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NEWS BRIEFS

Foreign envoys meet Hasina

Ambassadors of the USA, Japan, Italy, France, the Netherlands and High Commissioners of the United Kingdom and Australia in Bangladesh paid a courtesy call on Awami League president Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi residence last night. Earlier, Russian Ambassador in Bangladesh Edward Shevchenko also made a courtesy call on Sheikh Hasina at her residence, reports UNB.

AL worker stabbed in Pabna

PABNA, June 14: An Awami League activist was stabbed by unidentified miscreants at a village in Sadar thana today. Witnesses said Abdul Barik was called out of his shop at village Sonna at about 7:30 pm by the miscreants who stabbed him indiscriminately. He was rushed to Sadar hospital in critical condition. The Awami League blamed BNP supporters for the attack, reports UNB.

One beheaded in S Arabia

RIYADH, June 14: An Indian was publicly beheaded today for strangling a Saudi man to death. State-run Saudi Radio said Mohiuddin Hassan had killed and robbed Abdullah al-Sudee. It did not say when or where he committed the crime. Hassan was the ninth convict to be executed in the Kingdom this year. Another Indian, a Filipino, five Saudis and a Sudanese were earlier put to death in accordance with the Kingdom's Islamic laws, or Sharia, reports AP.

Rains kill 25 in India

MADRAS, June 14: At least 25 people were killed and dozens injured as torrential rains lashed the southern Indian states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, officials and domestic news agencies said today. Sixteen of the victims died in Tamil Nadu, including 11 in this state capital Madras which received one of the highest rainfalls that paralysed life in the otherwise bustling city, the officials said, reports AFP.

India may increase defence budget

NEW DELHI, June 14: India is expected to seek an increase in its defence budget, due in July, in the face of calls for a challenge to Pakistan's reported deployment of Chinese M-11 missiles, a top defence expert said today, reports Reuters.

Foreign polls observers say Election free, fair

By Staff Correspondent



Stephen Solarz, US team leader

Four foreign election observer teams yesterday said that the parliamentary polls held on Wednesday were generally free, fair and peaceful. Addressing separate press conferences in the city, the teams expressed the view that the few cases of intimidation and improprieties during the election did not materially affect its outcome.

The four teams are from the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI), the European Union (EU), SAARC and Japan.

NDI team

The multinational NDI team urged the party or parties that would form the next government to reach out to their political rivals in a spirit of reconciliation.

The delegation also observed that Wednesday's elections were a magnificent demonstration of democracy in action and established a basis for Bangladesh to emerge from the political crisis that recently beset the country.

The delegation expressed its hope that political and policy difference would henceforth be resolved in the Jatiya Sangsad, rather than on the street.

The delegation, however, noted with dismay that the countrywide generally exemplary polling was marred by significant instances of intimidation, violence and fraud in Chittagong district and other areas with large minority populations.

The delegation also pointed out that happenings in the aftermath of the election would be as important as the election itself in creating the basis for an enduring democracy.

Former Australian Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock, co-leader of the NDI delegation said, "We urge those parties that do not participate in the next government to accept their defeat graciously and

with dignity and to take their vital role as responsible, loyal and democratic opposition."

The other leader of the delegation, former US Congressman Stephen Solarz said, "The election process has been generally peaceful, open and well-administered and has won the confidence of the vast majority."

They, along with other members of the delegation, were briefing the press at a city hotel after witnessing the balloting and counting in polling centres throughout the country. The 30-member delegation, divided in 16 teams, visited polling centres in 36 constituencies in all the six divisions, covering more than half of the districts. They also witnessed counting of votes in more than 20 locations.

Solarz said that the NDI team would also observe the repolling in 27 constituencies on June 19 and give their final statement before the press.

The delegation was impressed by the high turnout and enthusiasm of the voters, particularly women voters, he

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US welcomes opinion of polls observers

By Staff Correspondent

The US Embassy in Dhaka has welcomed the conclusions of the independent election observers and congratulated the caretaker government and the people of Bangladesh on holding a free and fair election that demonstrates the nation's commitment to democracy.

The embassy in a press statement yesterday said, "We look forward to working closely with all parties in the government that emerges from the elections, in the same spirit of warm friendship that has been a constant of our bilateral relations."



Cayetana De Zulueta, EU team leader



Shin Sakurai, Japanese team leader



BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a press conference at Hotel Sheraton in the city yesterday.

Accepting polls results now premature, says Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia said yesterday that her party was committed to upholding democracy and was always ready to accept people's verdict.

"If desired by the people, we're ready to serve them as a party in power or in the opposition. We've no hesitation on the matter," the former prime minister told a post-election crowded press conference at the Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday evening, adding, "We believe in positive politics."

She said that accepting the election results at this stage would be premature as the election process was not yet completed.

"We will comment on the results only after polling in all the seats is over and our complaints of irregularities lodged with the Election Commission are answered," she said reply-

ing to questions as regards her acceptance or rejection of Wednesday's elections.

Asked whether her party won or lost the polls, a smiling Begum Zia said, "I myself have won in five seats and time is yet to come to say that my party has not won."

She alleged various irregularities in the elections and blamed the administration and the Awami League for those.

"We've specific allegations that people's verdict in a good number of constituencies has been changed," she said.

Elaborating the allegations, she said that supply of election materials including ballot boxes was delayed, time was

consumed unnecessarily for taking votes, supporters of a particular party were allowed to enter the polling centres to force the voters to vote for that party or leave the centres. Be-

sides, she added, there were many instances that polling stations were forcibly occupied for false-voting.

The BNP chief specifically mentioned that government officials who joined the Janata Mancha to express their allegiance to a particular party were made Returning Officers in eight districts. We complained to the Chief Adviser that such officers should not be made Returning Officers. But regrettably no action was taken, even though we were promised that action would be taken. A voting-centre in Banani in the city was changed in the morning of the polling day.

"We brought to the notice of the Election Commission and the Returning Officer or their assistants concerned, but nowhere actions were taken."

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Sheikh Hasina tells BTV, CNN Law & order top priority

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has said after formation of the new government of the country, improvement of law and order would be at the top priority list.

In an interview with Bangladesh Television last night Hasina said her government would work to build up Sonar Bangla (Golden Bengal) as dreamt by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and root out terrorism and corruption.

On the question of government formation, Sheikh Hasina said her party, which emerged as the largest party in the last Wednesday's polls, was now waiting for a presidential invitation to form government.

She expressed her satisfaction over the enthusiasm people showed in exercising their franchise.

About the fairness of the election, she referred to the observations of foreign poll observers and journalists.

"We are determined to ensure a society free from terrorism," the Awami League president said in an interview yesterday with the Delhi-based CNN South Asia Bureau Chief, Anita Pratap at her Dhanmondi residence, according to UNB.

The interview was broadcast by the CNN twice last night — at 6 pm and 9 pm (local time) bulletins.

Hasina accused the government of former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia of protecting the terrorists to stay in power.

"But we shall make the society free from terrorism," she said.

Asked about what kind of a

government she will run, she said it will be free from corruption.

About her economic policies, the Awami League chief said, "We will have to cooperate with the world order. We believe in privatisation and encouraging entrepreneurship."

However, she said Bangladesh is an agrarian country and hence the agricultural sector will get priority.

In reply to a question about the reason for high turnout during the June 12 election, Hasina said this has demonstrated that "our voters, especially the women, are now more conscious about their democratic rights."

Asked if her party will take Jatiya Party's help in forming the government, she said, "We can go to any extent for the

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Awami League President Sheikh Hasina exchanged greetings with people who gathered at the Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city yesterday.

6 killed in Tangail road accident

By Staff Correspondent

Eight people, including a minor boy were killed and 40 others injured in an outside road accident in and outside the capital yesterday.

Six people were killed and 40 others injured when a speeding bus hit a minibus at Natiapara yesterday on the Dhaka-Tangail highway, about 15 kilometres from Tangail, UNB quoting police said.

Of the dead, five were identified as Mohammad Adam Ali, 22, son of Shahabuddin of Karatia; Adam Ali, 30, Babul, 30, of Taralia in Bhatkura of Sadar thana; Farid Mia, 16, son of Zahiruddin and Ujjal Mia, 16, son of Mir Khurram of village Dubai in Delduar thana.

Witnesses said the accident occurred when the Tangail-bound bus hit the Dhaka-bound minibus, which was parked on the highway, at about 9:50 am.

All the injured were rushed to the Kumudini Hospital at Mirzapur. Of them, 12, were said to be in critical condition.

Our Staff Correspondent reports: A two-year-old boy was killed in a road accident in Tejgaon area in the city yesterday morning.

Robi, son of Rafiqul Islam, was fatally injured when an auto-rickshaw ran over him near Tejgaon truck stand at around 10:30 am, sources at the Dhaka Medical College. See Page 12 Col 3

AL observes 'shokrana dibash'

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League yesterday observed 'Shokrana Dibash' (day of gratitude) for holding of the parliamentary elections in a free and fair manner.

As part of the day's programme, milad mahfil was held and special prayers were offered after Juma prayers at different mosques in the country. Special prayers were also offered at other places of worship in the evening, says a press release.

A large number of pious Muslims and believers of other religions as well took part in these programmes seeking divine blessings for continuous peace and prosperity of the people and smooth forward march of democracy.

Awami League leaders, Dr Mohammed Selim, Sayed Fazlul Karim and others participated. See Page 12 col 8

AL, BNP clash in Sirajganj: 25 injured

SIRAJGANJ, June 14: At least 25 people were injured, two critically, as Awami League and BNP supporters were locked in a clash at Chandai-kona Bazar in Raiganj thana today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash ensued at about 11 am when some BNP activists from a victory procession of MP-elect Abdul Mannan Talukder from Sirajganj-3 seat ransacked two shops of Awami League supporters.

The processionists alleged that AL supporters had thrown bricks at their procession from a shop there without any provocation.

The two rival groups exploded about a dozen bombs and clashed with lethal weapons for about two hours. See Page 12 Col 5

Deposit money of 1860 candidates forfeited

By Staff Correspondent

Deposit money of over 1,860 candidates in the June 12 Parliamentary elections have been forfeited as they failed to get one-eighth of the total votes cast.

There were 2,574 candidates in the elections.

A candidate is required to deposit Tk 5,000 to the Election Commission while filing nomination. If the candidate fails to secure one-eighth of the total votes cast, then, as per law, the deposit money is forfeited. Otherwise, he is entitled to get back the money.

The total amount out of the forfeiture of deposit of money of the candidates comes to Taka 93 lakh.

Those who failed to reach

the mark are Gano Forum leader Dr Kamal Hossain and 103 other nominees of his party. Salman F Rahman of the Sammriddhya Bangladesh Andolon and nine candidates of the party, all the 241 candidates of Zaker Party, 163 candidates of Islami Oikya Jote, 65 out of total 66 candidates of JSD (Rab), 52 out of 55 candidates of Freedom Party, all the 47 candidates of Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, 31 out of 36 candidates of Communist Party of Bangladesh, 30 out of 34 candidates of Bangladesh Workers' Party, 260 out of 300 candidates of the Jamaat-e-Islami and 280 of the 281 independent candidates. They all lost their deposit money.

When asked how many of those have so far been received, the official said "quite a few" reached the EC.

"We hope to complete the publication of the results available to us far within the next two or three days," he added.

Depression turns into cyclone

The deep depression over west central Bay and adjoining south west Bay intensified into a cyclonic storm over the same area and was centred at 9 last night at about 1350 kilometres south west of Chittagong port, reports UNB.

A Met office special bulletin said it is likely to intensify further and move in a north-northwesterly direction.

Maximum sustained wind within 54 kilometres of the cyclone centre is about 62 kilometres per hour rising to 88 kph in gust or squall.

Sea will remain rough. Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised lower distant cautionary signal number one and hoist distant warning signal number two.

All fishing boats and trawlers in the Bay have been advised to keep close to the coast and proceed with caution.



Gen Nasim freed : BBC

Monitoring Report

Former Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Abu Saleh Muhammad Nasim, Bir Bikram, psc, has been released from confinement, based on the findings of a military court of enquiry, the BBC reported in its 10.30 news bulletin last night quoting sources in the armed forces.

Lt Gen Nasim was retired and subsequently interned May 20 on a presidential order "for refusing to obey the orders of a senior officer."

