended to the Rohingyas by Bangladesh, especially by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Guterres also lauded the continued socio-economic development of Bangladesh initiated by the present government, said a press release of the Bangladesh Permanent Mission in UN.

## Pakistan releases captured Indian pilot

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walking across the border near the town of Wagah just before 9.00 pm (1600 GMT). Indian officials confirmed he had been returned and said he would be taken for medical checks.

Abhinandan's MiG-21 jet was shot down by a Pakistani fighter during an aerial clash over the disputed Kashmir region on Wednesday as two weeks of growing tensions between the two countries erupted into open hostilities.

Thousands of Indians, waving flags, singing and dancing with patriotic fervour, had gathered at the crossing point yesterday afternoon but the crowd dwindled after his release was delayed inexplicably by hours.

In New Delhi the announcement of the experienced pilot's release was seen as a diplomatic victory, but India warned that its military remained on "heightened" alert.

On Thursday and yesterday both countries continued to fire barrages across the Line of Control (LoC), the de-facto border dividing Kashmir, leaving at least one person dead.

Gun battles on the Indian side left two militants and four members of the Indian security services dead, while a civilian was killed in later protests, police told AFP.

"Influence of terrorists and terrorism has been curtailed and it is going to be curtailed even more. This is a New India," Prime Minister Narendra Modi, facing a tough election due by May, said yesterday.

"This is an India that will return the damage done by terrorists with interest," he said.

India's junior foreign minister and former army chief, Vijay Kumar Singh, tweeted that the "welcome" release of the pilot was "the first of many steps that #Pakistan must take to reinforce their commitment to peace".

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since the end of British colonial rule. Both claim it in full and have fought two wars over the Himalayan territory.

India has half a million troops in

the part it administers, with militants -- backed by Islamabad, according to New Delhi -- fighting for independence or a merger with Pakistan.

Tens of thousands of people, mostly civilians, have died since a revolt that broke out in 1989. Last year was the deadliest in a decade with almost 600 killed, monitors say.

Matters escalated alarmingly after a massive suicide bombing killed 40 Indian troops on February 14, with

ended in both countries claiming they had shot down each other's warplanes, and Abhinandan's capture.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan unexpectedly announced Thursday that he would be released in the first sign of a potential thaw.

Khan alluded to the catastrophic consequences of nuclear war and called for talks -- even as he warned India should not take the announcement as a sign of weakness.

moustached Abhinandan were given a standing ovation by fellow passengers as they boarded a flight to Amritsar near Wagah to welcome their son.

He has become a national hero after purported footage that went viral after being shot down before Pakistani soldiers intervened, with social media abuzz with #GivebackAbhinandan and



Indian pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan, stands under armed escort near Pakistan-India border in Wagah before he walked into Indian territory yesterday. Image taken from a PTV video footage.

PHOTO: REUTERS

the attack claimed by a Pakistan-based militant group.

Twelve days later Indian warplanes launched a strike inside undisputed Pakistani territory, claiming to have hit a militant camp.

An infuriated Islamabad denied casualties or damage, but a day later launched its own incursion across the LoC.

That sparked the dogfight which

The tensions prompted Pakistan to close down its airspace, disrupting major routes between Europe and South Asia and grounding thousands of travellers worldwide.

Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) yesterday said that flights could land and depart from its main airports from 1300 GMT, and that others would be opened "gradually".

The parents of handlebar-

#Abhinandanmyhero hashtags.

His subsequent polite refusal to proffer more details than necessary -- "I am sorry major, I am not supposed to tell you this" -- won him particular sympathy in India.

His father, a retired air force officer, told the Times of India newspaper, "Just look at the way he talked so bravely... a true soldier... we are proud of him."

## Tigers

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their chances of staging a comeback get even slimmer after today's third day.

Bangladesh opted to go with an inexperienced pace unit comprising Ebadot Hossain, Khaled Ahmed and Abu Jayed as Mustafizur Rahman was given a rest to keep the ace left-arm quick fresh for the second Test in Wellington. While Ebadot made his debut, Khaled and Jayed are just playing their second and fourth Tests respectively.

Although the way Kiwis batted -- with sheer patience, concentration and intent -- was exemplary, it also brought the perils of playing with an amateur pace unit to the fore. The aforementioned pacers went wicket-less on the day as among the four wickets that were scalped by Bangladesh, only one was taken by a regular bowler -- off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz. Meanwhile, part-timers Soumya Sarkar and stand-in skipper Mahmudullah Riyad accounted for the rest, as the former took two and Mahmudullah scalped one.

However, it would be harsh to put all the blame on the pacers as the Kiwi batsmen did just everything by the book and the four wickets that fell were probably due to the batsmen relaxing against the non-specialists.

Another thing that was noticeable on the day was how the green pitch had lost its lustre and transformed to a completely different surface to that seen on the first day. With skipper Kane Williamson remaining unbeaten on 93 and the Kiwis resuming with six wickets in hand, Bangladesh could see a mammoth total being posted.

However, this is also not the most frightening part for Bangladesh. Head curator Karl Johnson had earlier mentioned that the pitch would ideally be difficult for batsmen on the fourth and fifth days -- when Bangladesh are most likely to bat in their second innings. And if we take into consideration how the curator's words have proven right till now as he was also right about how the green-top would simmer down to help the batsmen too, it can be said that the Test has just become more difficult for the visitors.

## Chinese

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Chen, who runs the company's workers union, told Chinese video site Pate that workers would often need to deal with unreasonable customers in the park, and sometimes these customers would leave them feel sad and wronged; therefore, the leave policy could "show the company's support and love towards our staff".

At the beginning staff were allowed to take a short break from their post to adjust their mood, but later on the park decided to give them one day a month to cope with stress, the spokesperson said.

Not many workers have actually taken the "bad mood leave", according to Chen.

He then added: "Only when the employees feel happy can they pass on their happiness to our visitors."

The policy has been praised by internet users in China who have shown envy towards the company's staff for the benefit.

One top-rated comment on Twitter-like Weibo said: "[The policy] is so humane. I am jealous."

Another user wrote: "How can I let my boss read this piece of news by accident?"

A third person joked: "Boss, I suddenly feel very moody."

The state-run Workers Daily, however, has questioned the purpose of the "bad mood leave". In a commentary, the newspaper claimed that the company's leave policy worked as a marketing stunt more than a useful solution for workers.

The news comes after two Chinese companies reportedly started giving their single employees "dating leave" last month to help them find their life partner.

One of the firms, a middle school in Hangzhou, permitted unmarried teachers two half-days every month to go on dates.

China's state-run Xinhua News Agency called the 'dating leave' a modern and creative way to manage human resources.

## 34 Rohingyas

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villagers found the Rohingya on the shore covered with mud, and many were crying.

It is the first time since April 2018 that Malaysian authorities have found a group of Rohingya who made it to the country by sea.

It was not clear whether they had started their journey in Myanmar or Bangladesh, where huge numbers of Rohingya are living in squalid refugee camps.

Bangladesh security forces have stopped repeated attempts by smugglers to transport Rohingya to Malaysia by boat. Authorities fear many are seeking to make the crossing before the start of the monsoon season at the end of March.

Relatively affluent, Muslim-majority Malaysia has long been a favourite destination for Rohingya, where they are a source of labour in low-paying industries such as agriculture and construction.