

UP elections off to turbulent start

One killed, 100 injured, polling suspended at 7 centres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 One young man died in crossfire at Munshiganj as the Union Parishad elections got off to a turbulent start yesterday.
 Rigging, snatching of ballot papers and shootout were reported from some other areas across the country. More than 100 people were injured in polls-related violence.
 However, Election Commission

(EC) officials claimed that polling in 327 UPs was largely peaceful. Voting in 63 more UPs takes place today.
 According to reports reaching the EC last evening, the authorities suspended polling at seven centres in Sirajganj, Comilla, Noakhali, Bhola and Kushtia.
 At Munshiganj, Mamun, 22 died from bullet wounds he had received

when supporters of two rival chairman candidates engaged in a shootout at Charkewar Union.
 Gunfight erupted in the early hours when the two groups tried to lay control over the polling centres in the area. More than 20 people received bullet wounds, according to hospital sources.
 A case was filed with the Munshiganj Sadar Police Station,

accusing 80 people including Hakim Mizi, a chairman candidate.
 Supporters of a chairman candidate vandalised two polling stations at Noakhali.
 Local people alleged that a group of 20 armed miscreants entered the Ewaz Balia government primary school centre at around 9:30am and started stuffing.
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A policeman (L) stands guard as women queue to vote at a Union Parishad polling centre on the outskirts of the capital yesterday. Violence erupted in Munshiganj during the first phase of local council elections, leaving one dead and 20 others injured.
 PHOTO: AFP



Scars on Kahn's dream

Construction of speaker's residence resumes



PHOTO: STAR

The land in front of the Sangsad Bhaban looks criss-crossed with tunnels as the government resumed a project to build two residential units for the speaker and the deputy speaker of the parliament.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 The government has resumed construction of two residential units for the speaker and the deputy speaker in the Sangsad Bhaban area, about two months after suspension of the work in the face of protests.
 Additional workforce has been engaged to complete the construction as soon as possible. Officials at the site said yesterday said that they were working extra hours to complete the houses by June.
 The project, which is now costing about Tk 3 crore, became controversial just after its approval by the then speaker of the seventh parliament, Humayun Rashid Chowdhury. It was alleged that the project would destroy the tone of the original plan made by world famous architect Louis I Kahn. Against this backdrop, the Prime Minister's Office stopped its implementation.
 The present government revived the project on the suggestion of a section of officials that Kahn had envisaged such housing units in his plan.
 But renowned architects of the country contradicted the officials' **SEE PAGE 11 COL 3**

14 die in trawler tragedy

14 die in trawler tragedy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 At least 14 passengers, mostly women, died and 15 others went missing when a trawler capsized in the river Dhaleshwari in the early hours of yesterday.
 The trawler had collided with a passenger launch to cause the accident.
 Rescuers have so far recovered 14 bodies from the river. The death toll may rise as search for the missing persons continues.
 Identity of all the dead could not be known. Some have been identified as Ayesha Begum, 50, Aturi Begum, 31, Rahina, 35, Minara Begum, 30, Champa, 24, Rayesa Begum, 40, Jamila Khatun, 25 and a one-and-half-year old baby Niaz Uddin. They all are residents of various villages of Gazipur district.
 Sources said the engine trawler was carrying about 60 passengers to the Zaker Monzil of Atroshi Pir at Nagarkanda in Faridpur from Baria, Gazipur.
 The Dhaka-bound passenger launch, MV Sagar-10, from Amtala, Patuakhali collided with the trawler near Munshiganj launch terminal at about 5:00am leaving the trawler badly damaged.
 Witnesses said some 25 passengers, mostly men, swam to the shore but the women and children drowned.
 "The accident might have occurred due to heavy fog," Superintendent of Police (SP) of **SEE PAGE 11 COL 3**

Retailers pour cold water on price control plea

STAR REPORT
 The commerce minister yesterday said essentials are increasingly going beyond the public's purchasing power and urged retailers to keep the prices low.
 "Ordinary people can't afford such high prices. The government has incurred around Tk 300 crore in revenue loss from edible oil alone to reduce the sufferings of the people,"
 Amir Khosru Mahmud Choudhury said at a meeting of wholesalers, retailers, refiners, government officials and representative of various organisations.
 The retailers however defended the price hike and told the minister they would 'try to keep prices as low as possible'. However, they said the transport cost has soared 100 per cent in a year; besides, wholesale prices also increased because of the price hike in the international market.
 Dhaka Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka also attended the meeting held at the Bangladesh Institute of International Strategic Studies (BISS) in the city.
 The commerce minister rued that a decision to put the price list on display in the markets is yet to be implemented and upgraded. If the **SEE PAGE 11 COL 4**

Powell to take Dhaka's plea to Bush

UNB, Dhaka
 US Secretary of State Colin Powell assured that he would discuss with President George Bush Bangladesh's concern over the strict US immigration regulations affecting Bangladeshis, as Dhaka made a strong plea for redress.
 The assurance came when Foreign Minister Morshed Khan met Powell in Washington Friday afternoon and conveyed Bangladesh's concern for being included in the US list of countries whose citizens would need to go through the US National Security Entry/Exit Registration System (NSEERS).
 Talking to UNB over phone on the outcome of his talks with his US counterpart, Khan said he presented Bangladesh's case and wanted to know the reasons for **SEE PAGE 11 COL 1**

Sangsad goes into session today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
 The Jatiya Sangsad goes back to session at 6:15pm today, 59 days after its last session was prorogued.
 The sixth session of the eighth parliament is set to see some stormy debates over a number of issues that triggered political controversies since the fifth session ended on November 27 last.
 Obligated by the constitution, President Iajuddin Ahmed will address the maiden session of the year. It will be Iajuddin's first speech in the House since he assumed office on September 6 last year.
 Main opposition Awami League (AL) that boycotted the concluding days of the last session will attend the House proceedings today, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid said last night.
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