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PHILIPS

Survey report 47 killed, 1955 hurt in UP polls violence

By Staff Correspondent

A total of 47 people were murdered and 1,955 injured in violence during the month-long Union Parishad elections which ended on December 31, according to a survey conducted by the Coordination Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB).

Three persons were killed and 250 injured — the highest number in an area on a single day — when clashes broke out between supporters of two rival candidates in Laxmipur on December 14.

In Bhola Sadar thana, 100 people were injured in polls-related violence on December 2. This was the second highest number of casualties in an area on a day.

The CCHRB said that besides their own on-the-spot observations in 750 union parishes of 44 districts, they compiled the figures from reports in the national dailies.

The UP elections were generally peaceful with large turnout of voters, especially female ones. Voting was slow with voters having to wait for long due to inadequate number of polling booths, it noted.

"In most polling centres, there was no privacy for the voters to cast their votes."

The CCHRB suggested that the number of female voters casting votes must be made available. The voters should be provided with identity cards and more election staff be deployed for smooth polling, it added.

Erratic gas supply in city areas

By Staff Correspondent

The people of the city are suffering badly for the last few days as gas supply in different parts of the city has become very poor and irregular due to a supply shortfall in the national grid.

Cold wave

From page 1

In its special forecast for the cricket tournament, the Met office said the weather will remain "generally dry" during the matches until January 20. A thin veil of mist will however prevail on Monday and Tuesday.

Visibility will substantially improve from Monday, bringing the touch of a "fine weather" during the day time, the forecast said.

The night temperature all over the country will gradually fall. With the disappearance of the cloud, there will be a sharp fall in the night temperature, the forecast said.

Biman sources said, two domestic flights of the airline was cancelled due to fog yesterday evening.

Railway sources said 32 train services including eight mail trains remained suspended since Thursday.

Ferry services were also disrupted.

Our weekly feature 'Down to Earth' could not be published today due to space constraint. Inconvenience to the readers regretted.

In most households having Titas Gas connections, supply is frequently dropping down to nil everyday, residents alleged.

In some areas, the gas supply dries out at about 6 am and remains so till about 11 am. In some areas, no gas is supplied from early morning to late evening.

As most households use the pipeline gas for cooking, such unpredictable situation disrupts their daily life. Many people are now reportedly depending on food from restaurants for iftar, dinner and self.

The areas where gas supply has become irregular are Rampura, Shahidbag, Shahjahanpur, Moghbazar, Nayatola, Mugdipara, Basabo, Rajabazar, Gopibag, Nayapalton, Cantonment, Azampur, Kalabagan, Rayerbazar, Jigatola, and Elephant Road.

When contacted, Titas Gas officials said that the gas supply shortfall was caused by declining gas pressure in the distribution network due to the persisting cold spell. They said that at places the gas pressure had dropped to one third of the normal pressure.

Besides, the overall gas supply situation is also poor for quite a long time. According to data available from Titas Gas, the authorities were supplying a maximum of 160 million cubic feet of gas per day to the commercial, industrial and domestic users against a total demand of 200 million cubic feet, leaving a shortfall of 40 million cubic feet of gas per day.

Repatriation of 'refugees thru' Tabalchhari begins today

From Our Correspondent

KHAGRACHHARI, Jan 9: The next phase of repatriation of tribal refugees will begin tomorrow through Tabalchhari frontier point of the district.

Refugees in Thakumbari, Shilachhari, Karbuk, Panchharanpara, and Lebachhara camps will return to their homes. One thousand two hundred and seven tibetans belonging to 200 families are expected to return home at Shilachhari tomorrow through the Tabalchhari point. They are residents of Matiranga, Panchhari and Dighinala thanas.

Earlier, a total of 263 refugees belonging to 54 families returned home on the ninth day of the sixth phase of repatriation today.

With this, 7895 refugees of 1581 families have returned home through Ramgarh frontier point from Kathachhari refugee camp in the Indian state of Tripura. The sixth phase of repatriation through Ramgarh has ended today.

President

From page 1

tions and the visit of Romano Prodi would further strengthen the existing ties between the two countries, he added.

President Shahabuddin observed that Bangladesh and Italy have cooperative relations in various international fora and both the countries have similarity of views on major global issues.

"Bangladesh considers Italy as one of her dependable friends," he said adding that Italy is one of the largest export destinations for Bangladesh products like garments, frozen foods and leather goods in Europe.

Prime Minister Prof. Romano Prodi appreciated the warm hospitality of the people of Bangladesh and the government shown to him and the members of his entourage.

Home-coming

From page 1

Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the occasion, calling the historic return of Bangabandhu to the motherland on January 10, 1972.

