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## SAARC team tells CEC Election was free fair

The SAARC poll observer group yesterday told Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mohammad Abu Hena that they did not find any irregularities in Bangladesh's parliament election, reports UNB.

The observation came when a four-member team of the non-governmental election observer group from South Asia (SAARC) called on the Chief Election Commissioner at his office yesterday.

On the delegation were Devendra Roy Pandey (Nepal), Niaz A Naik (Pakistan), Jeevan Thiagarajah (Sri Lanka) and Muchkund Dubey (India).

They told the CEC that 40 members of the SAARC observer group visited different polling centres to monitor the June 12 polls.

"The election was held in a peaceful atmosphere and free, fair and impartial manner," the team opined.

The SAARC observers congratulated the Election Commission on holding the vote successfully.

The CEC told them that the election was held peacefully with the cooperation of all quarters including the political parties.

The observers expressed their satisfaction over the massive 74 per cent turnout of voters in the election. They said they were overwhelmed with the spontaneous participation of women voters.

## Cyclone weakens

NEW DELHI, June 17: Heavy monsoon rains lashed India's eastern coast today, but a cyclone that had threatened to sweep into Bangladesh weakened over southern India, weather officials said, reports AP.

Two cyclones and three days of rain battered southern India last week, killing at least 123 people, Press Trust of India news agency said.

As rain continued to swell rivers and overwhelm urban drainage systems, more than 3,000 families in the coastal districts were left homeless and many towns were under several feet of water, said officials in Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh state.

At least 54 people in Andhra Pradesh died over the weekend, said the officials. Sixty-nine deaths were reported farther south in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka states. Most drowned or died when houses collapsed. About 240 fishermen from Tamil Nadu were reported missing.

## Quake

From page 1

floor between the islands of Flores and Sulawesi.

It was not immediately clear if the quake had affected populated areas in Indonesia. There were no immediate reports of deaths, injuries or damage.

"It's a big earthquake but its location and its depth could help minimise any damage," Murthead said.

Scientists regard a magnitude 7 as a major quake, capable of widespread, heavy damage. A magnitude 8 quake can be a great earthquake, capable of tremendous damage.

## CA: People's vigilance

From page 1

polling and uphold the hard-earned reputation of the country. There is no scope of becoming desperate in rejoicing or despondent in frustration.

Q: Elections have already been held in 273 constituencies without any hindrance. Are the results of the repolling equally important?

A: It will be easier to maintain constitutional process if the repolling is held in a healthy and peaceful atmosphere. The neutral caretaker government aspires cooperation of all in this regard. Nobody can halt the auspicious march of the people on the path of peace, development and democracy.

The government is determined to extend all possible assistance in carrying out its constitutional responsibility keeping itself above all controversies and in the face of all possible sensitive situation.

Q: There is an allegation that despite repeated requests the caretaker government did not transfer some deputy commissioners and police superiors from certain districts and as a result certain political parties have suffered. What is your opinion about it?

A: The election results had no reflection of the allegations made about those districts. If you look at the election results you will find how freely the voters have exercised their rights of franchise.

Q: Have we anything to learn from this elections?

A: I believe that the Election Commission will be able to take more proper measure for future elections by reviewing the alleged irregularities of this election. We have the scope to know and learn from the objective survey and information on the success or otherwise of the elections.

Q: Will you address the voters on the coming repolling?

A: I addressed the nation on the eve of the election. There is no need for it. The heavy turnout of voters along with family members and neighbours to the polling centres with great spontaneity and enthusiasm have delighted everybody. A peaceful atmosphere has been created in the country. People have heaved a sigh of relief. Friendship between religious communities are there in the country. People will resist all evil instigations by rising above group and communal interests. The government stands by peace-loving people of the country. I fervently appeal to all political leaders, particularly the leaders of major political parties to extend all-out cooperation to the Election Commission for peaceful holding of re-polling.

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Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motiheel 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.



World Bank Resident Representative Landell Mills called on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi residence in the city yesterday. — Star photo

## Hasina

From page 1

League chief, Carrier congratulated Sheikh Hasina for her party's victory in June 12 Jatiya Sangsad poll.

Carrier discussed in details with Awami League chief the UN activities in Bangladesh. Sheikh Hasina lauded the performances of the UNICEF in Bangladesh. She also sought UNICEF support and cooperation in the pragmatic approaches and steps for eradicating illiteracy in Bangladesh.

Awami League leaders Abdul Mannan, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofael Ahmed and Abul Hasanat Abdullah were present.

Businessman killed in road accident

From Our Correspondent

KHULNA, June 17: A businessman — Habibur Rahman, 27 — was crushed under the wheels of a Jessore-bound truck at KDA avenue under Sonadanga thana this morning.

The driver, however, managed to escape with his vehicle.

During the repolling, each centre will have five BDR members with required arms and 20 members of police on duty. Besides, there will be 12 ansars including 4 to 5 women ansars in each centre.

Moreover, the handout said, two to three platoons of BDR as striking force, required number of armed police battalion, police and battalion ansars will remain ever alert in each thana.

