

## Mamata's Trinamool fails

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screenwriter.

Jayalalitha's AIADMK got a sweeping two-thirds majority with 187 of the 231 results declared for a 234-member house. The ruling DMK was left way behind with only 42 seats.

However, Jayalalitha cannot for the time being become chief minister of the state as she has been convicted in a corruption case. A local court had even barred her from contesting elections.

But Jayalalitha declared Sunday that she would fulfil the wishes of her voters.

"People have given their mandate for me to rule the state. This vote is for me to assume leadership of the state. Putting anyone else in that place would mean disrespect to the verdict of the people. We cannot afford to do this," she told the private Star TV network.

Another of Vajpayee's key allies at the national level, the Asom Gana

Parishad, was also set to lose badly, getting only 26 of the 95 declared results against 52 won by Sonia Gandhi's party.

The Congress was also seen returning to power in Pondicherry, a former French colony, getting 14 of the 30 seats in the provincial house.

Analysts and political leaders said that the outcome of the elections could mean trouble for premier Vajpayee in New Delhi.

"Ultimately, this will have a direct bearing on the ruling federal coalition," said political analyst Anand Ojha.

Communist leader Sitaram Yechury, whose party will form a government in West Bengal for the sixth consecutive term, said the defeat of Vajpayee's ally in Tamil Nadu and the resurgence of opposition parties in other states signal troubled times for Vajpayee in the near future.

"The ball is already rolling and it is gaining momentum," he said.

## LDCs to press for more ODA

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countries with a total population of 630 million as officially "least-developed". The number of LDCs in late '70s was 25.

The criteria include a per-capita income of less than \$100, low levels of health, nutrition and education development, and economic vulnerability.

WTO trade regime marginalises their economies, and many of them spend most of their incomes on debt servicing.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh, as a coordinator and mouthpiece for 49 least developed countries in international forums, has prepared two volumes of country documents to place in the conference. The Bangladesh papers will reflect the demands and aspirations of LDCs as a whole, officials said.

Bangladesh, on behalf of the group, will urge the rich nations for

debt relief to help LDCs mobilise more resources for social sector.

"Besides, Dhaka will appeal for more flow of official development aid from rich countries, as the LDCs are yet to get sufficient flow of FDI to compensate for diminishing flow of ODA," one official hinted.

LDC share in FDI inflow is still very negligible and reduced ODA has stranded their development agenda while they are largely marginalised in the WTO trade regime.

Bangladesh may also raise the issue of easing the WTO rules of origin to derive benefits from free market access, already offered by EU and would request other rich nations for the same.

Free flow of labor, as of capital, may also come up as a demand from the LDC camp.

## Mamata resigns as Trinamool chief

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the public, I will accept it."

Her dramatics, however, continued. In the evening she resigned from the Trinamool Congress. One had to call it a resignation from the Trinamool, simply because she does not officially hold any position in the party.

Pankaj Bandopadhyay, the party spokesperson, said, "She is resigning as a mark of protest against the rigging of the CPIM and the failure of the EC to provide a safe atmosphere for the voters."

When journalists asked Pankaj Bandopadhyay as to what was the position from which Mamata was resigning, he said, "She is the head of the party even though she does not have a post officially. She can do anything that she likes."

Pankaj, however, informed that efforts were on to persuade her to withdraw her resignation. When asked whether Mamata had sent her resignation to Ajit Panja, who incidentally is the chairperson of the party in West Bengal, Pankaj left the room in a huff. And all heaved a sigh of relief.

Later on, when this correspondent tried to talk to Mamata by impersonating as a foreign reporter, she came on the phone. When asked what was the reason for such a poor show, she said, "You call this polling. Everywhere massive rigging has taken place."

When asked as to why she had put on a show of confidence from Thursday onwards after the polls

"On the other hand, the CPI (M) has utilised the state machinery to remain in power. If the EC had been fair, the results in 50 other constituencies would have been quite different from what they are at present."

Pranab Mukherjee, however, was not ready to make any remark. "We have to sit down and analyse where we went wrong."

## BNP may write to Speaker

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Aktheruzzaman were cancelled after they were expelled from BNP and letters in this regard were sent to the Speaker. The EC after hearing the cases declared their seats vacant.

Our Chittagong Correspondent Shahidul Islam quoting sources adds: The expelled BNP lawmaker held another meeting on Saturday night with some selected members of 'now defunct' NDP at his hill-top bungalow at Goods Hill Road in the port city.

In the meeting, Chowdhury reportedly asked his men to take preparations for holding a 'huge' public meeting at Lalbagh Maidan in Chittagong within the next 15 days in a bid to regain his 'lost popularity'.

Meanwhile, about 50-60 armed men loyal to SQ Chowdhury were seen moving on board 7-8 microbuses with sophisticated arms in Roazerhat, Ghatchak, Lehkhali, Chandraghona Daboshibazar and some other areas in Rangunia on Saturday evening.

Besides, Chowdhury's supporters also brought out several processions and organised rallies led by notorious NDP terrorist Ezlas alias 'Ezlassya', who is accused in as many as 25 criminal cases including murder, abduction and robbery, sources said.

Meanwhile, court proceedings of a case filed in 1997, in which SQ Chowdhury was charged with 22 more BNP stalwarts, 'halted for a while' at the Court Building in Chittagong yesterday morning as some supporters shouted slogans in favour of Chowdhury.

The incident took place at about 11:20 am in front of the room of First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court. The judge drew the attention of SQ Chowdhury and asked him to 'remove' his men from the court premises.

After the proceedings ended, the supporters organised a rally in front of the Court Building in which SQ Chowdhury was the only speaker.

BNP Chittagong city unit's former general secretary Ekramul Karim, BNP leader MA Hamid and Shawkat Azam Khwaja were present.

Later, they brought out a procession led by SQ Chowdhury which paraded the main roads of the port city.

## PMO pushes

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The Roads and Railways Division.

Meantime, the next fiscal year's ADP has been fixed at Tk 18,500 crore. Strikingly, the share of local resource in next year's development programme has significantly shrunk.

According to sources, project aid for next year's ADP has been estimated at Tk 8,219 crore, up nearly ten per cent from this year's Tk 7,473 crore. On the other hand, local resource input has been fixed at Tk 10,281, down three per cent from this year's Tk 10,607 crore.

Figures show that although it went for an ambitious ADP this year, the government has suddenly scaled down its development outlay by around 5.7 per cent.

Meanwhile, pace of spending under the ADP has picked up and about Tk 8,210 crore was spent during the July-February period, accounting for 47 per cent of the budgeted ADP, nearly 14 per cent higher than the spending during the same time of the previous year.

The revised ADP and that for the next fiscal would be approved at the May 20 ECNEC meeting, to be presided over by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.



PHOTO: AFP

Representatives of the House of Lords led by Rt Hon. Peter Shore (L) called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Claridge's Hotel in London on Saturday. Sheikh Hasina is on a 6-day European tour.

## Border disputes should be resolved

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gate that the BDR had acted on its own during the reclamation operation of Padua.

"No action is taken by the BDR without the 'connivance and clearance' of the government," he said. "As a former BDR chief I know how military decisions are cleared by the political leadership."

He suggested that the Bangladesh envoy to New Delhi be recalled for his "recent actions and indiscretions."

Both former BDR chiefs and several retired military officers present at the seminar said that the BDR acted valiantly during the recent clashes with the Indian forces.

The former officers and several other participants praised the leadership of BDR chief Major General Fazlur Rahman and brushed aside allegations by the Indians that General Rahman committed wrongdoing.

"India has no business to ask for investigation into the BDR activities or the actions of its chief. That is absolutely an internal affair (of Bangladesh)."

General Dasatagir said, "Our forces are second to none and they have withstood the test of being

challenged in a surprise attack."

The speakers were also of the opinion that not only the BDR troops who have been killed, but all those manning the Roumari Border Outpost and some civilians who helped the BDR during the intrusions should be decorated with gallantry awards, as well.

Major General (rtd.) Ibrahim said Bangladesh failed to take advantage of the "propaganda edge" following the uncalled for intrusion by the BSF.

"Bangladesh," he said, "succeeded in achieving military victory but failed to obtain diplomatic victory."

He said there is no crisis management mechanism in Bangladesh. The prime minister, he said, should have sat with a few political and military leaders to handle the border crisis.

Abul Hashim, a former secretary and ambassador, said Bangladesh must pursue a more proactive foreign policy.

Other speakers criticised the manner in which the government handled the border situation and its failure to inform the public about its position regarding the crisis.

Faruk Aziz Khan, Member of the Parliament, lauded the BDR action

and said the government acted well to defuse the situation by taking proper diplomatic steps.

Ishaque Aziz Ulfat, a freedom fighter, said that the people of Bangladesh will never accept foreign aggression and that it would be wise to go for compulsory military training for all. Major (rtd.) Hafiz also stressed upon the need for compulsory military training.

Brigadier (rtd.) Miron Hamidur Rahman said the official and semi-official propaganda by the Indians was "very lopsided and presented a negative picture of Bangladesh".

"We have fought for Bangladesh in 1971 because it was in our interest. They have fought against Pakistan in 1971, because it was in their interest."

Other speakers included Barrister Moinul Hossein, Chairman of the Editorial Board of the Daily Ittefaq, Prof. Emazuddin Ahmed, former Vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, Ferdous Ahmed Qureshi, Prof. Aftab Ahmed, Prof. Dilara Chowdhury of Jahangirnagar University, Advocate Salma Islam, former MP Major (rtd.) Akhteruzzaman, columnist Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury and journalist Mizanur Rahman Khan.

## Board to meet ahead of schedule

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colonels to the rank of brigadier general. The Board is also due to 'approve' promotion of brigadier generals to the rank of major general.

Normally the Board meets in August or September for dealing with promotion cases.

Last year, it met on August 30 and 31 and promoted 31 Lt. Colonels and 16 Colonels.

In October last year, the government decided to re-designate brigadier as brigadier general and also changed some designations of other ranks (ORs), revising the British colonial system and adopting the US model. The change was made to make the designations more compatible with participation of Bangladesh Army officers and soldiers in UN peace keeping operations.

As regards promotion to the rank of major general, priority is likely to be given to those officers who are

holding officiating or acting positions while some others may be promoted considering vacancies.

Those likely to be promoted to the position of major general are: Brigadier General Tareq Siddiqui, now officiating as Adjutant General; Brigadier General Ishaq Ibrahim, now officiating as GOC of Bogra Division and Brigadier General Abdul Wadood, now serving as Acting Engineer-in-chief.

The others being considered for promotion are: Brigadier General Shahabuddin Sikder, head of the SSF; Brigadier General Mahboob Alam, Military Secretary to the PM and Brigadier General Shafeyul Islam, posted at Savar.

Two officers tipped for promotion to the rank of major general originally belonged to the now defunct Jatiya Rakhi Bahini (JRB) while most others belong to the second Short Service Commission of BMA.

Some sources said that in 1996, at the initiative of the Prime Minister, a full-fledged Army Promotion Board was formed and it followed proper procedures to look into cases of promotion. All senior army officers welcomed it. A similar board should be set up to consider competent ones for promotion this time also, they said.

In the past, there were complaints that due to absence of written criteria, many officers with commendable performance were deprived of promotion. Personal liking sometimes mattered more than professional competence, sources said.

Promotion of an army officer is normally held up if any major general in the Army Promotion Board raises objection. Similarly, if all generals in the Board agree to promote an officer, objection by the Chief of Army Staff who is Chairman of the Board, often overrules it.

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Our Correspondent from Rajshahi adds: 1551 examinees were expelled in different districts under Rajshahi Education Board yesterday 163 in Rajshahi, 19 in Natore, 44 in Chapainawabganj, 47 in Pabna, 179 in Sirajganj, 87 in Bogra, 131 in Rangpur, 253 in Lalmonirhat, 84 in Kurigram, 253 in Gaibandha, 104 in Nilphamari and 187 in Thakurgaon.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh College Teachers Association (BCTA) urged the government to immediately form a task force to review the existing public examination system.

BCTA President Prof. Quazi Faruque Ahmed and General Secretary Principal Asadul Haque in a statement also expressed concern over assault on teachers on duty at different examination centres.

The teacher leaders demanded exemplary punishment to miscreants and proper treatment and compensation for the injured teachers.

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