

## Polls results of ten pourasavas

UNB, Dhaka

Results of election in 10 out of 13 pourasavas held yesterday were available till 10:40 last night.

Those unofficially declared elected chairman are: Golapganj Zakaria Ahmed (2,888 votes), Mirersarai M Abul Faruk Miah (3,373 votes), Borolekha Abdul Malik (2,650 votes), Dhirai Hajee Ahmad Mia (2,796 votes), Goalundu M Nizam Sheikh (3,460 votes), Jaldhaka Anwarul Kabir Chowdhury (9,013 votes), Fulbaria Mujibar Rahman (4,562 votes), Mirzapur Mosarrif Hossain Moni (4,137 votes), Phulpur M Shahjahan (2,676 votes) and Gangni M Amirul Islam (6,171 votes).

Results of 3 pourasavas Shakhipur, Katiadi and Sitakunda were yet to reach the Election Commission.

The first elections in 13 new pourasavas were held almost peacefully.

The Daily Star Correspondent in Chittagong adds: out of nine polling centers of Sitakunda, turn up of voters at three centers was thin as some miscreants exploded crackers creating panic. They allegedly threatened the minority people there on the previous night.

A group of miscreants also reportedly exploded a cracker at Alam Shafi Primary School centre in the early morning while another group harassed minority voters at Sitakunda College and Primary School centers.

The administration deployed BDR personnel apart from police to avert any untoward incidents.

Election to 193 pourasavas out of 251 in the country was held earlier.

## Naogaon stranger is a Nepalese criminal, not Mashayaki

BSS, Naogaon

All speculations about the identity of the mysterious foreigner living in a Naogaon village came to an end yesterday when the sister of the missing Japanese national categorically declared that the stranger is not her brother Arayama Mashayaki.

"He is not my missing brother, nor he is a Japanese," said Koga Michiyo, sister of a Japanese engineer who was missing from Cox's Bazar sea beach over two decades ago.

Local people now suspect the stranger to be a notorious Nepalese citizen who has taken refuge in their sleepy village to escape punishment for crimes he might have committed in his country.

Michiyo, reading newspaper reports, arrived in this remote village of Chapainagar, 16 km southwest of Joypurhat, yesterday morning with the hope to meet her missing brother.

With tears in her eyes, a disappointed and disheartened Michiyo told reporters, "I am shocked not finding out my brother here, but I am grateful to newsmen in Bangladesh who filed reports about my missing brother."

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# Rice from Bhomra land port looted

## Border trade suspended as criminals allegedly backed by local MP beat up customs officials

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

A group of criminals allegedly belonging to a local lawmaker forcibly took away six trucks of rice from the Bhomra land port on Sunday night at gunpoint, customs officials alleged.

They also assaulted customs officials and ransacked offices. Border trade at the port was stopped following the incident.

Probal Store, a private importer in Jessore town, imported eight metric tones of rice by allegedly under-invoicing the same and declaring them as animal feed on Sunday evening. But customs officials seized the consignment.

The clearing and forwarding (C&F) agent of the importing firm pressurised the customs officials to clear the consignment. Ali Kador, a local lawmaker, owns the

C&F agency.

But as the customs authorities refused the release of the goods, a group of 40 miscreants allegedly led by Robiul, Hobby, Wahidul, Shaheen, Mahub, Sharafat and Rahim, who enjoy blessings of the local BNP, attacked the customs office, assaulted the officials and ransacked furniture.

Two customs inspectors Tayub Rahman and Sudhir Kumar were wounded in the attack.

The attackers forced the customs officials into signing the clearance certificate of the consignment, holding Customs Superintendent Shivupada Das at gunpoint, witnesses said.

The miscreants later picked up a widow (name withheld) of the nearby Luxmidari village, stripped her and forcibly took her snaps with the customs superintendent.

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## Committee on gas to minimise difference of opinions

UNB, Dhaka

Determining the country's gas asset and its demand up to the year 2050, the national committee on gas reserve decided to narrow the difference of opinions among its members over the estimates.

The committee accepted the US Geological Survey and Petrobranga study report to determine the reserve put at 32.5 TCF. It fixed the demand of gas up to 2050 from 45 to 175 TCF, taking into account three, four, five, six and seven per cent energy-intensified GDP growth in the country.

With this major development, the national body at a meeting yesterday decided to launch a fresh bid to minimise the differences on reserves. The committee members agreed to reach a consensus following a request from its chairman and

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PHOTO: KAMRUL AHSAN

Workers recover Tk 30 lakh worth of 'Sundari' timber from the Bhairab River at Rupsha in Khulna yesterday in presence of the taskforce that consists of forest officials, coast guards and policemen. A group of timber traders in connivance with some corrupt forest officials are involved in felling trees in the Sundarbans.

