

Opposition to tour N-dists for reform support  
UNB, Dhaka

Leaders of the Awami League-led 14-party opposition combine will launch campaigns in the country's northern districts to gather public support to their demands for electoral reforms, cancellation of "fake" voter list and uninterrupted power and water supply.

The alliance leaders, in two groups, will tour of eight northern districts, beginning from May 20.

The first team, led by AL president member Abdur Razzak MP, will launch its campaign from Panchagarh on the first day.

Headed by Suranjit Sengupta MP, also an AL president member, the second group will start their campaign from Lalmonirhat the same day. The other districts are Thakurgaon, Nilphamari, Joypurhat, Kurigram, Rangpur and Gaibandha.

# 9 die as storm hits 4 districts

UNB, Dhaka

At least six people, including two women, were killed and 35 others injured as violent storms lashed Sirajganj and Meherpur districts on Wednesday night.

In Sirajganj, the storm started lashing six upazilas of the district at 8:00pm and continued for an hour, damaging about 50,000 houses.

The affected upazilas are Belkuchi, Shajadpur, Ullapara, Tarash, Enyetpur and Raiganj.

Khoda Box, 50, of Jigishaguna village and Tofizuddin, 60, of Dhapwasin in Tarash upazila, and

Abu Hanif, 25, of Betkhor village in Raiganj upazila, died instantly as mud walls of their houses collapsed on them during the storm.

A 12-year-old boy, M Ali, of Karamasi village in Belkuchi upazila died on the spot as a tree fell on him near his residence during the nor'wester.

The injured were admitted to Sadar Hospital and upazila health complexes.

In Mehepur, nor'wester swept Gangni upazila of the district, killing two women.

The dead are Mahorjan, 52, wife of Makkar Sheikh, and Majeda

Khatun, 60, wife of Rezaul of Juginda village. They were injured critically as they fell on the ground during the squall.

Both Mahorjan and Majeda were rushed to Gangni Upazila Health Complex where they died yesterday.

Some 100 tin-roofed houses were damaged by the storm that started at about 10:00pm and lasted for about 20 minutes.

The storm also damaged ready-to-read paddy on a vast tract of land in the area and uprooted a good number of trees and electric poles.

Humayun Khan Panni passes away  
BSS, Dhaka

Former deputy speaker of the 5th Jatiya Sangsad Humayun Khan Panni died of old age complications at Apollo Hospital in the city yesterday afternoon. He was 85.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar and Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui expressed their deep shock at the death of Humayun Khan Panni.

In separate condolence messages, they also conveyed their deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

Mahi for president's step to resolve fire mystery  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) Organising Secretary Mahi B Chowdhury MP yesterday demanded the president's interference to unearth the mystery behind the fire incident at the house of former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury.

Speaking at a press conference held in the National Press Club he said, "I am requesting President Iajuddin Ahmed to look into the matter. Like Badruddoza he will also be a former president sometime later. So the president should take the matter seriously."

A mysterious fire broke out at the Baridhara house of former president early April 30 morning and gutted cash and valuables kept in three rooms. Badruddoza and his family including his lawmaker son narrowly escaped the blaze.

BDB organised the press conference to provide information about

# Indian Communists win big in West Bengal

## Congress routed in Kerala, Jayalalitha's party in Tamil Nadu

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Indian Marxists scored two significant electoral victories yesterday, tightening their grip on power in their West Bengal bastion and defeating a Congress-led alliance in the southern Kerala state.

The Left parties, which provide key outside support to India's Congress-led UPA government headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, retained its firm

hold in West Bengal with three-fourths majority.

In the 294-member West Bengal assembly, Left Front secured 234 seats, leaving main challenger Trinamool Congress headed by Mamata Banerjee a distant second with just 35 seats followed by Congress 23 seats.

West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee scored a thumping victory in Jadavpur constituency, winning by a margin of over 58,000 votes.

"It is our victory. All credit goes to the people," Bhattacharjee told reporters while coming out of the CPI-M headquarters at Alimuddin Street.

Bhattacharjee's predecessor and veteran CPI(M) leader Jyoti Basu hailed Left Front's march to power in West Bengal for the seventh successive term as "unprecedented in parliamentary history".

"It was a reflection of the people's faith in our policies and we

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Buddha Purnima observed  
BDNEWS, Chittagong

Buddhists in Chittagong yesterday celebrated Buddha Purnima, the largest festival of the Buddhist community, with traditional enthusiasm and solemn devotion.

The Buddhists celebrate the festival in commemoration of Buddha's birth, attainment of enlightenment and passing away on this day of full moon of Baishakh.

In the city, main religious congregations were held at Nandankanon Buddhist Temple, Purnachar International Buddhist Monastery at Devpahar, Chandgaon Saikkymuni Vihar and Agrabad Biswamoitri Vihar.

However, a majority of the

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PHOTO: STAR

Devotees pray at a monastery in Bashabo in the capital yesterday as the Buddhists celebrate Buddha Purnima, the largest religious festival of the community.

14-PARTY ON POWER, WATER, GAS CRISES

# Govt should resign if fails to give solution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) led 14-party opposition combine yesterday staged demonstrations in the capital for immediate solutions to ongoing power, water and gas crises and scrapping of what it said was the fake voter list.

It said the BNP-Jamaat government must step down if they feel they could not solve these problems.

Reiterating resolve to resist any election before implementation of the proposed reforms in the caretaker government and electoral systems, leaders of the mainstream opposition parties called for a voter

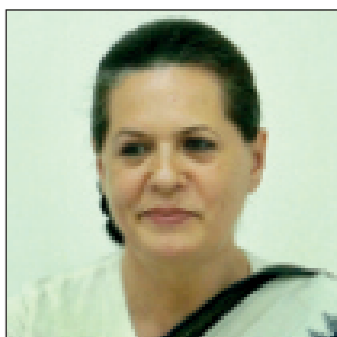
list to be prepared in line with the High Court directives.

Addressing a rally at Azampur Government Primary School in Uttara, they also said the chief election commissioner (CEC) and the two "politically appointed commissioners" must go in order for the next parliamentary election to be free and fair.

SM Suruzzaman, president of Uttara AL, presided over the rally organised by Uttara unit 14-party.

AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed said the prime minister who once dismissed the reform proposals as illogical has included war criminals and patrons of

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# Sonia sweeps back to parliament

AFP, Rae Bareilly

India's ruling Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi swept to a massive victory yesterday in a by-election she provoked by resigning amid

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# London bombings linked with Qaeda

## Concludes official report

AFP, London

Two of the suicide bombers behind last year's deadly London transport attacks likely had contacts with al-Qaeda, but British security lacked

resources to stop the atrocity, an official report concluded yesterday.

The report, by an influential parliamentary committee, cleared intelligence services of any

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# 2 RU teachers suspended for 'sexual abuse'

UNB, Rajshahi

Two teachers of Rajshahi University (RU) have been suspended on charges of sexually abusing two girl students.

Official sources said the punitive measures were taken at a syndicate meeting held on Wednesday night.

The suspended teachers are Prof Dr Nurul Amin of Botany Department, and Assistant Prof Sabyasachi Saha of Sociology Department.

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# Iran says it's now ready to negotiate

AP, Jakarta

Iran's president said yesterday he was ready to negotiate with the United States and its allies over his country's nuclear program but he also suggested that any threats against Tehran would make the dialogue more difficult.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad also intensified his verbal attacks on Israel, calling it a "tyrannical regime that one day

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Prayer Timing		
May 12		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation