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আর্থিক নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত করতে

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**As the 12th parliamentary election of the country took place yesterday, around 28 reporters along with eight photo journalists and multimedia team of The Daily Star visited several polling centres across at least 10 constituencies in Dhaka. The following are their firsthand accounts of how the day unfolded.**



## They line up to vote when TV camera appears

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There weren't many voters around 10:00am at Gulshan Model School in Dhaka-17 constituency yesterday, but suddenly about 20 individuals got together and formed a queue in front of the polling centre when several TV cameras appeared to cover the polls situation.

When the channels were done capturing footage after a minute, the queue slowly started to disperse, with only two or three people entering the polling centre.

One man in the queue, Samir Barua from Chattogram opted not to enter. Asked why he hadn't entered, he said he would vote later.

When asked about his residence and voter registration number, he replied, "I reside in Shiddeshwari

**When the channels were done capturing footage after a minute, the queue slowly started to disperse, with only two or three people entering the polling centre.**

and came here as a party activist, belonging to Swachhasebakk League. I stood in the queue with instructions from the leaders."

Another individual, who did not provide his name, claimed to be a

registered voter and said he would cast his vote soon.

A few minutes later, Mohammad A Arafat, the Awami League candidate for the constituency, entered the centre.

Upon entering, he paused and instructed the accompanying crowd not to enter the premises without being voters registered at that polling centre.

Despite the instructions, some of them entered with him without showing any credentials to the police at the gate. The school had five centres, and voter turnout was low as of 12:00pm.

According to Nazmul, a presiding officer at one of the centres, 141 votes were cast by 12:00pm out of 2,500 registered voters.

## Two 'boat' agents in one booth!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was 9:09am at Mitali Bidyapith in Dhaka-6 constituency yesterday.

When this correspondent entered booth-9 to observe the situation, he found two polling agents for the same candidate in that booth, even though the rule is that no more than one polling agent per candidate can operate inside a booth.

Both agents donned cards that displayed the "boat" and the photos of the Awami League candidate.

When questioned, the agents claimed, "We are agents of boat candidate Sayed Khokon."

While this discussion was occurring, assistant presiding officer Rezwan asked one of those boat agents to leave the room.

Rezwan claimed that the extra boat agent had been inside for just 5-6 minutes. He declined to comment further on the matter.

However, after the correspondent left the booth, the ejected agent re-entered the same booth.

Meanwhile, at Sher-E-Bangla Balika School of the same constituency, one Nuzat Tabassum arrived in the first hours of voting with excitement to cast vote for the first time.

However, she was forced to wait 20 minutes, as voting did not commence in her designated booth until 8:20am, despite the official start time of voting being 8:00am.

In explanation, the centre's assistant presiding officer said, "The polling agents arrived late, so we had to start late."

While talking about her experience at booth-3, a dispirited Nuzat said, "The experience of voting for the first time hasn't been a good one."

Elsewhere, even more frustration was reported by Shibani Sarker, who spent over an hour trying to cast her vote at Shyampur Government Model School and College in Dhaka-4 but in vain.

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## Free rickshaw ride for voters, Tk 1,000 for pullers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To increase voter turnout, the ruling Awami League supporters arranged free rickshaw service for voters to visit their respective polling centres and return home yesterday.

During a visit to the capital's Karail slum and Adabor areas, this newspaper saw rickshaws, with the respective AL candidates' posters on the back, providing free service to the constituents.

In Dhaka-13 constituency, the rickshaw pullers were wearing T-shirts with AL candidate Jahangir Kabir Nanak's photos printed on them.

These rickshaws were hired for a certain area and many of them hung a small poster in front of them mentioning the coverage area.

For instance, a poster was found on a rickshaw that said it would ply from Karail's Bou Bazar to Banani Model School of Dhaka-17 constituency.



"Around 32 rickshaws were hired for the whole day in the Karail slum area for Tk 1,000 each, along with breakfast and lunch," Monir Hossain, a rickshaw puller of Karail, told The Daily Star.

These rickshaw-pullers refused to go to other destinations. In front of Dhaka Oxford School at Adabor, a rickshaw-puller was heard saying, "I am only responsible for taking voters to their polling centres and their residences in this area."

A similar scenario was found in Dhaka-12 constituency.

Talking to this newspaper, a female voter of the constituency said she and her sister took a rickshaw to go to the polling centre.

When they reached the centre, the rickshaw-puller refused to take the rent and said, "I'm not allowed to take money from voters. This might create problems for me if someone sees me taking money from you."

