

POLLS TO 5 CITIES JP names mayoral candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party, the main opposition in parliament, has nominated its mayoral candidates for city corporation polls in Gazipur, Sylhet, Khulna, Rajshahi and Barishal.

They are MM Niaz Uddin in Gazipur, Saiful Islam Swapan in Rajshahi, Shafiqul Islam Madhu in Khulna, Engineer Iqbal Hossain Taposh in Barishal and Nazrul Islam Babul in Sylhet.

The announcement came during a views-exchange meeting between party high-ups and divisional leaders at its Banani office yesterday, Khandaker Delwar Jalali, press secretary of JP Chairman GM Quader, told The Daily Star.

The elections will be held in Gazipur on May 25, Rajshahi and Sylhet on June 2, and Khulna and Barishal on June 12.

MUKTA RANI MURDER

Rights bodies demand justice; suspect lands in jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Several rights bodies and other organisations yesterday held separate protests, demanding exemplary punishment of the man who killed a school girl in Netrakona recently.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organised a rally, chaired by Taheja Begun Anny, general secretary of the body's district unit, in Netrakona town's Chhoto Bazar area yesterday afternoon.

Presidents of the district Udichi Shilpi Goshhi, district Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik, local AL leader Md Shahidullah, among others, spoke at the event.

Meanwhile, another group, under the banner of "Sarbastorer Janota, Mymensingh", held a rally at the Shashi Lodge area in Mymensingh city yesterday noon.

Mukta Rani Barman, 16, of Netrakona's Barhatta upazila, was hacked to death by Kawser Mia, 18, on her way home from school on Tuesday afternoon.

He was arrested a day later, after the victim's father filed a case with Barhatta Police Station.

According to the case, Kawser used to harass the girl to get into a relationship with him. As she refused, he attacked her indiscriminately with a sharp weapon. Mukta died on her way to hospital.

Khokon Kumar Saha, officer-in-charge of the station, said Kawser was produced before a court yesterday. After his statement was recorded under Section 164, he was sent to jail.



The images show the current state of BK Das Road



PHOTO: URBAN STUDY GROUP



POTENTIAL OF OLD DHAKA as a tourist destination

RBR

History and culture are what make a city come alive and our beloved Dhaka has all these attributes.

Tourism develops on the five vital components which are attraction, accessibility, accommodation, amenities, and activities. Dhaka has a rich historical past which serves as a major attraction, traffic congestion might cause some accessibility issues but accommodation and amenities are plenty. The metropolis is now a city of activities, plays, exhibitions, concerts, and museums with a plethora of dining options offering global cuisines.

Then why Dhaka — Old Dhaka in particular — is still not a popular tourist destination?

Taimur Islam is the CEO and Chairman, Urban Study Group (USG). For almost two decades USG has been working as a non-profit organisation, campaigning for the conservation of the architectural heritage of Old Dhaka.

He feels, "Tourism in Dhaka should not be confined to a few iconic buildings in the old town and handful of monuments under the tourism department. It should be the mandate of the city corporation to clean and restore the past with the help of the archaeological department."

There is an unknown pull, a unique charm that brings you to Old Dhaka. There are popular guided tours; tour operators and USG volunteers show you the things in and around Old Dhaka. But is it enough to draw the attention of local and foreign tourists on a large scale?

Taimur points out a few hard facts.



A possible future with proper conservation and restoration.

"We failed to appreciate the huge bank of treasures from the Buriganga to Ramna that has 400 years of history."

The city flourished as an urban space a few centuries ago and the old neighbourhoods are marked with historical sites. From the likes of Shankhari Bazaar, which is one of the oldest areas in Dhaka, they stretch along narrow lanes lined with richly decorated brick buildings and temples built during the late Mughal or Colonial period. Sutrapur's grandeur with Hrishikesh Das Road's English-styled old heritage buildings can add historical nostalgia to old-town tourism.

"The rivers around Dhaka are an asset that can be turned into tourist destinations. For example, the Buckland Dam is a significant architectural feat located on the banks of the Buriganga. In the 19th century (and early part of the 20th century) this was a popular tourist destination

of the city. Now the entire area is in a mess," Taimur adds.

"Take Ruplal House, a 19th-century mansion in Farashganj area, for example. This grand structure is now occupied by local spice and vegetable merchants and a colony of unauthorised squatters. With proper intervention, we could save the structure and also have spice souks around for visitors. We should keep the new and reclaim and restore the old. It is an issue of urban planning and parallelly disaster management," he opines.

"We are killing Old Dhaka because we cannot appreciate it."

"The old town is a 24 square kilometres place that should be declared as a heritage zone. We are losing the battle against time and unless we find a way to stop the destruction of heritage property, Dhaka's historic environment will be lost," Taimur concluded.

Elderly woman found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Police yesterday recovered the body of an unidentified elderly woman in a roadside ditch at Dhanua village in Jamalpur's Bakshiganj.

The dead is aged around 65. Locals found the body and informed police. Later, the law enforcers recovered the body, said Sohel Rana, officer-in-charge of Bakshiganj Police Station.

The body was sent to Jamalpur General Hospital morgue, he said, adding that police were trying to identify the victim.

BGB seized 5kg heroin

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Members of the Border Guard Bangladesh have recovered 5kg heroin near Sonamasjid in Chapainawabganj's Shibganj upazila.

A special patrol team of BGB went to Tahakhana area. Sensing their presence, two men fled the scene, leaving a motorcycle and a sack, said Lt Col Golam Kibria, commanding officer of BGB 59th battalion in Rohonpur.

After searching, BGB members found 5kg heroin in the sack and seized the motorcycle. None was arrested in this connection, he added.

2 killed as train hits motorcycle

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Two men were killed after a train hit their motorcycle on an unmanned level crossing in Dinajpur's Parbatipur upazila yesterday.

The dead are Hamidul Islam, 40, of Kurigram's Ulipur, and Susanta Roy, 42, of Nilphamari's Jaldhaka, said police.

The duo was heading towards Phulbari from Parbatipur. Their motorcycle got stuck on the level crossing around 10:30am. Before they could move to a safe place, Khulna-bound Rocket Mail hit them, said Nurul Islam, officer-in-charge of Parbatipur Government Railway Police.

They died on the spot. The bodies were handed over to the victims' family members, he added.

Missing madrasa student found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A minor madrasa student, who had been missing since Wednesday, was found dead in a maize field in Thakurgaon Sadar yesterday.

The victim is Murad Hossain, 11, resident student of Madarganj Hafezia Madrasa in the upazila.

Locals found his body in a maize field near Madarganj MB High School. On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Javed Ali, sub-inspector of Thakurgaon Police Station.

Police primarily suspect that he was murdered, the SI added.

AFGHAN BORDER

Militants in Pakistan kill six soldiers

REUTERS, Peshawar

Islamist militants killed six Pakistani soldiers in an exchange of fire with the military in a northwestern tribal district bordering Afghanistan, the army said yesterday.

The Pakistani Taliban, also known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an umbrella group of several Sunni Muslim militant groups, claimed responsibility.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed condolences to the grieved families. "No matter how long the battle, our valiant armed forces, with the support of the nation, will root out terrorism in its entirety," he said in a statement.

The bloodshed came after Pakistan declared a new offensive against militants following a resurgence of attacks, including a mosque bombing that killed more than 100 people in February.

Islamabad says the militants, who want to establish a hardline version of sharia (Islamic law) in Pakistan, enjoy safe haven in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan to plan and execute the attacks, a charge Kabul denies.

Amir Khan Muttaqi, foreign minister of Afghanistan's Taliban administration, was due to arrive in Islamabad yesterday for meetings with his Pakistani and Chinese counterparts.

"A fire exchange took place between terrorists and our own troops," the army said in a statement describing yesterday's incident in North Waziristan, which has long been a hotbed of militants operating on both sides of the border.

It said three militants were also killed when the army engaged them, adding that it was searching the area to determine if any more attackers were in hiding.

No let-up in price hike

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gone up by Tk 5 a kg over a week, putting consumers, especially those of limited income, in further difficulty.

A kg of potatoes is now being sold at Tk 30 to Tk 35 while onions cost Tk 55 to Tk 60 a kg.

The retail price of eggs also rose by Tk 10 a dozen. A dozen is now Tk 140-Tk 150.

"The prices of almost all essential commodities have been increasing, but not our income. How could we survive in this situation?" Sukkur Ali of West Tejauribazar told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said he is left with no other option but to cut consumption as the fresh hike will only spell more trouble for his family.

"I'm thinking of not providing my children and elderly mother with eggs every day as I cannot afford it after paying the rent and other fixed expenses."

Anamul Haque, who works at a private bank in Chattogram, said they have already cut consumption of desserts like payesh and shemai because of the high prices of sugar.

"Now I may have to consume these desserts once a month instead of

once a week," he said, adding that he was expecting a relief from price hike after Eid, but that did not happen.

Visiting different kitchen markets in the capital yesterday, this correspondent saw traders selling a kg of loose sugar for Tk 130-Tk 140. Last week, its price was Tk 120 to Tk 130, according to the traders.

Tofail Ahmed, proprietor of Al-Amin Store in Karwan Bazar, said he usually stores sugar after buying it from Moulvibazar wholesale market in Old Dhaka.

He said suppliers at the wholesale market told him that there has been a shortage in supply for about a month. Tofail said last week he bought packaged sugar for Tk 125 a kg although the retail price mentioned in the packets is Tk 109. He added that he sold a one-kilogram packet of sugar for Tk 130.

According to the National Board of Revenue, sugar imports dropped by about 25 percent, or 2.29 lakh tonnes, in the first four months of the year compared to the same period of 2022.

The country's annual demand for sugar is 25 lakh tonnes. But domestic production can supply only 1 lakh tonnes.

UK's Sunak warns of 'hard' test in first date with voters

AFP, London

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives yesterday braced for heavy losses in their first major electoral test since he became the UK's third leader in the space of a few chaotic weeks last year.

In the depths of the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades, the local council elections across England will shed light on the main parties' standing ahead of a UK-wide general election expected next year.

Sunak conceded that his Tory party faced a "hard" trial with voters, after it ditched Boris Johnson and then Liz Truss in quick succession last year.

"Good councillors will lose their seats because of all that has happened over the past year," he said at a think-tank event late Wednesday, according to the Daily Telegraph.

"I've only been prime minister for six months but I do believe we're making good progress," Sunak added. Voting stations opened at 7:00

am (0600 GMT) for more than 8,000 council seats across 230 English districts, and will close at 10:00 pm (2100 GMT).

Most results should be clear by late today — just as Britain gears up for Saturday's coronation of King Charles III.

In national polls, the opposition Labour party has built a double-digit lead over the Conservatives, and is portraying the municipal elections as a referendum on "13 years of Tory failure".

AL nominee all on his own

FROM PAGE 1

City AL President AKM Jahangar said, "We will participate in the polls campaign according to the directives to be given by our guardian Abul Hasanat Abdullah in a joint meeting of the district and metropolitan committees of the party."

However, supporters of Khair said this is a ploy of wasting time by the followers of the mayor.

AL leader Torun Chanda alleged that such a situation has arisen because Hasanat and his son Sadiq only gave priority to their supporters in the party for a long time.

Mayor Sadiq has absolute control over the Barisal city AL while his father Hasanat, also a lawmaker from Barishal-1, has total influence over the district unit of the party. The two did not take part in any party activities since the AL's nomination board picked Khair as its mayoral candidate.

After Khair was picked, a section of AL leaders who were "politically cornered" by the followers of the mayor became active. Among them are supporters of State Minister for Water Resources Zaheed Farooque, also a lawmaker from Barishal-5.

When the mayoral nominee came to Barisal from Dhaka with some central AL leaders on April 20, the anti-Sadiq faction welcomed Khair and held a reception at the city AL office.

Five central AL leaders, including Abdur Rahman and Nanak, were present at the event, but almost all city, district and ward unit leaders of the party and the supporters of Sadiq and Hasanat did not show up.

Only the Barishal city AL president, AKM Jahangir, and district AL general secretary, Talukder Md Younus, addressed that event. The two, however, are now not accompanying the party mayoral candidate during his "campaign".

AL leaders said as the opposition BNP, which is boycotting the polls, has a huge vote bank in Barishal city, a united polls campaign for the ruling party nominee is a must to

ensure his win.

Speaking at an event marking the inauguration of Khair's campaign office on Sadar Road in Barishal city on April 28, AL presidium member Nanak said, "Those who are in the party have no scope to oppose the candidate nominated by Sheikh Hasina."

Many, however, said that the outcome of the next city polls may be similar to that of the 2013 Barishal city polls.

In that election, AL nominee Shawkat Hossain Hiran lost to BNP candidate Ahsan Habib Kamal by a margin of about 15,000 votes as the party faction loyal to Hasanat either refrained from voting or did not vote for "boat", said party leaders.

Late mayor Ahsan's son Kamrul Ahsan Rupan has announced that he would take part in the mayoral polls as an independent.

The last date for filing nomination papers is May 16 and the last date for withdrawal of candidatures is May 25.

Khair earlier this week said if anyone doesn't take part in polls campaign, the party high-ups will look into it.

This newspaper could not reach Sadiq for comments as he did not pick up calls.

Suspect arrested in deadly Atlanta hospital shooting

AFP, Washington

Police have arrested a man suspected of shooting five people — one of whom died — at an Atlanta hospital on Wednesday, authorities in the southern US city said.

One person was killed and four were injured when Deion Patterson allegedly opened fire in a hospital waiting room just after midday (1700 GMT). Patterson then allegedly stole a truck that had been left running at a nearby gas station and fled.