



Devotees stick out the windows of a train at Tongi to offer Akheri Munajat yesterday. Trains were crammed with thousands of Muslims who went to the Biswa Jitema to seek divine blessings.

PHOTO: STAR

# BJP sweeps Gujarat polls

## Curfew in two areas as violence breaks out

AFP, New Delhi

India's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was jubilant yesterday after winning a resounding victory in state assembly elections in the riot-torn state of Gujarat, where around 2,000 people died in communal violence early this year.

Despite opinion and exit polls which had predicted a photo finish between the BJP and the main opposition Congress, the BJP won a two-thirds majority with 127 seats in the 182-member assembly, with the opposition Congress trailing on 50.

In Ahmedabad, Gujarat's commercial capital, as well as in the capital New Delhi, huge crowds gathered at BJP offices, cheering, setting off fire-crackers and dancing in the streets at what many saw as an unexpectedly good result for the BJP and its controversial chief minister Narendra Modi.

But violence broke out in parts of the state and curfews were put in place in two areas of the town of Baroda, 120 kilometres from Ahmedabad.

Police said one person was taken to hospital after celebrating BJP activists and Muslims clashed in Baroda, while there were inci-

dents of stone-throwing in Ahmedabad as the victorious BJP candidate went on a victory procession.

The win was the BJP's first major victory since national elections in 1999 and analysts saw the poll as a litmus test of the headline Hindu nationalism unashamedly preached by Modi.

The party has suffered a series of defeats in state votes that have left Gujarat the only state where it has sole control.

But the Gujarat victory could usher in a further swing to the right for future campaigning by the BJP, which heads India's coalition government, analysts say.

"The people of Gujarat have given a verdict in our favour - I thank them for this," Modi said. "This is a defeat for pseudo-secularists."

He told a victory rally of 40,000 people that the election was a slap in the face for critics of the state's administration.

"For the last nine months, a continuous attack has been launched on Gujarat nationally and internationally. The people of Gujarat has given a befitting reply," he added.

However, Modi reassured the

state's minority Muslim community, who bore the brunt of India's worst sectarian violence in a decade this year.

"The new government will belong to not only those who voted for it, but also to those who did not."

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who is also from the BJP, was one of the first to congratulate Modi.

Vajpayee, who telephoned Modi from New Delhi, also congratulated him on his personal victory in the Maninagar constituency, where he defeated his rival by 75,000 votes.

"With this victory, we feel a winning trend has started in our favour. We want to take inspiration from this and prepare for upcoming elections in other states," Vajpayee

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7



Victorious Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader and chief ministerial candidate Narendra Modi (L) is greeted by a supporter yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Verdict on share scam petitions tomorrow

STAR REPORT

The Appellate Division yesterday concluded hearing 11 petitions filed by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) challenging a High Court verdict on the 1996 share scam cases.

The court fixed Tuesday for delivery of verdict.

The SEC filed the petitions against three directors of Chittagong Cement and five of HMMS and Associates, Nurunnabi of Rupun Oil and Feeds, Imtiaz Husain of Imtiaz Husain & Company and Riiwan Bin Farouk of First Capital Securities.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

## Army nabs JP leader

### 700 litres of liquor seized at Karwan Bazar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army arrested a central leader of Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP-Nazir), a component of the ruling alliance, from his private firm at Sonargaon road in the city yesterday.

An army team raided the private security service office of BJP joint organising secretary Kamrul Islam Sajal and arrested him. He was taken to the army camp at science laboratory.

Sources said the arrested JP leader told the army team that he had a very urgent meeting with party leaders. He was then taken to the party office and another person was arrested there.

Besides, army personnel raided a house at Karwan Bazar and seized 700 litres of liquor yesterday. Three persons - two employees of house owner Mohammad Kabir and a buyer - were arrested. They were handed over to police.

Our Barisal correspondent reports that the joint forces arrested 14 people, including leaders and activists of Awami League (AL), its student wing BCL and the ruling BNP's student front JCD from three southern districts in the last two days.

The arrested included Abdul Quader Molla, president of Barisal Kotwali thana unit of AL; Jahangir Miridha, president of Sharikhal union unit of BNP and his son Ruhul Amin, JCD leader at Gouranadi College

Ead Hossain Sardar and his associate Kabir Hossain. Besides, two listed Criminals - Alal Khalifa and Jahidul - were arrested from C&B area in Barisal town.

In Bagerhat, the joint forces arrested two persons and recovered eight firearms from Kathaltala and Pikepara villages in Fakirhat upazila on Saturday. Five pipe guns and three single barrel guns were recovered from their possession.

Our Feni correspondent reports that the joint forces arrested 11 criminals from different parts of the district.

Of them, five were arrested for toll collection in transport sector.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

## Bangladeshi shot dead by BSF in Thakurgaon

BSS, Thakurgaon

A Bangladeshi national was shot dead by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) near Baliadangi border in the district yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mojibur Rahman, 25, son of Kartik Ali of village Samiragar.

The commanding officer of Battalion No. 3 of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) at Thakurgaon told BSS that BSF opened fire on Mojibur near the border pillar no 379-5 while he was returning home from his paddy field in the morning. He died on the spot.

BSF took away the body.

## Indo-Bangla trade fair postponed

SHAHRIAR KARIM

The government has postponed a four-day Bangladesh-India bilateral trade fair scheduled for December 20 inauguration in the city for security reasons.

