



PHOTO: STAR

Election preparation... army men guard a city polling centre as part of the massive security measure for the city corporation polls; ballot boxes are being unloaded; and campaigners canvass with umbrellas, replica of deer and cock.

## Far-right candidate lands a bombshell in French polls

Jospin knocked out of presidential run-off, to quit politics

AFP, Paris

France, shocked by the triumph of extreme-right politician Jean-Marie Le Pen in the first round of two-stage presidential elections, united in a backlash against him yesterday to halt his advance.

Le Pen caused a political upheaval Sunday when he made it through to the run-off of the country's presidential election, pushing Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin into third place.

The 73-year-old leader of the National Front, widely condemned for his hardline views on immigration, won over 17 percent of the vote, and will now confront his arch-rival President Jacques Chirac in the deciding second round on May

5, according to provisional results. It was the first time a far-right candidate has won through to the second round of a French presidential vote, marking a humiliating defeat for Jospin, once considered the front-runner in the poll.

Polls show Le Pen has no chance of unseating incumbent centre-right President Jacques Chirac in the run-off poll.

The surveys credit Le Pen, a 73-year-old ex-paratrooper who runs on an anti-immigration, anti-EU ticket, with no more than 20 percent of the vote.

But his stunning second place behind Chirac, 69, in Sunday's first round profoundly disoriented France and alarmed its EU neighbours, including Germany and the

Netherlands, which are also heading into elections.

Protests erupted around the country overnight after the results became clear, and more took place Monday, threatening to grow into an anti-Le Pen groundswell that could carry through to the May election.

Politicians from the left and the right urged the French to massively rally behind Chirac, if not to give him a second mandate, then at least to stall Le Pen's disconcerting rise and salvage France's international standing.

Chirac and others also went into emergency meetings to come up with strategies to stop Le Pen's National Front from capitalising on the upset in legislative elections that

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Jacques Chirac



Lionel Jospin



Jean-Marie Le Pen

## Hasina leaves for London

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her party is always in favour of joining parliament, but the "ruling alliance has blocked the way by making parliament ineffective and resorting to torture on opposition."

"Obviously, we want to go to parliament. But the government does not want the existence of opposition," she told newsmen at the VIP lounge of Zia International Airport prior to her departure for London in the morning.

Hasina said if opposition Awami League joined parliament, it would raise the issues of "terrorism, corruption and other misdeeds" of the government. "This they don't want, they want to eliminate the opposition."

"We are not joining parliament considering the overall situation," the Awami League chief said and accused the government of introducing repressive laws one after another and continuing its torture on the people including AL workers.

Asked if she personally received any offer of discussion from the government, Hasina replied in the negative.

"On the one hand, the government is torturing the people and the Awami League workers, on the other, the prime minister is sending bouquet," she said.

During the UK visit, Hasina will stay in London for 15 days, meet her younger sister Sheikh Rehana and work on the translation of a personal diary of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. She is expected to return home on May 6.

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## Malaysian envoy sees vast scope for trade, investment

M ANWARUL HAQ

Bangladesh and Malaysia have a tremendous scope for enhancement of cooperation in industrial exchange, manpower development, investment promotion and growth of tourism.

"The two countries with a shared cultural and religious heritage could explore several areas to make an economic leap forward, if we work together," said visiting Minister of Malaysia for Culture, Arts and Tourism Dato Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir in an interview with The Daily Star.

The minister suggested that Bangladesh take initiatives to send trade and investment delegations to Malaysia for talks with various chambers of commerce and industry.

Abdul Kadir said Bangladesh could take advantage of the relocation of labour-intensive industries by entering joint venture enterprises with Malaysian entrepreneurs.

Malaysia was phasing out all labour-intensive industries, including textiles and electronics, and several categories of such industries could easily be relocated to Bangladesh, he pointed out.

"There is an opportunity for Bangladesh. It is up to you to take the initiative," he said.

Over the last few years, his country has extensively focussed



Abdul Kadir

on setting up high-tech industries because of what he said shortage of local manpower and the increasing number of Malaysian graduates qualifying for high paid jobs, he explained.

The Malaysian minister said his country had a population of only 23 million that perhaps could enable it to make a quantum leap in acquiring hi-technology.

Ten million constitute the workforce, of them some two million foreigners are legally or illegally involved in the Malaysian job market.

He said the Bangladeshi workers have earned a good reputation and

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## Planned steps needed to improve quality of edn: Khaleda

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday underlined the need for immediate planned steps to improve quality of education to help Bangladesh occupy a prestigious place in the global economy.

She said that if planned initiatives for ensuring quality of education in the open and independent 21st century world economy -- based on knowledge and efficiency -- were not taken, Bangladesh would lag behind in the global competition.

"I think emphasis should be laid not only on quantity but on quality on an emergency basis," said the prime minister while inaugurating the first-ever Education for All Week at the China-Bangladesh Friendship Auditorium here.

Khaleda said her government had taken up steps to improve the standard of education and involve uneducated children, juveniles and adults, who could not participate in the formal institutional education, in the non-formal education programme.

Describing primary education as the foundation of all forms of education, the prime minister said that her government had mapped out effective steps to consolidate the base of primary education by ensuring highest investment in the field.

