J&K LOCAL POLLS

Anti-Modi alliance wins most seats

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

An alliance of political parties in Indian-administered Kashmir opposed to India's policies in the region has won a majority of seats in local elections, the first since New Delhi revoked the disputed region's semi-autonomous status last year.

The Peoples Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), which is pro-India but favours self-governance in Kashmir, won 112 of a total of 280 seats in District Development Council elections, which were held in a staggered eight-phase process from November 28 through December 19.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 74 seats. Independent candidates won 49 seats while India's main opposition Congress party won 26 seats.

Political activities in the region came to a halt after the abrogation of Article-370 in August last year when most of the political leaders were detained in the region.

The election is part of a process in which residents directly elect their village representatives, who then vote to form development councils for clusters of villages. The councils have no legislative power.

The Kashmir-based politicians said the election results made it clear that Kashmiri people have rejected last year's decision.

Ties with US going 'bad to worse'

Says Russia; Biden says cyberattack against US won't go 'unanswered'

AFP, *Moscow*

With less than a month before Joe Biden moves into the White House, Moscow yesterday accused the incoming US administration of "Russophobia" after the president-elect promised to punish Russia for a major cyber attack.

Biden is expected to take a tougher stance against Russia than Donald Trump, whose ascent to the US presidency in 2016 was plagued by accusations of Russian interference to boost his campaign.

Russian President Vladimir Putin was one of the last leaders to congratulate Biden on his election victory, sending his congratulatory message six weeks after the November 3 vote and saying he was ready for "collaboration."

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov, speaking to reporters on Wednesday, said the Kremlin was expecting "nothing positive" in ties with Washington.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov struck a similar note, speaking about Moscow's expectations from the future US administration.

"We are definitely not expecting anything good," Ryabkov said in an interview with Interfax news agency.

"And it would be strange to expect good things from people, many of whom made their careers on Russophobia and throwing mud at my country," he added.

Washington has recently accused Russia of a major cyber attack on government agencies -- a claim Moscow has denied. Biden on Tuesday said the attack cannot go "unanswered", promising to retaliate once he steps into office on January 20. The US president-elect also accused

Trump of downplaying the gravity of the attack.

Ryabkov said Moscow should move to a "total containment" approach in relations with the United States and retain "selective dialogue" on subjects that are of interest to Russia.

Both Peskov and Ryabkov said that Russia would not initiate any contacts with Biden's transition staff.

Referring to fresh US sanctions imposed this week on 45 Russian organisations over their military connections, Ryabkov said the outgoing administration was trying to "loudly slam the door".

"We are going from bad to worse," Ryabkov said.

A farmer's son sleeps on a tractor at the site of a protest against new farm laws, at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border in Ghaziabad, India, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump pardons two linked to Russia probe

Blackwater guards also pardoned

AFP, *Washington*

US President Donald Trump granted pardons Tuesday to two people linked to a probe into alleged collusion between his campaign and Russia along with a list of others as time ticks away on his remaining weeks in office.

They add to pardons already issued to political allies of Trump, due to leave office on January 20.

The White House said in a statement that Trump had granted full pardons to 15 people and commuted all or part of the sentences for five others.

A full pardon was given to George Papadopoulos, a former Trump campaign adviser who admitted lying to federal investigators about his contacts with Russians.

Papadopoulos was a member of Trump's foreign policy advisory panel when he ran for president in 2016. He pleaded guilty in October 2017 to lying to the FBI about contacts with a professor who promised to connect him to senior Russian officials.

Another full pardon was granted to Alex van der Zwaan, a Dutch lawyer who was also convicted in connection with Mueller's probe.

Full pardons were also granted to four Blackwater security guards convicted over the 2007 killing of 14 Iraqis. The four convicted over the 2007 shootings in Baghdad's crowded Nisur Square included Nicholas Slatten, who had been sentenced to life.

Others included on the list were three former Republican members of Congress.

Hopes for Brexit trade deal hang on leaders' calls

AFP, *Brussels*

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen and Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson held the fate of a post-Brexit trade deal in their hands yesterday as talks hung in the balance.

The focus of the negotiations has shifted to cross-Channel calls between the leaders after officials failed to close the gap on how to share access to UK fishing waters.