Besides the officer-in-charge, and assistant police super will be engaged in each thana to look after law and order. A total of 122 magistrates including one magistrate in each centre will perform their election duty on the day, the handout said.

During the repolling in Comilla district, the handout said, one additional divisional commissioner and an additional DIG of Police will be in the overall responsibility. An additional IG will be in Chittagong to look after the overall law and order during the repolling, the handout said.

A national coordination committee with Additional Home Secretary has been formed regarding the repolling at the national level. A control room has been opened at the police headquarters, the handout said.

It was informed at the meeting that all vehicles would be examined before the repolling and the drive against illegal arms and terrorism would continue to ensure total security in the polling centres.

A ban was imposed on movement with licensed arms in the concerned areas of repolling from June 17 to 21. Besides, ban was also imposed on movement of certain vehicles during the repolling, the handout said.

The Election Commission EC has categorised persons who according to the 1972 Representation of People's Order can enter into polling centres with permission from presiding officers concerned, reports BSS.

According to an Election Commission press release in Dhaka yesterday, specific number of voters with permission from the presiding officer can enter the voting centre on June 19.

Candidates and their election agents and polling agents and persons permitted by the returning officer can also enter the polling centres.

It was also mentioned in the press release that the identity cards provided, to both local and foreign journalists and observers would remain valid for repolling on June 19.

India blames Pakistan for Delhi blast

NEW DELHI, June 17: Police in India's capital accused Pakistan's secret service today of being behind a powerful blast that killed 14 people in a crowded market last month, reports AP.

"We have no doubt that it was engineered by the Inter Services Intelligence," New Delhi's police chief, Nikhil Kumar told a news conference.

Kumar offered no evidence that the military-backed intelligence service had masterminded the blast.

The Lashkar-e-Sajjad, a lit-

Yeltsin

From page 1

who has already ruled out joining any communist-led coalition.

An aid foresaw a meeting between the two men later today and there was speculation Yeltsin would offer the 46-year-old Lebed a high post in government, possible at first deputy prime minister level.

But Zyuganov himself moved quickly in search of common ground with Lebed, calling on him and another defeated candidate, eye surgeon Svyatoslav Fyodorov, to join forces with his 'national-patriotic' bloc.

US President Bill Clinton praised Russians today for what he said appeared to be a free and fair presidential election and reaffirmed US support for democracy and market reforms in Russia.

## Stage set for repolling

From page 1

Major General Ezaz Ahmed Chowdhury, Inspector General of Police M Azizul Huq and representatives of armed forces division, army headquarters, Ansars and concerned senior officials were present at the meeting.

The meeting gave top priority on peaceful holding of the repolling. It was informed at the meeting that the highest security measures would be taken in coordination with police, BDR and ansars in each centre on the repolling day.

Besides, the handout said, army would carry out their responsibility as the auxiliary force being at each concerned thana.

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## 2 alleged dacoits beaten to death in Satkania

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 17: Two alleged dacoits were beaten to death by unruly mob at Demsha village under Satkania thana last night, police said.

They were identified as Nurul Islam (35) and Abdus Salam (34). The dacoits came under the wrath of villagers after patrol police had an exchange of fire with them. Police challenged the dacoits while they were fleeing after committing dacoity in the same village. But villagers gheraoed them immediately and started beating, police said.

Police recovered a SBBL gun from their possession and some stolen goods including TV, VCR etc.

## Night coach dacoity near Ishurdi

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, June 17: A dacoity was committed in a Rajshahi-bound night coach from Dhaka near Ishurdi Sunday morning.

The dacoits looted money and goods worth about Tk one lakh from the passengers. Seven passengers were injured.

The dacoits boarded the bus (Shyamoli Poribahan) in disguise of passengers. Near Ishurdi, they forced the driver stop the bus. The injured passengers were admitted to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

## Zaker Party threatens mass movement

The Zaker Party yesterday threatened to launch a mass movement across the country if results of the June 12 parliamentary elections are not scrapped immediately, reports UNB.

"People have been denied the opportunity of spontaneously reflecting their opinions through the June 12 election results," Zaker party chairman Mostafa Amir Faisal told a gathering of party activists from Sadarpur Charbhadrans constituency in Faridpur district.

The Zaker Party fielded 241 candidates in the general election, but none came out successful.

Faisal said it was shown that 70 to 80 per cent votes were cast during the first six hours of polling. "This is completely unthinkable and impossible."

Accusing the caretaker government of failure to hold a free and fair election, he said cancellation of the election results is the only way to protect truth, justice and democracy.

## Muslim League hails JP for supporting AL

The Bangladesh Muslim League yesterday welcomed the Jatiya Party for extending its support to single majority party Awami League to form the government for institutionalising democracy, reports BSS.

A meeting of the Muslim League held at the party's central office at Magbazar congratulated former President Hussain Muhammad Ershad, JP acting chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, JP presidium member Begum Raushan Ershad and JP Secretary General Anwar Hossain Manju for extending the support to Awami League.