"The scene was the same when we took another rickshaw to get

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DHAKA-17

## 'Show ink mark to get ration card'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There are 27,301 voters in the Korail slum of Dhaka-17 constituency.

At the constituency's BTCL Colony polling ground (centre for male voters), 15 percent votes were cast in four hours since 8:00am. The figure was 11 percent for Banani Model School (centre for women voters) during this period.

Talking to some voters at the centres, this correspondent learned that Awami



League leaders are bringing them in by promising them civic facilities.

"We were told to come and show ink on our hands. Only then our ration card will be renewed, otherwise not. Those without a card will be given one if they can show the voting marks on their fingers," said a resident of the slum, preferring anonymity.

Many voters of the slum were seen roaming around the Banani Model School centre for a long time. Asked the reason, a voter said, "They came to our doors, moving from house to house, asking us to vote."

"There are seven voters in my family but we don't have a preferred candidate for the seat. But they came to us asking for votes. So we came here," said a resident of Jamaibazar in Korail slum.

"They said we live in slums on government-owned lands and enjoy benefits provided by them. It's not right to do so if we don't vote. I came to the centre due to this pressure but did not vote as I did not find a preferable candidate. I came back home," said another slum dweller.

Following surveys, it was found that 14,290 voters of the total 27,301 currently

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## Free lunch by the courtesy of AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supporters of the Awami League candidate distributed lunch boxes in many constituencies of Dhaka, observed these correspondents after visiting at least 10 polling centres under Dhaka-12 and Dhaka-13 constituencies.

AL activities distributed lunch boxes and water bottles with stickers of the "boat symbol and Sheikh Hasina's name" among the poll officials and polling agents of different candidates, even the rival ones, at Noyatola Darussalam Etimkhana Complex in the Dhaka-12 constituency, where four polling centres are located.

Similarly, at the BUTEX centre of the same constituency, similar lunch boxes were seen being served to polling agents and even the election officials, including the presiding officer.

"Yes, all our food has been provided by the boat candidate," a presiding officer said. He, however, did not want to disclose his name. Some Ansar officials echoed him.

Supporters of Jahangir Kabir Nanak, the Awami League candidate in Dhaka-13, has also provided lunch to polling officers and law enforcement members at various polling centres.

A polling officer at Sweet Bird School polling centre in Adabor, having lunch at 1:30 pm, said he didn't know where the lunch came from.

Police and Ansar members at the same centre were also seen having lunch served by the AL candidate.

"Not all meals are from the Awami League candidate; the police

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## AL men crowd polling centres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There was a large presence of Awami League supporters inside and outside some polling centres in the first four hours of voting in the Dhaka-6 constituency yesterday.

This correspondent visited at least six centres, between 9:30am and noon. At the entrance of every centre, a huge number of ruling

female centre, Mahi couldn't come up with a satisfactory answer.

He and one of his associates were seen talking to the centre's presiding officer Md Rokonzuzaman.

When asked, Rokonzuzaman said they were "just inquiring if everything was okay."

Only 82 votes were cast at the



party supporters and agents were seen moving around.

There were two centres - male and female - at Kabi Nazrul Government College. In the female centre, the total number of voters was 2,820 and in the male centres, the number of voters was 4,094.

During a visit to the female centre around 11:40am, this correspondent found at least dozens of males moving around with badges of boat candidate on their necks.

The group leader identified himself as Miraz Mohammad Mahi, an aspirant for the president post of ward-42 AL unit.

When asked why he was inside a

centre till 11:30am.

"Generally, women come to vote after lunch. We are expecting a larger percentage in the afternoon," he said.

When this correspondent was leaving the centre after noon, no lines of voters were observed. However, the number of votes rose

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## 'Never seen polls with so few voters'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ghorai Chandra Das, an Ansar member stationed at Fulbaria Govt Primary School centre, has been providing security during national elections for the last 40 years.

"I have never seen polls being held with so few voters," he told this correspondent yesterday.

"Even in the 2014 and 2018 elections, I saw a good number of voters standing in queues. But this time, there was no queue here for the whole day, only a few voters came and cast their votes," he added.

The centre had a final voter turnout of 13.9 percent, which is actually decent compared to what the correspondent observed till 2:00pm.

Amid the poor turnout, presiding officer of the centre, Md Tarek Hossain,

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**PRAYER**  
**TIMING**  
**JANUARY 8**



Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:30 7:00

JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:35 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**When this correspondent was leaving the centre after noon, no lines of voters were observed. However, the number of votes rose to 445 within some hours, as told by the presiding officer over a phone call in the early evening.**