Observed at the call of UNESCO, the programme was addressed also by Prime Minister's Advisor on Primary and Mass

Education Prof. Jahanara Begum, Secretary to the Primary and Mass Education Division Dr. Tahmina Hossain, UNESCO Country Director and UN Country Coordinator Jorgen Lissner and Director General of the Directorate of Non-formal Education AKM Delwar Hossain.

Ministers, diplomats, representatives of donor countries, teachers and educationists were present.

Describing illiteracy as one of the major reasons of poverty, the prime minister said, "Poverty and illiteracy are deeply related. We must remove the darkness of illiteracy, if we want to root out poverty. Each citizen should be educated."

She said Bangladesh had already achieved the declaration of ensuring equal access for girls to education by removing male-female discrimination in primary education as adopted in the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. She said the ratio of admission of male and female students to school is now 51:49.

She urged teachers to be imbued with ideals to make the programmes of education for all a success. The prime minister urged all to turn education programme into a social movement.

In her speech, Prof. Jahanara Begum said the rate of literacy in the country now stands at 66 per cent and hoped that the country would be freed from illiteracy by the year 2006.

## 14 die in Kashmir violence

AFP, Srinagar

Fourteen people were killed in insurgency-linked violence overnight and yesterday in Indian-administered Kashmir, where police arrested a prominent human rights activist, officials said.

Indian and Pakistani troops also exchanged fire over their disputed border, they said.

Indian security forces yesterday shot dead five militants near the highway township of Banihal, 120 kilometres (75 miles) south of Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar, an army spokesman said in Jammu, the winter capital.

He said the five separatists, all of them foreigners, were shot dead during a cordon and search operation by the security forces.

Three militants of the Jaish-e-Mohammed rebel group were also shot dead by troops in the village of Dardpora in the northern Kupwara district during a six-hour encounter, police said.

Jaish is one of two Pakistani-based militant groups India blames for a December 13 attack on its parliament, which killed 14 and triggered a standoff on its borders with Pakistan.

Islamabad has banned the two outfits, but India wants Pakistan to hand over 20 alleged militant leaders before it withdraws troops from the border.

Five more militants and a civilian were also killed in fighting in the insurgency-wracked territory.

Meanwhile, police in Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar arrested leading human rights activist Ahsan Untoo from a hotel overnight.

"I had planned to go on a hunger strike today (Monday) against the increasing anti-people activities of Ikhwan," Untoo told AFP from Srinagar's Ram Munshi Bagh police station.

Ikhwan is a pro-India militant group, which was formed in 1994 by former separatists and works

closely with security agencies to battle the rebels.

Last week its members allegedly shot dead five civilians in the northern Baramulla district. Two Ikhwan members were arrested and charged with murder.

Meanwhile, Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged small- and medium-range fire over the disputed Kashmir border in the Jammu division.

A defence ministry spokesman accused Pakistani troops of opening unprovoked fire at Indian positions along international border and the line of control -- the de facto border that divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

## OC, 2 cops hurt in clash with supporters of candidate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The OC and two constables of Mirpur police station in the city were injured in a clash between a police team and supporters of an independent candidate for the Darus Salam Road in Mirpur yesterday.

Mirpur police said supporters of Iqbal Hossain Titu were holding a rally on the road blocking traffic. The OC, Mahfuzul Alam, went there at about 5:17 pm and asked them to clear the road. But they refused and clashed with the police team.

The OC and constables Mohammad Didar and Mohammad Manjur were taken to a hospital for treatment, police said.

Another sources said last night that after the incident, several policemen from Mirpur thana went to the candidate's residence at Mirpur and kept it cordoned.

## Speedy trial court tries first case in city

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The enforcement of the recently enacted Law and Order Disruption Crimes (Speedy Trial) Act began in the capital city yesterday.

One of the four speedy trial courts in the city started functioning yesterday with an extortion case filed with Mohammadpur police station.

Mohammadpur police produced Mohammad Rana before the

speedy trial court, Dhaka at 3:00 pm yesterday with a forwarding report.

In the report, police said seven local extortionists went to the Nabinagar Housing Project in Mohammadpur area at about 11:00 am on Sunday and demanded Tk 50,000 from contractor Abu Hanif who supplies sand to the project.

The miscreants opened fire on

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## 4 suspected Hazarimen held AL activist shot dead in Feni

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Feni

An Awami League activist was shot dead in Sonagazi upazila in the district yesterday.

Mahbubul Hoque, 40, son of Abul Khair of Sharparupur village, worked as a peon at the Hazi Saiful Islam High School.

An armed gang of ten, allegedly belonging to the BNP, fired on

Mahbubul Hoque at the school. He died instantly. Delwar Hossain, who came forward to help him, was also injured, police said.

Earlier in a predawn raid yesterday, the army and BDR personnel arrested four armed criminals suspected to be members of the former lawmaker Joynal Hazari's 'class committee'.

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## Three UPDF men killed in gunfight with PCJSS

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Three activists of United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), killed in a gunbattle with PCJSS activists on Saturday, were recovered from Kaptai lake yesterday.

They were identified as Proshan Chakma, 45, Lengra Kanti Chakma, 50, and Shujan Chakma, 25.

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