

Parties urged not to involve govt officials in politics

Leaders of Prajatantrik Karmakarta Samannaya Parishad (coordination council of the officials of the republic) yesterday called upon all political parties to refrain from encouraging government officials in getting involved in party politics, reports BSS.

The parishad leaders in a joint statement said "We firmly believe that all categories of officers and employees of the republic instead of expressing allegiance to any political party should wholeheartedly cooperate with the (non-party) caretaker government to ensure holding of free and fair elections in an atmosphere free from terrorism."

Expressing its concern to the reported difficulties faced by the caretaker government in maintaining non-partisan and neutral character, particularly in the recovery of illegal arms for holding neutral election, the leaders said they would soon launch a country-wide campaign and movement to facilitate functioning of the caretaker government by discharging its responsibilities independently and impartially.

Referring to a recent meeting between six Prokrihi leaders and BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar, the statement expressed surprise that those who have launched a tirade against officers and employees of the republic since March 31, are now encouraging the officials to express solidarity with the programmes of a particular political party. "This is illegal," the statement added. The statement said this type of dual policy would hamper the holding of election by caretaker government.

The signatories to the statement are Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, vice president, BCS (Admn) Cadre Association, Eng. Md. Abul Kashem, vice president Engineers' Institution, Dr. Kazi Shahidul Alam, secretary general, Bangladesh Medical Association and Dr. MA Razzak, secretary general, Krishibid Institution. They are also joint convenors of the parishads.

Shops, travel agency offices gutted in city

By Staff Correspondent

A fire partially damaged some shops and travel agency offices in Motijheel commercial area in the city yesterday morning.

The fire originated from an electric short-circuit reportedly in an office of a travel agency and spread to the adjacent rooms which houses three offices of other travel agencies and two stationery shops, fire service sources said.

The affected office rooms are located near the WAPDA building at Motijheel, police sources said.

Two vehicles of the Fire Brigade took around half an hour to extinguish the fire, the sources added.

The extent of damage could not be known immediately.

Fertiliser seized in Nabiganj: 3 arrested

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Apr 25: Two hundred bags of urea fertiliser allotted for the agricultural rehabilitation programme were seized and seven persons were injured at Nabiganj thana headquarters when the fertiliser bags were being smuggled into the black market today.

The thana Nirbahi Officer of Nabiganj of Habiganj district, on getting information, seized five pushcarts carrying 36 bags of urea fertiliser while these were being sent to the black market from the thana Agriculture Office this morning.

He also caught the five persons pulling the carts. Based on their confessional statement, the TNO alongwith a police party went to the godown of Iskander Ali and Babul Roy, Manager of Chitta Ranjan Roy, two fertilizer businessmen in the bazar and seized 164 bags of fertiliser from there. The thana Agriculture Officer, Nareh Chandra Pramanik and the two businessmen were also arrested.

A case has been registered in this connection.

Imran Khan

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politicians and the political system and we are announcing this movement to bring a change," he said. "Today marks the beginning of the battle against corruption and injustice," he added.

Imran, 43, who retired from cricket after leading Pakistan to victory in the 1992 World Cup and built a cancer hospital in his mother's memory in Lahore from donations, acknowledged that he had no experience in politics.

'US Visa Centre not US govt body'

The Embassy of the United States of America has received many inquiries from citizens of Bangladesh regarding the "US Visa Center" which is offering to assist people with the Diversity Visa Programme. The US Visa Center charges a fee ranging from \$50 to \$125 for its services, says a USIS press release.

The Embassy wishes to make clear that the "US Visa Center" is a private company and has no connection whatsoever to the US government. It should not be confused with the National Visa Center, a visa processing facility established by the Department of State and located in the state of New Hampshire.

Reading promotional letters from the "US Visa Center," some people have mistakenly concluded they have become visa lottery "winners." Actually the purpose of the letter is to solicit business clients for the "US Visa Center" which will file an application for the lottery on the client's behalf for the fee.

Information on the Diversity Visa Lottery is distributed by the Embassy through the local media, and anyone may apply for the programme at no charge. There is no need to go through the "US Visa Center" or any other service to make the application.

The registration period for DV-97 ended on March 12 and no further applications will be accepted for this year. No date has been set for DV-98 registration.

EC committee to handle media and publicity

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday formed a 10-member steering committee to implement matters related to the media and publicity during the coming general elections, EC sources said.

The committee, known as the Media and Publicity Steering Committee for the June 1996 Parliamentary Elections, is headed by the Joint Secretary, Administration of the EC Secretariat, A Mannan, as its convenor.

Members include two officials from the BTV, two from the Bangladesh Radio, one from the Directorate of Film and Publications, one from BSS, one from the Department of Mass Communication, one from the PID and one from the External Publicity Wing.

"The task of this committee would be to implement decisions made at the EC level in relation to use of the media and publicity during the June parliamentary elections," said an EC source.

Sundarbans

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This part of the jungle is known as 'Katakuli', a fire-prone area, located 6 km away from the Chandpai Forest Office. The fire broke out on April 10 and was brought under control after three days.

As it was a rare incident, rumors spread in the area that the fire was raging across the 5570 sqkm of the world's largest mangrove forest, covered with valuable Sundari and Pashur trees and home of the Royal Bengal Tiger.

Forest officials suspect that the fire might have originated from honey collectors who often use fire to collect honey from small bee hives in the area.

Katakuli is located near a dried up river in the forest. The actual splendour of the Sundarbans is not available in this part of the forest. Therefore, the fire did not harm the valuable trees," said Deputy Conservator Mosharrar Hossain, who also heads a three-member committee to probe the fire incident.

Some 100 workers and about 60 employees of the Forest Department with the help of the local people, extinguished the fire, he said.

BNP protests

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The present government is far away from reality if it intends to hold a free and fair election with the help of civil servants who spoke from the dais of a political party and joined procession under the banner of that party," he said. How can neutrality be expected from such officials? he questioned.

Criticising the on-going transfers and postings of government officials, Salam Talukdar claimed that there was instance of transfer of a government official only 10 days after he was posted and said such action had already destabilised administration.

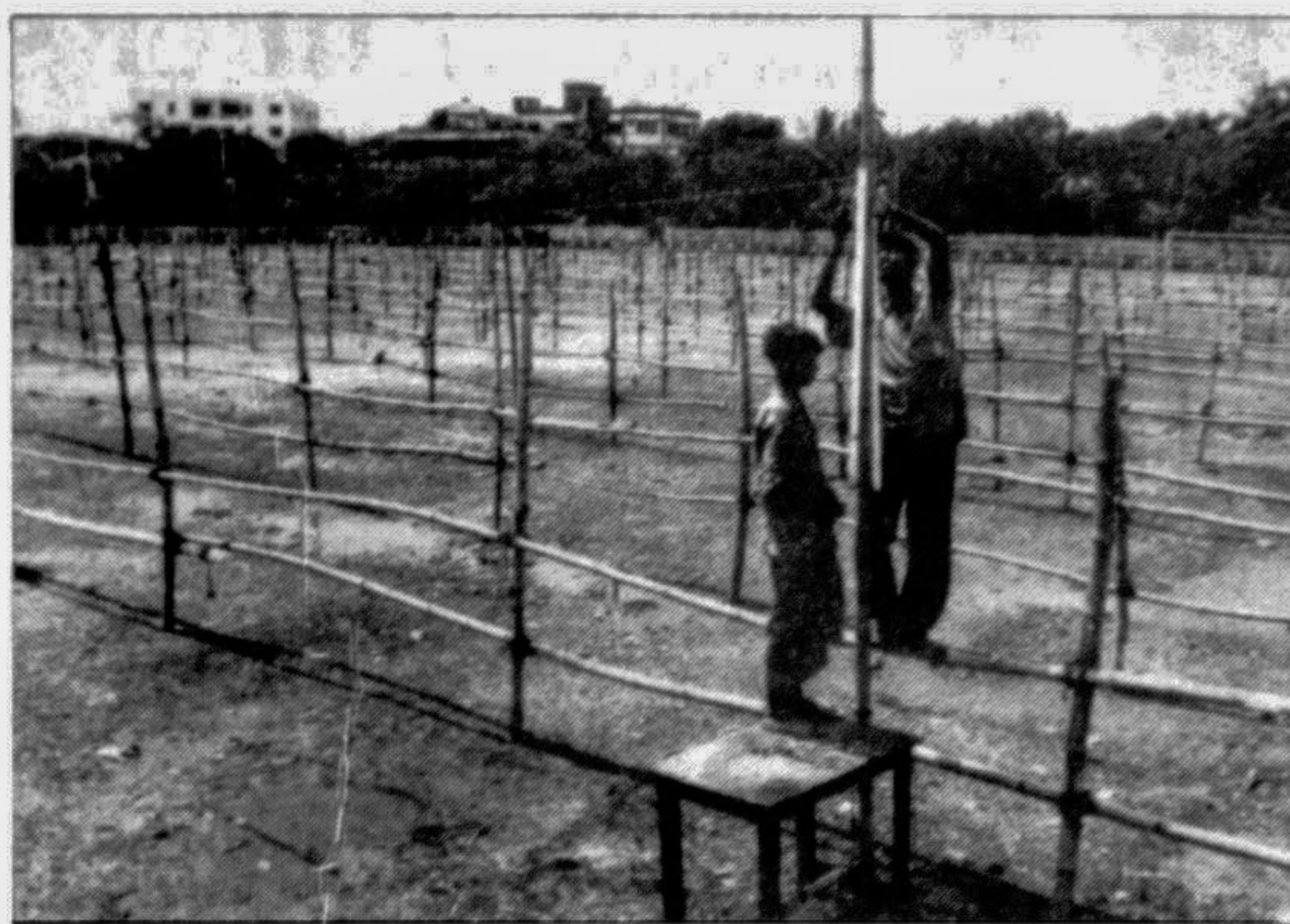
The Chief Adviser must consider the neutrality of an official before posting him to a key-position in the administration," he asserted.