The meeting in its resolution also hoped that the future government would take effective measures for ensuring due share of the Ganges water with India, repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis, realisation of dues from Pakistan and resolution of problems of so called Shantubahini in the hill tracts.

The meeting was presided over by AFM Harun-er Rashid.

## Nooruddin's gratitude

Former chief of army staff and Awami League nominee contesting in Narasingdi-4 constituency Lt Gen (Retd) Nooruddin Khan yesterday expressed his gratitude to the people of his area for the support and sympathy they have given to him, reports BSS.

In a statement Gen. Nooruddin said, due to physical inability following a road accident he could not go to his area to meet the people despite all his desire to do so.

He called upon the people of his area to pray for him for the early recovery so that he could work for the welfare of the people staying by their side.

## The Midnight File

### Arafat arrives in China

BEIJING, June 17: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat arrived in Beijing today for a three-day official visit to China. Arafat, on his tenth visit to China and first since September 1993, is scheduled to meet President Jiang Zemin tomorrow. They are likely to discuss the fate of the Middle East peace process following the election of Benjamin Netanyahu as Israel's Prime Minister, reports AFP.

## SADF formally opens

From page 1

discuss various aspects, including detailed operational modalities of different windows of the SADF, mobilisation of capital and establishment of its secretariat.

Chief Executives of Development Financial Institutions (DFIs) and senior foreign ministry officials of the SAARC member countries are attending the meeting hosted by the ICB.

Khairul Huda said the SADF would promote projects located in one or more countries of the region that would be of economic interest for more than one countries.

The member countries donated a total of 5 million US dollars as the initial core capital of the fund, he said. "Soon we will move for searching of additional capital from various sources outside the South Asia region."

The secretariat of the Fund will be located at the ICB office in Dhaka.

King of Bhutan had mooted the idea of a regional fund in 1991 at the 6th SAARC summit in Colombo. The 8th summit in New Delhi in May last year endorsed the establishment of the three-window SADF, merging the previous two funds — SAARC Fund for Regional Projects and SAARC Regional Fund.

The three windows of the SADF are: (1) Window for Identification and Development of Projects; (2) Window for Institutional and Human Resources Development Projects; and (3) Window for Social and Infrastructure Development Projects.

The SAARC Fund for Regional Projects has so far identified and recommended 13 projects, mostly large-scale manufacturing ones, for different regional countries. Of those, five projects with a total investment outlay of about Tk 433 crore are for Bangladesh.

The feasibility costs of the projects were borne by the Fund.

## Three hurt in road accident

Three people were injured when the jeep of Kamal Ahmed Majumder, an MP-elect from Dhaka-11 seat, was hit by a bus on Dhaka-Aricha highway near Savar Gonoshastha Kendra yesterday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the MP-elect, however, escaped unhurt, but his Nissan Petrol jeep was badly damaged.

The mishap occurred at about 4:30 pm when the bus driver tried to overtake the jeep.

The injured — ward commissioner Mostafa Kamal, former ward commissioner KM Zaman and Sramik League leader Tofael Ahmed — were given first aid at the Gonoshastha Kendra.

A case was filed with Savar thana.

## Women

From page 1

male voters increased exceptionally all over the country this year, women of those villages did not turn up to the polling centres during the June 12 election.

All efforts made by the Election Commission, district administration and NGOs were totally failed despite massive motivational campaign.

Director of a local NGO A Kabir, who took initiative to bring the female voters to polling centres told UNB that there is a social restriction not to cast female votes in the area.

He said male members discouraged and restricted their females to cast votes adding that motivation was necessary among the males first.

UP member Toazuddin said he never saw female voters to cast their votes in these villages during his life time. In 1970 election a UP chairman faced serious problems when he tried to bring the female voters in the polling centres, villagers said.

## Dhaka's support

From page 1

support to uphold the peace process.

President Arafat said the peace accord was not between PLO and the Israeli Labour Party only but an international agreement which enjoyed the full support and backing of the international community.

Referring to the conditions within the West Bank of Gaza, he said severe hardship has been caused by various measures enforced by the Israeli government resulting in a loss of over six million US dollars a day to Palestine which is far in excess than donations and contributions it had been receiving.

President Arafat stressed that there should be a comprehensive Middle East peace agreement which should encompass not only Palestine but also Syria and Lebanon. He emphasised that the Jerusalem issue was not simply a problem of Palestine but one affecting the international community.

He pointed out that Jerusalem is important to all religions and it belongs to people of diverse faiths.

President Arafat referred to the strong support of the European countries for the Palestinian state and said the European Union has proposed for conclusion of joint trade agreement with Palestine Authority. The European Union has already concluded similar agreement with several Arab countries like Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt and now the Union is keen to do the same with Palestine to emphasise on the independent character and status of the Palestinian state. This has been conveyed to the Israeli Prime Minister, he added.

Chief Adviser Rahman briefed President Arafat on the recent polls in Bangladesh. He referred in particular the huge voters' turnout including large number of women voters.

President Arafat said he had read about Bangladesh elections and had been very impressed by very high turnout of women voters. He said this was also the case with the polls in Palestine.