



Acid survivors light earthen lamps in memory of acid victims at a programme organised by the Acid Survivors Foundation at the National Museum in Dhaka yesterday.

BJP walks on nerves

Lok Sabha vote counting begins today

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, *New Delhi*

Just a day ahead of the counting of votes in parliamentary elections, India's ruling Hindu nationalists were in palpable anxiety yesterday following huge defeat in the state assembly polls in Andhra Pradesh. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee-led NDA (National Democratic Alliance) camp is in trouble apparently for two reasons: firstly, the anti-NDA wave that swept Sonia Gandhi-led Congress party to a landslide victory in Andhra Pradesh can be reflected in the outcome of the contest for 42 parliamentary seats in the state. The ruling alliance may bag victory in just four seats, which will further recede its possibilities of retaining power. Earlier in 1999, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led alliance won 36 parliamentary seats here. Secondly, if a similar trend is witnessed in adjacent Tamil Nadu state holding 39 seats, it may virtu-

ally dash the NDA's hope of staking claim to form a coalition government. There is recognition in the BJP camp that anything less than a tally of 250 seats will make it very difficult for the party to have a go at government-formation. However, a spokesperson of the Prime Minister's Office yesterday termed "baseless" the reports that said Vajpayee has consented to sit in the opposition if the NDA wins less than 250 seats. On the other hand, the mood in the camp of Congress and its allies is upbeat as Sonia and CPI (M) leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet are busy wooing like-minded parties to shore up the strength of anti-NDA alternative. The result of Andhra Pradesh assembly polls has radically changed the NDA's predictions and forced it to step up efforts to rope in more regional parties to touch the majority mark of 272 in the 543-strong Lok Sabha. What was most striking about the

result of the assembly polls outcome is that Congress and its allies have virtually swept all parts of the state, including those considered strongholds of the NDA, reflecting a strong anti-NDA surge. Analysts predict if the result of the assembly polls in Andhra Pradesh is repeated in parliamentary elections, the NDA may not get more than four out of the 40 seats, much lower than even the worst projections by some exit polls. The prime minister late Tuesday night held a threadbare discussion with senior party colleagues on the post-poll scene and the emerging situation in the backdrop of a hung parliament. BJP sources, however, said even if the NDA were to get less than 250, it would not shy away from making efforts to form the government. Sonia has set up a team of senior leaders to consult other leaders in the non-NDA formation, which

Reinvestigation ordered into attempted rape case against DGFI official

COURT CORRESPONDENT
A Dhaka tribunal yesterday instructed the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to reinvestigate an attempted rape case against a deputy director (DD) in-charge of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and his office assistant. Judge Shamsul Arefin of the Fifth Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression passed the order upon a naraji petition (no confidence) against the final report filed by Mosammam Sheuli Akhter January 23. Airport police submitted the final report on January 11 to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka and prayed for discharge of charges against the accused. Police sought permission to file a case against the complainant as their probe found the charges false.

ASF celebrates 5yrs of aiding acid victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) yesterday celebrated its five years of providing support and service to 1,400 acid victims of the country since 1999. The acid attack survivors recounted their harrowing ordeal at a programme marking the anniversary at Sufia Kamal Auditorium of the National Museum in Shahbagh. Mazeda of Comilla, the first survivor of ASF, related her tragic tale and said, "I'm urging all my fellow beings to be with us so that we don't feel left alone." "We haven't done any offence

and are not responsible for the consequences (that befell us), so why will we not be able to keep our heads up in society," added Mazeda, who has a child, referring to her ditching by the in-laws after she suffered acid burns. Dr John Morrison, the founding executive director of the ASF, said the organisation has become better and stronger now, which is a good news for acid attack survivors. Morrison is now chairperson of Acid Survivors Trust International, UK. Nasreen Haq, country director, ActionAid, Bangladesh, said earlier people did not care about acid

BSF guns down two Bangladeshi nationals

UNB, Thakurgaon
Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday gunned down two Bangladeshi nationals, who mistakenly crossed the frontier and entered Indian region. One of the victims was identified as Rafiqul Islam, 40, son of Bheisa Mohammad of Udaypur village in Baliadanga upazila. Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said the BSF opened fire on the victims as they crossed the Mondumala border in Baliadanga near demarcation pillar No. 384 at dawn. The BSF had taken away the bodies but returned those after a company-level flag meeting between the BDR and BSF at Mondumala yesterday afternoon.

AHSANULLAH MURDER Property of five suspects attached

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Police yesterday attached the property of five a day after the arrests of four suspects of the May 7 Tongi mayhem that killed opposition lawmaker Ahsanullah Master in a rally amid allegations of misplaced police probe. Attack on the rally by gunmen also killed a schoolboy and injured at least five others on the scene. "We have attached the property of four key suspects -- brothers Nurul Islam Dipu, Shahidul Islam Shipu and Ohidul Islam Tipu and Kana Hafiz -- and low-profile accused Jahangir to compel them to surrender," said Khalequzzaman, assistant superintendent of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police. Asked why the property of only five was attached when a case was filed against 18 suspects, Khalequzzaman, who is currently probing the case, said: "It's a primary step, we will also seize the property of some others, if need be." The CID on Tuesday night arrested four Tongi youths believed to be associates of the killers of Ahsanullah, executive president of Awami Shramik League, the labour front of the main opposition Awami League (AL). Hundreds of local residents



CALL OF CANNABIS: Connoisseurs have started streaming into the Mahastangarh archaeological site to celebrate a three-day traditional ganja festival beginning today.

25 criminals kill baby boy

UNB, Pabna
Miscreants killed a six-month-old boy and injured two others at a village in Sadar upazila early yesterday. Police quoted family members as saying a gang of 25 stormed into the house of Nasir Sarder at Raninagar village at about 4:00am, snatched the kid, Sagar, from his mother's lap and tossed him on the floor. Sagar died instantly. Nasir's two brothers--Motiur Rahman and Rabiul Islam--were injured in the attack.

Abuse row woman 'ordered to pose'

England claims in interview with CBS; US lawmakers to see new photos; 2 more GIs to stand trial

CBS/AGENCIES, New York
Army Pfc. Lyndie England, seen worldwide in photographs that show her smiling and pointing at naked Iraqi prisoners, said she was ordered to pose for the photos, and felt "kind of weird" in doing so. In an exclusive interview with Brian Maass of Denver CBS station KCNC-TV, England also confirmed that abuses worse than those depicted in the photos were carried out at the US-run Abu Ghraib prison

near Baghdad, but she declined to discuss them. England, 21, repeatedly insisted that her actions were dictated by "persons in my higher chain of command." In the photos, England is seen smiling, cigarette in her mouth, as she leans forward and points at the genitals of a naked, hooded Iraqi. Another photo taken at Abu Ghraib shows her holding a leash that encircles the neck of a naked Iraqi man lying on his side.

"I was instructed by persons in higher rank to stand there and hold this leash and look at the camera," she said. In Washington, US lawmakers are treated to a three-hour private viewing of unpublished pictures of abuse, while a US television network broadcasts a video shot by a US soldier inside the prison. Warner, head of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the Defense Department agreed to

CTG ARMS HAUL Woman UP member remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
A Chittagong court yesterday placed the female union parishad (UP) member, arrested on charge of having a hand in the April 2 arms cache, on a three-day remand.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police held Marium Begum alias Bodhini, a female member of Khottapara UP, on Tuesday afternoon for her alleged link with Hafizur Rahman, key suspect of the biggest ever arms haul at Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Limited (CUFL) jetty, sources said. She was also reportedly seen around the CUFL jetty minutes before offloading of the consignment of hi-tech weapons started, they added. CID police produced her before

Pot extrava-ganza

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra
It doesn't get any better for the marijuana lovers! Thousands of marijuana or ganja lovers seeking spiritual ecstasy from across the country as well as from India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Pakistan have started pouring in the 2,375 year-old Mahastangarh to celebrate a three-day ganja festival beginning today. The annual extravaganza, a

crowd-puller, is held every last Thursday of the Bangla month of Boishakh and draws both male and female pot connoisseurs with plaited hair. Not all the visitors smoke ganja at the festival, though, locals say. Most of them go there to watch the ganja-lovers. The main festival is held for one day, but it invariably stretches to three days. In a tradition introduced more

than 100 years ago by Hindu Sadhus (saints), as many as three lakh ganja-lovers are likely to converge on the area today. However, for the last three years they are having a hard time with the festival in the wake of increased police resistance and leaving the organisers' to guesswork about the exact number of the ganja-lovers likely to turn up at the

Prayer Timings
May 13

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



Mosaddak Ali Falu, four-party alliance candidate for Dhaka-10 constituency by-polls, shakes hands with the Dhaka divisional commissioner after submitting his nomination paper to the latter's office yesterday.