The BNP Secretary General also said that leaders of Islami Shasantantra Andolan and some other Islamic parties met the BNP Chairperson at the party office yesterday noon and expressed their willingness to work with BNP in the coming general elections.

When his attention was drawn to press report yesterday that BNP's attempt to unite the nationalist forces had failed, Talukdar said "The nationalist forces were meeting us every day and exchanging opinions with us. The process of unity is going to succeed."

The BNP is awaiting announcement of the election schedule to start its election activities, he told another questioner.

As regards recovery of illegal arms, he said the drive will succeed provided neutrality of the authorities concerned is maintained strictly.



Preparations for a sacrificial cattle market in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Cattle markets

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80,000 for each of them. He bargained at the Tk 20,000-25,000 range, but the seller nodded his head in rejection.

As the buyer and the seller were approached by this correspondent, separately, the buyer said, "I am just taking a note of the market mood today. I will buy later." In a similar tone the seller also said that he would stick to demanding a high price till the last day of trading. "There is no hurry," said the seller.

Visiting some cattle markets and talking to a number of sellers, this correspondent got an impression that the price position of this year's Eid cattle market would not settle down until today when more supply of cattlehead from remote areas are expected.

China, Russia sign jt communique

BEIJING, Apr 25: China and Russia signed today a joint communique on a strategic partnership as well as 11 government agreements and two accords at the ministerial level, reports Reuters.

A keynote treaty between Russia, China and the three former Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan on confidence-building and security measures along their common borders will be signed in Shanghai on Friday.

KU closed

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figy of the Vice Chancellor in front of Press Club at noon and demanded his immediate removal.

They also declared seven teachers of the varsity as persona non grata and decided to boycott classes and all examinations until the disciplinary actions against all 13 students was withdrawn.

Meanwhile, a huge contingent of police was deployed around the residence of the Vice-Chancellor and at some strategic points of the varsity.

Gunfight leaves 11 injured in Maheshkhali

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Apr 25: Eleven people, eight of them women, received bullet injuries in a gunfight between two rival groups at Kutubjhom village under Maheshkhali thana here this morning.

The two rival groups equipped with fire arms traded gunshots for about an hour from around 10 am over occupation of a grocery shop in the village, witnesses said.

According to the local villagers, one Kamal Pasha had previous enmity with one Md Ali of the same village over taking occupation of the shop.

Maheshkhali thana police visited the village after the incident, but no arrests were made.

Of the bullet hits, Shahed, 22, Nur Ayesha, 25, Banu, 35, and Sofia Khatun, 50, were rushed to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital while the other injured were admitted to the Maheshkhali thana health complex.



'Bandit Queen' Phoolan Devi (R) holds an infant as she speaks to low-caste Hindu women Wednesday in Mirzapur, India. — AFP/UNB photo

Hasina offers prayer in Medina

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina sought Allah's blessings for continuous peace, progress and prosperity of the country expatriate Bangladeshes as well as the world community during her prayer in Medina yesterday.

Sheikh Hasina, now on a pilgrimage trip to Saudi Arabia, offered nafil prayer at holy 'Mashjid Qibla', a mosque in Medina built by the prophet of Islam, Hazrat Mohammad (SM:) himself, says a party press release.

She also offered munajat at the grave of Hazrat Ammer Hamja (R:) in Medina prior to her return to Jeddah.

Her younger sister Sheikh Rehana, aunt Khadija Hussain and Rizla Naser, cousins Abul Hasnat Abdullah and Firoja Begum and president of Medina unit of Bangabandhu Parishad Khandaker Abdul Gaffar were, among others, who accompanied the AL chief in Medina.

Atmosphere for fair polls yet to be created: Kamal

MUNSHIGANJ, Apr 25: Kamal Hossain today said despite the formation of the caretaker government a congenial atmosphere for election is yet to be created as the law and order situation is still grave, reports BSS.

Addressing a public rally at Jubilee Field here he called upon the caretaker government to strengthen its drive to recover illegal weapons and take stern actions against the cadre forces of the political parties to uphold the morale of the people.

Dr Kamal said the interim government must set up an example in implementing the laws related to loan defaulters and checking expenditure in elections campaign by keeping it within Taka three lakh limit.

He expressed his all out confidence on the caretaker government and urged it to ensure neutrality in the government controlled media.

Gano Forum leaders Advocate Zahurul Islam, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Samar Ghose, Kazi Asaruddin, Shahiduzzaman Shahid, Shaiful Islam and Dr Rafiqul Islam also spoke on the occasion while Gano Forum Munshiganj District Unit President Mohammad Hossain Babul was in the chair.

Jatiya Party

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could not be held if Ershad was not freed. "Release sick Ershad on parole for his proper treatment outside jail without any delay," he urged the caretaker government.

He asked that while leaders of all political parties should participate in electioneering for the coming polls, why Ershad would not be allowed to do so.

Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury said the aim of their present movement was to release Ershad from the prison and create a congenial atmosphere for the elections through uniting the nationalist forces.

He expressed the hope that the Jatiya Party would form the next government by getting the mandate of the people.

Chowdhury alleged that the BNP government in the past had sent Ershad to jail by constituting cases against him with vindictiveness. He said if the caretaker government keeps the trend then it would lose its neutrality.

Among others, Begum Raushan Ershad, Moudud Ahmed, Col (ret'd) MA Malek, Sardar Amjad Hossain, Syeda Razia Fayez, and JAGPA chief Shaiful Alam Prodhan spoke on the occasion.

Begum Ershad appealed to her jailed husband to break the hunger strike. "I on behalf of the Jatiya Party and the family appeal to him to break his strike in view of his deteriorating health," she added.

She said the party was not demanding unconditional release of the former president, she said. "We will carry on with the cases framed against him," adding "we want his release before the holy Eid-ul Azha."

Govt borrowing

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spending as the caretaker government has intended to restrain budget deficit by curbing expenditure.

As the economy is now coming back to normalcy, it is expected that revenue collection from customs duties will increase as imports are being cleared from the port. But collection from income tax, excise and supplementary duties and VAT which are related to domestic production may not rise immediately, officials fear.

Both tax revenue and total revenue recorded a sharp increase as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the last three fiscal years. This improvement in budgetary resource position is reflected in a reduction in the overall budgetary deficit, say economists.

This year witnesses a significant new development in the nature of government domestic borrowing. The government retired its debt to the banking system on an unprecedented scale although the volume of borrowing from non-banking sources through savings instrument increased sharply, they added.

The Midnight File

Cong candidate, 4 others killed in Assam

GUWAHATI, Apr 25: Armed separatists killed five people, including a Congress candidate, contesting an election for the state assembly in the northeastern state of Assam today, police officials said. Assam is one of the six states where assembly elections are simultaneously being held with the general election, reports Reuter.

10 held for setting fire to village in Gazaria

MUNSHIGANJ, Apr 25: So far ten alleged miscreants have been arrested on charge of setting fire to Imampur village under Gazaria police station, reports BSS.

Among the arrested persons, two alleged miscreants, including the gang leader Majibur Rahman Khan were rounded up by Munshiganj police today.

Acting on information, police raided the government officers' quarters at Munshiganj and arrested the miscreants from the roof of a four storey building. The other miscreant was identified as Golam Sarwar Mintu, son of late Hatem Ali of Kalipura village.

81 Rohingyas pushed back

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Apr 25: Bangladesh Rifles 39 Battalion has pushed back a group of 81 Rohingyas to Myanmar today.

The BDR personnel had apprehended them while they were trying to enter into Bangladesh crossing the Teknaf border.

The BDR formally handed them over to the Myanmar border security force NASAC.

Rohingya refugees have recently started to enter Bangladesh territory again for the repatriation of about 42,000 refugees who took shelter earlier was yet to be completed.

Chinese team

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snatched Tk 1.38 lakh yesterday.

An unidentified gang stabbed one Mizanur Rahman, 30, at Golam Bazar, Zingira near the city and took away Tk 1.35 lakh from him, eyewitnesses and hospital sources said.

It was learnt that Mizan, a sales agent of the BTC in Keraniganj area, was attacked when he was on way to his house at Zingira.

Mizan was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with stab injuries in his back, sources added.

In another incident, Shamim, 28, an employee of a restaurant in Bangshal area was stabbed by the muggers near Balidha Garden in the old city. The snatchers took away Tk 3,000 from Shamim. He was admitted to the DMCH, hospital sources said.

PLO declares

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"It was an overwhelming positive decision," Kanafani said.

The amendment does not specify exactly which clauses will be dropped in the old documents, which committed the PLO to an "armed struggle to liberate all Palestine" and to "eliminate Zionism from Palestine."

The session was boycotted by headline opponents to Arafat's accords with Israel, the democratic and popular Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine, as well as the Islamic Khalas Party, close to the radical Hamas.

Arafat had repeatedly said the charter clauses were obsolete, but Israelis, especially the right-wing opposition Likud Party, saw the document as evidence the Palestinians remained committed to Israel's destruction.

Meanwhile, the United States on Wednesday hailed Palestinian move.

"We've looked forward to this development," State Department spokesman Glynn Davies said at a briefing while the council was voting.

"We believe that the charter should be amended, and of course it must be amending from Israel's standpoint if that track of the peace process between Israel and the PLO is to be completed," Davies said.

If the current trend of raising offices every where is allowed to continue then few days later, with the elections around the corner, the political parties would be raising street-side makeshift bamboo structures as their traditional campaign camps, said another official and added with firm determination, "this time no campaign camps will be allowed on the Corporation's property."

DCC drive

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problem is that floating people flock together and take refuge from one place to another. It requires more policing," said Sardar Kaiser Ahmed, Estate Officer of DCC.

Getting a rough estimate some concerned officials told this correspondent that there were at least five such unauthorized structures in each of 90 wards in the city, which were being used as offices by local level units and front organisations of various political parties and youth clubs.

Taking the cost of political repercussions into consideration, the DCC had so far restrained itself from taking any drastic actions against such illegally raised structures, said an official on condition of anonymity.

"But this go-slow policy and issuing warnings time and again against the illegal occupants have already cost much to the inconvenience of the 86 lakh citizenry. And this time being himself a political person the Mayor sounded loud against these illegally raised offices of the political parties," added the DCC official.

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ইস্টার্ন হাউজিং-এর আবাসিক প্লট কিতুব

বনজী এবং গোড়ান (দক্ষিণ বনজী) প্রকল্পে এখনই হস্তান্তরযোগ্য কিছু প্লট বরাদ্দ হবে। আগ্রহী ক্রেতাগণ সম্ভব যোগাযোগ করুন।

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ইস্টার্ন হাউজিং লিমিটেড
ইসলাম চৌধুরী (৪র্থ তলা)
১২৫/এ, মতিঝিল বাণিজ্যিক এলাকা, ঢাকা-১০০০, বাংলাদেশ
ফোন: ৯৫৬৬০০০-৫, ৯৫৬৬০৫৩, ৯৫৬৬০৫৪

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX: 500092-4, Commercial: 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA.