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PHILIPS

Second phase of Indian elections tomorrow

NEW DELHI, Feb 20: Hectic and intense electioneering ended today in the 183 Lok Sabha constituencies spread over nine states and Union Territory of Pondicherry, going to polls on Sunday on the second leg of general elections in India, reports BSS.

In the first phase, elections were held in 222 constituencies on February 16 but Election Commission ordered repolling in more than 1200 centres in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Assam.

Nearly 1600 candidates are contesting in 183 constituencies in Sunday's elections in the states of West Bengal, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh besides Union Territory of Pondicherry.

Campaigning, which saw political parties trying to win over the voters focussing on issues, agenda and manifestos in the first round, had become acrimonious during the second round with party leaders trading allegations.

Several political parties including the Congress, Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and Republican Party have demanded that the

Srikrishna Commission report be made public before the second phase of election so that the voters would know who were behind the riots in Mumbai in the wake of Ayodhya demolition.

The Commission submitted its report to the BJP-Shiv Sena government in Maharashtra earlier this week.

The Bofors issue, which was raised by all BJP leaders at election meetings for the first round of polling, took a new turn with Sonia Gandhi stating that the BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee was telling 'white lies'. Vajpayee also retorted by maintaining that he had never lied during his over four-decade long political career.

According to original schedule, Sunday's polling was to cover 184 Lok Sabha constituencies but the election has been postponed in Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu to February 28 following explosions there claiming 46 lives.

Meanwhile, PTI says, prime minister I K Gujral today blamed Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) for the recent bomb blasts in Coimbatore and violent incidents in some parts of the country and said they were aimed at disturbing peace on

the eve of Lok Sabha polls.

Addressing an election rally at Gulbarga, Karnataka, Gujral recalled the recent violent incidents in Tripura and Kerala and warned the people to be cautious about the threat posed to the country's stability by Pakistan.

The Prime Minister sharply criticised the congress for its 'failure' to provide honest administration to the country, adding, it had tarnished the country's image as several Congress leaders were facing corruption charges.

Ridiculing the stability plank of Congress, he accused the party of destabilising five non-Congress governments.

Referring to the fall of his government, Gujral pointed out that he had urged Congress president Sitaram Kesri to wait for one month for the verdict of designated court in Chennai in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case but the Congress did not listen.

"We preferred to relinquish power rather than sacking DMK ministers", he said.

Gujral also flayed the BJP for its 'communal outlook' and alleged that in the name of religion, it was planning to divide the country. He called upon the people to be wary of BJP's 'designs'.

PCJSS proposes postponement of arms surrender on Feb 28

By Special Correspondent

The Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) has requested postponement of surrender of arms by Shantibahini members on February 28.

The surrender of arms was scheduled to take place at Dudukchhara in Khagrachhari district.

In a letter to the authorities through the Liaison Committee yesterday, PCJSS Chairman Jyotirindriyo Bodhipriyo Lama proposed the postponement.

But he gave no reason for this.

There was no reaction from the officials on the latest development. They declined to comment whether the government would refix the date for the final phase of arms surrender.

Tk 13 lakh gold seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

The customs authorities at Zia International Airport (ZIA) recovered gold bars and ornaments worth about Tk 13 lakh from a passenger of a Bangladesh Biman flight from Dubai yesterday afternoon.

Airport sources said, customs officials, out of suspicion, challenged Sudhir Chandra Nath, an inhabitant of Sylhet, after he crossed the green channel. After scanning his luggage, they recovered 26 gold bars each weighing ten tola and ornaments weighing about 57 grams.

The gold bars and ornaments were kept inside some soap packets, electronic adapters and medicine packets wrapped with scotch tape.

Sudhir was arrested and a case lodged with Cantonment thana in this regard.

India says 'no' to use of its space against Iraq

NEW DELHI, Feb 20: India has rejected a request by an unnamed country to use its sea, land and air space in case of a military strike against Iraq. Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral was quoted as saying today, reports AP.

