

Filipino polls

Santiago-Ramos battle for lead

MANILA, May 14: Miriam Defensor Santiago was locked Thursday in a seesaw battle with Fidel Ramos for the lead in the presidential race as tensions mounted because of the slow count and allegations of fraud, reports AP.

The laborious count in Monday's presidential contest hit another snag when computers crashed at the only organization authorized to tabulate and release figures from the race to succeed President Corason Aquino.

Vice President Salvador Laurel, who was trailing in the seven-member field, conceded defeat and called on his supporters to prevent Mrs Santiago from being cheated out of victory.

Both she and Ramos, who is supported by Mrs Aquino, variously held slender leads in private tallies, which were based on official figures. The official tabulation of the Commission on Elections was not expected to be released for days.

Monday's balloting for 17,000 posts contested among 87,000 candidates was the largest election in the nation's history. The seven presidential candidates include Imelda Marcos, widow of former President Ferdinand Marcos.

Confusion over the election's outcome fueled allegations of violations, including vote-buying, ballot thefts and intimidation. It could not be established how many of the

charges had merit, but the Philippines' long and notorious history of fraudulent elections added to public skepticism over the balloting.

ABS-CBN television reported serious counting delays in 20 towns and cities in the Manila area and central Luzon. Protests mounted in scattered areas across the country. The Commission on Elections sent Marines to Santa Rosa, near Manila, to protect registrars from angry crowds who claimed election fraud there.

Supporters of a candidate for mayor in Mauban town in Quezon province, 50 miles (80 kilometers) southeast of Manila, stormed the municipal hall and burned ballots. The demonstrators were protesting alleged election fraud by the incumbent mayor. No arrests were made.

Hundreds of protesters formed a human barricade in front of the town hall in Santa Ana, near the former US-run Clark Air Base, to complain that they were unable to vote Monday because their names had been stricken illegally from registration lists.

Antonio Abaya, the administration's gubernatorial candidate in Ilocos Sur, accused supporters of his longtime rival, Gov. Luis Singson, of "massive election fraud" and sought to nullify results of the voting there.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia visiting the newly-built locomotive workshop of Bangladesh Railway at Parbatipur yesterday. —PID photo

PM: Railway

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The Prime Minister said the present government had given priority to the overall development of the Railway as this sector has an important role to play in the faster industrialisation and increasing economic activities of the democratic government.

Begum Zia said the government was going to take up some more projects for the development of railway apart from those which are scheduled to be completed soon.

The projects which are to be taken soon include construction of a bridge with railway over the River Rupsa, setting up Khulna Mongla railway, construction of double line between Bhatrab and Tong Bazar and setting up rail lines from Sharisha Bari to Raichhia. She said the government was contemplating to introduce a computerised system for cargo service in the railway.

Communication Minister OI Ahmed said the government had taken no decision for retrenchment of railway employees.

He said the newspaper reports on the retrenchment was baseless and motivated.

Information Minister Nazmul Huda, Education Minister Jamiruddin Sircar, Members of Parliament and heads of different foreign missions attended the programme.

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Shoot-on-sight order in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, May 14: The Indian authorities have issued shoot-on-sight orders in Kashmir after Afghan Mujahideen were spotted on the Pakistani side of the disputed state's border, PTI reported today, reports AFP.

Security along a five-kilometer (three-mile) curfew-bound border belt has also been tightened following reports that Afghans armed with sophisticated weapons had been seen on the frontier, the news agency said.

PTI did not say when the shoot-on-sight orders, also valid in the curfew-bound area, were issued.

The ownership of Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state, is disputed by Pakistan, which controls its northern third. The two countries have twice gone to war over the province.

India accuses Islamabad of arming and training Muslims waging a bloody secessionist campaign in Kashmir. Pakistan denies the allegation, but says the militants' campaign is a legitimate struggle for self-determination.

PTI quoted official sources as saying that Pakistani troops and the Afghan Mujahideen were concentrating on the Kashmir frontier in a bid to push Kashmiri militants into

India.

Indian officials say more than 3,000 "Kashmiri youths" are in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir waiting to cross to the Indian side to join the separatist campaign.

The security forces on the border with Pakistan have been directed to shoot if any attempt was made by infiltrators to violate (the border) PTI said in a report from the border town of Poonch.

Indian officials have previously linked Kashmiri guerrillas with sections of the Afghan Mujahideen.

AP adds: Indian army troops shot and killed eight Muslim rebels Thursday when they opened fire on a group of 20 armed infiltrators trying to sneak into the Kashmir Valley from Pakistan, police said.