Asked whether a deal was possible on Wednesday or Thursday, a European source close to the talks said: "Yes, but as ever nothing is guaranteed."

If there is no breakthrough in the next two days, teams are expected to take a Christmas break, leaving only a narrow window to reach any deal before New Year.

And, with or without a trade deal, Britain will leave the EU single market at midnight on December 31, ending a half-century of deepening economic partnership.

The remaining differences between the two camps are narrow but deep, in particular over fishing, with EU crews facing a dramatic cut in their catch from British waters.

London wants to reduce EU fishing fleets' share of the estimated 650-million-euro annual haul by more than a third, with changes phased in over three years.

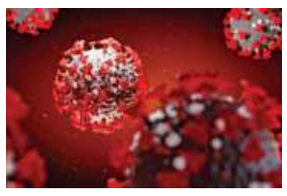
The EU, in particular countries with northern fishing fleets like France, Denmark and the Netherlands -- are insisting on 25 percent over at least six years.

And there are thorny details to be hammered out. There are quotas for more than a hundred different species of fish, and EU members want to share the cuts equally.

EU negotiator Michel Barnier briefed ambassadors and then senior MEPs on Tuesday that he had made his last offer on fish and that it was now up to political leaders to decide.

Brussels will continue to negotiate until the end of the year -- or even "beyond", as Barnier suggested -- but time is running out for any deal to be provisionally applied.

Students receive face masks from an elephant dressed as Santa Claus, in an effort to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease, ahead of Christmas celebrations at a school in Ayutthaya, Thailand, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS



Coronavirus reaches end of the earth!

REUTERS, *Santiago*

The coronavirus has landed in Antarctica, the last continent previously free from Covid-19, Chile's military said, as health and army officials scrambled to clear out and quarantine staff from a remote research station there.

Chile's armed forces said at least 36 people had been infected at its Bernardo O'Higgins base, including 26 army personnel and 10 civilian contractors conducting maintenance at the base.

The permanently staffed research station, operated by Chile's army, lies near the tip of a peninsula in northernmost Antarctica.

Base personnel "are already properly isolated and constantly monitored" by health authorities in Magallanes, in Chilean Patagonia, the army said, adding there had so far been no complications.

Research and military stations in Antarctica - among the most remote in the world - had gone to extraordinary lengths in recent months to keep the virus out, canceling tourism, scaling back activities and staff and locking down facilities.

Researchers with the British Antarctic Survey estimate about 1,000 people at 38 stations across the frozen continent had safely navigated the southern hemisphere winter without incident. But an uptick in travel to and from the region this spring and early summer have heightened infection risk.

Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute

"Seaweed Culture & Seaweed Product Development in Bangladesh Coast" Research Project

Marine Fisheries and Technology Station, Cox's Bazar

Memo No. 33.04.0000.124.03.005.20-55 Date: 23.12.2020

Request for Expressions of Interest

Ministry/Division	:	Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, Bangladesh.
Agency	:	Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute, Mymensingh.
Procuring entity	:	Director General.
Expression of Interest for Selection of	:	An International Seaweed Culture & Value Addition Consultant (1 No.); Package No. S1 and an International Seaweed Culture Technician (1 No.); Package No. S2.
Duration	:	06 months in two phases.
EoI Memo No.	:	Memo No. 33.04.0000.124.03.005.20-55
Date	:	23.12.2020
Procurement sub method	:	Quality and Cost Based Selection (QCBS).
Budget and source of funds	:	Development Budget and GoB.
Development partners	:	N/A.
Project/programme code	:	224256500
Project/programme name	:	Seaweed Culture & Seaweed Product Development in Bangladesh Coast Research Project.
EoI closing date and time	:	Date: 13/01/2021 and Time: 05.00pm.

Information for applicant:

Outline of the assignment and required qualifications & experiences [Details provided in the Standard Request for Application (SRFA)].

