

London HR meet  
says persecution,  
harassment exist  
in Bangladesh

STAR REPORT

There is ample evidence of persecution and harassment [in Bangladesh]" and "To say persecution doesn't exist, is itself a terrorism, speakers at a human rights conference on Bangladesh in London said.

Speakers made the comment on Monday in the launching of a report titled 'Cancer of Extremism' at the UK House of Parliament based on an international conference 'European Human Rights Conference on Bangladesh: Extremism, Intolerance & Violence' held in June this year.

Lord Avebury, vice-chair of Parliamentary Human Rights Group and chairman of International Bangladesh Foundation, presided over the event inviting representatives of persecuted groups to report, a UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group press release read.

Representatives speaking at the event were Prasanta Barua from the Buddhist community, Anukul Talukder from the Hindu community,

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# Bihar votes to end Laloo's 15yr reign

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Patna

Bihar's electorate created history yesterday, finally ending 15 years of political domination by Railway Minister Laloo Prasad and ushering in a new administration that will be led by his long-time foe Nitish Kumar.

In a stunning verdict, voters who only eight months ago delivered a badly hung 243-member Bihar Assembly gave the alliance of the Janata Dal-United (JD-U) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) an easy win in the staggered elections that ended Saturday.

Within hours after counting of the millions of votes began, the writing was on the wall for Laloo Prasad and his Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), which had ruled the country's second most populous state since 1990, winning election after election with amazing regularity.

The JD-U and BJP together had won 149 seats while only 122 seats were needed to form a government.

Celebrations broke out here and in New Delhi, outside the offices of the JD-U and the BJP, both of which claimed

that the verdict was a vote against Laloo Prasad's and his party's poor administration.

In New Delhi, Nitish Kumar, once a friend of Lalu Prasad who later became one of his bitterest critics, called it a "vote for change and good governance".

Nitish Kumar, who unlike in February was projected this time as the chief ministerial candidate of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), said: "The people of Bihar were disappointed and disillusioned with (poor) governance. I will work for the welfare of all communities - Hindus, Muslims, backwards."

"It is a wave (against RJD)," added a beaming Sushil Modi, the BJP chief in Bihar. "It is a reflection of people's anger against Laloo and Rabri Devi. They thought they could indefinitely remain in power on the strength of their vote banks. That myth has been shattered."

Tuesday's verdict marked the end of the Laloo era, and a mellowed but still

confident RJD leader accepted defeat after confining himself for hours to the house of his wife and former chief minister, Rabri Devi.

"On a personal level I congratulate him (Nitish Kumar)," Laloo Prasad told a crowded news conference. But he quickly added that the voters had blundered by voting for the JD-U and the BJP.

"We will fully cooperate with Nitish Kumar. We will play the role of the opposition. On a personal level he is my younger brother. I congratulate him, but not the BJP."

The RJD, which in February had ended up as the single largest political party, cut a sorry figure, winning along with its allies including the Congress just 63.

Several RJD stalwarts were humbled. Even Rabri Devi scraped through with just about 5,000 votes in Raghopur after initially trailing to her JD-U rival Shiv Kumar.

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AUG 21 BLAST

## Dikon first accused to get bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted ad-interim bail to an accused of the August 21 grenade attacks on Awami League (AL) rally last year.

This is the first time a lower court granted bail to an accused of the August 21 grenade attack case, court sources said.

Judge Mohammad Momin Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court granted bail to Shoib Sayeed Dikon following a criminal appeal filed by the defence against the rejection order of the lower court.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court had rejected his (Dikon) bail earlier.

While moving for the bail petition Dhaka Bar Association

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## Bomb found at 14-party rally venue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police recovered a bomb from Shaheb Bazar Zero Point during the protest meeting of the 14-party alliance local unit last evening.

The bomb, weighing 300gm and tied with red tape, was in a plastic box connected to a detonator with batteries. The bomb was taken to Boalia Police Station and kept in water.

On duty police quoting eyewitnesses said a young boy getting down from a human-hauler left the bomb under a parked microbus in front of National Bank Rajshahi branch and fled.

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PHOTO: STAR

The two-day transport strike forces many passengers to have a risky ride on the train roof to come to the capital yesterday. The photo was taken near the Kamalapur Railway Station.

## Graduate courses on nursing sought

### Roundtable terms existing edn facilities inadequate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Graduate course on nursing should be introduced in private medical colleges and universities to produce qualified and skilled nurses.

This will also improve the dignity, image and status of the nursing profession, increase employment opportunities for nurses at home and abroad and attract students with better calibre

higher and socio-economic background to this profession, providing lucrative career opportunity.

This was the unanimous view of speakers at a roundtable on 'Giving Nurses Due Recognition: Promoting Nursing Education in Bangladesh' at Sheraton Hotel in the capital yesterday.

The existing facilities for nursing education are not enough to

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## Drive for Aman procurement starts Nov 25

Rice price fixed at Tk 14, paddy Tk 9.25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government fixed Tk 14 for per kg rice and Tk 9.25 for per kg paddy under its Aman Rice Procurement Programme for this Aman season in yesterday's cabinet meeting.

This year's price of Aman is Tk .75 more than last year's and the price of IRRI-Boro is Tk .50 less than the last year's price per kg. The procurement drive will drive from Nov 25.

A food ministry source said the

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## ME leaders fear another Iraq in Syria: Annan

REUTERS, AFP, United Nations

Middle East leaders want Syria to cooperate with a UN inquiry into the killing of a former Lebanese leader but fear a UN confrontation with Damascus could lead to "another Iraq," Secretary General Kofi Annan said on Monday.

During a recent tour of the region, every capital Annan visited wanted to see Syria convinced to cooperate through diplomatic means rather than via a change in regime or military action as occurred in neighbouring Iraq, Annan told reporters.

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## 5 hurt as bombs go off at JMB man's house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Five people, including a woman, were injured when three bombs went off at a house of Taragunia village in Daulatpur upazila in the district yesterday.

Hearing the blasts at about 3:30pm, local people rushed to the spot and identified the injured as Ikhtiar Hossain, owner of the

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Prayer Timing		
November 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-05	5-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-21	5-24
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		