

CHATTOGRAM CITY CORPORATION

Port city gearing up for elections

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

With Chattogram City Corporation (CCC) election candidates campaigning daily in different areas since Friday, the port city has taken a festive look. Posters of mayoral and councillor candidates can be seen all around, reminding voters that election day is approaching.

The Election Commission (EC) has declared that polls will be held on January 27, which was originally scheduled for March 29 last year but was postponed due to the pandemic.

Apart from the mayoral post, candidates are vying for 41 general seats and 15 reserved seats for women under councillor posts.

Seven candidates are competing for the mayoral post. They are Awami League (AL) nominated candidate Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Bangladesh National Party (BNP) candidate Dr Shahadat Hossain, Bangladesh Islamic Front candidate MA Matin, Islamic Front Bangladesh candidate Wahed Murad, Islamic Movement Bangladesh candidate Jannatul Islam, National People's Party candidate Abul Manjur and independent candidate Khokan Chowdhury.

Of them, voters think the AL and BNP candidates would be prime contestants for the post.

"Although seven candidates are vying for mayoral post, I think the battle of votes would remain mainly between Rezaul and Shahadat," said Amulyo Ranjan Dey, a resident of the city's Pathorghata area, who witnessed several national and local elections throughout his life.

Asked who is holding an advantage, the elderly citizen said both candidates have some strengths and weaknesses, and so, he expects a good contest.

Many voters share Amulyo's thoughts and are expecting a free and fair election.

Tahera Begum, a resident of Jamal Khan area, said both AL and BNP mayoral candidates have a clean image. "We know both of them are patrons of fair politics, and so, they are in the voters' good books."

Sources said apart from BNP's reserve votes, Shahadat may bag votes of Jamaat's supporters, although Jamaat-e-Islami did not officially support him.

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Mayoral candidates are campaigning in full force, as supporters, whether on vehicles or on foot, were seen in large numbers at different areas of the city. Awami League nominated candidate Rezaul Karim Chowdhury was seen waving at locals at Uttar Kattoli as droves of supporters surrounded his vehicle, bottom left. Dr Shahadat Hossain, the BNP candidate, visited the same area with his own followers holding placards, bottom right. The photos were taken throughout the week.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



Steps taken to protect 1,220 Bangabandhu murals and monuments

Police Headquarters tells HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Headquarters yesterday submitted a report to the High Court saying that it has taken necessary measures to ensure protection of all monuments and murals of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman across the country.

There are a total of 1,220 monuments and murals of Bangabandhu where law enforcers are deployed round the clock, said Deputy Attorney General Abdullah Al Mahmud Bashar, who placed the report before the HC.

Search lights and CCTV cameras were also set up in the areas, said DAG Bashar citing the report.

The PHQ submitted the report through the home ministry to the HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice Shahed Nuruddin in line with its December 7, 2020 order.

The HC bench has set January 21 for passing further order on this issue, DAG Bashar added.

Following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Bashir Ahmed, the HC on December 7 last year directed the authorities concerned of the government to immediately take necessary steps to ensure protection of all monuments and murals of Bangabandhu.

It also ordered the government to establish Bangabandhu's murals on the office premises of all deputy commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers and to submit a report before the court in this regard.

DEATH OF HEFAJAT LEADER SHAFI PBI officials visit Hathazari madrasa

Say they will submit probe report on time as per court directive

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Officials of Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), Chattogram visited Al Jameyatul Ahlia Darul Ulum Moinul Islam Madrasa, commonly known as Hathazari madrasa, yesterday to probe into the case filed over the death of Hefajat-e-Islam's former chief Shah Ahmad Shafi.

A team of PBI, led by its Chattogram special superintendent (SSP) of Police Md Iqbal Hossen and SP Nazmul Hasan, reached Hathazari around 11am.

Hefajat ameer Junayed Babunagari welcomed the investigators, said madrasa sources.

"As part of the investigation, we talked to 15 to 16 persons, including Babunagari," said SP Nazmul.

