

33,000 security personnel mobilised in 3 cities

Polls campaign ends tonight

NAZRUL ISLAM

Electioneering for Thursday's city corporation polls ends at the zero hour tonight with the people still feeling insecure.

About 33,000 security personnel, including the members of the army, have started taking positions in the violence-prone city zones from last night as the Election Commission (EC) has taken unprecedented security measures in a bid to restore confidence among the voters and ensure peaceful polling.

About 1,500 army troops were deployed in the capital yesterday along with 1,200 paramilitary BDR, 11,252 police men, 1,740 armed police battalion, 16,104 anasir personnel.

Hectic campaigns by the contenders in three metropolises -- Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi also marked the penultimate day of canvassing.

The EC has announced the election day a government holiday. Voting will continue from 8 in the morning to 4:00pm on the day.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4



Double murder in Badda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two young men were shot dead by unidentified gunmen at Shimultala in the city's South Badda area yesterday.

Mohammad Sumon, 28 and Mohammad Hiron, 30, were sitting in front of a tea stall at about 2:45 pm. Suddenly, a gang of five came there and fired on them, killing them on the spot, sources at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) said.

Another young man, Monir Hossain and a pedestrian, Mohammad Sohel, were also hit with stray bullets.

SEE PAGE 11 CO 7

DIG, five SPs retired

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A deputy inspector general of police (DIG) and five superintendents of police (SP) were given forced retirement yesterday.

Abul Kashem Hawlader, DIG of Dhaka range and Mizanur Rahman, Jahangir Hossain, Awlad Hossain, Altaf Hossain Molla and Anisur Rahman all superintendents of police were given forced retirement yesterday.

No specific charges were brought against the said police officers cases to send them on force retirement, sources said.

Another sources said that the said police officers were promoted illegally for their close ties with the government during Awami League Government.

Earlier, the present government sent three additional Inspector general of police, five Deputy

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

Nor'wester kills 12, injures 400 in 3 northern districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT

At least 12 people were killed and over 400 injured as nor'westers ploughed through several upazilas in Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat and Netrokona districts Sunday night, leaving a trail of devastation.

Nor'westers also hit areas in Sherpur, Bogra and Rangpur districts but no casualties were reported.

Eight people were killed and 270 injured when a nor'wester battered areas under the Sadar, Gobindaganj, Sadullahpur and Shaghata upazilas in Gaibandha, uprooting electric poles and trees, damaging houses and crops.

The severe storm accompanied with rains blew away scores of tin-shed houses and even razed concrete structures to the ground at places, the district administration said yesterday.

The dead were identified as Kabila, 55 and Kasiran, 72 of Mohimaganj village under Gobindaganj upazila;

Tasiran, 56, of Baniyerjan village under sadar upazila; Parveen Begum, 20 and Enayet Ali, 50, of Sonatola village and Jainab Begum, 45 and Dalu, 32, of Kalupurpa village under Shaghata upazila.

Another victim at Khoratkha village under Shaghata upazila is yet to be identified.

The injured are being treated at different hospitals.

Power supply to Gaibandha town remained snarled as the nor'wester uprooted a good number electric poles.

BSS reported from Lalmonirhat that at least two persons were killed and two hundred injured when a nor'wester swept over four upazilas in Lalmonirhat district Sunday night.

The dead were identified as Asma Beoya, 65, of Gobardhan village and Hashimuddin, 60, of Mohishkhocha village under Aditmari upazila.

The storms damaged a large number of houses,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Armed gang slays Buddhist monk inside Raozan temple

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Buddhist monk was slain in the early hours of yesterday at a temple in Hingla village under Raozan thana in the district.

The victim, Ganojyoti Mohasthobir, 52, was in charge of the Hoara Puyan Buddha Bihar -- a temple-cum-orphanage.

As many as 22 armed men, led by local gangster Azizul Haq, forced their way into the monastery, tied and blindfolded the 'sebok' (religious servant) and killed the monk at around 12:30am, police said. The assailants hit him on the head and stabbed him.