The soldiers captured 12 rebels and seized 22 AK-47 assault rifles after the encounter in the pine-studded mountainous region, said Director-General of Jammu-Kashmir Police BS Bedi.

The incident was in the Uri sector, a 5-kilometer (3-mile) strip of land running along the India-Pakistan frontier. Uri is 75 kilometers (45 miles) west of Srinagar, the center of the Muslim rebellion against mostly Hindu India.

Malaysia deporting illegal Bangladeshis

Bangladesh nationals entering Malaysia illegally are being deported right away, according to reports published in the Malaysian newspaper, reports BSS.

"Bangladesh nationals spotted by enforcement officers are being subjected to 100 per cent checks and those found to have sneaked in illegally without any travel papers are deported," the reports said.

The reports said thousands of Bangladeshis pay money to organised syndicates for jobs in the country. These workers, the daily 'New Strait Times' said in the report, are issued passes upon entry, via legal checkpoints bordering Thailand by the immigration department and are said to have paid the syndicates upto US dollar 200 each for making the visits from Dhaka.

But many of these people work with forged work permits and land into trouble. Certain immigrant officials are paid money by the organised syndicates to facilitate the entry of each Bangladesh national. But at times forgery goes to the extent of syndicate people posing themselves as the immigration officials with false uniforms and many people are cheated in the process, the reports said.

BCI writ

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to defeat the purpose of criminal case and so it was not bonafide, he said.

Huq also said that Bangladesh Bank has got power under Articles 51, 52 and 53 of Bangladesh Bank Order to regulate the credit system of the country. Bangladesh Bank is also empowered to take steps by suspending the activities of BCI, he said.

He further said that licence for carrying business was given by Bangladesh Bank to BCI. The Bangladesh Bank has got right to cancel the licence and suspend the activities of BCI temporarily, he added.

Hearing will resume on May 18.

Khaleida-Hasina

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members of the bereaved families and prayed for the peace of the departed souls.

Ruhul Kabir, and two students, Ali Mortuza Chowdhury Shobhan and Kazi Mohammed Ahmedur Rahman Arif, drowned in a boat capsized in the river Buriganga early yesterday morning.

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her profound stock at the tragic death of three BUET students.

In a message of condolence, she said the nation lost three prospective engineers through premature deaths of the three brilliant students.

Hasina prayed for the salvation of the departed souls and expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved families.

DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman MP yesterday condoled the death of three BUET students including EUCSU VP Mir Mohammad Ruhul Kabir who died in a tragic boat capsized in the river Buriganga.

Former VP and General Secretary of EUCSU Farid Ahmed and Refel Kabir, Dhaka University Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal President and General Secretary Habbuddin Sobel and Ali Akkas Nadim, Dhaka City Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal President and General Secretary Abul Khair Bhuiyan and Nasir Uddin Pintu and General Secretary of EUCSU Fazlul Karim also condoled the deaths in similar messages.

We want Azam's trial in court: B Chowdhury

SATKHIRA, May 14: Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said today Golam Azam is a foreign national and has no right to dabble in Bangladesh politics, reports UNB.

Addressing a big public meeting at Razzak Park here this afternoon, B Chowdhury said the BNP government had arrested Golam Azam to show its respect to country's constitution.

"We also want Golam Azam's trial in constitutional court, not in Gano Adalat," he told the cheering crowd.

Presided over by BNP district President Advocate Shamsul Haq, the meeting was also addressed, among others, by Social Welfare and Women's Affairs Minister Tariqul Islam, Whip Ashraf Hossain and Farida Rahman, MP.

The Deputy Leader criticised the Awami League politics, saying this party failed to return to power as the people rejected it over the last 15 years.

One killed in road mishap

KUSHTIA, May 14: A youth of village Moragacha in Khoksa upazila was killed in a truck mishap near Kumarkhali bus stand Tuesday. According to witnesses, the victim Mokbul Hossain (20) while crossing the road was crushed to death by the brick loaded speeding truck. His body was sent to morgue for autopsy, report UNB.

IDA to provide \$150m loan

WASHINGTON, May 14: Bangladesh will receive 150 million dollars from International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank for its public resource management adjustment programme, reports BSS.

Bangladesh Ambassador Abul Ahsan and Vice President of the World Bank Joseph Wood signed the agreement here Wednesday on behalf of the government of Bangladesh and IDA respectively.

IDA is the specialized agency of the World Bank to provide loan at concessional terms to selected developing countries.

The credit will finance a portion of Bangladesh's import requirement over a period of three years.

Master plans

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here a few days ago.

It would take five years to complete the project and the new plan would cover Savar, Joydebpur and Narayanganj as Dhaka city areas.

The project named Metropolitan Development Planning, Dhaka & Chittagong, would be launched formally next month, a source of Rajuk said without elaborating.

Another source working on the population of Dhaka city said that the population increase rate was much higher in Dhaka than in other urban areas in the country and it would be actively considered during the preparation of the new master plan.

80pc islands may sink Gayoom sees 2 options to save Maldives

MALE, May 14: Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom says that up to 80 per cent of the low-lying Coral Islands that make up his country could sink below sea level if predictions of global warming prove correct.

Experts have estimated that atmospheric warming of the earth will cause the sea level to rise by 20 cm (nearly eight inches) by the year 2030.

Twenty centimetres is not much for any other country. But to the Maldives it is a lot because that would mean we could lose 80 per cent of our smaller islands and 20 per cent of the larger ones, Gayoom told Reuters in an interview on Tuesday.

Land in the Maldives, a group of 1,190 small Coral Islands lying close of Sri Lanka and India, is only about two metres (six feet) above sea level.

Gayoom said some small island states were considering moving their entire population to other countries but as far as the Maldives is concerned, I don't think we at any rate have entertained that idea.

"It would not be a solution of our choice. I don't think the time will come when we will have to migrate from here and become environmental refugees," he said.

The President, a leading advocate of environmental



Ghatak-Dalal Nirmul Committee brought out a procession in the city yesterday in support of May 18 hartal. —Star photo

The Midnight File

Fierce artillery duel in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina, May 14: Serb attackers and Muslim defenders fought a fierce artillery duel Thursday in Sarajevo. Defense officials said virtually the whole city came under bombardment, and at least four people were reported killed. The fighting ebbed by afternoon, and Gen Philippe Morillon of France, deputy commander of the UN peacekeeping force for Croatia, said the warring sides had agreed to a truce for the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina, reports AP.

Russia to become large state: Gorbachev

WASHINGTON, May 14: Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev told members of the US Congress on Thursday that Russia is in deep trouble but eventually will become a "large and flourishing state." Gorbachev also called for "new thinking" that takes into consideration the interdependence among nations in the modern world, reports AP.

Pacific fleet ammunition dump explodes

MOSCOW, May 14: An ammunition dump for the former Soviet Navy's Pacific Fleet caught fire and exploded Thursday, unleashing a cloud of yellow smoke and forcing the evacuation of thousands of families, a news agency reported. An undisclosed number of people were injured in the blast on the outskirts of the Russian Far East city of Vladivostok, but there were no deaths reported, the ITAR-Tass news agency said, reports AP.

BUET students

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the Electrical Department and Ali Mortuza Shobhan, a second year student in the Chemical Department of the university dead.

Six other BUET students travelling in the same boat were rescued.

The body of Kabir, a fourth year Electrical Engineering Department student, was kept in the Diabetic Hospital in the city to be sent to his home district of Rajshahi today (Friday).

Bodies of Arif and Shobhan were sent to their homes at Uttara in the capital and Badurtoza of Bogra district after Janaza at the BUET Central Mosque in the afternoon.

Shobhan was a nephew of the State Minister for Finance Mujibur Rahman.

Kabir and Shobhan were members of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal.

According to Fire Service and BUET sources, the tiny country boat carrying all the nine BUET students capsized when it was hit by a trawler near Goshalghat at about 4 am.

Three of the boat passengers fell into the water and were drowned while six others managed to climb the hull of the overturned boat. They managed to reach the shore.

The fire rescue unit arrived at the spot at 7 am and started searching for the three missing persons.

The fire service divers recovered the body of Shobhan at 8 am. A naval rescue team joined the firemen at 12 noon. It left the spot after a one-hour search. However, the

Public Prosecutor Abdur Razzak Khan, and Special PPM Mujibur Rahman conducted the case. They were assisted, among others, by M Masud Ahmed Talukdar and A K M Morshed.

Advocate Serajul Haq, Barrister Rokunuddin Khan Mukul and Wadud Ahmed were, among others, who defended the accused persons.

Delhi bans LTTE

NEW DELHI, May 14: India today outlawed the Sri Lankan rebel group the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), saying its presence in the country was a threat, reports AFP.

The LTTE has been declared an "unlawful association with immediate effect." Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan announced in parliament's Upper House.

Sources close to the BNP government said that Attorney General Amnul Haque recently made his opinion known to the Home Ministry, saying that the case could be prosecuted by the government on the basis of the charges brought by the JSD leader.

Earlier, the Attorney General was asked for his opinion on the issue, the sources added.