SSP Iqbal said police will submit its report on time as per a court directive, after completing investigation over the death. "We visited the places mentioned in the case statements and collected information talking to relevant persons of the madrasa," he added.

Babunagari did not make any comment over the visit. "They [PBI officials] are our guests and we will always welcome them if they come to the madrasa for further investigation," he said while talking to journalists.

Shafi, who often drew controversy for opposing women's rights, passed away on September 18 last year.

His death came a day after he resigned as director general of Hathazari madrasa, following two days of student unrest.

Shafi's brother-in-law Md Moin Uddin filed the case with the court of Judicial Magistrate Shiplu Kumar Dey of Chattogram on December 17, 2020, claiming that Shafi was murdered in a "pre-planned manner".

The court then directed PBI in Chattogram to investigate the case and submit a report to it within a month.

In the case statement, Moin Uddin alleged that Shafi was killed in a pre-planned manner through collaboration between the accused at the direct and indirect instigation by Mamunul Haque, joint secretary general of Hefajat, and Nasir Uddin, a top Hefajat leader.

"Shafi was mentally tortured and his oxygen support was removed. Apart from that, the ambulance carrying him while he was in a critical condition was stopped on its way to the hospital. All these killed my brother-in-law," Moin Uddin told The Daily Star.

Children cannot afford another year of school closure: Unicef

UNB, Dhaka

Unicef Executive Director Henrietta Fore yesterday said no effort should be spared to keep schools open or plan reopening, as they enter the second year of pandemic, and cases continue to soar around the world.

"Despite overwhelming evidence of the impact of school closures on children, and despite increasing evidence that schools are not drivers of the pandemic, too many countries have opted to keep schools closed, some for nearly a year," Fore said in a statement.

The cost of closing schools - which at the peak of pandemic lockdowns affected 90 percent of students worldwide and left more than a third of schoolchildren with no access to remote education - has been devastating, said the executive director.

"The number of out-of-school children is set to increase by 24 million, to a level we have not seen in years and have fought so hard to overcome," she said.

Children's ability to read, write and do basic maths has suffered, and the skills they need to thrive in the 21st century economy have diminished, Fore said.

"Their health, development, safety and well-being are at risk. The most vulnerable among them will bear the heaviest brunt," she further said.

"Without school meals, children are left hungry and their nutrition is worsening. Without daily interactions with their peers and a reduction in mobility, they are losing physical fitness and showing signs of mental distress. Without the safety net that school often provides, they are more vulnerable to abuse, child marriage and child labour," Fore added.

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Mizanur Rahman Khan laid to rest

Tributes pour in from journalists, lawyers, politicians alike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted journalist Mizanur Rahman Khan, the joint editor of Prothom Alo and one of the few journalists who became known for their expertise on writing about judicial matters, was laid to final rest yesterday at the Martyred Intellectual Graveyard at city's Mirpur.

Mizanur, who had been suffering from Covid-19, breathed his last at Universal Medical College Hospital in the city's Mohakhali at around 6:05pm on Monday at the age of 53.

His burial was completed at around 2.15pm in the presence of his wife, children, family members, relatives, well-wishers, friends and colleagues from different media houses including Prothom Alo.

The ambulance carrying Mizanur Rahman Khan's body reached the graveyard at around 1:30pm.

Earlier Mizanur Rahman Khan's body was taken in front of Prothom Alo office at city's Karwan Bazar after his third namaz-e-janaza at Jatiya Press Club premises.

Prothom Alo Editor Matur Rahman along with other colleagues paid solemn tribute to Mizanur Rahman Khan, laying floral wreaths upon his coffin when his body was brought in front of Prothom Alo office at around 12:15pm.

Prayers were offered for the salvation of the departed soul.

Current and former staff members of Prothom Alo, journalists from different media and people from all walks of life gathered in front of the newspaper office before the coffin reached the premises.

Grief stricken colleagues broke down in tears as the ambulance carrying the body arrived at the spot.