Position	Outline of the assignment	Qualification & experience
An International Seaweed Culture & Value Addition Consultant	❖ Explore Seaweed resources in the Bangladesh coast and assist in identification of Seaweed species. ❖ Explore the different Seaweed cultivation techniques and adopted them to local conditions. ❖ Develop techniques for potential use of Seaweed as food items and other industrial uses. ❖ Explore export potential of Seaweed: where, how and in which form Seaweed can be exported. ❖ Explore different alternative uses of Seaweed, where and how Seaweed can be used. ❖ Explore import of high yielding sea weed germ ling from aboard for cultivation in Bangladesh coast. ❖ To assist the scientists of BFRI in Seaweed culture, processing and product development. ❖ Prepare periodic project reports. ❖ Relevant any other task assigned by the Project Director/project management as and when required.	❖ The position requires minimum Master's degree in Marine Fisheries/Biology with 10 year's experience in Seaweed Culture & Value Addition. Preference will be given to PhD holder in relevant field with experience in Asian countries. He/she must have a broad international exposure in his field of specialization.
An International Seaweed Culture Technician	❖ Provide technical guidance and support about the seaweed culture, identification, processing and product development of seaweed processing laboratory complex. ❖ To assist the scientists of BFRI in Seaweed culture, processing and product development. ❖ Prepare periodic project reports. ❖ Relevant any other task assigned by the Project Director/project management as and when required.	❖ Must have minimum graduation degree in Fisheries/Aquaculture/ Marine science with at least 6-8 years working experience on Seaweed Culture in abroad. Or ❖ In case of highly practical experienced person educational qualification might be relaxed. ❖ Highly trained person will be preferred.

Other details:

Applicants are requested to provide information as per the format provided in Standard Request for Application (SRFA) indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (complete CV in prescribed form with other details as applicable). SRFA may be obtained from the websites: fri.portal.gov.bd or www.mofl.gov.bd or from the address below either through email or in person from the office of the undersigned. The applicants shall submit supporting documents in favor of their experience and qualifications along with the SRFA. The services of the specialist will commence as per practical need of incumbent which will be determined once recruitment process is completed.

The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EoI(s) without assigning any reason thereof.

Procurement entity details

Name of official inviting EoI	Md. Mohidul Islam.
Designation of official inviting EoI	Project Director.
Address of official inviting EoI	Seaweed Culture & Seaweed Product Development in Bangladesh Coast Research Project, Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute, Marine Fisheries and Technology Station, Cox's Bazar-4700, Bangladesh.
Contact details of official inviting EoI	Cell: +88-01719355655 Email: seaweed.projectbfri@gmail.com, mohidbfri@gmail.com

Md. Mohidul Islam
Project Director

GD-2053

DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT

Nepal SC begins hearing petitions

REUTERS, *Kathmandu*

Nepal's Supreme Court yesterday started hearing petitions challenging Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's sudden dissolution of parliament and call for fresh elections, a move denounced by his opponents as unconstitutional. Oli's decision, the culmination of months of political turmoil in the Himalayan country situated between China and India, has triggered unrest in his party and protests on the streets of the capital Kathmandu.

"Hearing on 12 petitions against the dissolution of parliament has begun," said Bhadrakali Pokharel, a Supreme Court spokesman.

Lawyers opposed to Oli's decision argued that the prime minister had no prerogative to dissolve parliament under the constitution. Seven ministers have stepped down to challenge the dissolution and stated that it was a violation of the "popular mandate" given to them in 2017 general election.

Oli recently lost support within his own Nepal Communist Party (NCP), with some members accusing him of sidelining senior party members in decision-making and key appointments.

They called for him to step down.

Oli this week said he decided to dissolve the parliament after facing non-cooperation from his party officials, and a fresh mandate was the only way to settle disputes. Nepal's President Bidhya Devi Bhandari over the weekend set April 30 and May 10 for the general election, a year ahead of schedule.

আমের রাজধানী
চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ জেলার
মহারাজপুরহাট এ
আমাদের ৪৭তম
ব্রাঞ্চের আজ
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আব্দুল কায়েম মার্কেট
মহারাজপুরহাট
চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ সদর
চাঁপাইনবাবগঞ্জ।

ব্যাংকিং সুবিধায় সমৃদ্ধ হোক শিল্প ও বাণিজ্য
উন্নত হোক সুবিধা বঞ্চিত মানুষের আগামী জীবনধারা

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