

VIOLATION OF ELECTION CODE

Rajshahi flooded with plastic-laminated posters

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

In a blatant violation of the electoral code of conduct, the streets and adjacent walls of Rajshahi were inundated with plastic-laminated posters, seeking votes for the boat symbol, just hours before the distribution of election symbols for the upcoming Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) elections. This move has drawn severe criticism, considering the High Court's ban on such posters during the elections of Dhaka North and South City Corporations back in January 2020, due to concerns expressed by environmentalists.

AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, the incumbent mayor of Rajshahi and the Awami League nominated candidate seeking a fourth term in office, is at the centre of this controversy. Liton, also a presidium member of the Awami League, previously advocated creating a green city. However, the sight of plastic laminated posters endorsing his candidacy has sparked widespread condemnation.



The distribution of electoral symbols began yesterday at the Rajshahi Shilpakola Academy auditorium, with the returning officer Delwar Hossain leading the proceedings. The symbols were first distributed among the candidates for reserved seats for women, followed by the mayor candidates between 11:30am and 12:00pm. Councillor candidates continued receiving their symbols until 5:00pm. Surprisingly, the polythene-laminated posters were visible in the city since the early hours of the day, raising questions about the negligence of those responsible.

When questioned about the posters, Liton claimed ignorance, stating that “enthusiastic party workers” might have hung them. He further justified the use of plastic lamination, arguing that the posters would not withstand the rains unless adequately covered.

Liton and several councillor candidates have been engaging with the electorate since the announcement of the election schedule in April. Holding over 70 meetings with various groups, including traders, businessmen, professionals, cultural activists, and students, Liton

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KHULNA CITY POLLS

Talukder Abdul Khaleque is running for mayor in Khulna on the ruling Awami League ticket. His key opponent Mohammad Abdul Awal is nominated by the Islami Andolon Bangladesh, the party which was founded by late Fazlul Karim, popularly known as Charmonai Pir. The Daily Star's Dipankar Roy and Ashik Abdullah Apu talked to them about their aspirations and plans.

I promise progress



TALUKDER ABDUL KHALEQUE

Within the Khulna Awami League, there are no internal conflicts or divisions. All party leaders and activists are working together to secure our victory.

DS: How is the electoral atmosphere in Khulna?
Khaleque: The electoral atmosphere is good. There is no conflict regarding the election. We are conducting our campaigns in a proactive manner, reaching out to voters and addressing their concerns.
DS: What pledges have you made to the city dwellers?
Khaleque: Having served as the mayor of Khulna twice before, I acknowledge that there are unfinished development projects from my previous term. I have assured the voters that once the ongoing projects are completed after my re-election, visible improvements will be noticed in the city.
DS: Are you receiving full support from the leaders and activists of your party?
Khaleque: Within the Khulna Awami League, there are no internal conflicts or divisions. All party leaders and activists are working together to secure our victory.
DS: Some mayoral candidates have alleged that you might win the election by leveraging the influence of the ruling party. How do you respond to these?
Khaleque: Those who have raised these allegations need to provide detailed explanations of where they have faced any hindrance. I'm a proponent of free and fair elections. Although I belong to the ruling party, I have experienced defeat in the past while the party was in power. I have gracefully accepted the people's verdict before and will do that in the future as well.
DS: Many are concerned about a low voter turnout as the major opposition party, BNP, has boycotted the election. What is your perspective on this issue?
Khaleque: I have repeatedly told Khulna residents that casting their votes is their responsibility and a reflection of their will. Despite BNP boycotting the election, the response I have received from the people indicates that they are committed to going to exercising their right to vote.

We want to serve the community



MOHAMMAD ABDUL AWAL

Our primary goal is to transform Khulna into a modern and pollution-free city. We have highlighted the need to address issues such as waterlogging and food security.

DS: How is the electoral atmosphere in Khulna?
Awal: The atmosphere is pleasant. We've been conducting campaigns since the day of the symbol allotment. Our focus is on presenting our ideology to the voters.
DS: How confident are you about winning?
Awal: If the situation remains favourable and the people can freely exercise their right to vote, we are confident of securing a victory.
DS: Many allege that you never stood by the people and only approach voters during elections. What is your response to this?
Awal: These allegations are untrue. We have always stood by the people and followed the principles of our Islamic ideology. We are committed to serving the community regardless of any election cycle.
DS: BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami have boycotted the election but they have significant vote banks in Khulna. Where do you think their votes will go? There have been allegations that you have secretly joined hands with them.
Awal: We do not categorise anyone as BNP-Jamaat. We are seeking votes from all the peace-loving people of the city, irrespective of their party affiliations.
DS: Do you think voters will show up at the polling centres?
Awal: The Gazipur city polls set a positive example of voters exercising their democratic rights. Furthermore, the assurance provided by top officials of the administration, including the Chief Election Commissioner, has instilled confidence in people.
DS: What will be your priority if you are elected?
Awal: Our primary goal is to transform Khulna into a modern and pollution-free city. We have highlighted the need to address issues such as waterlogging, food security and substance abuse.

SYLHET CITY POLLS

Campaign begins after symbol allocation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

With the official allocation of the symbols among mayoral and councillor candidates of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) polls, candidates have started the campaign for the election slated for June 21.

Sylhet Regional Election Officer and the Returning Officer of SCC polls Faysal Kader distributed the symbols among the candidates yesterday.

Of political party nominated mayoral candidates -- Md Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury of Awami League was allocated 'boat', Jatiya Party candidate Md Nazrul Islam 'plough', Islami Andolon Bangladesh candidate Mahmudul Hasan 'hand fan' and Zaker Party candidate Md Zahirul Alam 'rose'.

Independent mayoral candidates -- Abdul Hanif Kutu was allotted 'horse', Md Salah Uddin Rimon 'cricket bat' and Md Shah Jahan Miah 'bus'.

The candidates of general councillors and reserved women councillors also got symbols by the returning officer.

So far 273 candidates vying for general councillor posts of 42 wards in the city while another 87 women candidates participating for reserved women councillor seats.

After receiving symbol from the returning officer, the candidates brought out a procession and started official campaign.

All candidates have opened up their electoral campaign offices and started hanging posters and distributing leaflets. The campaign will continue till June 19.

Four more dengue cases reported

UNB, Dhaka

Four more people were hospitalised with dengue in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

Of the new patients, two were admitted to hospitals in Dhaka and the rest outside it, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Three-hundred-thirty-two dengue patients, including 289 in the capital, are now receiving treatment at hospitals across the country.

So far, the DGHS has recorded 2,138 dengue cases, 1,793 recoveries, and 13 deaths this year.

The country logged 281 dengue deaths in 2022 -- the highest on record after 179 deaths recorded in 2019. Also, it recorded 62,423 dengue cases and 61,971 recoveries last year.



With the Barishal City Corporation elections up ahead, a poster maker cuts out the campaign flyers of the candidates to hang throughout the city's roads and prominent locations. This photo was taken in Barishal city's Ray road yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

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