The President in his message urged all irrespective of party affiliations to make efforts in establishing a happy and prosperous country.

In her message, Sheikh Hasina reiterated her pledge to build the country as dreamt by the Father of the Nation.

On this day in 1972, our great leader returned to the home land, the independent Bangladesh after being released from Pakistani jail, she said.

"His return gave Bangladesh its independence its completeness. Therefore, the January 10 is a glorious event in the political history of Bengali nation."

Bangladesh Awami League and its front organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the day.

The programmes include hoisting of national and party flags atop its central and all unit offices across the country and Bangabandhu Bhawan at 6 am, and laying wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu at 8 am.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will attend a discussion meeting organised by Awami League at Engineers Institute at 3 pm.

Bangladesh Betar and Television will put out special programmes on the occasion.

Sundarbans

From page 1

within minutes all types of shrimps and crabs start crawling up the shores in a bid to escape. The poachers quickly pick their catches and disappear into the vast network of canals of the mangrove. Within half an hour, fishing is complete.

"Other fishes get washed away in the current, dead or dying. The poachers are more interested in shrimps and crabs for their high prices and easy sale," he said.

Some fishermen queuing in the Dhaingamari forest office to get their fishing licenses renewed told this correspondent that the poisoning has become so rampant these days that they are hardly getting any fish.

A fisherman, Bimal Chandra said as the poisonous water mixes with the current towards the sea, it kills fishes, baby crocodiles, snakes and many other aquatic creatures until it gets diluted in the big river.

Bimal said this particular poison is smuggled from across the border and is available in the shops selling pesticide and insecticide in the villages near the forest. "A bottle costs between Tk 100 and 150," he said.

Forest officials at Karamjal Forest Post, under Chandpai Forest Range also complained about poaching by poisoning. "This problem exists in many parts of the forest," said an official.



Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia called on Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi at the residence of the Italian Ambassador in Dhaka yesterday.

Khaleda blasts 'wrong policy' 'Conspiracy on to split country into pieces'

BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday accused the government of hatching conspiracy to split the country into pieces, reports UNB.

"The public life is now at stake due to the wrong policy and for lack of efficiency and skill of the government," she told a gathering at Mirpur where she was joining an iftar party there.

Begum Zia addressed the spontaneous gathering at the Mirpur National High School premises in the city and then joined the iftar mahfil arranged by Mirpur thana BNP.

"She said BNP, standing beside the people, will continue the movement it has already started against the 'so-called peace agreement on the CHT and the anti-party activities of the government'."

The BNP Chairperson said while making agreements on the Ganges water-sharing and the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the government has sacrificed the national interests and sovereignty.

"The government has already completed all arrangements to destroy the country," she alleged.

The Leader of the Opposition called upon all irrespective of party and opinion to come forward to protect the country's independence, sovereignty, economy and democracy.

Mastermind of WTC bombing jailed for life

NEW YORK, Jan 9: A judge Thursday ordered a life prison term without parole for the man who masterminded the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing and recommended that he serve it in solitary confinement, saying "You, God, your master," reports AP.

"Yes, I am a terrorist and am proud of it," Ramzi Yousef told the court before the sentence was announced.

Harkin to urge US

From page 1

Bangladesh's effort to eliminate child labour from its apparel industry on return and try to convince US buyers, politicians and the Clinton Administration.

He termed the memorandum of understanding to eliminate child labour from the garments industries as a landmark and said it would help the gradual elimination of child labour from different industries throughout the world.

He said the US government would continue to contribute a total of one million dollars to support the education programme for some 8,000 children who are now studying in various schools under the MOU.

Earlier, talking to The Daily Star, he said, there was no link between allocation of oil and gas exploration blocks to the US companies and getting an additional quota for garments export to the US.

"But I do believe that the issue has to be addressed. I want to make sure that the US companies in question are not again put into a disadvantage in the bidding process for the gas fields," he added.

Earlier at a gathering of garments manufacturers in a city hotel, he said he would try to raise Bangladesh's garment quota as a reward for removing children from the industry. The American legislator made the pledge in reply to ap-

peals by Commerce Minister Tofael Ahmed and BGMEA chief Mostafa Golam Qudus to raise the quota by 30 per cent.

UNB adds: At the airport Harkin said Major (ret) Mohiuddin Ahmed, an accused in the Bangabandhu murder case, must be extradited and put on trial in Bangladesh if there is "sufficient evidence that show he was involved in the killing."

He said the question of extradition of the accused was discussed with Hasina. If it is found that the accused is involved in the killing, then the US administration will take action through Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) to send his back and put on trial, he said.

"Independence of judiciary in Bangladesh is well known in my country and all over the world," Harkin added.

On a question about the exemption of Bangladesh's debt repayment of about \$18 million US dollars under PL-480, the Senator said he would talk to the US administration so that Bangladesh could get debt exemption.

In 1990, a legislation was passed by the US Senate giving debt exemption to certain countries under the PL-480.

He said he must look into the matter how Bangladesh failed to get the benefit of the legislation. If possible, the law must be rectified, it must be changed, because this debt repayment is a burden for Bangladesh.

Khaleda

From page 1

settlement can be reached through a spirit of cooperation and understanding among all concerned, he added.

The Italian Prime Minister spoke of the significant role being played by his country in European Union, which is becoming a more important partner of Bangladesh, specially in trade.

He hoped that the existing cooperation between Italy and Bangladesh, especially in commercial and economic fields, will be further expanded.

Meanwhile, US Senator Tom Harkin called on BNP chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia at her Minto Road official residence yesterday.

Abducted trader yet to be rescued in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 9: Police could not yet rescue a businessman Asraf Hossain, abducted by terrorists from near his residence at Beparipara in the city on Tuesday.

Police said the abductors demanded a ransom of Tk 14 lakh from Hossain's family for his release.

Hossain was abducted on gun point when he was returning home by rickshaw.

However, Detective Police said drive is on to rescue the victim.

Meanwhile, another businessman, Mujibur Rahman, abducted on January 5 from Baidyadighi area near Khatun-gonj business hub, returned home last night after he was released by his abductors, police said.

But it was not known whether he paid any ransom for his release.

10 hurt in Narsingdi gunfight

From Our Correspondent

NARSINGDI, Jan 9: At least ten people were injured in a gunfight today in connection with the last month's Union Parishad elections at Srinagar under Raipura thana.

At least 15 rounds of shots were fired during the violence that lasted for about two hours, according to witnesses.

Of the injured, Anis Miah, 25, sustained serious injuries and was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Others were under treatment at Raipura hospital.

The violence took place when a group of about 100 people attacked the house of Shah Alam Master, reportedly a supporter of a newly-elected UP chairman Rezauul Karim Khan, at Bheuluar village in Srinagar at about 10 am.

Police said none was arrested or no case was lodged in connection with the incident till Friday night.

Golam Kashem Daddy dead

Renowned photographer

Golam Kashem Daddy died of old-age ailment in the city yesterday at the age of 104, reports UNB.

Golam Kashem was a pioneer of photography in the country. He died at his Ikaira Road residence at 9 pm, family sources said.

Terrorists

From page 1

of arms racketeering and drug smuggling groups.

Allegations are also there that some unscrupulous elements in the law enforcing agencies also supply ammunition to the gangs.

Firearms are also reportedly manufactured in Dhaka and some other parts of the country, including Jhenidah, Barisal and the hill areas of Chittagong.

For the convenience of carrying, the gang members prefer to use small weapons like pistol, revolver and sawn-off rifles, the sources said.

But they also possess heavy arms like LMG, SMG and even rocket launcher. Some of these are smuggled from other countries, the sources added.

FBCCI

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at 258 million US dollars and direct foreign investment from Italy is yet to reach a satisfactory level. We think the position can improve significantly with increased and meaningful communication and interaction between the private sector of the two sides."

The meeting concluded with the signing of a protocol of co-operation between the General Confederation of the Italian Industry and the FBCCI. Confederation official Giovanni Corduni and FBCCI vice president Kazi Shaiful Islam, initiated the protocol.

Pvt sector to play vital role

From page 1

sphere" in Bangladesh. "There is evident interest of Italian investors to be more active in Bangladesh. I am confident that the private sector will play a significant role in furthering trade and investment between our two countries."

The Italian Prime Minister said his country supports the promotion of regional cooperation pursued by Bangladesh.

"We are also happy about the Ganges water sharing treaty with India and the CHT peace accord signed recently."

Praising the CHT accord, Prodi observed, "It would bring necessary peace for accelerating development efforts."

Europe has developed because of peace and "you also need the same for your development," he noted.

Responding to a question, he said it is true that Bangladesh has many problems, mainly because of its size. He, however, added "The economic fundamentals of Bangladesh are quite good and there is no reason that this country will not prosper."

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said at the joint press conference that the two sides had discussed ways and means of increasing trade and investment flows between the two countries.

We also reaffirmed our willingness to strengthen the existing friendly relations, intensifying cooperation in various fields."

Sheikh Hasina recalled with gratitude the support and assistance extended by Italy in rebuilding the war-ravaged economy of Bangladesh immediately after its independence in 1971.

"We also appreciate the assurance given to us by Prime Minister Prodi that Italy will seriously consider participating in the Ganges Barrage project," she said.

Earlier in the morning, official talks were held for an hour between the two sides at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Sheikh Hasina led a 12-member

home delegation while her Italian counterpart led his country's 10-member delegation.

Briefing newsmen about the

Italian PM leaves Dhaka

Italian Prime Minister Prof. Romano Prodi left Dhaka yesterday afternoon for Rome ending his two-day visit, reports BSS.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina saw Prodi and Madame Flavia Prodi off at the Zia International Airport.

Ministers, civil and military officials and Italian nationals including members of the diplomatic corps were also present at the airport.

Prof Prodi is the first Italian head of government to visit Bangladesh. He arrived here on Thursday evening from India with a big delegation of Italian entrepreneurs and businessmen.

Earlier, the Italian Prime Minister placed wreaths at the National Memorial at Savar.

Prof Prodi stood in solemn silence after placing the wreaths while the bugle of Army played the last post. He signed the visitors' book.

Ferry service

From page 1

asked the authorities concerned to implement it "as soon as possible."

A high official of BIWTC yesterday said, "Once the new ferry service is opened, the load of cargo vehicles going through the capital will be cut down by at least 40 per cent."

He said, "It will be a great step forward in the road communication system in the country. The ferry service will be of great convenience especially for the truck drivers who travel to Khulna and Barisal divisions from Chittagong division."

Akram Khan in a crowded press briefing at a local hotel last night.

Tournament coordinator Syed Ashraf Haque, match referee Mike Denness and all the captains and managers of the participating teams attended the briefing.

"The whole nation is expecting a good performance from us after two embarrassing tours of Kenya and New Zealand. As far as standard is concerned, there is a gulf of difference between them and us, but we will try our best to put up a good fight," said a soft-spoken Akram.

When Akram was hoping for a better outcome, his Indian counterpart Mohammad Azharuddin, who regained the captaincy a week ago replacing Sachin Tendulkar, expressed his concern over the prevailing weather.

"The wicket looked a bit damp in the morning when we had our practice at the venue. I don't know how it is going to be tomorrow. I think, no one can make any prediction until the match starts," said Azhar.

"However, we have come here to play and we are taking

every match seriously. Bangladesh is an emerging nation, but there is no scope of underestimating them," said the Hyderabad-born most successful Indian captain.

At official briefing, Syed Ashraf Haque, a vice-president of the Bangladesh Cricket Board, declined to disclose the financial dealings of the tournament.

"I am not authorised to say anything other than introducing the officials of the three teams," he said in reply to a volley of questions from the newsmen, who were eager to know the deal between the Board and America-based WorldTel.

Ashraf, however, assured that the board would disclose all the details about the deal in a month.

The WorldTel will provide live coverage of the tournament to 20 countries across the globe.

Doug Cowie of New Zealand and Russell Tiffin of Zimbabwe will officiate today's match while Rudi Koertzen of South Africa will act as the third umpire.

Independence Cup cricket

From page 1

per Akram Khan and his Indian counterpart Mohammad Azharuddin opted to wait till the morning before finalising the playing eleven. But an expected full-house crowd at the 35,000-capacity Dhaka Stadium will keep their finger crossed for a shiny day to enjoy the game of glorious uncertainties.

This is for the fifth time Bangladesh will face India in an official limited-over match since their first meeting in October 1988. Bangladesh lost all their previous four engagements against their more colourful neighbours by an identical nine-wicket margin.

"This is for the first time we have included a bunch of new faces in our side and I hope they will perform up to their potential," said Bangladesh skipper

গ্যাস ব্যবহারে সতর্কতার বিজ্ঞপ্তি

- * এখন শীতকাল। অনেকেই ঘর গরম রাখা, কাপড়-চোপড় শুকানো, সারাক্ষণ পানি গরম করা কিংবা লোড সেডিং এর সময় গ্যাস জ্বালিয়ে কিংবা একটি ম্যাচের কাঠি বাঁচাতে মূল্যবান প্রাকৃতিক সম্পদের অপব্যবহার করছেন। গ্যাসের এই অপব্যবহার ও অপচয় রোধ করুন।
- * সামান্য অসতর্কতা বা ভুলের কারণে অগ্নিকাণ্ড ঘটে জানমালের ক্ষতি হতে পারে। গ্যাস ব্যবহারে অধিক সতর্ক থাকুন এবং আগামী প্রজন্মের জন্য গ্যাস ব্যবহারে মিতব্যয়ী হউন।
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