

Low turnout, fake

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held in a free, fair and transparent manner. He denied the allegation of false voting and capture of polling centres.

Turnout of voters was thin as people had a little enthusiasm about the by-election due to the boycott by the main opposition party. Most of the polling centres were a deserted look three to four hours after the balloting started at 8:00am.

Different election observer groups including National Election Observation Council and Bangladesh Centre for Human Rights and Development in their preliminary reports said the voters' turnout was very low in the by-polls.

The cops intercepted the procession and charged batons on Mounna's supporters when they tried to break the police barricade. They however allowed Mounna and a few of his election agents to meet the returning officer (RO).

Mounna submitted a written complaint to the RO alleging that the supporters of the ruling alliance candidate forced his agents to leave different polling centres. He accused the administration of working for the BNP candidate.

He said the alliance supporters drove away his agents from Narsingdi Govt Girls School, Satirpar KK High School, Bhelanagar Govt Primary School, Madhabdi SP Institute, Brahmandi Govt High School, Shalidha Govt Primary School, Brahmanpara Govt Primary School and Shaheerpratap Govt Primary School centres.

Mounna accused the polling officers of slowing down the process of vote casting in char areas where he claimed a huge number of voters turned up to cast their votes. He felt that the slow vote casting would only help the ruling alliance candidate.

But Khokon refuted his competitor's allegation and said people cast their votes peacefully and without any intimidation. Asked about the attack on Mounna and his supporters and the capture of polling centres, Khokon said he was not aware of that.

The Daily Star correspondents while visiting different centres found at least two centres at Brahmandi and Satirpar captured by the ruling party men.

Local BNP leader Monjur-e-Elahi led a group of about 30 youths who forcibly entered the Brahmandi KK Government School polling centre at noon.

When the group started fake voting at the centre, Presiding Officer ARM Anisuzzaman challenged them but the BNP leader warned him of dire consequences.

The Satirpar KK Institution centre was also captured in the same way. Around 4,500 law-enforcers, including army and paramilitary BDR, were on duty during the eight-hour balloting that ended at 4:00pm without any break. There were 15 striking forces, 41 mobile forces and five mobile courts.

SITUATION OF SOME POLLING CENTRES

Unusual vote casting and fake voting were found at Shalidha Government Primary School centre. According to the presiding officer, in the first hour of the balloting, a total of 1,200 votes were cast out of the total 4,459.

"It takes two minutes to cast a vote but sometimes women take more time to cast their votes compared to the male," said Giasuddin Ahmed, the presiding officer.

Asked how 1,200 votes were cast in only one hour, Ahmed replied, "There was a huge rush of voters in the morning and we have seven booths."

Police arrested two boys at the centre on charges of fake voting. The arrestees, Idris Ali and Saddam Hossain, told The Daily Star that one Bachchu, belonging to the local BNP unit, had sent them for casting fake votes for Khokon.

When The Daily Star correspondents went to Narsingdi Government Girls High School centre at 10:00am, a handful of voters were found casting their votes. The assistant presiding officers and polling agents were found gossiping.

Presiding Officer KN Tamjidul Alam said some 600 votes had been cast till 10:00am.

At the Duttapara Government Primary School centre, the vote casting was unusually slow. The presiding officer of the centre said 1,050 votes had been cast till 2:00pm.

The voters' presence at the Narsingdi Pilot High School was also thin. Mohammad Shahidullah, presiding officer of the centre, said 1,100 votes had been cast till 2:00pm.

A mobile court arrested two youths -- Abdul Quddus and Hajrat Ali -- from Dilalpur Govt Primary School Centre on charge of roaming around the centre with sharp weapons.

At the Basail Government Primary School Centre, Mounna's agent Nurul Islam was beaten up allegedly by the alliance workers at about 8:00am.

At the Narsingdi Women's College Centre, Mounna's polling agents Abid Hossain Rinku and Asad Hossain Bhuiyan were driven away by their opponents at about 10:30am.

HC asks govt

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freed on bail," Dr Kamal said. He claimed the government has no specific evidence to prove the money laundering charge.

Opposing the bail prayer, Additional Attorney General Abdur Rezak Khan said Bidisha has been accused of funneling abroad local and foreign currencies worth Tk 21 crore. It needs to be seen what is the source of this money, Khan added.

Dr Kamal was assisted by Barrister Sara Hussain, Barrister Tanjib-al-Alam and Advocate Shafuluddin Bhuiyan. Rezak Khan was assisted by DAG Helaluddin Mollah.

Earlier on Sunday, the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court once again rejected the bail petition of Bidisha in the money laundering case filed against the estranged wife of former president HM Ershad.

Bidisha was sued for money laundering on June 16 minutes after she was granted bail in all the three criminal cases filed earlier since her arrest amid a high drama.

Metropolitan Sessions Judge Md Mominullah rejected her bail prayer in the latest case filed by the officer-in-charge (OC) of Gulshan Police Station under Section 13 of the Money Laundering Act.

Bidisha's lawyer filed a criminal miscellaneous case against the order of Metropolitan Magistrate Abdur Rouf wherein her bail prayer was turned down on Saturday.

Chudadanga BNP

leader shot dead

UNB, Chudadanga

BNP district vice-president and chairman of Shankarchandra Union Parishad (UP) was shot dead and his close associate wounded by unknown assailants on Wednesday night.

Police said Noor Ali, 45, died on the spot when the gunmen sprayed bullets on him as he was talking to a group of party workers at his Dingeda residence at 8:00pm. His close associate Zillu wounded by bullet was rushed to the hospital.

Party workers attending the meeting said two unidentified men riding a motorbike came to the house, fired three shots at Noor Ali and quickly left the place.

Tension mounted in the area following the death of the BNP leader.

Two bodies

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price from middlemen. The meeting has formed a sub-committee headed by Jute Ministry Joint Secretary (policy) Golam Mostafa to deal with financial problems in the sector as a whole and in the BJMC-run mills in particular.

Representatives from the finance ministry, Planning Commission, Bangladesh Bank, Sonali Bank, Janata Bank, Agrani Bank, Uttara Bank, Rupali Bank, Pubali Bank and Export Promotion Bureau have been made its members.

The second subcommittee headed by Jute Ministry Joint Secretary (administration) Golam Mustakim will deal with jute and jute-goods production.

Its members are the representatives from the agriculture ministry, Planning Commission, Bangladesh Jute Research Institute BADC, BJA, BJE, BJMA and BJS.

The subcommittees have been asked to prepare reports and recommendations on the basis of existing problems and submit those in three months to the advisory committee.

On the government's delayed release of Tk 30 crore, the meeting was told that Tk 200 crore was in fact sought to procure raw jute.

The ministry and BJMC pleaded for bank loans and got another Tk 30 crore as production stopped at 15 mills.

But BJMC had to buy raw jute at inflated rate of Tk 1,000 a maund to feed the mills and keep at least some of those operational.

The meeting discussed an option of giving subsidy to the jute sector, easing the lending process and export potentials of jute and jute-goods.

In the morning, a big procession of the indigenous people paraded a couple of villages. They gathered on Fazar Ali Mollah College field where discussions and cultural functions were held.

They placed floral wreaths on the martyrs' monument built on the college ground to remember Saontal heroes including Shidhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairav who sacrificed their lives for the cause of Saontals' rights.

The discussions upheld the ethnic minority groups' demands for primary identity, compulsory primary education in their own languages, equal opportunity in jobs, protecting their cultural traditions, construction of a permanent memorial for the Saontal heroes, and establishment of a separate ministry.

Adibasi Unnayan Shangstha (AUS) consultant William Nablet, a of Unicef Rajshahi representative Abdul Latif, ASED president Dubin Kisku, Executive Director of Adibasi Bikash Kendro Benjamin Hasda, AUS Project Coordinator Anjia Biswas, and other aborigine leaders and development workers spoke in the meeting chaired by AUS Executive Director Bhagbat Tudu.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abdul Mannan attended the meeting as guest.

A bow and arrow competition

transmission link. The optical fibre link will ultimately link the country with the SEA-ME-WE4 submarine cable network.

The cabinet purchase committee, headed by Finance and Planning Minister Saifur Rahman, scrutinised this deal before the PM's final approval. This committee criticised the BTB for taking so much time to process the deal.

The telecoms minister has failed to explain to his cabinet colleagues about the wrong doings of the BTB. The committee unanimously rejected the dubious deal and proposed to prosecute the officials responsible for such anomaly.

On April 10 in a letter to the telecoms ministry, the Cabinet Division conveyed the prime minister's order to it and asked to inform the cabinet purchase committee about the actions taken against the guilty officials by May 15.

The letter quoted the PM as asking the ministry to keep the Cabinet Division updated about the proceedings of the case.

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PM to attend Clinton

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The Clinton Global Initiative will provide discussion and debate on some most pressing global challenges including The Escape from Poverty, Conflict and Reconciliation in the 21st Century, Climate Change and Enhancing Governance.

This nonpartisan conference will bring together a diverse and select group of current and former heads of state, business leaders, noted academicians, and key NGO representatives to participate in a series of dynamic interactive workshops.

The meeting will devise strategy on the best methods to reduce poverty, use religion as a force for reconciliation and conflict resolution, implement new business strategies and technologies to combat climate change, and strengthen governance.

The aim of the September 15-17 meeting, inaugural meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative, is to develop an agenda for action that all the participants can help implement during the coming year.

The grand event will coincide with and complement the Millennium Summit of the 60th session of the United Nation's General Assembly (UNGA).

Khaleda Zia, who is also going to attend the UNGA session, will join the Clinton Global Initiative as a sideline event and speak on poverty alleviation, official sources said.

The event will bring together a number world leaders and personalities, including President of France Jacques Chirac, King Abdullah II of Jordan, President of the Dominican Republic Leonel Fernandez Reyna, President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Ercidoz, an UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Vice Premier of Israel Shimon Peres, Governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger, President of the Institute for Liberty and Democracy Dr. Hernando de Soto, President of the Indian National Congress Party Sonia Gandhi, Chairman and CEO, News

Corporation Rupert Murdoch, Chairman and CEO, Time Warner Inc. Richard Parsons and Founder and Managing Director of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh Dr. Muhammad Yunus.

The conference will ask each participant to make a specific commitment to take action in one of the areas to be discussed.

There are instances that family members of several ministers use the transports taken from the subordinate offices which is seriously hampering the normal activities of the offices concerned.

He said there are some ministers who have not yet returned the transports taken from their ministries' subordinated offices despite repeated reminders. However, some sensible senior ministers usually do not use additional transports unnecessarily, he said.

The official admitted that a section of top bureaucrats, who wants additional vehicles besides those allotted by the government transport pool, usually pursue ministers to use extra jeep to justify their own use of jeeps from different projects.

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Appreciating recent actions taken by Bangladesh in the border areas, the Indian side stressed the importance of continued action, consular access and the need for regular exchange of information.

The Bangladesh side also stressed the need for action against Bangladeshis' miscreants and providing consular access.

Both the sides expressed satisfaction over the commencement of coordinated patrolling by the border forces of the two countries. The Bangladesh side agreed to examine the Indian proposal for coordinated patrolling on the riverine boundary where feasible.

Regarding illegal cross border movement and activities, the Indian side reiterated its proposal for a high level meeting.

They emphasised requirement for border fencing within and upto 150 yards of the international border. Bangladesh side stressed the need to conform to the 1975 border guidelines and avoid any action that may have adverse impact on the peace and stability in the border areas. Both sides agreed to facilitate repair and development works along the India-Bangladesh border.

The two sides looked forward to the early conclusion of the Treaty on Mutual Cooperation for Preventing Illicit Trafficking of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances.

The two countries agreed to strengthen measures to combat trafficking of women and children. India's proposal to appoint nodal officers to deal with this issue was noted by Bangladesh.

Both the sides emphasised the need for early convening of the home secretary level talks to discuss the entire range of issues under their purview and carry forward the process of cooperation between the two countries in a constructive and positive manner.

The two sides agreed to continue discussions to expedite completion of the demarcation of the land boundary and decided to resume meetings of the Joint Boundary Working Groups to consider boundary-related issues in August 2005.

Both the sides agreed to address the issues related to exchange of enclaves and territories in adverse possessions as early as possible to mitigate the sufferings of people.

Following discussion on sharing of the common rivers, in response to concerns raised by Bangladesh foreign secretary over the Indian River Linking Project, the Indian foreign secretary said India would not take any unilateral action, which would harm the interest of Bangladesh.

Both the sides stressed the need for convening the Joint Rivers Commission in Dhaka at a mutually convenient time that can be preceded by a meeting of the secretaries of Water Resources ministries.

The two sides expressed satisfaction at expanding economic and commercial cooperation.

The Indian side conveyed its sincerity to address Bangladesh's concerns on the trade deficit, espe-

cially through the removal of non-tariff and para-tariff barriers and reiterated the importance of measures like free trade agreements as well as border trade and establishment of border markets.

They agreed on signing the revised Trade Agreement at an early date and said the bilateral Joint Working Group on trade, para-tariff and non-tariff barriers and on customs should meet by August 2005.

The text of the Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement, acceptable to both the countries, is ready for signature at a suitable occasion, the two sides observed with satisfaction.

Discussing issues relating to improved connectivity in the region, the two sides agreed to explore the possibility of commencing Dhaka-Guwahati, Dhaka-Shillong and Dhaka-Siliguri bus services.

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The Indian side invited a Bangladesh delegation to visit in July '05 to continue discussions on the extension of a US\$150 million Line of Credit for infrastructure projects.

Bangladesh and India discussed matters relating to the tri-nation gas pipeline and agreed to carry forward further discussions in this regard.

The two sides agreed to increase cooperation in the fields of agriculture and science and technology. The Indian side offered increased training slots in India under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme, including at its Institute for Training of Highway Engineers.

The two sides expressed satisfaction that a draft cultural exchange programme had been agreed upon and could be signed shortly.

They stressed the importance of high level exchanges, including visits by parliamentary delegations.

They exchanged views on regional and international issues, including India's candidature for

Dhaka, Delhi agree

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cultural relations, said a joint press statement issued yesterday.

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They stressed the importance of high level exchanges, including visits by parliamentary delegations.

They exchanged views on regional and international issues, including India's candidature for

permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council.

The Indian foreign secretary mentioned that the Indian prime minister was looking forward to attending the forthcoming 13th Saarc summit to be held in Dhaka.

Appreciating the warm welcome and gracious hospitality extended to him and his delegation during their stay in India, the Bangladesh foreign secretary invited his Indian counterpart to visit Dhaka for the next round of the foreign secretary level meeting, which the latter accepted with thanks.

Bangladesh also welcomed the proposed visit by the Indian Minister for Commerce and Industry to Dhaka.

Both the sides made commitment to constructively work for further promotion of bilateral cooperation for the mutual benefits of the two neighbouring peoples.

Bangladesh High Commissioner (designate) to India Liaquat Ali Chowdhury, Acting High Commissioner of Bangladesh Masud Bin Momen, Director-General (South Asia) of foreign ministry Fazlul Karim, Joint Secretary of the Home Ministry Mohammad Mohsin, Joint Secretary of the Commerce Ministry Elias Ahmed and government officials accompanied the Bangladesh foreign secretary during the talks.

The Indian foreign secretary was assisted by High Commissioner of India to Bangladesh Veena Sikri, Joint Secretary (BSM) Neelam Deo and senior officials of various ministries and departments of the Indian government.

Representatives from the State Governments of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and West Bengal also participated.

During his 3-day stay in New Delhi, Hamayetuddin called on Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil, Minister for Commerce and Industry Kamal Nath, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Mani Shankar Aiyar and State Minister for External Affairs EAhamed.

ment forces clashed with those of a Taliban-linked commander, Saaduddin Yaqoubzada, in the western province of Farah, district chief Mohammad Salim said.