Prothom Alo editor Matur Rahman said Mizanur Rahman worked with Prothom Alo for 15 long years.

"He was one of the finest journalists of the country. His absence would be painful for the daily and nothing can fill the void created by Mizanur Rahman Khan's departure," he also said.

Mizanur Rahman Khan's elder son and two brothers were present at that time.

Prothom Alo's managing editor Sajjad Sharif said, "Mizanur Rahman Khan was an outstanding journalist and even better as a human being."

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Vivekananda's legacy revisited

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yesterday marked the 158th birth anniversary of legendary social reformer Swami Vivekananda. On the day, Vivekananda Shiksha O Sangskriti Parishad (VSSP), Dhaka University, and VSSP-Bangladesh jointly organised several programmes to recount the life and times of Vivekananda.

Branches of VSSP around the country celebrated the day through discussion sessions, distribution of the Vivekananda Scholarship, youth conventions and other cultural programmes.

The programmes featured book distribution -- where books written on Vivekananda's life were given to students -- distribution of educational materials and food packs among the disadvantaged children of Dhaka University campus, and providing warm clothes in the country's north.

Earlier in the day, members of VSSP paid their homage by offering flowers at the feet of the Vivekananda sculpture at DU's Jagannath Hall.

Born on January 12, 1863, Vivekananda was one of the most famous and influential spiritual leaders of the philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga. He died on July 4, 1902.

He was the founder of Ramakrishna Math and Mission, which remains engaged in various forms of humanitarian and social service activities for more than a century.

13-year-old girl killed in wall collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, SAVAR

A thirteen-year-old girl was killed and three people, including the girl's mother, were injured after wall of a one-storey building collapsed on them in Ashulia yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Happy Akter Mina, a fifth grader at a school in Ashulia, said fire service officials.

Abdul Alim, deputy assistant director of fire service (zone-4), said some workers were demolishing a one-storey building owned by one Ali Hossen at Zirani in the morning.

Around 11am, a portion of the wall collapsed on four pedestrians leaving Mina, daughter of Habibur Rahman of Kushtia, dead on the spot and three others injured.

On information, a team of fire-fighting unit rushed to the spot and recovered Mina's body and handed it over to police, he said. The body was sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

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It's a jungle, it's a sewage pipe, it's a... car? Vehicles that were kept as evidence lie abandoned south of Chattogram-Dhaka Kachpur bridge, covered in moss and creeping plants. Due to lack of maintenance, one can barely tell that this is a dumping ground for automobiles. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

NARCOTICS CASE

Charges framed against Papia, husband

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday framed charges against expelled Jubo Mohila League leader Shamima Nur Papia and her husband Mofizur Rahman Sumon in a case filed under the narcotics control act.

Papia and Sumon, now behind bars, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Judge Md Amirul Islam of the Special Tribunal-8 of Dhaka read out the charges to them.

Earlier in the day, the judge dismissed the couple's petitions, seeking discharge from the case and fixed March 1 for starting trial of the case.

On September 10 last year, Rab pressed charges against the couple in the drug case.

Members of Rab-1 arrested Papia, her husband Sumon, a former Chhatra League leader, and their two accomplices from Dhaka Airport on February 22 last year when they were trying to leave the country.

They recovered seven passports, Tk 2,12,270, fake notes of Tk 25,600, USD 11,481, 420 Sri Lankan rupee, 301 Indian rupee and two debit cards from their possession.

Rab also raided Papia's Farmgate flats and recovered a foreign pistol, two magazines, 20 bullets, five bottles of foreign liquor, Tk 58,41,000, credit and debit cards of different banks from there.

Later, two cases were filed with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station under the arms and the narcotics control acts, while another case was lodged with Airport Police Station under the Special Powers Act.

Besides the three cases, two money laundering cases were filed against the couple.

On October 12 last year, Papia and her husband were sentenced to 27 years' imprisonment in an arms case.