Gujral told an election rally in western India that he had received a telephone call from "a great country" seeking India's help, the United News of India news agency said.

Gujral didn't name the country or the leader who had telephoned him.

The Foreign Ministry spokesman was not immediately available for comment on the news agency report.

During the 1991 Gulf war, India provided refueling facilities to American warplanes, but withdrew landing rights following criticism from the opposition.

On Wednesday, India said it was opposed to a US-led military strike and favoured a diplomatic solution to Iraq's defiance of the United Nations.

Found dead

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father's residence at the city's Green Road on Tuesday.

Shirin returned to their first-floor flat at about 3:30 pm yesterday. She found the main entrance of the flat locked from inside.

As none responded from inside when Shirin knocked the door repeatedly, she sought help from their landlord. Later, some neighbours got into the flat through a passage at its back and found Mosharrarf dead.

Police thought that he died sometime on Thursday.

An unnatural death case was lodged with Dhanmanti thana in this regard.

Meanwhile, Bangla Academy has condoled the death of Mosharrarf Hossain. A freedom-fighter, Mosharrarf had sincerely served the Academy for the last 25-year, a press release said.

Fabrics

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ready requested the commerce ministry to look into details of the cash incentive, how it helps the fabric manufacturers and garment exporters and if there could be any other ways of giving incentive to the fabric manufacturers.

The commerce ministry has now decided to conduct a detailed study on the pros and cons of such cash incentive.

In the first impression, we can say that it helped boost the export-oriented textile sector," said a commerce ministry high official. "Quite a number of composite textile mills have grown up since 1994 and they are supplying to our garment sector. The garment sector is also finding procurement of local fabrics much more competitive and easier than getting those imported through complicated and delaying procedures."

No Bangla Academy award this yr

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangla Academy will not give Literary Award this year, says a press release of the Academy.

The executive committee of the Bangla Academy, after considering all aspects of the literary award, has decided not to confer the award this year, the press release said without mentioning any specific reason.

The Director General of the Bangla Academy could not be contacted over phone last night. A member of his family told The Daily Star that he was sick.

Murals on Bangla Academy wall

By DU Correspondent

The murals on the wall in front of Bangla Academy was inaugurated yesterday.

Gaziul Haque, a hero of the Language Movement, inaugurated the murals depicting the Language Movement and the Liberation War.

Poet Shamsur Rahman, president of Bangla Academy, presided over the inaugural function. Prof Syed Anwar Hossain, Director General of the academy, delivered welcome address.

Obaidul Kader, State Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs was present at the function.

Gaziul Haque said that Bangla Academy played an important role in the struggle for liberation. The murals have nicely depicted the struggle of the people of Bangladesh, he said.

Five killed in Savar road accident

SAVAR, Feb 20: Five people, including a university student, were killed and 10 others injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Aricha highway at Savar this noon, reports UNB.

Police authorities said the accident occurred when a Sauria-bound minibus fell into the roadside ditch after hitting a tempo and a motorcycle.

The deceased were student of Jahangirnagar University Shafiq, 25, driver of the minibus (unidentified), and three tempo passengers Sazzad, 25, of Sattaria, Dewan Ali, 60 and Asadullah, 32, of Bauchar in Savar. All died on the spot.

The injured were rushed to Savar's Health Complex.

The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

A case was filed with Savar police.

Indonesia may face serious food crisis : WB

JAKARTA, Feb 20: Indonesia, hit by economic crisis and an unprecedented drought could face a serious food shortage and needs three million tonnes of rice, a World Bank paper said today, reports AFP.

It warned that there was "the potential for a serious food crisis with widespread social consequences."

AP adds: Hundreds stood in line for food handouts, jamming a narrow lane way in an overcrowded slum on the banks of a stinking, polluted canal.

Arms surrender

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taken for arms surrendering ceremony and officials concerned today visited the Dighirpur area where the guerrillas will lay down their arms.

