

AL's poll report ridiculous, says Moudud

BSS, Dhaka

Brushing aside Awami League's claim in its Sunday's polls report, Law Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed yesterday said the 'motivated' report published after eight months of the general election would merely give people something to laugh at.

Barrister Moudud, who was highly critical of Awami League's claim that the four-party alliance had snatched away its sure victory in 152 seats through 17 fraudulent methods, told newsmen at his office that the main opposition should prove it through election tribunal at the High Court.

"If the claim is true, why Awami League and its respective nominees did not go to the election tribunals soon after the October 1 general elections?" he asked. He further pointed out that despite the AL's claim of vote-rigging in 152 seats, it has filed only 20 or 21 cases, of which two have already been withdrawn by their respective candidates.

Commenting on publishing the book styled "A Rigged Election: An Illegitimate Government" eight months after the general election, the law minister said, "Deep frustration and disrespect to democracy have pushed Awami League to such a position."

Hasina

FROM PAGE 12 and reporting objectively because of threat, intimidation and murder by what she said BNP-Jamaat criminals.

She alleged police as well as the BDR personnel continued unleashing torture on common people. She called upon the people to overcome such anarchic situation.

There was a proven lack of seriousness on the part of this coalition government to properly run the country, said Hasina. "Rather, it is busy amassing wealth by corrupt means."

The leader of the opposition also urged the journalists to sharpen their writings against violence, saying that such anarchic situation cannot be allowed to continue any longer.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to Sheikh Hasina, and Awami League leaders Matia Chowdhury and Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin were present.

Barrister Moudud said the objectives of publishing such a book was to make the caretaker system ineffective in future. "The allegation made by Awami League in its book is anti-constitutional and contrary to national interests."

The law minister asked if Awami League was defeated through 'crude rigging', how the party could get 2.5 per cent more votes than in the past.

He observed that it was Awami League, which took all preparations to do major irregularities in the election process and on the election day to win it, but the neutral government had foiled all its evil designs. "So Awami League became furious against the president, chief advisor, chief election commissioner and the army," he said. Barrister Moudud said the way these good offices were blamed by Awami League was a shame for the whole nation. He urged Awami League to do positive politics for the welfare of the people.

DUDS election held

UNB, Dhaka

The election of the executive committee of Dhaka University Debating Society (DUDS) was held on Thursday.

Khademul Karim Iqbal and Nazmul Huda Sumon were elected unopposed as president and general secretary respectively for one-year term.

Failing to get

FROM PAGE 12

Sources said the group of eight entered the house of AL worker Abu Sama at about midnight. Brandishing firearms, they asked his wife Baby Naznin, 20, to open the door of her room. As Sama was not there, they cut a lock of her hair.

The elements fled as neighbours rushed to the spot on hearing screams of Naznin and her six-year-old daughter.

She lodged a case with a magistrate's court at Natore yesterday, alleging that the group also threatened to kill her husband.

Meanwhile, Sama has been keeping off his house since the AL's debacle in the October 1 general election.

Slipping thru' loops

FROM PAGE 12 Narayanjanj court, accusing seven DB men including the OC of Narayanjanj DB, of torturing her son to death.

But on May 22, his mother Sanowara Begum withdraw the case under 'threat and pressure' on her family members.

Besides, two on-trail prisoners died at the DMCH following alleged police torture. The victims were local Awami League leader and Union Parishad (UP) member Fazlul Haq Bhuiyan, 40 of Rupganj and Mohammad Alam, 19, a rickshawpuller of Kamrangirchar.

Bhuiyan was arrested on May 12 from Pitalganj village on charge of involvement in the murder of a housewife. He was produced before court and taken on a two-day police remand.

But he was sent to Narayanjanj jail in a critical condition before the expiry of his remand. He was then shifted to Dhaka Central Jail on May 19. Later, he was admitted to the DMCH on May 21 where he died the same day. Family members and local people alleged that he died due to physical torture by police.

Rickshawpuller Alam was picked up for alleged drug addiction and later handed over to Kamrangirchar police. He was sent to Dhaka Central jail after being tortured in police custody.

He was rushed to the DMCH as

his condition deteriorated on May 21, where doctors declared him dead. Family members of the victim alleged that he died following police torture.