The policymakers of the ruling party are learnt to be divided on the issue. Party sources said that a section of party hierarchy agreed in principle that the government should prosecute the case against Ershad for usurping power from the government of Justice Sattar, while others differ. Those who oppose the trial contend that such incidents might encourage the Awami League to sue late President Ziaur Rahman on the same charges.

Legal experts are of the view that the 7th Amendment to the Constitution, through which Ershad legalised his taking over of power, would not bar the prosecution of the case since the entire Ershad regime was termed illegal in the 11th and the 12th amendments to the Constitution.

Inu regretted the government's delay in prosecuting the case. "This government doesn't realise the political importance of the case," he told The Daily Star. "The government should take up the issue to achieve the main goal of the nine-year struggle against the Ershad regime. Now it depends entirely on the political will of the government," Inu added.

PPP, police clash

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her party workers, a charge it denies.

Her party was defeated in elections in November 1990, held three months after her administration was dismissed from power on charges of corruption and political ineptitude. Claims of vote rigging in that election have surfaced from members of several political parties.

Last week the government claimed to have shot and killed seven members of Al-Zulfikar, a militant wing of Mrs Bhutto's party. She dismissed the charges saying the organization, named for her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, was disbanded almost a decade ago.

The organization was founded by her brother Murtaza, living in exile in Syria since being accused of masterminding a hijacking in 1981 of a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) aircraft.

Mrs Bhutto said that government action "was fabricated to find an excuse for the crackdown."

Project loans

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listing regulatory and promotional functions of government agencies with regard to the SMES was prepared by a commission formed by the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI).

The report was presented at a day-long workshop on the subject held Thursday at the conference room of the FBCCI under the sponsorship of the ZDH/Technonet Singapore.

The report found that most of the regulatory and promotional functions performed by the government agencies were characterised by 'bureaucratic red-tapism, delay, duplication, inefficiency and corruption' that adversely affected the growth performance of the industrial sector.

The report observed that the small and medium scale enterprises played a very significant role in the economy of the country.

"The main potentials of the sector lie in the sphere of employment generation, generation of extra foreign exchange earnings, upgrading the quality of the country's labour force, diffusion of technological know how, lower requisite of investment fund, high absorption of traditional skill etc", the report added.

It, however, suggested measures of three types, short

term, medium term and long term, to streamline the small and medium scale industrial sector.

The short term measures include, upgradation of institutional capabilities, rehabilitation of the sick industries, conducting nationwide survey on SMES and market study on some selected SME products, training for skilled development and improved management of the industries and providing advisory and extension services on technical, economic and environmental issues.

It also includes assistance on the creation of new industries and support for cooperation between small and large scale units by establishing small business industry liaison offices.

The medium term measures included establishment of credit guarantee scheme, capital development fund and its operation, sub-contracting linkage among small, medium and large industries, hire purchase system and the information network and data bank.

The measures also included, assistance in providing term loan and working capital from the banks, developing industrial land and providing various services including power, gas, water, sewerage and telecommunication load network.

The long term measures are, establishment of the Common Service Facilities Centre (CSFC) on various SME products and the productivity development cell in various growth centres in the country.

The proposed long term measures also included determination of procedures for importation of industrial raw materials, participation in the dividing of labour laws, ensuring of quality control of products and services, providing marketing support both within and outside the country and administering bonded warehouses and duty drawback system for tax free imports for the export-oriented industries.

The committee will identify causes of the incidents and the people responsible and also recommend measures to stop recurrence of such incidents in future, said a government press note tonight.

A meeting of all parties concerned held yesterday with Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury in the chair took stock of the situation and decided to take necessary steps to restore communications on the highway from today (May 15).

Neyamatullah Sabu, MP, Shahjahan, Vice-Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University and JUCSU representatives, President of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Malik Samity Alhaj Jataln Abedin and its Additional Secretary General Abdul Kader, President of Bangladesh Truck Owners Association Christopher Ganesh, General Secretary of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Samik Federation Abdur Rashid and its Joint Secretary Roy Ramesh Chandra and other leaders attended the meeting.

The meeting also decided that compensation be given to the damaged transport owners.

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Section 144 in Sirajganj town

SIRAJGANJ, May 14: The district administration imposed section 144 in the town from 2 am today (Thursday) following Wednesday's clash between activists of Jamaat and Nirmul Committee that left two people dead and some 100 injured, reports UNB.

Jamaat had announced a two-day Tafsirul Quran Mahfil May 15-16 at the local Government College ground while Nirmul Committee also called meeting at the same venue on the same days.

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