MUNICIPAL POLLS

Rampant violations of election rules alleged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) and Brotee, two nongovernment organisations (NGO) working with election monitoring, yesterday alleged that most of the candidates standing for upcoming municipality elections are violating the election rules.

In some municipalities, candidates are exploiting the government machinery for reaping election benefits, said the Brotee and Fema officials at a joint press conference at the National Press Club yester-

Fema President Munira Khan said "In some areas of the country voters belonging to the minority community are being intimidated."

She said Fema would deploy 2000 full-time election observers in 117 municipalities with a view to egarding the election.

Speaking at the press conference, Chief Executive of Brotee Sharmin Murshid urged the government to disqualify the corrupt candidates who thumb their nose at the election rules.

She also called on the members of parliament (MPs) and the ministers to refrain from influencing the municipality polls and the candidates to be respectful of the election result as it comes

She said Brotee will deploy 407 mobile election observers and would review the pre- and postection situation.

Information based on the election observation will be passed on to the Election Commission (EC), the government, political parties and civil society

Executive Member of Brotee Dr

tion of democracy depends on how efficiently and transparently we handle our elections -- from local level to the national level."

Citing the example of India, Dr Atiur said "The role of EC must be strengthened in order to have a healthy democracy." He also emphasised the role of election monitoring for the election results to be acceptable to all parties involved.

Vice President of the Fema Aftabul Islam and its General Secretary MA Matin attended the press conference among others.

Odhikar, another NGO, will also monitor the election at 13 out of 117 municipalities. The Odhikar team will reach the election areas on May 4. It will monitor especially the incidents relating to human rights



A bicycle, the election symbol of a chairman candidate, is fastened to the corner of a stage during an election rally yesterday in the run-up to the May 5 Gazipur municipal polls.

3 hangmen

visit Ershad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Three hangmen to execute notori-

ous criminal Ershad Shikder on

May 10 visited the gallows of

have been briefed on how to bring

Ershad Shikder to the gallows from

the condemned cell and execute

him, Jail Super Mohammad Farhad

Shahjahan if Ershad refuses to

Pakistan foreign

Pakistan Foreign Secretary Reaz H Khokar comes to Dhaka on May

5 to hold talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Shamser Mobin Chowdhury on bilateral, regional

This is an annual secretarylevel consultation between Dhaka and Islamabad when the two sides are expected to discuss bilateral trade and commerce, particularly

The two-way trade that amounts

for USD 130 million is in favour of

Pakistan whose annual exports

were worth around USD 94 million

while Bangladesh's about USD 36

million according to the latest

Dhaka and Islamabad are also

Among the bilateral issues, the

engaged in negotiations aimed at

striking an agreement on Free

longstanding question of repatria-

tion of nearly 300,000 stranded

Pakistanis still languishing in

refugee camps remained unre-

solved despite repeated assur-

already extended its full support to Bangladesh's candidate, Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury. Foreign Secretary Khokhar will call on Foreign Minister M Morshed

Khan. He is also expected to make a courtesy call on Prime Minister

He will hold a pre-departure

Prayer Timings

May 3

Azan

4-15

12-45

4-45

6-31

8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Jamaat

4-50

1-15

5-00

6-35

8-30

The two foreign secretaries are also likely to discuss Bangladesh's candidature for the post of OIC secretary general. Pakistan has

and international issues.

free trade, on May 5.

Trade Area (FTA).

ances from Pakistan.

Khaleda Zia on May 6.

Zohr

Maghrib

press conference on May 6.

secretary due

on May 5

UNB, Dhaka

Haris and Hafiz will help

Shahjahan Mia, Haris and Hafiz

Khulna District Jail Saturday night.

Shikder's

gallows

Mian said yesterday.

AL MP comes under attack, escapes unhurt

Main opposition Awami League (AL) awmaker Abdul Hye yesterday escaped unhurt a series of bomb attack on a procession he was eading in the evening at Shailkopa.

Witnesses said Hye was leading a procession taken out in support of his party's chairman candidate Ashraful Azam in the upcoming municipal corporation polls when ruling BNP cadres launched the attack with homemade bombs.

Hye narrowly escaped unhurt but a leader of AL's student front Bangladesh Chhatra League, Raju (full name unknown), was injured in the attack.

Hye blamed the ruling BNP cadres for the attack and said police did not respond to their repeated calls for help. BNP leader Abdul Wahab how

ever refuted the allegation and said a procession of the BNP chairman candidate at Kabirpur came under bomb and gun attack at 7:00pm

Political violence, social unrest make journalism risky

Discussants say on eve of World Press Freedom Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different rights and media organisations yesterday held various programmes on the eve of World Press Freedom Day 2004 today and stressed the need for free flow of information, journalists' professionalism and safety and implementation of proposed right to information act in ensuring freedom of the press.

Speaking at a discussion, senior journalists demanded safety of media persons and financial secu-

Bangladesh Centre for Development, Journalism and Communication organised the

discussion at the Jatiya Press Club. Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor

Bangladesh Observer, said political violence and social unrest make journalism risky in Bangladesh and identified attacks on the lives of journalists as a threat to press freedom

New Nation Editor Alamgir Mohiuddin said collision of roles between newspaper editor and owner often undermines press

"Without financial security, there could neither be professionalism nor press freedom." noted Sohrab SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Outrage over Iraq photos growing

US army report says prisoners faced 'sadistic, blatant, wanton criminal abuses'

AGENCIES, Washington/ Baghbad

The US-led coalition is facing outrage amid mounting allegations of widespread abuse at its jails in Iraq and growing anger from the people it claims to have

Iraqi prisoners faced numerous "sadistic, blatant and wanton criminal abuses" by US soldiers, including sodomy and beatings, according to a US army report quoted by the New Yorker magazine.

The New Yorker said it had obtained a 53-page, internal US military report into alleged abuses at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison outside Baghdad. In an article posted on its Web site on Saturday, the

magazine said the report had been authorised by Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, the top US officer in Iraq, and was completed in February.

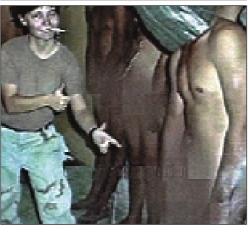
The May 10 issue of the magazine goes on sale

The army report listed abuses such as "breaking chemical lights and pouring the phosphoric liquid on detainees; ... beating detainees with a broom handle and a chair; threatening male detainees with rape allowing a military police guard to stitch the wound of a detainee who was injured after being slammed against the wall in his cell; sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light and perhaps a broom stick.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7









(Clockwise) A British soldier urinates on an Iraqi prisoner in a vile display of abuse, a rifle is cruelly jabbed in the young man's groin, naked male detainees are stacked in a pyramid and a woman US soldier with her fingers mockingly fires at genitals of lined-up inmates.

Doctor couple held for torturing domestic help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ramna police yesterday arrested a physician couple on charge of torturing their 10-year-old domestic

Police also rescued Mostakina from the couple's Paribagh house where the girl from Nilphamari had been working for the past 10 months

Mostakina, who had numerous bruises on her body including raw facial wounds from hot electric iron. was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for treatment. Ramna police said they picked

up the couple -- Dr ABM Jamal of Mitford Hospital and his wife Dr Fatema Doza of the DMCH -- for questioning at the police station,

adding that process was underway

"Madam (Dr Fatema) used to claw me across the face or poke me with whatever she could find even for my small mistakes," said Mostakina, whose face was full of scratch marks.

The torture came to light when a neighbour saw the condition of the girl as she was taking out the garbage. She immediately informed Ramna police.

Mostakina said her father Bashir Mian of Birnakuni village in Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari, married for a second time. He brought her to Dhaka to work for the couple 10 months ago but never



5 Israelis die in Gaza shooting

AP, Gaza Strip

Palestinian militants yesterday attacked an Israeli vehicle near a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip, killing four children and their mother, the Israeli army said. Two attackers were killed.

The attack near the entrance to the Gush Katif bloc of settlements came as the ruling Likud Party was holding a referendum on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's plan to pull out of Gaza. It was unclear how the attack would affect the vote.

The militants opened fire -- killing the five family members and wounding a motorist in a second vehicle -before detonating a bomb, the army spokesman said.

Two soldiers were wounded by gunfire, and the attackers were killed by return fire, the army said. Police said the white Citroen station wagon spun off the road after

the initial shooting, then the attack-

ers approached the vehicle and shot the occupants at close range. The car was riddled with bullets,

and the carpet inside was stained with blood. Israel Radio reported the mother had been on her way to protest against Sharon's Gaza withdrawal plan. On the car was a bumper sticker saying, "Uprooting the settlements, victory for terror."

Settlers said the family lived in the Katif settlement in central Gaza. **SEE PAGE 11 COL 6**

9 GIs die in Iraq attacks

US hostage Hamill escapes

REUTERS, Baghdad

Nine US servicemen were killed in Iraq yesterday -- six of them in a mortar attack -- but U.S. commanders also announced American civilian Thomas Hamill had escaped after being held hostage for three weeks by gunmen. US Marine Major TV Johnson

walk to the gallows, jail sources told reporters the mortar attack had targeted a military base two hours The headsmen came here drive from Falluja, the flashpoint on April 27 from Dhaka Central Jail Sunni city some 30 miles west of and did not visit the gallows since Baghdad, but would give no further

> Two US soldiers were killed in northwest Baghdad and another died when guerrillas detonated a roadside bomb and fired assault rifles at a US base near the northern

After April became the bloodiest month for US troops in Iraq with 129 combat deaths, American commanders were able to report good news when Hamill, a trucker, ran into the arms of a US patrol close to

Saddam Hussein's home town of

"He had an opportunity to escape saw some US forces and made his dash," General Richard Myers, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Americans on breakfast

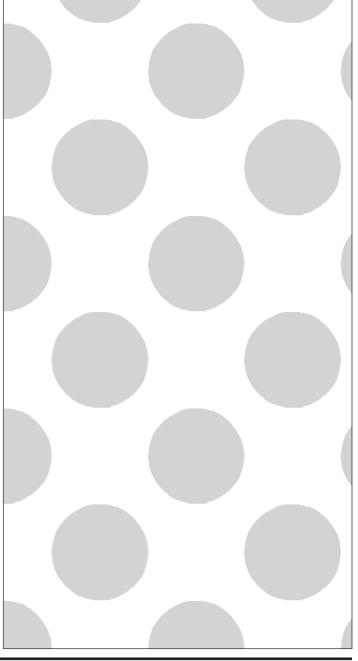
UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE

In April's upsurge in violence soldiers from other countries in USled forces and foreign civilians were foreigners were kidnapped, jeopardising transport, construction and oil projects key to US efforts to win hearts and minds in Iraq.

Three Italian civilians and a US soldier remain hostages. No new kidnappings have been reported for nearly two weeks.

wonderful. It's the best feeling I've had. I am so ecstatic and I just want to thank everybody that has prayed and sent their prayers to us.' Pictures of Hamill, 43, as a hos

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



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