In another incident, Jamal Uddin Fakir, an activists of Kapsasia unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League and president of Shaheed Tajdin Ahmed Smriti Library, was picked up by Kapsasia police and allegedly tortured to death at the thana. His body was recovered from the river Shitalakhyia on April 20.

According to the victim's family members, a police team led by the OC Kapsasia thana, Gazi Mahiuddin, picked up Jamal from his house at village Taraogan in Kapsasia telling the family that he would be released after 'interrogation'.

Ward commissioner

FROM PAGE 1

Some unidentified gunmen shot Anwar Hossain, 22, son of Hafiz Uddin of Gandaria, Sutrapur, said witnesses. The locals believe some revengeful muggers shot him, as he filed a general diary against some local youths for mugging.

Anwar was robbed of Tk 7,000 at Namapara two days ago. He had been admitted to the DMCH.

Budget

FROM PAGE 1

clearly laid out in the budget to bring about transparency in expenditure.

At the same time, the pension requirement of the public employees would also be shown under a separate head to keep the administrative expenditures low. The budget would have little block allocations, rather funds would be earmarked for specific programmes.

The sources said the budget would reflect on the government's poverty reduction strategy, a paper of which is being prepared. The poverty impacts of different sectors like health, public security, and roads and communications would be shown on a segregated basis. All in all, about 40 per cent of the total outlay would be earmarked directly for poverty reduction programmes.

It is expected that some special facilities would be made for revival of the readymade garments and textiles. This may be in the form of interest support for the backward linkage sectors. To boost industries, special facilities would be given to enterprises in the northern region and listed companies would get further tax breaks.

Special emphasis would be laid on improving tax collection from non-NBR sources and VAT.

3 schoolboys

FROM PAGE 12

tied up and confined in a room there in an unconscious state.

Later at around 3:00pm one of the boys regained consciousness and cried out for help. Hearing his cry, one of the neighbours informed the police who rushed there and rescued the boys who were kidnapped for ransom.

Sensing arrival of the police, the kidnapers managed to escape scaling the boundary wall of the house.

The boys were kidnapped in front of a large number of pedestrians and policemen on duty in the Khulna district police lines, one of the boys told police.

Rubel murder

FROM PAGE 12

filed a murder case with Ramna Police Station the following day in this connection.

The Investigation Officer (IO) of the case submitted a chargesheet before the CMM's Court, Dhaka against 14 people, including AC Akram Hussain, on September 24, 1998. In the charge sheet, 62 people were shown as prosecution witnesses.

Eleven of the 14 accused in the case, now detained at the jail custody, were produced before court yesterday during the hearing. They are -- AC Akram Hussain, Inspector Aminul Islam Khan, Sub-Inspectors -- Haiyatul Islam Thakur, Amir Ahmed Tareq ASI Abdul Karim, Havildar Nuruzzaman, constables -- Ratul Parvez, Quamrul Hasan, Mir Faruk Hossain and Mong She Oen and Rokhana Begum alias Mukuli Begum, a local Awami League leader.

Three other accused -- SI Nurul Alam, constables Abul Kalam Azad and Mohammad Zakir Hossain -- have been absconding since the incident.

Advocate A B M Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Syed Rezaur Rahman, Ehsanul Haq Samaji, Mahbub Ahmed and Sheikh Baharul Islam appeared in the court on behalf of the accused.

FM returns

FROM PAGE 12

Senator McCain and Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz.

Morshed Khan during his meeting with the US dignitaries discussed issues of bilateral and regional interests as well as global peace.

Besides, he had talks with US Congressman Benjamin Gilman and Senator Sam Brownback and discussed issues on US investment and interest in Bangladesh. He also met a group of journalists at the National Press Club in Washington.

In New York, he called on the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, discussed a wide range of current issues and spoke about the ways and means of achieving the goals of the Millennium Declaration.

Later, Morshed Khan flew to Canada and had a meeting with the Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien, whom he urged to include Bangladesh along with other African LDCs for granting quota- and duty-free concession during the forthcoming G-8 summit.

He also handed over a letter of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to the Canadian prime minister.

Before flying back to Dhaka, the Foreign Minister met his Canadian counterpart Bill Graham in Ottawa and discussed the whole gamut of bilateral, regional and international issues of common interest.

He also called on Peter Milliken, speaker of the Canadian House of Commons.

Eight killed

FROM PAGE 12

Tangail General Hospital. The truck was carrying goods and 25 people on it while going to Rangpur, police said.

In another accident, two people were killed and 40 injured at Pingeria bus stand in Kachua upazila on Bagerhat-Morelganj road.

One of the deceased was identified as Tozabab Ali, 80, of Rajor village in Swarankhola upazila. The other victim was teenage boy.

Police said the accident took place when a passenger bus overturned at about 10:00 am.

Ten of the injured were admitted to different clinics in Bagerhat and Khulna.

After the accident, traffic on the road was disrupted for about three hours.

Meanwhile, a minor boy was crushed under the wheels of a speeding truck at Tongi near the capital yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Sony Rozario, 6.

Police seized the truck and arrested its driver Sohela. A case was filed.

Malaysia

FROM PAGE 12

after their tenure expired. Malaysia is now willing to recruit fresh workers from Bangladesh provided recruiting cost is reduced.

Bangladeshi officials have sent a proposal to their Malaysian counterparts informing them of keeping recruiting costs between Tk 60,000 and 70,000. "Now we are waiting for a response from the Malaysian government in this regard," the minister told The Daily Star.



An Indian soldier keeps watch from his bunker in the Akhnoor sector 30 Kms west of Jammu. Cross-border shelling between Indian and Pakistani soldiers along the international frontier in Kashmir continued yesterday but at a lower intensity than in recent days.

Stylish start for Italians

FROM PAGE 1

over the Ecuadorean defence by Luigi Di Biagio, allowing Vieri to shrug off defender Ivan Hurtado, the round the keeper and roll the ball home.

Ecuador picked up their play in the second half and Italian keeper Gianluigi Buffon had to react sharply to deny Agustín Delgado his nation's first World Cup goal in the final minutes of the match.

The forward who plays for English Premiership side Southampton smashed a shot from inside the penalty area that Buffon palmed round the post.

Italian coach Giovanni Trapattoni said a relatively untroubled buildup had paid off.

"I've been working with the players since May 11 and I was very satisfied with the way they played tonight."

"In the first half we played excellently against Ecuador and scored early - we looked very fresh. Mentally there was no doubt that we were ready for this match although when we eased up a bit in the second half Ecuador put us in a little difficulty."

"They were World Cup newcomers and that may have been a problem for them."

Skipper Paolo Maldini was also pleased, saying: "We did well - it was a good start - we put on a good show but obviously we still have to improve."

Italy are notoriously slow World Cup starters having only won one of their opening games in the five previous World Cups and Maldini, playing in his fourth finals, said: "The first game is always difficult but the pleasing thing was that we seemed a lot fresher than we have been."

Trapattoni had drafted in an additional defender, adding AS Roma defender Christian Panucci to the established trio of Maldini, Fabio Cannavaro and Alessandro Nesta as he seeks the rock on which to build a charge to the finals.

In the first period that play worked to perfection with Ecuador looking rudderless in attack and Italy creating several opportunities but the Italian defence had more work at the start of the second half with the lively Edison Mendez blasting a shot past the post.

The minnows began to mount more attacks, and won a succession of corners but failed to convert them into goals.

Italy struck back, Damiano Tomassini's strong drive forcing a save from Cevallos, and Cristiano Doni hit the bar from the resulting corner.

Cevallos also punched away a rasping drive from Vieri, who was looking for a hat-trick to match the one scored here by Germany's Miroslav Klose against the hapless Saudis on Saturday.

Alessandro Del Piero was introduced as a 74th-minute substitute, proving that a player who has fallen out of Trapattoni's plans has a role to play in these finals.

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Ecuador's Colombian coach Hernan Dario Gomez, now fully recovered from a gunshot wound last year, took strength from his side's second-half improvement.

"With our performance in the second half we're not discouraged and we have the strength and the preparation to go on to the next match," he said.

With Mexico beating Croatia 1-0 earlier in the day, Italy go top of their group and face Croatia in Ibaraki, Japan, on Saturday, while Ecuador take on Mexico on Sunday.

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Brazil blues spared

FROM PAGE 1

Turkey coach Senol Gunes was disappointed by the result but remained confident his team would still reach the second phase.