In the wake of recent serial bomb blasts at cinemas at Mymensingh, the commerce ministry sent a letter to the Indian High Commission here on December 12 and requested it to defer the fair.

"In the wake of recent subversive activities it would not be possible to ensure security at the fair and so we are requesting you to defer the fair for a few months," the letter said. It was signed by Deputy Secretary Golam Mostafa.

As soon as the Indian High

Commission received the letter, it informed the matter to Delhi and requested the C&F (clearing and forwarding) agent to stop clearing different products awaiting clearance at the Benapole land port.

Indian products being brought for display at the fair are now lying at Benapole land port, according to sources here.

The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) and the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI) of Bangladesh jointly organised the December 20-23 fair. It was scheduled to be held at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Centre in Dhaka.

Despite postponement of the fair in Dhaka, a delegation led by

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## UK minister arrives today

UNB, Dhaka

British Minister for International Development Sally Keeble arrives here today on a three-day visit for a review of DFID-aided projects in Bangladesh.

"The aim of her visit is to discuss Department for International Development (DFID)'s support to poverty reduction with the Government of Bangladesh," an announcement said here yesterday.

One of her concerns is the issue of "better governance" and she will discuss and try to find ways to "accelerate improvement in this area" during her visit, said Keeble prior to undertaking her trip to Bangladesh.

During her visit, Keeble will visit

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## 17 Jubo League men arrested at Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police yesterday arrested 17 leaders and activists of Jubo League Mymensingh district unit from a procession in Ganginar Par area of the town.

The procession was brought out protesting the arrest of Principal Motiur Rahman, president of district Awami League (AL).

Motiur Rahman was arrested by members of the joint forces on December 9.

The arrested Jubo League leaders and activists are Prof Golam Sarwar, Advocate Azharul Islam, Babul Roy, Motahar Hossain Litu, Manik, Imtiaz, Abdul Khaleque, Sohrab, Uttam, Mintu, Moslem, Prodig, Liton, Rubel, Nazrul Islam, Zahangir Alam and Abdur Rahim.

Meanwhile, Principal Motiur Rahman was produced before a Magistrate's court here yesterday morning with a prayer for a ten-day remand. The court granted a five-day remand. Motiur was shown arrested in Mymensing cinema blasts case.

Family members of Motiur Rahman held a press conference at the Mymensingh Press Club yesterday evening demanding his immediate release. They also termed the case against Motiur Rahman as false, fabricated and politically motivated.



PHOTO: AFP

People jump out of a sinking ferry after the vessel carrying some 100 passengers began to capsize after the Biswa Jitema ended in Tongi some 20 kilometres off the capital yesterday. All passengers were rescued with the help of local residents.

## US troops caught in street fight with South Koreans

AFP, Seoul

Three US soldiers were held Sunday for brawling with South Koreans in a street fight, hours after a huge candle-lit protest descended on the US embassy here, police said.

The fight took place after midnight in a street outside the main US military base in Seoul, four km from the city centre, police said.

Police said the three soldiers were handed over to US military authorities after being questioned over the fight involving a taxi driver and two Korean passengers.

"They were transferred to US military police but we will investigate them later on charges of violence," a police officer said.

Television showed the civilian-clothes soldiers covering their face during an interrogation at a police station in front of two Koreans with blood stains on their face.

Yonhap news agency said that the fight started

when a car driven by a US sergeant with two other soldiers as passengers pulled up abruptly and a taxi carrying two Korean passengers honked loudly from behind.

Police, helped by pedestrians and another taxi driver, arrested the soldiers, it said, adding the two sides blamed the other party for starting the fight.

The altercation followed a candlelit march by some 50,000 Koreans Saturday night near the US embassy in downtown Seoul, in memory of two girls crushed to death by a US military vehicle in June.

The march turned central Seoul into a sea of light, with radicals shredding US flags and demanding the complete withdrawal of the 37,000 US troops stationed here since the 1950-53 Korean War.

Daily protests have rocked Seoul for a month since a US court martial acquitted two US soldiers of negligent homicide in the road accident and let them leave for the United States.

In a telephone conversation with South Korean

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Four babies burnt alive in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Four infants were burnt to death and a housewife received serious burn injuries in a fire here in the early hours of Saturday.

The dead were identified as Shimul, 3, Shima, 5, Enamul, 2, and a newborn of 15 days. The critically injured housewife Habiba Khatun is reportedly fighting for her life at the Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

Sources said the fire originated from a kerosene lamp in one of the four tin-roofed huts that were burnt to ashes. The owners of the huts - Israfil Matobbor, Monir Matobbor, Jahangir Hossain and Felu Matobbor of village Dapha under Nagarkanda thana of the district - were rendered totally destitute by the fire.

## Writ challenging legality of Speedy Trial Tribunal Act

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday issued rule upon the government to show cause in four weeks as to why the Speedy Trial Tribunal Act, 2002, should not be declared ultra vires the Constitution.

The rule came upon a writ petition filed by Nasibun Ahmed, mother of Ruhid Hassan Sumon, one of the 34 accused in the sensational Sutrapur Rifle Club double murder case, challenging the legality of the Act. Sumon, who is facing the trial, is currently on bail.

The court, however, rejected the plea for stay of proceedings of the case that began in the Speedy Trial Tribunal yesterday.

Dr M Zahir, counsel for the petitioner, submitted that the Act is contrary to article 27 of the Constitution that says all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Dec 16	5-15	5-14 pm
Dec 17	6-34 am	

  

Prayer Timings		
Dec 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-20	5-25
Esha	7-30	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation