

EU team has doubt about polls, says Ershad

Mission meets JP, Jamaat, business leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The visiting six-member European Union (EU) Election Observation Mission yesterday had meetings with Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamaat-e-Islami and business leaders of the country.

Former president and JP Chairman HM Ershad said that the EU delegation expressed their apprehension about the next general elections.

"The EU mission has doubts about the next election as the ruling BNP and opposition Awami League (AL) are yet to sit to resolve the political impasse centring the election," Ershad told newsmen after a meeting with the EU mission.

He said the BNP secretary general has gone to Singapore to

Drug peddler killed in Rab 'encounter'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A drug peddler was killed in an encounter with the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at a residential hotel in the city yesterday morning.

He was identified as Raihan Ahmed Nahid, 30, of Joydevpur in Gazipur district.

According to a Rab press release, four drug peddlers were arrested along with 1000 bottles of phensidyl from a Dhaka-bound microbus in Nawdapara area of the city in the early hours of Sunday.

They are Sohrab Hossain of Rampura in Dhaka, Babul of Rajshahi, and Jasim and Belal of Comilla.

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No relief in arrest of 10 Mirpur crime dons

Businessmen now asked to chip in with staggering tolls for their release

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SHAHEEN MOLLA

The arrest of 10 gangsters of infamous Shahadat-Khorshed group during the last few days did not bring any relief to the traders of Mirpur as the gang members who are still at large are targeting more people for tolls.

"I have kept myself confined to my house for the last three days as Shahadat's men demanded Tk 50 lakh as toll," said a leading businessman of Mirpur seeking an-

nymity. The gang members recently called a few more businessmen and demanded a huge amount of money for releasing arrested gang members, he said, adding that businessmen, owners of under-construction buildings and families of expatriate Bangladeshis are the prime targets of the group.

Detective Branch (DB) of police after a long hunt arrested 10 members of the gang, including two killing squad members of the criminal group.

The organised group has around 250 members in areas under Mirpur, Kafur, Pallabi and Shah Ali police stations, the arrestees said while talking to The Daily Star at the DB office on Saturday.

Some are members of the killing squad while some are trained up to shoot at the legs, the arrestees said, adding that the gang has an IT section which is tasked with keeping information about the probable targets, rival criminals and

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Oli threatens to reveal graft by ministers, MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The BNP standing committee member and former minister Col (ret) Oli Ahmed yesterday declared that he would make public the details of all the corruption practised by the ministers and lawmakers of the government through holding a convention next month.

All the required evidence against those corrupt people will also be presented, who amassed huge wealth in the last few years, he added.

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23 rescued from human traffickers

UNB, Benapole

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel rescued 23 people from the clutches of traffickers at a village here on Sunday night.

Acting on a tip off, the BDR men raided the frontier village, Ghiba, and rescued 23 people including three women and a child. Sensing the presence of the paramilitary troops, the traffickers managed to flee.

The victims hail from Noakhali, Chittagong and Sylhet districts. They told the BDR men that the traffickers promised them jobs in India and took Tk 600 from each of them.

They were later handed over to the police.

REMARKS ON ISLAM Pope regrets to Bangladesh Muslims

UNB, Dhaka

Vatican ambassador to Bangladesh personally conveyed the regrets of Pope Benedict XVI to the Muslims in Bangladesh for his controversial remarks on Islam.

The pope apologised to the Muslims in Bangladesh since his remarks in a recent address at the University of Regensburg in Germany hurt their religious sentiment, according to a foreign ministry press release.

Apostolic Nuncio, ambassador of Vatican Very Reverend Monsignor Paul Tschang in-Nam, conveyed the regrets when he called on Acting Foreign Secretary Md Touhid Hossain at the foreign ministry yesterday.

He also noted that when the

Bhuiyan had check-up in Singapore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday underwent a medical check-up at Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre in Singapore.

Consultant Cardiologist Maurice Choo supervised the check-up. Bhuiyan is scheduled to have an angiogram at 9:30am local time today under the supervision of the same doctor, said a press release of BNP.

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People of 12 Bogra villages weave their fortune

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, back from Sonatola

A rapid expansion of handloom industry across 12 villages under Sonatola upazila of Bogra has made several hundred men and women financially independent.

Siddique Hossain of Borobalua village said that the number of handlooms in those villages was not more than 400 two years ago while now at least 700 looms are running round the clock. A huge number of day labour-

ers and housewives have worked their way out of poverty by getting into weaving.

It was only a couple of years ago when Raju and Nazrul as day labourers were passing their days in abject misery. But things started to change for the better soon after they had their own looms.

The weaving apparatus did not cost them much as they were made of wood using indigenous technology, they noted.

Housewife Sarju told she was working in a weaving factory in Borobalua village for Tk 40 a day only two years back. Now she owns six handlooms.

Rebeka of the same village said she has savings of about Tk 1 lakh made in less than two years. Like Sarju, she too was a worker at a handloom factory.

Zillur Rahman, a local, said not so long ago, most of the villagers would barely make ends meet. A few could afford every meal of the day then. Now most of them are quite well off and lead a sound life.

However, some of the handloom owners complain that they are not being able to reap the full benefits of the business for high prices of weaving materials.

Raju said that a few months ago they would make a profit of Tk 25 from selling a piece of woollen cloth for Tk 125. "Now we are getting only Tk 10 from the same cloth," he added.

Besides, there is no fixed market for their products in Bogra and in the other parts in the country.