"We came here with pride and we played the game with pride...we had a great effort but we couldn't get what we deserved," he told reporters.

"There is an injustice in the result, I have to say that, an injustice," he added.

Turkey midfielder Emre Belozoglu said the offence that led to the penalty had happened outside the box.

"Of course as far as we could see it was outside the box," he said. "I thought we played well and fought hard, the important thing now is to win the coming games and qualify."

Turkey, playing at their first World Cup for 48 years, had stunned the four-times world champions when Sas gave them the lead in first-half injury time as the Brazilians tended to over-elaborate and only occasionally produced flowing moves.

But, with Ronaldo showing flashes of the play which made him twice World Player of the Year, Brazil still dominated the match only to be denied by Turkish goalkeeper Rustu Recber.

After a lively opening, the first half exploded in the last five minutes as Rustu produced three saves in a row to keep Brazil at bay and Turkey went up the other end and scored.

The goalkeeper made two saves from Rivaldo -- one a close range header when the Barcelona player seemed certain to score -- and one from Ronaldinho, after he had broken through the defence.

Then, with the last move of the first half, Turkey went upfield, Yildiray Basturk chipped the ball over the Brazil defence and the lively Sas sneaked behind Cafu and whacked the a left-footed volley past Marcos.

Rustu miraculously defied Rivaldo and Ronaldo four minutes into the second half, but in the next attack Rivaldo crossed from the left and Ronaldo got in front of three defenders by throwing himself forward feet first to steer the ball past Rustu.

Shortly afterwards, Ronaldo jugged his way through the defence but the impressive Rustu saved again.

Brazil twice appeared set to score in their following attacks but again found Rustu in the way.

First, he dived at the feet of Lucio to stop the Bayer Leverkusen player scoring from close range and then he tipped away a drive by Juninho.

WB for accountability body

FROM PAGE 12

and transparency are different parliamentary committees, especially the Public Accounts Committee, the Public Estimates Committee, the Public Undertakings Committee, said the WB, which are dominated by members of the party in power.

"It is difficult for back-bench MPs to exercise any independent voice as they depend on party favour for appointment to government offices. The constructively critical role of the opposition is not properly understood," the report said.

"Moving his (CAG) audit function out of the executive to a new agency, directly responsible to parliament, would have a profound impact on the evolution of democracy in Bangladesh," the WB said.

On the public enterprises responsible for about 40 per cent of all public spending, the WB said their performance has been "unsatisfactory at least since 1982".

Mentioning mismanagement, politicised labour relations and corruption because of the unsatisfactory performance of the public enterprises, the WB said that "wages and salaries have been increasing faster than productivity in public enterprises in all sectors".

Here it suggested that apart from privatisation that has been dragging slowly, performance could be improved by injecting top-level business experience into the boards. All top appointments should be made on criteria of business experience and track-records.

"Few public servants are paid by check. Most are paid in cash. Payrolls are controlled by collective bargaining agents (CBA) and there is no physical identification (by supervisor) of all personnel on the payroll to prevent payment to fictitious persons (ghost workers). Verification of payees is necessary."

Political cards FROM PAGE 1 her senior colleagues until yesterday.

Sources said the length of the budget session will ultimately shape the AL's decision. "If the session runs for more than 33 days, then the party would attend the House briefly to save its parliamentary seats from being vacated due to a 90-day consecutive absence," said one source.

And joining the House on a regular basis, or resigning from the parliament, or even sitting for a dialogue hinges on the government's treatment of the opposition, the source added.

Meantime, Hasina told reporters yesterday that her party is still willing to join the parliament if the government creates a 'congenial' political atmosphere and stops persecuting her party activists.

Khaleda returns

FROM PAGE 1

prime minister expressed her gratitude to Almighty Allah for the success of her knee operation and thanked the countrymen for their prayers for her quick recovery.

Ministers, diplomats, MPs, high civil and military officials were present at the airport to receive the prime minister. Coming out of a Biman aircraft, a cheerful Khaleda exchanged pleasantries with her senior party colleagues including ministers.

Thousands of cheering activists of the BNP turned out to the streets leading to the airport. Carrying portraits of Khaleda and the late president Ziaur Rahman, they started thronging the airport areas from different parts of the city before the Biman flight landed at ZIA at 11:30am.

