

IRAN POLLS Rafsanjani in slim lead

Run-off vote now certain

REUTERS, Tehran

Moderate cleric Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani held a narrow lead yesterday in Iran's presidential election, but was far short of outright victory, with an unprecedented run-off vote now certain, officials said.

Sources close to the Guardian Council, a watchdog body, said Rafsanjani had taken 21 percent of the 26.64 million votes counted from around 32 million cast in Friday's poll.

Former Tehran mayor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a religious hard-liner, was in second place with 19.7 percent.

If they hold their edge over their nearest rival, reformist cleric Mehdi

Karroubi, who had 17.8 percent of votes counted, the pair will square off next Friday in a deciding election.

Whoever wins, unelected Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has the last word on state affairs and hard-liners hold key levers of power, such as security and the courts.

Rafsanjani is a veteran politician who wants better ties with the West and would be likely to pursue a pragmatic reform program, liberalising the economy and preserving social freedoms without antagonizing the powerful clerical elite.

Ahmadinejad, a staunch ally of the hardline establishment,

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EU unity bid shattered in summit disaster

AFP, Brussels

Europe's leaders tore into each other after an EU summit on long-term finances imploded Saturday, ripping away a veneer of unity to expose fundamental differences over the bloc's future.

France and Britain engaged in the most savage recriminations, reminding the European press of Trafalgar and Waterloo but also revealing the depth of the crisis facing the 50-year-old alliance.

EU leaders had hoped the two-day summit would spur the 25-nation European Union to pull together after French and Dutch voters rejected a first-ever EU constitution.

"People will tell you next that

Europe is not in a crisis," Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, who holds the EU presidency, said as the summit ended in acrimony.

"It is in a deep crisis." The gap between Britain, which clung to its long-cherished budget rebate, and most of its 24 EU partners proved impossible to bridge in a desperate, last-minute round of EU diplomacy.

Recriminations broke out as hopes for a deal on the 2007-2013 budget, worth about 100 billion euros a year, were crushed.

"I believe a deal would have been possible. The fact that there was no deal is a disaster."

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Jamaat main patron of terrorism

Says Hasina, flies to France

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the alliance government of trying to make Bangladesh a 'failed' state

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Khulna stopped to protest poor budget fund

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Normal life came to a halt due to a daylong hartal in the metropolitan city yesterday.

The hartal was enforced by Greater Khulna Development Action Coordination Committee

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PHOTO: PID

Newly appointed Chief of Staff of Bangladesh Army Lieutenant General Moeen U Ahmed calls on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Customs officials seize 2,592 cellphone sets worth around Tk 1.5 crore from passengers' baggage coming from Singapore and Dubai at Zia International Airport (ZIA) Friday night.

60 killed in Iraq violence

AFP, Baghdad

The US military said yesterday it killed about 50 insurgents since the start of another joint US-Iraqi operation against rebels in Iraq's western Al-Anbar province near the Syrian border while 10 Iraqis were killed in two suicide bombings in the same province.

Fighting raged for the second day yesterday in Karabilah, near Iraq's border with Syria, as US marines and Iraqi soldiers swept through the area in search of insurgents and weapons.

"Approximately 50 insurgents have been killed since the operation began yesterday morning," said a military statement.

"There have been no additional reports of military or civilian casualties as a result of the operation."

Operation Spear was launched Friday morning.

In a chilling discovery, troops found four Iraqi hostages who had been beaten, handcuffed and chained to a wall in a bunker in the town, US Captain Jeff Pool said.

"The operations objectives, to root out insurgent and foreign terrorist presence within the city and deny them the use of Karabilah as a sanctuary, are similar to Operation Matador conducted by Marines May 7-14," he said.

But unlike Matador, he said the 1,000 strong operation has more Iraqis taking part. Iraqi soldiers from the 1st Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Brigade were involved he added without giving exact figures.

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Shammeer's killer bus' driver held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested from his Badda residence in the capital the driver of the killer bus that struck down Dhaka University student Shammeer Akhter Happy at city's Shahbagh on May 28.

The arrestee, Manik Hawlader, 25, son of Abdul Kader of Chhatia village of Babuganj upazila in Barisal, told Rab that he is one of the two helpers of the bus and was

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Prayer Timing		
June 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-50	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Trade, security, water to figure in Delhi talks

Foreign secretaries sit June 21

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A foreign secretary-level meeting between Bangladesh and India begins in New Delhi on June 21 to review the entire range of bilateral relations.

The two-day talks at this level, taking place after two years, will have an 'open-ended agenda,' official sources said.

"I am going to Delhi with an open, fresh and positive mind for consultation with my Indian counterpart Shyam Saran. We will discuss all

issues of bilateral interests and cooperation," Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin told reporters at his office yesterday.

"We are looking for a positive consultation and attaching considerable importance to the meeting. This is also significant for our foreign policy."

The director general (South Asia) of the foreign ministry, joint secretary (political) of the home ministry, joint secretary (ITO) of the commerce ministry and high officials of

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