# Major success story

## US State Dept journal praises Bangladesh's performance in food, agri sectors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's accomplishments in transforming its "devastated" agricultural sector into one of the most productive farm economies in South Asia is a major success story.

The observation was made in the current issue (volume 7, number 2, May 2002) of the Economic Perspective, an electronic journal of the US State Department.

In an article titled, 'Food and Agriculture in Bangladesh: A Success Story,' the journal further noted, "The close cooperation between the government of Bangladesh, research institutions, and international development agencies suggest that Bangladesh can move beyond self-sufficiency and that agriculture and agribusiness are going to remain the bedrock of Bangladesh's economy for years to come."

Bangladesh's agriculture sector is "the most open and least subsidised in South Asia", the article noted.

Gordon West, a former USAID Director in Bangladesh, who had long been involved in the country's agriculture, wrote the article. West is now Deputy Assistant Administrator at the Asia and Near East Bureau of the USAID (United States Agency for International Development).

The Economic Perspectives is one of the five electronic journals brought out by the Office of International Information Programs of the US Department of States, explaining US government policies to foreign audiences.

The article said, "Once racked by famine and dependent on food imports, the country (Bangladesh) is now essentially self-sufficient in rice, is emerging as a significant exporter of high-value agricultural products, and enjoys the second highest percentage growth in per capita income in South Asia."

About 26 percent of Bangladesh's gross domestic product (GDP) comes from agriculture, including

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## Arafat skips visit to Jenin camp

AP, Jenin Refugee Camp, West Bank

Yasser Arafat scrapped a planned stop in this battered refugee camp yesterday, apparently out of concern he would be heckled and his speech drowned out by several thousand people chanting the names of dead Islamic militants.

Security officials advised the Palestinian leader -- on his first tour of the West Bank since he was confined by Israel forces to Ramallah six months ago -- not to stop among the agitated crowds in the camp, the scene of the heaviest fighting during Israel's recent military offensive.

Arafat visited the town of Jenin and then reached the entrance to the dusty camp, but then left immediately for his next stop, the northern West Bank town of Nablus.

Some residents said people were angered that Arafat's leadership didn't do more to defend them against the Israeli invasion last month.

When two Jordanian desert camouflage helicopters delivered Arafat to a soccer field in Jenin, a crowd of about 500 people greeted him by repeatedly shouting, "Tawalbeh," a reference to Mahmoud Tawalbeh, a prominent fighter and leader of the militant Islamic Jihad who was killed during the April 3-11 battles.

Arafat waded to the crowd and was whisked away in a convoy trailed by some cheering children. He also visited a municipal complex and the tombs of people killed in the fighting.

Arafat's decision to skip the refugee camp came as a surprise. Many houses packed into the cramped camp were leveled by huge Israeli bulldozers toward the end of the fighting.

## Triple murder Hafizur placed on five-day remand

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court yesterday granted five days police remand for Hafizur Rahman, an accused arrested in connection with the sensational triple murder case at Uttar Badda of the city.

Police yesterday produced him before the court of CMM Kazi Miraj Hossain with a prayer for 10 days remand.

The court after hearing prosecution side granted his five days remand.

Police arrested Hafizur Rahman for his alleged involvement in the killing of his wife and two sons.

The horrifying incident took place at their residence at Uttar Badda in the city on Thursday last and the partially decomposed bodies were recovered a day after the killing.

## Rejoinder

Hazi Rafiqul Islam, commissioner of ward no 4 in Mirpur in the city, yesterday denied his involvement in garment's 'waste cloth' business.

He issued a rejoinder to a news item headlined "Crime Links Newton to death", published in The Daily Star on May 11.

"I did neither control waste cloth business nor I have any involvement in it," he said in the rejoinder.

# Likud votes to reject creation of Palestine

AP, Tel Aviv

Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's Likud Party voted yesterday to reject the creation of a Palestinian state, a major defeat for Sharon.

The vote, by a show of hands of members of the Likud Central Committee, was overwhelmingly against accepting the eventual creation of a Palestinian state. Sharon had strongly opposed the resolution and had tried to prevent the vote, concerned that it would increase international pressure on Israel and tie his hands diplomatically.

Though the party body does not have the power to remove Sharon from office, the vote showed his political weakness in his own camp and might limit his effectiveness.

Behind the confrontation with Sharon was ex-premier Benjamin Netanyahu, who has announced his plans to challenge for the party leadership, hoping to be elected prime minister again in place of Sharon.

Only a handful of delegates voted against the Netanyahu-backed resolution, which read, "No Palestinian state will be created west of the Jordan (River)," referring to the area including the West Bank, Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Responding to the vote, Palestinian Cabinet minister Saeb Erekat said it "unmasked many things. This just shows that the war being waged by Israel against the Palestinians is not a war against what they call terror, it's really their

war to maintain the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza." He told The Associated Press that the vote was "a real slap in the face" for US President George W. Bush, who has spoken in favor of setting up a Palestinian state.

"What we have seen tonight is a major and severe blow to all efforts being made to revive the peace process," Erekat told CNN.

"How many Palestinians will wake up tomorrow and say we have nothing to lose?" Erekat asked.

Erekat called on Labour, Likud's main partner in Israel's unity government, to take a stand, and hinted the left-leaning party should quit the ruling coalition.

Opposition to a Palestinian state

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PHOTO: STAR

BDR personnel on guard at the Sitakunda Degree College after Shibir cadres beat up some Hindu voters during the election to Sitakunda Municipality yesterday.

## 3 murders in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three persons including an alleged criminal with a number of cases against him were murdered in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

Sohel alias Pichchi Sohel, 28, an accused in eight cases for crimes in Tejgaon area, was shot by a gang of three unidentified elements at Manik Mia Avenue at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. The gang fled the spot immediately.

Tejgaon police recovered a loaded pistol tied with his (Sohel) waist. They rushed him to Suhrawardi Hospital where doctors declared him dead. His body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Police said Sohel was a terror in the area and some of the cases against him were filed under the explosives act and the Special Power Act.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately.

In another incident, Ruhul Amin, 35, a leather trader, was shot dead by five unidentified persons at Hazaribagh in the early hours of yesterday.

The gang allegedly led by one Monir went to the residence of Amin at Nabipur Lane in the area and called him out. They took him to nearby Sher-e-Bangla Road and shot him dead.

Hazaribagh police recovered the body and sent it to Mitford Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Monir was arrested. Besides, Tejgaon police recovered the body of a young man from a shanty at Jahir's slum at Kunipara.

The body bore marks of injury. Police suspected that he might have been killed by miscreants early yesterday. They sent the body to the DMCH morgue.

## Former jailer sent to jail for prisoner's death in '90

UNB, Kishoreganj

Former jailer of the district jail and 10 others accused of torturing to death a prisoner 12 years ago have been sent to jail hajot when they appeared before the court.

Nuru Mia, a poor hawker, undergoing simple imprisonment, was allegedly beaten to death inside jail on June 9, 1990 for failing to meet the jail officials' demand for bribe.

The victim's wife, Asia Khatun, filed a case accusing jailer Jahangir Kabir Khan, jail warden Yahya Hossain, Fazlul Haq Mollah, Jaynal Abedin, Iskander Sharif, Khrosheed Alam, Abdul Jail Mia, Ali Akbar Dewan, Matiur Rahman, Momtajuddin Thakur and Yunus Ali Khan.

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# UNDP's CHT mission awaits govt nod

SHAHRIAR KARIM

The UNDP's proposed security assessment mission to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) will be delayed further as the government is yet to endorse it, according to sources.

According to highly placed government sources, the mission could be delayed until Prime Minister Khaleda Zia returns from the USA on May 26.

"We want the mission to be a joint effort by the UN body and the government. For some technical reasons it is taking some time to fix a date for the mission," a foreign ministry source said.

Initially, the UNDP proposed the mission from May 1 to May 10 to assess the overall situation in the CHT and asked the government to arrange one or more representatives from the armed forces to be included in the mission.

However, the government is yet to announce its team for the mis-

sion, according to sources.

Meantime, the UNDP has already finalised its team and had a meeting with Foreign Minister Morshed Khan and other foreign ministry officials on the proposed mission. The team includes two security experts from the USA and Canada. The UNDP also appointed Maj. Gen. (Rtd) Moinul Islam Chowdhury its advisor for the mission. A retired military bureaucrat, Chowdhury also served the last caretaker government as advisor.

The main objective of the mission is to find out if donors could resume their development programmes in the CHT without risking lives.

Also, the mission will have a look at the impact of the peace accord signed between the government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) in December 1997.

Since signing of the peace accord, donors cautiously

extended development assistance to the region. But, after the abduction of three foreigners in Rangamati in February last, they suspended operation.

The UNDP mission will talk to a cross section of people in three hill districts and 25 thanas including the local administration to draw its conclusion on the situation, according to sources.

The UNDP move came against the backdrop of increased armed clashes between pro-peace treaty PCJSS and anti-peace accord group United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and also the deteriorating law and order.

In April alone about 10 people died in clashes between the PSJSS and the UPDF and between army and the UPDF.

Any future donor assistance for the region will depend on the outcome of the assessment, according to sources.