In most cases, they sell their

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A woman weaves patterns on winter clothing at her house in Bogra to increase family earnings.

Iran threatens to pull out of talks if SC takes action

AFP, Vienna

Iran warned yesterday it would cut cooperation with UN nuclear inspectors if the UN Security Council acted against it but said negotiations could still work in the crisis over Tehran's atomic ambitions.

There should "be no doubt that any hostile action by the UN Security Council would lead to limitation of cooperation with the (International Atomic Energy Agency)," Iranian Vice President Gholamreza Aghazadeh told a general conference in Vienna of the IAEA's 140 nations.

The United States is pushing for sanctions against Iran for failing to

heed an August 31 Security Council deadline to suspend uranium enrichment, which makes fuel for civilian nuclear reactors but also can produce atom bomb material.

Aghazadeh, who is head of the Iranian Atomic Energy Agency, warned that a "unilateral approach" at the United Nations, "aggressively pursued by one or two states, is bound to cause loss and damage to all."

But he said Iran "believes that an agreement is accessible through negotiations, relying on good faith, political will and flexibility."

Iran was "prepared for negotiations and political compromise," Aghazadeh said.

His comments came shortly after IAEA chief Mohammed ElBaradei opened a week-long conference of the watchdog agency, whose inspectors monitor compliance with international nuclear safeguards, by saying he remained "hopeful" that Iran and world powers could move towards "long-overdue" negotiations.

French President Jacques Chirac had earlier in Paris urged world powers not to refer Iran to the Security Council for possible sanctions over fears the Islamic Republic seeks nuclear weapons.

ElBaradei said he hoped negotiations, which would eventually

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A street pet vendor sells spotted doves in front of Ramna Police Station in the city. Although law prohibits this practice, the authorities are blind to it.

16 killed in 2 road crashes

Bus-truck collision in Habiganj, bridal party microbus falls into Tangail ditch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 16 people died and 47 others were injured in road accidents in Habiganj and Tangail districts yesterday.

Of them, 10 died in Habiganj and the remaining six in Tangail.

In Habiganj, a Sylhet-bound night coach from Rangpur collided with a truck on the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Shibpur area of Madhabpur upazila at about 7:30am, killing eight passengers of the coach on the spot and injuring 42 others, according to the UNB.

Two of the injured later died at a local hospital, raising the death toll in the deadly accident to 10.

Of the dead, seven were identified as Kanchan Bala, 25, and her two-year-old son Nayeem of Louhajang upazila of Munshiganj; Abdur Rahim, 40, Abul Bashar, 50, and Amjad Hossain, 32, of Rangpur; and Khurshed Ali, 60, and Monor Ali, 40, of Joypur village in Sadar upazila of Habiganj.

Identity of the rest two could not be known.

The injured were admitted to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital and Habiganj Sadar Hospital.

Our Tangail correspondent reported that six people died and seven were injured when a microbus carrying a bridal party from Pabna skidded off the Tangail-Mymensingh highway and fell into a pond in Ghatail upazila in the morning.

Police said the tragic accident took place at Athharodana at about 9:00am when the Sherpur bound microbus was giving side to a truck, killing six of the bridal party on the spot and injuring seven others including the bridegroom.

The dead are Afsar Ali, 48, Mofidul Islam, 15, Shah Abdul, 70, Mostafa, 13, Abdul Mazid, 25, and AbdulAziz, 58.

Locals rescued the injured and sent them to Kalihati Upazila Health Complex.



2.25kg gold statue seized in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered a 2.25kg gold statue, which they claim is worth around Tk 35 lakh, at a village in Kahalu upazila in Bogra on Sunday. Rab also arrested a man in this connection.

Following a tip off that one Nasir was in possession of the statue and was trying to smuggle it abroad, a Rab team went to his house at the village Jaam around 8:00pm in the guise of customers.

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S Korea eyes gas exploration in Bangladesh

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea's POSCO Co. Ltd. (005490.KS: Quote, Profile, Research) and Korea National Oil Corp. (KNOC) plan to set up a local office in Bangladesh for natural gas

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Prayer Timing		
September 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-35	5-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-09	6-12
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

11 die in killing attempt on Somali president

AFP, Baidoa

At least 11 people, including six alleged assailants, were killed here yesterday in an unsuccessful bid to assassinate Somalia's interim president, the country's foreign minister said.

In an attack blamed on those responsible for the weekend murder of an Italian nun in Mogadishu, five members of President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed's entourage and six purported assassins died in powerful blasts that rocked the town of Baidoa, the minister said.

Yusuf was unhurt in the incident but his younger brother, Abdulsalam Yusuf Ahmed, was among those killed, Foreign Minister Ismail Mohamed Hurre told

reporters in the Kenyan capital where he is on an official visit.

"Five people were killed from the presidential convoy and three wounded. Six attackers were also killed and two captured," he said, blaming the blasts on the same people who killed the elderly nun at a Mogadishu hospital on Sunday.

"Those who were behind the assassination of the Italian nun are also behind this attack, targeting not only the president, but also the whole democratic process," Hurre said.

Hurre said security forces were pursuing several attackers who escaped after the blasts in Baidoa, the temporary seat of Somalia's weak transitional government about 250km northwest of Mogadishu.

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Trading Corporation of Bangladesh sells essentials at a moderate price from a truck near the Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday ahead of Ramadan when prices usually soar.

