

Presidential polls in Russia today

MOSCOW, Mar 25: Russians got a day of rest from campaigning today as they prepared for a Sunday presidential election in which Acting President Vladimir Putin is virtually certain to win, reports Reuters.

From midnight Friday, campaigning was banned to allow people to reflect on their choice but, if opinion polls were correct, many had already made up their minds in favour of Putin.

He enjoyed a wide lead over closest rival, Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, although doubts remained whether Putin would get the 50 per cent needed to win in the first round. Failure to do so will mean a runoff.

His apparently sure victory has meant for a dull campaign but has raised questions about Russia's future course.

Putin, who has gone from being an obscure spy chief to possible leader of the world's largest country in less than a year, appealed on Friday for

people to turn out and vote.

He said the 108 million eligible to go to the polls across 11 time zones had to choose a leader capable of restoring Russia's prestige and overseeing its vast nuclear arsenal.

Looking stiff and tense, Putin made the appeal in a television address as he sat at a desk with the Russian red-white-and-blue tricolour flag in the background.

"We are electing a president whose duty will be to revive the economy, restore the country's prestige and leading role in the world and provide for everyone an effective system of government, stability and prosperity," Putin said.

He said it was his obligation to ask Russians "to carry out your constitutional duty. It is imperative to go to the polls on Sunday and choose the president of a new Russia."

Voting for the 11 candidates will begin in Russia's Far East when it is still late today in

Moscow then sweep across the time zones from Vladivostok to the western Kaliningrad enclave.

Voting lasts from 8 am to 8 pm from 2000 GMT on March 25 to 1700 GMT on March 26.

An exit poll and the first provisional election results from the Far East will be available as the last western polling stations close. A clearer picture will emerge within hours.

Election commission chief Alexander Veshnyakov said the first results would be known at 9 pm Moscow time.

Putin said Russia had emerged stronger from the difficulties of recent months, particularly the military campaign in Chechnya in which Russian casualties have mounted in recent weeks.

Russia, he said, was "one of the biggest countries in the world and a mighty nuclear power."



US President Bill Clinton prepares to get off a plain colour Gulfstream jet at Islamabad International Airport yesterday. Clinton was scheduled to meet with Pakistan's President Muhammad Rafiq Tarar and General Pervez Musharraf yesterday. Clinton is on the final stop of his six-day trip to South Asia.

— AFP photo

5 villagers killed in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Mar 25: Muslim separatist rebels shot dead five sleeping Muslim villagers in the troubled Indian state of Kashmir, an army official said today, reports AFP.

Major general PPS Bindra said the attack occurred overnight Friday at the village of Ramyan, some 200 kilometres (125 miles) north of the Kashmir winter capital Jammu.

"A group of militants stormed the home of Muslim family and shot dead two men and three women," he said. "Two other men were injured in the attack."

Bindra said the family was targeted because its members did not cooperate with Muslim separatist rebels.

Indian forces shoot dead 5 suspects of Sikh massacre

JAMMU, India, Mar 25: In a gunbattle with Islamic militants, Indian soldiers shot dead five men suspected of involvement in the massacre of 40 Sikhs in Kashmir earlier this week, reports AP.

Acting on a tip off, soldiers cordoned off Pacharthal Pathribal, a village 80 km south of Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital, and began firing on two houses where seven militants were believed to be hiding, police said.

The militants retaliated, and in the ensuing two-hour gunbattle, five rebels were killed.

Police later blasted the houses where the two remaining militants were hiding, setting the houses ablaze. Officials were waiting for the fire to subside to find out if the two other insurgents were dead.

Gunmen kill 2 policemen in Karachi

KARACHI, Mar 25: Gunmen shot and killed two policemen in southern Karachi in a drive-by shooting today in the heart of the troubled port city, said police, reports AP.

The two sub-inspectors of police were shot and killed while on a motorcycle, they said. No one has taken responsibility but police said both men were at the forefront of a police crackdown several years ago against a minority ethnic party, the Muttaheda Qami Movement.

Pakistan's largest city of Karachi has been wracked by bitter religiously and ethnically motivated violence in recent years. The military-led government has promised to try to curb the violence.

Stampede at SA disco leaves 13 children dead

In the chaos, "I had just reached the safety of the exit and as I turned to look back, I saw this wall hurtling downwards on the people below," he said.

The youngest of those killed was 11. The injured suffered mainly abrasions, respiratory problems and head injuries. Several victims were seriously injured.

R K Khan hospital superintendent Dr. Prakash Subban said most patients ranged from 12 to 18.

The club had two exits, but the children had access to only one, said Naren Singh, provincial minister for agriculture and environmental affairs.

However, club owner Rajan Naidoo said the club had four exits, and that all were open.

"About three to four songs had been played when suddenly people started screaming, pushing and running towards the doorway. I didn't know what was happening, but found that I couldn't breathe," he said. "I was forced to join the scramble to get out of the club as fast as I could."

He fell and was trampled upon, but managed to get up and escaped uninjured. His clothes were torn and he had lost a shoe.

About 600 children were in the club, and police suspect that one of the children released the tear gas. KwaZulu-Natal police spokesman Bala Naidoo said a brick wall collapsed during the chaos.

Anderson Marimuthu, 18, said he feared a friend had died

in the stampede.

Kevin Govender, 19, is a regular at the club and was there Friday.

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Singh called for an investigation into why children as young as 11 were at the club. Naidoo said it was matinee disco, and that the general policy was to serve alcohol only to those 18 and older.

Community volunteers set up an emergency center with trauma counselors to help parents who feared their children might have been caught in the stampede.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Kishoreganj Public Works Division
Kishoreganj

Tender Notice No 36(P)/1999-2000

Tender Invitation Notice

Tenders in No 2911 BD Form in sealed envelopes are invited from building contractors/contractors firm as per financial feasibility enlisted with the Public Works Department for the completion of the undermentioned work. Tenders will be opened on the day of submitting at 12.15 PM in presence of the interested tenderers (if anyone remains present). Tenders must be submitted in a sealed envelopes on which the name of the work, address and the address to whom the tender is submitted will have to be mentioned.

1. Name of work : One in Kishoreganj under a project titled jail reforms/development (food godown and kitchen construction). Sub-head: Construction of food godown in Kishoreganj District Jail. Fiscal year-1999-2000.
2. Estimated expenditure : Tk 8,871/-
3. Estimated money : Tk 17,756/-
4. Time limit for completion of work : 60 (sixty) days.
5. Names of offices where tenders will be sold and received : Public Works Division, Kishoreganj/Mymensingh/Tangail/Jamalpur/Sherpur/Netrokona.
6. Last date of selling tender : 02-04-2000 (during office hours).
7. Last date of receiving tender : 03-04-2000 (till 12.00 Noon).
8. Ready tender schedule containing Bangladesh Form No 2911 including additional terms and conditions can be seen in the offices stated and interested contractors themselves can purchase tender schedule on payment of usual fees for Tk 400/- (four hundred) only (non-refundable) and on payment of usual fees for Tk 25 (twenty-five) only (non-refundable) for No. 2911 Form by producing registration book or their representatives whose signature has been attested by the contractor on the authorisation can purchase by producing all original registers of enlistment and certificate of registration of the Value Added Tax Department. No form will be sold on the day of opening tender.
9. Contractors will have to produce the original copies of certificate regarding TIN from the appropriate authority and registration certificate from the Value Added Tax Department at the time of purchasing tender. Original copies of the certificates will have to be produced. Copy of the certificate attested by the class I official and money receipt for purchasing tender will have to be enclosed with tender. Otherwise tender will be treated as rejected.
10. If the rate of the more than one bonafide tenderers for the work becomes the same, then contractor will be selected through a lottery on the specific date of the Superintending Engineer, Mymensingh Public Works Circle.

Kazi Mohiul Alam
Executive Engineer
Kishoreganj Public Works Division, Kishoreganj

Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat
Common and Co-ordination Section
No-16(1)/99-Common (Part-1)/375
Dated 14-03-2000
31-11-1406 Bang

Re-Tender Notice

Tenders in sealed envelopes with two envelopes — one containing technical tender and other financial tenders are invited from bonafide computer trader/local agent/dealer for purchasing modern and with fast capacity colour laser printer and Pantrium-III computers for use in the Sangsad Bhaban office of the Honourable Speaker of the 7th Jatiya Sangsad.

(2) Tenders can be deposited in the tender box kept at the office chamber of the Deputy Secretary (Administration-1) of the Secretariat from 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon on 04-04-2000. Tenders will be opened the same day at 12:10 PM in presence of the tenderers (if anyone remains present).

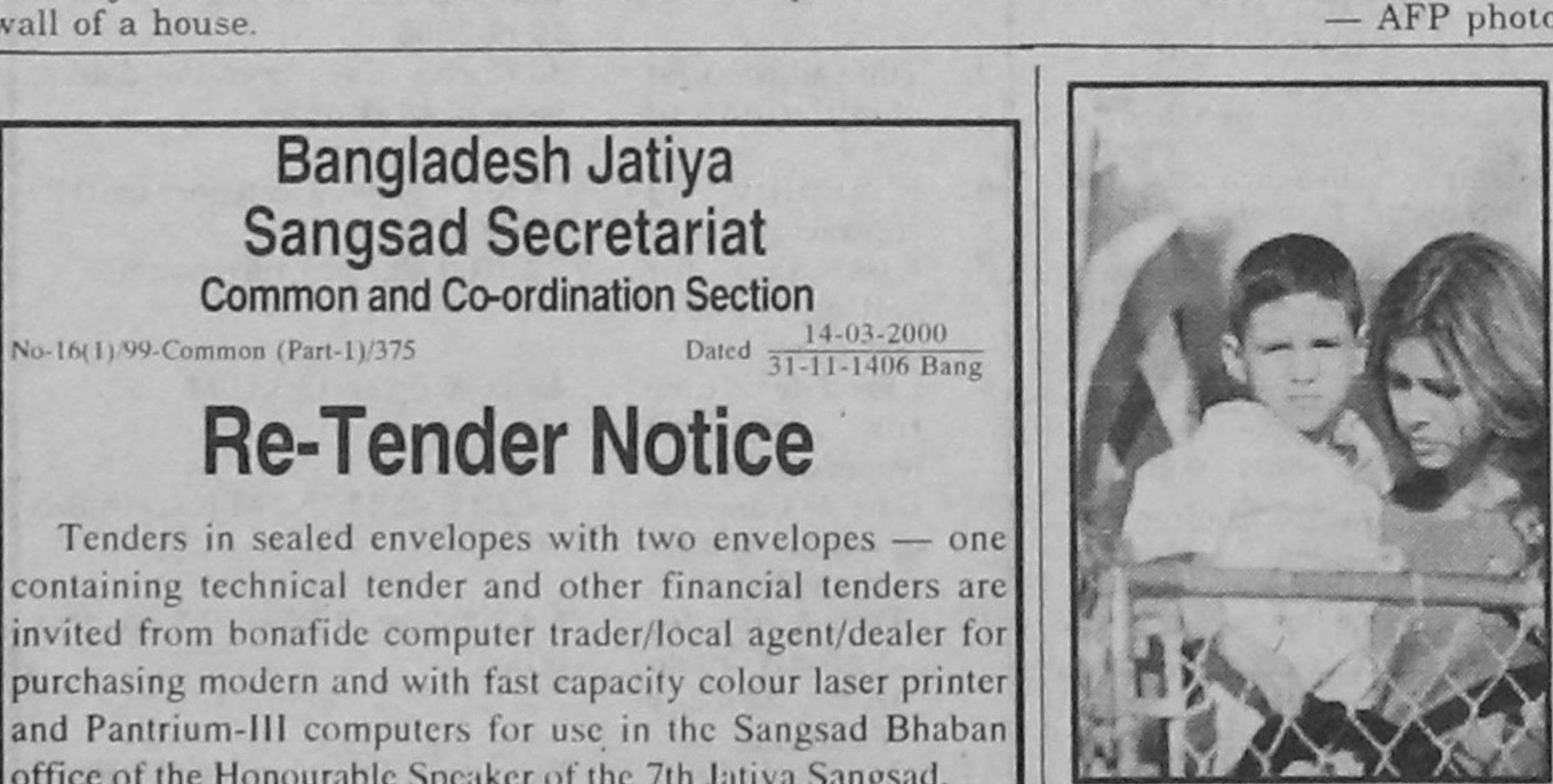
(3) Trade licence regarding business for the current fiscal year, income-tax certificate and attested photocopy of certificate regarding VAT and original receipt for purchasing schedule will have to be submitted with the tender.

(4) 2.50 (two and a half per cent) of the total estimated expenditure as the earnest money in the form of Bank Draft/Pay-Order (refundable) in favour of the undersigned will have to be submitted alongwith the financial tender. Tenders will be treated as rejected if earnest money is deposited alongwith the technical tender.

(5) Tender schedule containing detailed description of the tender and other terms and conditions and specification of printers can be procured from the Accounts Section-1 (South-West Bloc, Level-5, Room No. 524) from 02-04-2000 to 03-04-2000 during office hours on payment of Taka 250/- (two hundred and fifty) (non-refundable) by applying in the pads of the respective establishments along with trade licence. More than one schedule will not be delivered to a single tenderer.

(6) The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reason.

Md Rabiul Islam
Assistant Secretary (Common)
Phone: 9124762



Rescue workers look for victims trapped under the wreckage of Antonov-12 cargo plane that crashed onto several houses Friday in Kadirana, near Sri Lanka's only international airport. At least six crewmen - five Russian and one Sri Lankan - were killed and two people on ground also perished in the crash during bad weather while many more escaped with injuries. The aircraft broke into several pieces and the main wings rested on a brick wall of a house.

— AFP photo



Six-year-old Erian Gonzalez is carried into his relatives' home by cousin Marisleya Gonzalez Friday in Miami, Florida. A US official ruled out arbitration in the Erian Gonzalez case, calling for the swift return of the shipwreck survivor to his Cuban father. — AFP photo

Believe it, or not!

WALNUT CREEK, California, Mar 25: Chris Hoyle heard the scream and looked up from her desk to see a man falling past her window — head first, reports AP.

"His head was down, his feet were up, and he came whizzing by screaming," she told the Contra Costa Times.

She ran outside and shouted to a man near the five-story building, "Is everyone all right? I just saw a man fall off the roof."

"Yeah, that would be me," Ken Larsen, 34, told her. His arm was scratched and his shoulder bruised, but nothing was broken. In fact, he said, he landed on his feet.

Larsen had been laying telecommunications cable on the roof.

Palestinians, Israelis mum on talks

WASHINGTON, Mar 25: Israeli and Palestinian negotiators kept their mouths shut on Friday by order of their US hosts, but a few tantalizingly positive descriptions lit up the Middle East's secretive peace process, reports Reuters.

Kept away from the media at a quiet US Air Force base overlooking the sweeping Potomac River, the two seven-member negotiating teams were reportedly enjoying a good rapport under the eye of a US team led by special envoy Dennis Ross.

"There has developed a very cordial working relationship there," State Department spokesman James Rubin told

reporters as a fourth day of talks was conducted away from the glare of the cameras at Bolling Air Force Base in Washington.

It's clear that both sides like and respect each other, and we think that is an important ingredient in ultimately being able to reach agreement," he added.

The teams have given Ross a vow of silence that in theory will aid negotiations, and so far no expressions of either frustration or outright optimism have leaked from either side.

But another hint of Middle Eastern optimism at the onset of Washington's cherry blossom



Kultida Yenprasert, 21,(C), receives congratulations from Thailand's two former Miss Universe Porntip Narkhrankankon (R), and Apatsara Hongsakul (L), after she was crowned Miss Thailand 2000 late Friday in Bangkok. Kultida will represent Thailand in the next Miss Universe pageant in Cyprus.

— AFP photo