Jamaat candidate in Satkhira-2 declared elected

The Election Commission yesterday announced the unofficial result of the Wednesday's election in Satkhira-2 constituency, one of the two held up on technical ground, reports UNB.

Kazi Shamsur Rahman of Jamaat-e-Islami has been unofficially declared elected from the Satkhira-2 seat.

He secured 54,096 votes while his nearest rival Syeda Razia Faiz of the Jatiya party got 53,789 votes, followed by M Nazrul Islam of the Awami League (45,450) and M Mansur Ali of the BNP (14,682).

Polls results to be gazetted shortly

Star Report

The Election Commission (EC) may decide today when to publish the gazette notification on the election results, EC sources said.

"There is no legal bar to publishing the gazette any time, so the EC may decide tomorrow (Saturday) to go for the publication as soon as the Returning Officers (ROs) have finished sending the results in prescribed forms," said an EC official yesterday.

The EC gives the official results through gazette notification. When asked how many of those have so far been received, the official said "quite a few" reached the EC.

"We hope to complete the publication of the results available to us far within the next two or three days," he added.

President should not wait for repolling : JP

By Mizan Ali

The President should immediately invite the largest party to form the government, Anwar Hossain Manju, secretary general of the Jatiya Party (JP) said here yesterday.

According to him the President should not wait for the repolling in 27 constituencies, scheduled to be held on June 19. The presidential invitation should be extended immediately to avoid constitutional crisis," he told this correspondent.

About a possible coalition with the Awami League which emerged as the majority party, Manju evaded a direct reply saying, "We will extend our full support to help continuity of the democratic process."

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Bosnian parties sign accord to limit heavy weapons

FLORENCE, Italy, June 14: Bosnia's former warring parties signed a disarmament agreement here today at a conference to review the Dayton Peace Accord, reports AFP.

The agreement was to have been signed in Oslo on Tuesday, but was blocked by the Bosnian Serbs' insistence on being treated as a separate entity rather than part of a unified Bosnia.

It provoked the Bosnian government in Sarajevo to refuse to sign the accord, arguing it was the only internationally recognised government in Bosnia.

However, negotiators insisted that all the factions which took part in the disarmament talks should sign. They were Bosnia, Croatia, Federal Yugoslavia, the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Republika Srpska.

The accord limits the number of heavy weapons allowed in Bosnia, Croatia and Federal Yugoslavia.

Another report says: Economic sanctions will be imposed against Bosnian Serbs and Belgrade unless hardline Serb leader Radovan Karadzic is ousted from power by July 1, Bosnian Prime Minister Hasan

Muratovic said today.

"There is very clear request which will be announced now that Karadzic is out of politics by first of July. Sanctions will be imposed if this does not happen," Muratovic said following the signing of a joint statement here at the end of a two-day conference on the Bosnian peace accords.

The sanctions warning is included in that statement.

"Economic sanctions that were imposed before to Serbia and Republika Srpska will be reimposed if they don't comply with the conclusions of this conference," Muratovic said.

Meanwhile, OSCE mission chief in Bosnia Robert Frowi K. said today he was recommending that Bosnia's first post-war elections go ahead as planned this September.

"I have decided to recommend to the OSCE chairmanship, federal councillor Cotti, that these elections take place within the timeframe stated in the general framework agreement that is by September 14," he told a Dayton peace accord review conference here.

"Overall I believe it is more wise to go forward with the elections than not to hold

them and risk an unravelling of the entire process, in both its military and civilian dimensions," he said.

Speaking to journalists later he said he would make the recommendation formally in a few days time in a letter to Cotti.

Under the Dayton Peace Accords, whose signature last December ended Bosnia's almost four-year war, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe is to supervise general elections in the former Yugoslavia Republic.

Reuters reports: A senior Bosnian Serb today dismissed

demands for the arrest of indicted war criminals as "hysteria" and said headline leader Radovan Karadzic may take part in Bosnia's planned elections.

The Prime Minister of the Bosnian Serbs, Gojko Kljickovic, spoke to reporters during a two-day ministerial review conference in Florence which is expected to recommend calling Bosnia's first post-war elections by September 14.

His defiant words were in sharp contrast with the assessment shared by virtually all conference participants