The assailants entered the monastery by climbing the compound wall.

Although the motive behind the killing could not be known immediately, the extortion and land-grabbing might have led to the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8



PHOTO: STAR

Buddhist monks parade down the streets in Raozan in a mourning procession yesterday, protesting the killing of Ganojyoti Mohasthobir, a monk.

Police security for 'listed criminal'!

STAR REPORT

Mirpur police are providing armed security to a 'listed criminal' who is a ward commissioner candidate in the Dhaka City Corporation but have arrested another candidate who has no case with the thana, sources said.

Sayedur Rahman alias Newton, a nominee of the four party alliance in Mirpur Ward No. 8, has 12 criminal cases against him, including those of murder, rape and extortion, the sources said. He is on bail now.

Apart from deployment of armed policemen at his house at Mirpur-1, police escort Newton when he attends public rallies for polls campaign, witnesses and local residents alleged.

Driving a luxurious Nissan Petrol and surrounded by armed cadres, Newton is spending huge amounts of money everyday in his election campaign, including a daily payment of Tk 15,000 for hiring an elephant although he has no known legal source of income. Elephant is his election symbol.

Police arrested Saidul Islam Chowdhury Ripon, another candidate in ward, on April 9 under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Some of his supporters alleged that Newton got him arrested to ensure his (Newton's) victory although there was no case against him with Mirpur thana.

"The April 25 election is now just

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Govt takes conservative path to next budget

INAM AHMED

Close the gap between flagrant expenditure and trickling cash flow -- that's what the finance ministry is gunning for as it formulates the budget for the next fiscal.

According to sources, the ministry has already set the fiscal deficit at 4.4 per cent for FY03, beginning from July, considerably down from the current fiscal's target of six per cent.

Deficit financing till December this fiscal has already been perched on an elevated path at Tk 7,734 crore, with Tk 2,240 crore in net

foreign financing and Tk 5,194.66 crore in domestic financing. Last year, deficit financing for the same period was Tk 5,430 crore.

However, there are indications that revenue expenditure slated for the next fiscal is insignificantly expansionary, if inflation is adjusted.

The ministry has set Tk 23,050 crore revenue expenditure for the new financial year, up by 4.59 per cent from the current fiscal's Tk 22,038 crore.

At the same time, the ministry plans an ambitious Tk 31,750 crore revenue income, 16.56 per cent up from this year's Tk 27,239 crore.

The ADP for the new fiscal has been set at Tk 18,500 crore, compared to last year's original Tk 19,000 crore, which was later scaled down to Tk 16,000 crore.

According to sources, the ministry has taken a 'realistic' view on foreign aid and loan availability and scaled down foreign aid inflow to Tk 8,069 crore next fiscal from this year's Tk 9,074 crore.

However, non-NBR resource mobilisation still looks gloomy and so does income from autonomous bodies. The exception is the Bangladesh Telegraph and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

New BB rule causes fresh loan default concerns

STAR REPORT

A new Bangladesh Bank (BB) definition of down payment to reschedule default loans has created fresh concern among bankers, who

think it would encourage borrowers to default on their payment obligations.

The central bank has recently advised some commercial banks that they can reschedule a term loan by taking 10 per cent down payment on the instalment/s that the borrower has defaulted on.

This new rule is miles apart from

the previous practice and has in a way bent the definition of defaulters, bankers said.

The thumb rule that the banks have so far followed is that once a borrower defaulted on instalments, the entire amount was deemed default loan.

As such, the borrower needed to pay 10 per cent of the loan amount, not of the defaulted instalment, as down payment for rescheduling.

"The new Bangladesh Bank directive will make it difficult to realise loans from borrowers," said the managing director of a private

commercial bank. "For example, a borrower, who has a Tk 10 lakh instalment due, can easily avoid paying it. All he has to do is default on the amount. And then he can just pay Tk 1 lakh as 10 per cent down payment of the defaulted instalment and then get his loan repayment period extended."

A top BB official also admitted that there were scopes for misuse of the new rule. But he said the relax

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

13 Dhaka mayor candidates observe token hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With prospects of an election victory ever high due largely to an AL boycott of the April 25 Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) polls, ruling coalition's mayoral nominee in Dhaka Sadek Hossain Khoka continues with his ministerial job, prompting allegations from his rival candidates of influencing the elections.

None of the 19 other aspirants to the coveted office of city father in the capital is anywhere close to Khoka, who finds no contest from the Awami League as the main opposition is boycotting the city polls apprehending unfairness in the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Loan rescheduling of Rahman Group raises more questions

M SHAMSUR RAHMAN

The Bangladesh Bank has asked Sonali Bank to come up with suggestions about allegations of coercion and persuasion of and threats to its officials in waiver of Tk 46 crore in interest and rescheduling of Tk 173.82 crore loans of Rahman Group.

Sonali Bank last week approved rescheduling of loans of 11 enterprises of the group. The waived interest includes Tk 11 crore in applied interest. Although the Sonali Bank board recommended the rescheduling, the facility will be subject to clearance from the central bank.

"A letter stating the threats to the officials was sent to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) which was redirected to the Bangladesh Bank," a top bank source said.

He said the central bank then asked Sonali Bank to look into the matter but the board instead waived interest and allowed rescheduling of Tk 173.82 crore although the required down payment was not made.

The SB went ahead with the decision knowing well that the loans were not secured in at least five organisations. And, being convinced that the loans would not be realised Sonali Bank as a last resort filed as many as seven cases against seven of companies of Rahman Group between February 23, 2000 and February 27, 2000.

Insiders say the latest interest waiver and loan rescheduling testify to the fact the powerful lobby succeeded in pressuring the bank board to approve the rescheduling facilities in violation of banking rules.

Rahman Group started securing loans from Sonali Bank since 1990,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Graft case against Motia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) yesterday filed a graft case against former agriculture minister and Awami League (AL) leader Motia Chowdhury and nine other people accusing them of causing a loss of about Tk 13.31 crore to the state coffer.

Inspector (Taskforce) of BAC Syed Tahsinul Huq filed the case with the Ramna police station.

In its case the BAC mentioned that Motia and others misappropriated about Tk 13.31 crore from the state coffer in the name of importing rice.

While in power, Motia Chowdhury ordered import of 12,000 tons rice from India and made payment to the exporter before delivery of goods. But the ship, which was carrying the rice, did not reach country's port, the BAC said in its case.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Bid to abduct schoolboy in city frightens parents

MORSHED ALI KHAN

The abortive abduction of a schoolboy in Mirpur on Saturday has spread panic among thousands of parents and guardians at one of the largest schools in the country.

A profound sense of insecurity has gripped the parents who are flocking to the school gate escorting their children at the start and break of classes at the 8,000-student-strong Monipur High School.

The usual school vans carrying hundreds of students everyday have been rendered unemployed ever since the frightened parents

took up the job to shuttle between the school and home. The resultant rush is also creating an impossible situation at the school gates and on the narrow streets of Monipur and Roopnagar, where the school annexes are situated.

The management of the school has held meetings over the situation but has categorically denied that the 'abduction' took place after the school refused to pay local extortions a sum a Tk 8 lakh recently.

Abdul Hamid, the representative of the parents and guardians at the ten-member school committee, told The Daily Star that the management

had also held talks with the police and had informed them about the current situation at the school.

According to the guardians, local hoodlums recently demanded the money threatening that any refusal would result in abduction of the school children.

"There was an alleged abduction on Saturday but the victim, a class VII student of the school, returned home in the evening. His parents refused to talk to us about the incident and the child has skipped classes ever since. We are not sure if it was an incident of abduction or truancy," Sheikh Sabdar Ali, the

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

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RANGS TOSHIBA

WORLD CUP QUIZ

Round 1 on Page 15