The prime minister came out of the airport amidst thunderous applause and slogans welcoming her back home and wishing her long life. Hundreds of BNP activists surged towards her vehicle in their bid to have a glimpse of their leader amid tight security all around.

They also lined up along the road from Dhaka Cantonment to the ZIA as Khaleda drove through the Airport Road on way to her cantonment residence. A smiling Khaleda reciprocated by waiving at the cheering crowd.

However, the prime minister neither addressed the gathering nor spoke to the newsmen who covered the occasion. Dhaka City unit of BNP organised the huge gathering at the airport area under the supervision of Dhaka's Mayor and Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadeque Hossain Khoka, who heads the party's city committee.

In an official statement issued

Gas reserve

FROM PAGE 1

arrived in the city for this purpose and met high officials of the Power Development Board, Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BIC) and other agencies dealing with the gas sector.

"We don't expect a major shift from our own gas demand forecast set by the government because the Norwegian experts are depending on the same set of data provided by various gas consumers and providers," noted a source.

Once done, this study would however help the government to take decisions on gas sector development. Currently there are two national committees on gas -- one assessing the country's gas reserve and the other recommending the best options to utilise it.

AL leader

FROM PAGE 12

ants stormed into the house of Advocate Talukder Md Yunus, office secretary of Barisal district unit of AL at about 7:30 am and damaged TV, freeze, decks and other property.

AGD was filed in this connection. None was arrested till the filing this report last night.

Almaty talk today

FROM PAGE 12

Delhi blames on Pakistan-based militants fighting its rule in divided Kashmir.

Tensions flared again after militants raided an Indian army camp in Kashmir on May 14, killing more than 30 people.

Musharraf has said he has proposed meeting Vajpayee several times without success. Vajpayee told reporters before leaving India for Kazakhstan: "There is no such plan."

They last exchanged a cold handshake and a few words in Nepal in January.

Asked at a news briefing yesterday under what conditions he would be willing to talk to Vajpayee, the Pakistan military ruler replied: "Unconditional. You need to ask that question to Prime Minister Vajpayee. I have no conditions."

Putin hopes to bring them together to end a confrontation the international community fears could set off a nuclear war, and Musharraf was extremely positive about his potential role.

"Yes, surely I will meet him (Putin)," he told the same news briefing. "I am extremely privileged that he has asked me to meet him. It would like to contribute my utmost to his efforts to reduce tensions."

He noted Russia's long-standing links with India.

"I would say that he is a very important personality of the world. He certainly is a dynamic leader and a very forward looking leader. And Russia has always been close to India, therefore I think he has an important position and role to play in mediating between India and Pakistan."

In the Ukrainian capital Kiev, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told a news conference: "I hope the opportunity that the meeting in Almaty has offered will be used wisely and that the discussions will take us away from the brink."

Chinese President Jiang Zemin, who arrived in Almaty yesterday, also plans to meet the two leaders separately.

The Arab League on Sunday also called on India and Pakistan to show restraint and move toward a political settlement of the thorny Kashmir problem.

The Cairo-based pan-Arab organisation "urges the two friends of the Arab world, India and Pakistan, to show restraint and to stop escalation as a first step toward a political process," Arab League spokesman Hisham Youssef said.

Fresh tension erupted yesterday as officials said a Pakistani soldier was killed when the two sides exchanged heavy mortar, machinegun and small arms fire.

Pakistani authorities detained

later on the day, Khaleda said, "I was overwhelmed and I firmly believe that Almighty Allah has granted me quick recovery responding to the prayers and love of the countrymen."

She said she would now devote her full strength and capacity to the cause of welfare of the nation.

The statement also thanked all those who made queries through e-mail, phone, fax etc., about her condition during and after the operation as well as those who arranged milad mahfil seeking divine blessings for her.

Besides the BNP men, a number of noted citizens also wished Khaleda an early recovery when she was in New York. They include chief advisor of the immediate-past caretaker government Justice Latifur Rahman and several editors of national dailies.

Khaleda led a high-powered Bangladeshi delegation to the UNGA. She addressed the plenary session, and participated in the roundtable discussion and other side events of the special UN session.

During her stay in New York, Khaleda also met some dignitaries including Nep