Earlier, 1282 Shantibahini guerrillas had surrendered their arms and ammunition in two phases.

The first phase of arms surrender took place at Khagrachhari Stadium on February 10 and the second phase at Baghaichhari High School ground on February 16.

Rail track

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nine km rail track on the western end will connect the bridge with the Sirajganj-Ishwardi broad gauge section at Kalia Haripur.

When the bridge will be opened for traffic the new rail track laid on the western and eastern sides will however remain broad gauge and metre gauge respectively.

Another 80 km new rail track will be laid to connect Joydevpur with Ibrahimabad, the sources said adding that land acquisition for laying the track is in process.

The existing 244 km rail track on Sirajganj-Parbatipur route is broad gauge and this section will be converted into 'dual gauge' by laying a third track in between to accommodate metre gauge trains.

A similar 'dual gauge' rail track will be constructed from Sirajganj to Joydevpur.

The whole project will involve about Tk 1155 crore and is expected to be completed by 2001.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presenting Ekushey Padak '97 to one of the recipients at the Osmani Memorial Hall in the city yesterday. — PID photo

PM: Ekushey Padak

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given it the honour of state language.

For the year 1997, eleven personalities were awarded Ekushey Padak, the highest national recognition for outstanding contributions in the arts, literature, education and journalism.

The award recipients are: Abu Ishaq (literature), Novera Ahmed (sculpture), Nitun Kunda (sculpture), Debun Bhattacharya (music-posthumous), Runu Biswas (dance-posthumous), Dr Razia Khan (education), Dr Siraj Huq (education), Shabnam Mushtari (music), Santosh Gupta (journalism), Monajat Uddin (journalism-posthumous) and Momtazuddin Ahmed (drama).

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy director general Azad Rahman received the medal on behalf of Debun Bhattacharya while that of Runu Biswas and Monajat Uddin were received by their wives.

The Prime Minister said, "We have much more to do for establishing the prestige and development of our mother-tongue."

The power, individuality

and brightness of Bangla are to be used in all creative works, not only for study and in official work, she said. "We've to work with determination to motivate the people for using Bangla in all practical work."

Hasina said the people of the country want to know about science and technology, invention and ideas through their mother-tongue. The government is sincerely trying to develop Bangla as the main medium for acquiring knowledge and flourishing thoughts and ideas, she added.

Recalling the supreme sacrifice of the martyrs of the great Language Movement, the Prime Minister said this is unprecedented in the world history that a nation shed its blood for the language.

The Prime Minister said the government is pledge-bound to create a congenial atmosphere for the healthy growth of language and culture as well as for the flourishing of music and arts.

Ministers, MPs, political leaders, diplomats, educationists, artists, musicians and cultural activists were present at the function.

Ekushey back again

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people, irrespective of age and sex, who placed wreaths with the tune of chorus — 'Amar bhaier rakte rangano Ekushey February, aami ki bhulite par'.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed in a message on the occasion yesterday called upon all irrespective of party affiliation and opinion to put their sincere efforts to build an illiteracy-free Bangladesh.

Paying homage to the martyrs of the Language Movement, the President said the idea of separate nations — identity emerged through the struggle for establishing the dignity of the mother tongue Bangla at the national level.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave a separate message on the eve of Amar Ekushey yesterday calling upon the countrymen to properly practice Bangla language at all levels.

She urged all irrespective of party affiliation to launch a united effort to build a poverty-free and exploitation-free Bangladesh, imbued with the spirit of the immortal Ekushey.

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia in her message called upon the countrymen to be imbued with the spirit of Ekushey to protect country's "threatened independence, sovereignty and integrity" and democracy and also to resist cultural aggression.

She said a conspiracy was being hatched against Bangladesh nationalism and urged all freedom loving people to carry forward the current movement to its goal. She also prayed for the peace of the souls of the martyrs.

Different socio-cultural and political organizations will observe the day through elaborate programmes.

Awami League's Shaheed Day programmes include hoisting of black flags and the National Flag and party flags at half-mast at all offices of the party and at Bangabandhu Bhaban at 5:30 am and placing wreaths at 7 am at the Central Shaheed Minar and Azimpur Graveyard where the Language Movement martyrs were buried. Awami Jubo League, the youth front of AL, has also taken up a similar programme.

On the last day of its three-day Ekushey programme today, BNP will hoist black flags, the National Flag and party flags at half-mast at its central office at 6 am. BNP will place wreaths at the Shaheed Minar and offer feteha at Azimpur Graveyard at 6:30 am. Besides, it will hold a meeting and cultural function at the Ramna Batamul in the city at 3 pm today. BNP chairperson will attend the meeting as chief guest.

Mohila Muktioddha Sangsad, an organisation of woman freedom fighters, will assemble in front of Udayan School at 7 am and march towards the Central Shaheed Minar to place wreaths.

As part of its two-day Ekushey programme, Shilpakala Academy will hold a "Bhashar Gaan" (songs on language) and dance programme on its premises at 4 pm today.

Shaheed Day programmes of National Museum include handwriting competition for children at 10 am, exhibition of photographs of Language Movement heroes at 11 am, a discussion at 4:30 pm and recitation of poems by poets at 5 pm.

Tremor jolts Pakistan, Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, Feb 20: An earthquake with an initial magnitude of 6.1 rattled north-western Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan today, seismologists said, reports AP.

Residents in the federal capital of Islamabad fled their homes and waited in the street for the tremor to pass.

The epicentre was located 450 kilometres (270 miles) northwest of Islamabad in the Hindu Kush range in neighbouring Afghanistan, according to Sallauddin Khan, director of the meteorological centre in northwest Pakistan.

The quake hit at 5:20 pm local time (1220 GMT).

Khan said there were early reports of damage in northern Pakistani towns of Chitral and Dir.

It wasn't immediately known if there were any injuries, but the homes in that region often are made of mud or wood and collapse easily.

Khan said in Peshawar, the capital of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier province people ran from their homes and stood in the street waiting for the tremor to subside.

The epicentre of today's quake was barely 100 kilometres (60 miles) south of Rustaq. It wasn't known if more damage occurred to the region, however, most people in the area still were living outdoors in makeshift shelters.

Thapa survives no-confidence

KATHMANDU, Feb 20: Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa today defeated a no-confidence motion ending the month-long political crisis in Nepal, parliamentary sources said, reports AFP.

The opposition garnered 100 votes, three short of the total necessary to oust the government, the source said.

Khaleda

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trated mainly on the two party lawmakers' joining the government and on speculation that more will follow.

Some BNP legislators, reportedly having contacts with the government, asserted that such speculations were totally baseless and motivated and designed to harm their image. All of them reaffirmed that they had absolute allegiance to the party and its chief Begum Zia.

Both the ruling party and a section of the BNP men were blamed for such "propaganda". One such MP from Pabna swore upon Allah while denying he reported of his plan to join the government. This led to clippings in the meeting.

In reply, Begum Zia said she had trust in all her party lawmakers and advised them not to pay any heed to such propaganda.

Emerging from the meeting, Mannan Bhuiyan told waiting newsmen that they discussed the latest socio-economic and political situation in the country.

While approached, Begum Zia told newsmen that they would continue discussion in parliamentary party meeting. She avoided a question if her party would return to the House.

CHT judges

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tional deputy commissioner (revenue) in each of the three districts deals with civil disputes.

The Divisional Commissioner and the additional deputy commissioners belong to the BCS (admin) cadre and the Supreme Court as well as the law ministry do not have any administrative control over them, the sources added.

Signing of the CHT peace agreement on December 2 last year has paved the way for the government to appoint district and sessions judges there.

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জনতা ব্যাংক

ঢাকা