



DHAKA-17 BY-POLLS TODAY

Voters show little interest

Allegations of buying votes crop up against AL candidate's supporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka-17 goes to polls today, with little enthusiasm among voters.

On the eve of the by-polls, two candidates alleged that supporters of an aspirant were distributing money among slum dwellers to buy votes, and one of the two was doubtful about free and fair polls.

Jatiya Party candidate Shikder Anisur Rahman and independent candidate Ashrafur Alam alias Hero Alam made the allegations.

Anisur did not mention the candidate's name who was trying to buy votes. Hero Alam alleged that supporters of ruling Awami League candidate were distributing money.

AL candidate Prof Mohammad A Arafat did not pick up his phone.

William Pralay Samaddar, chief coordinator of Arafat's media cell, said, "These allegations are just part of a political strategy. We have received complaints from our agents that BNP activists are distributing money among voters to buy votes for Hero Alam."

Hero Alam said he was doubtful whether the polls would be fair.

"Even if the election is held in a free and fair manner, I'm worried whether the Election Commission would announce the actual result. I won the by-polls to Bogura-6, but the commission did not announce the actual result ...

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Bangladesh players celebrate their historic maiden ODI victory over India in the first match of the three-match series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Story on page 11.

PHOTO: BCB

14-PARTY ALLIANCE

Hasina to meet its leaders after 16 months



PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

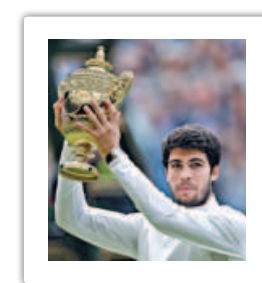
After around 16 months, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina is going to sit with the leaders of AL-led 14-party alliance on Wednesday.

Informing the leaders about the outcome of AL and government's meetings with US envoys and visiting European delegations and discussion on the next course of action regarding politics are in the agenda, said sources.

But sources in the 14-party alliance said Hasina convened the

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Alcaraz the new king of Wimbledon



REUTERS, London

Carlos Alcaraz heralded the changing of the guard in men's tennis as he ended Novak Djokovic's long reign at Wimbledon with a rip-roaring 1-6, 7-6(6), 6-1, 3-6, 6-4 victory to win the All England Club title for the first time on Sunday.

The 36-year-old Serbian had been indestructible on Wimbledon's Centre Court for a decade but on Sunday he finally met his match as he ran out of ideas to stop young gun Alcaraz from hurtling towards the title.

After the 20-year-old had broken for a 2-1 lead in the fifth set with a stupendous passing shot winner, Djokovic's racket felt the full force of his anger as he smashed it against the wooden net post to leave it in a mangled mess.

That earned Djokovic

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EU team seeks views on ways to ensure fair polls

Meets civil society members

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Election Exploratory Mission yesterday met civil society members and wanted to know their opinions on how the next parliamentary election can be held in a free, fair, peaceful and inclusive manner.

Members of the mission also wanted to know the advantages and disadvantages of holding elections under a caretaker government and the incumbent government.

The civil society members who attended the meetings at the EU embassy in the capital include Badiul Alam Majumder, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik; Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Center for Policy Dialogue; and Adilur Rahman Khan, secretary of Odhikar.

Talking to The Daily Star about his meeting with the six-member EU mission led by Chelleri Riccardo, Badiul said the EU mission wanted to know what was wrong with the 2014 and 2018 elections and what could be done for a free, fair, peaceful and inclusive election.

"I said, 'We need certain conditions for the elections to be free and fair.' The conditions include a flawless list of voters, choice of candidates, and neutral roles of the Election Commission, administration and law enforcers," Badiul said.

He also told the mission that the institutions related to elections must function effectively without playing a partisan role. "What we need is a level-playing field for all parties."

Badiul recommended that the EU send election observers well ahead of polling. Besides, the EU observers should be accompanied by the local observers.

The election process has already begun, and now is the right time for the EU observers to start their work, he said.

Dr Fahmida said the members of the mission wanted

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Rail workers delink Dhaka for 5 hours

Block lines demanding their jobs be made permanent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of railway passengers suffered delays after a section of contractual rail workers blocked the rail lines near Karwan Bazar in the capital for around five hours yesterday.

The workers, who were demanding their jobs be made permanent, withdrew the blockade around 2:30pm, but the train schedule was thrown into disarray.

At least 26 trains were delayed. At least five trains scheduled to depart Dhaka were delayed by four to five hours, officials of BR said.

Jannatul Juthy, who was heading for Chapainawabganj on Banalata Express, said her train was supposed to leave Dhaka Airport Station at 1:30pm after starting from Kamalapur Railway Station.

Banalata Express departed Dhaka Airport Station at 4:50pm.

"Most of the passengers were not aware of the blockade. We reached the station on time ... There were not enough seats at the station for all the passengers, which intensified their suffering," she told this newspaper.

She said the station authorities could not properly update them about the situation, leaving many confused. Some cancelled their tickets.

Several hundred contractual workers blocked the rail lines around 10:00am, practically cutting off rail communication between Dhaka and the rest of the country.

They were demanding that the authorities make their job permanent and stop outsourcing their jobs.

Ali Hossain, who works as a gatekeeper, said he has been on the contractual job for the last eight years. The authorities have told him that his contract would not be renewed.

Ali, who used to get Tk 16,500 per month, said the rail authorities promised to request the firm getting the outsourced jobs to hire them.

"But the contractor will hire workers taking money from them and it is not

At least 26 trains were delayed. At least five trains scheduled to depart Dhaka were delayed by four to five hours.

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9th-grader 'beaten to death' by teachers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

A ninth grader died after he was tortured by the teachers of his school in Kaliganj upazila of Sathkira yesterday.

Raj Pratap Das, son of Dinabandhu Das of Bharashimulia Chandipur area, died after several teachers of Nalta High School tortured him, said witnesses and locals.

A student named Muhammad Jubayer said it was his and another student's birthday, and all of them were in an empty classroom cutting a cake Raj and several others had brought around 10:00am.

All of a sudden, Assistant Head Teacher MA Muhit, assistant teachers Abakash Chandra Kha, Monirul Islam and Sidhartha Roy Chowdhury, and several others barged in and started beating them, he told The Daily Star.

Jubayer added that one of the teachers kicked Raj on his chest.

Jubayer, Raj, and two others were taken to the headteacher's room where they were assaulted again.

Raj and Jubayer then fell to the floor and touched the feet of Headteacher Abdul Monayem and asked for mercy, Jubayer said.

A while after they were dismissed from the headteacher's room, Raj told Jubayer that he was feeling unwell and left for home.

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Contractual workers of Bangladesh Railway, demanding that their jobs be made permanent, blockaded the rail line at the FDC Rail Gate signal near the capital's Karwan Bazar yesterday. A number of trains from across the country were stuck at Kamalapur rail station due to the blockade, which lasted almost five hours starting from 10:00am.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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