

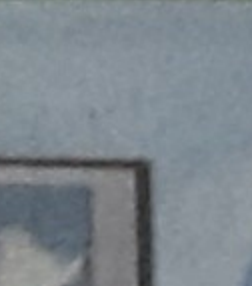
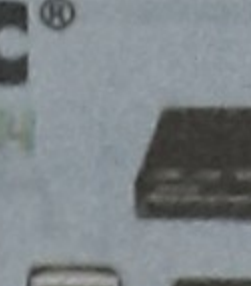
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Fema sees Aug 4 polls free, fair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (Fema), an election-monitoring organisation yesterday said that the standard of polling at the August 4 local body elections held under the state of emergency was better compared to any other elections in the past.

Fema said that polls in the four city corporation and nine pourasavas were held in a free and fair environment.

"There was no problem in holding the elections under a state of emergency," Fema president Munira Khan said while unveiling its polls observation report at the National Press Club yesterday.

The August 4 elections deserve appreciation as it was of a better standard than any elections in the past, the report said.

"Voters could cast their votes spontaneously as the law and order situation was good," the Fema president said in reply to a question.

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Russia seizes S Ossetia as wider conflict feared

Georgia quits breakaway region

AFP, Tbilisi

Russian troops backed by tanks and fighter jets seized control of South Ossetia yesterday as fears grew of a wider conflict with Georgia over the separatist region.

Georgia said it had withdrawn most of its troops from South Ossetia in the face of a build-up in Russian firepower and that it had lost control of the near-destroyed regional capital, Tskhinvali.

International condemnation grew as Georgia claimed that Russian jets had bombed near the capital Tbilisi for the first time, targeting a military airfield.

As diplomatic efforts intensified to bring an end to the crisis, officials in Tbilisi said Moscow had begun bombing Georgian territory in and around another restive province, Abkhazia.

Georgian Reintegration Minister Temur Yakobashvili told

journalists that Georgia's western city of Zugdidi was being bombed and that Russian battleships had been moved to the nearby Black Sea.

"Zugdidi is now being bombed," Yakobashvili said at a press briefing.

There was no confirmation from Moscow about action near Abkhazia. Russian officials said they were in control of Tskhinvali but added that Georgia still had about 7,400 servicemen, 100 tanks and artillery pieces in the area.

AFP reporters witnessed Russian attack helicopters hovering over the area near Tskhinvali and a stream of people were fleeing the devastation carrying their belongings.

"We're being driven away. The place was in flames and we couldn't stay," Pavlik, an elderly man travelling by foot, told AFP as he fled from the conflict zone.

Russia puts the death toll from hostilities that broke out last week at 2,000 while Georgia estimates range from 92 to 150.

Russia backs the separatist government in South Ossetia and sent in tanks and troops on Friday in response to pro-Western Georgia's military offensive to take back the province which broke away in the early 1990s after a separatist war.

French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, who is due in Tbilisi later Sunday to begin mediation, warned in an interview of a Balkan-like spiral of violence in the conflict between Russia and Georgia.

"We are facing an escalation of violence" that is "unacceptable at the doors of Europe," Kouchner told Le Parisien newspaper as he prepared to leave for the region to mediate with Moscow and Tbilisi.

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BARISAL CITY

Santu demands cancellation of poll results

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Defeated Barisal City Corporation (BCC) mayoral candidate Sharfuddin Ahmed Santu yesterday demanded cancellation of the election result and urged the Election Commission (EC) not to publish gazette notification of the result.

"The Election Commission should hold the election again. At least it should arrange re-election in controversial polling centres 18, 19, 31, 36, 57 and 79. The same goes for polling centres 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 30 as Hiron complained about these centres," he said.

"It should take half an hour at most to take the result to the election office from any centre in the city but surprisingly, it took about eight hours to announce results of a number of the polling centres," he said claiming it was nothing but a proof of irregularities and manipulation.

The PDP leader lost to Awami

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Danish envoy for lifting emergency soon

UNB, Dhaka

Danish Ambassador in Dhaka Einar H Jensen yesterday said his country would like to see the emergency rules lifted soon and a free and fair general election held in Bangladesh later this year.

"We like to see the lifting of the state of emergency as soon as possible," he told reporters after a meeting with Home Affairs Adviser MAMatin at his secretariat office.

Ambassador Jensen, who observed municipality election in Mymensingh's Fulbaria on August 4, praised the holding of the polls in a peaceful and fair manner.

"I think it was very good and a good sign for Bangladesh general election later this year," he said.

Court rejects Shamim Iskander's petition for quashing case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected a petition for quashing a case filed against detained former Biman flight engineer Shamim Iskander for hiding information from the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after hearing arguments from the defence and the prosecution.

Shamim, brother of detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, went to the sessions judge's court following the rejection of a similar appeal by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on July 31.

He stated in his petition that the case was filed violating the provisions of law and with the mala fide intention to harass him.

Shamim, whose name was on the second list of 50 corruption suspects, and his wife Kaniz Fatema were sued on May 5 this year on charges of concealing over Tk 20.47 lakh of their wealth from the ACC.

He was arrested when he came out of Khaleda's Shaheed Moinul Road residence on July 18.



PHOTO: STAR

A street vendor of sugarcane juice illegally taps into the power lines to operate his motor used for crushing sugarcane. The photo was taken at Paglabazar on Dhaka-Narayanganj highway yesterday.

Lone bidder's condition makes Bibiyana power project uncertain

SHARIEF KHAN

The Bibiyana 450 megawatt power project has become uncertain due to poor handling by the Power Cell of the power ministry as its lone bidder Powertek Consortium has imposed a condition that the government will be responsible for paying up to \$15 million for cancelling the project before its financial closure.

This is the first time a private company has imposed such a condition on the government in a bidding process. Instead of reject-

ing such an idea, the Proposal Evaluation Committee (PEC) of the Power Cell on Thursday forwarded this "exception" to the law ministry for opinion.

The bid originally participated by several companies has now only one bidder and guided by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) that controversially disqualified local Summit group.

A consortium of a South Korean and a Malaysian company, Powertek last month submitted its bid proposal stating its request that the "government be responsible

for up to \$15 million of project company's liabilities under EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) contract if the implementation agreement is terminated prior to financial close for any reason other than a Project Company Event of Default."

The cell requested Powertek to withdraw this "exception" on July 29, which the company refused. It then sought clarification why Powertek needed this kind of guarantee.

Powertek replied that it would

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BURNT BY HUSBAND Rajshahi wife finally gives up battle for life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arzina Khatun, whose husband allegedly set fire to her after pouring kerosene 13 days ago, succumbed to her injuries yesterday at a city hospital.

The poor housewife from Rajshahi died at 7:45am at the Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

"How can I bear the loss of my child? The brute took my daughter's life," said victim's mother Zayed Sheikh holding Arzina's coffin while it was being taken out of the DMCH morgue after a post-mortem.

Arzina's mother Zayed and brother Liton Sheikh, along with other relatives, received the body at 2:15pm and left for Rajshahi to bury her at the family graveyard at Lakshimpur Bhatapara.

Arzina, who obtained master's degree in geography from Rajshahi College and passed the 27th BCS exams last year, received burn injuries to her face, breast, abdomen, arms, back and thighs after her husband Kamruzzaman Kamu doused her with kerosene and alighted her with a gas lighter at their house at Shalbagh in Rajshahi on July 29.

While receiving treatment at the

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PRIMARY SCHOOLS Teachers plan agitation against Brac supervision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of non-government primary schools will hold a grand rally in the capital on August 20 demanding cancellation of Brac supervision over all primary schools in 20 upazilas under a pilot project.

Tougher programmes will be announced from the grand rally, if their 10 demands are not met by August 18, said teachers under the banner of Bangladesh Non-Government Primary Teachers' Association yesterday.

"It is the responsibility of the state to ensure quality primary education for all. Why does the government allow non-government organisation Brac that has no experience in formal education to supervise all primary schools in 20 upazilas?" said association President M Aminul Islam Chowdhury at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the capital.

He also said the government move is part of a plan to privatise country's primary education. But it would not help improve the standard of primary education, he added.

"We shall hold a grand rally on

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Prayer Timing		
August 11		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-25	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-41	6-44
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: AFP

Georgian refugees sit next to their belongings in central Tbilisi yesterday as Russian troops were reportedly heading towards the Georgian town of Gori.

Lankan troops push into rebel territory: 43 killed

AP, AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan soldiers launched a pre-dawn attack on Tamil separatists in the embattled north yesterday, killing 15 rebels, while other battles in the region left 27 rebels and one soldier dead, said the military.

The civil war on the Indian Ocean island has escalated in recent months, with the military stepping up ground assaults and airstrikes after the government pledged to capture rebel-held territory and crush the insurgents.

In the latest offensive, army troops pushed into the rebel territory across a defence line in the village of Kilali on the Jaffna peninsula early Sunday and attacked rebel bunkers, said military spokesman Brig Udaya Nanayakkara.

He said soldiers killed 15 guerrillas before retreating to their bunkers, without suffering casualties.

Fighting, meanwhile, continued throughout Saturday along the front lines in Vavuniya, Mullaitivu,

Jaffna and Welioya regions bordering the rebels' de facto state, Nanayakkara said.

Scattered battles in Vavuniya killed 16 rebels and one soldier while three rebels died in Mullaitivu. Separate clashes killed five insurgents in Welioya and Jaffna.

There was no immediate word from the Tigers about the military's latest claims, but the guerrillas said an air strike inside their territory on Saturday killed or wounded civilians.

"Two civilians, including a school teacher, were killed, four more civilians were injured... when (the) Sri Lanka air force bombed Iranaipalai," the Tigers said.

The military has not commented on the Tiger claims, but the defence ministry said 27 guerrillas and a government soldier were killed in other fighting in the northern parts of the country in fresh fighting since Saturday.

Both sides routinely exaggerate enemy casualties and underreport

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Corruption probe against major's in-law lands UNO in trouble

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Mehendiganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) filed a general diary (GD) against an army major after he allegedly threatened the official with dire consequences when the UNO refused to back down from investigating corruption charges against the major's brother-in-law.

UNO Khan Md Nurul Amin filed the GD Saturday night with Mehendiganj Police Station.

Sources said Khan ordered his youth development officer to investigate corruption charges against Patarhat Muslim High School headmaster Nurul Amin.

The headmaster's brother-in-law, the major, called the UNO Friday and asked him to stop the probe and file a probe report in favour of the headmaster, Khan alleged.

When the UNO refused to stop the investigation, the major

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PHOTO: STAR

A rickshaw garage built illegally on the box culvert of a canal at Kafrul in the capital. A bamboo bridge has also been made to get the rickshaws to the garage. The photo was taken yesterday.

SEIZURE IN CTG No expiry dates found in 450 MT powdered milk

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Customs officials at Chittagong Port could not find any manufacturing or expiry dates of the powdered milk inside 18 containers the authorities seized Thursday.

Customs officials of the Audit Investigation and Research (AIR) branch opened five of the 18 powdered milk containers Thursday and found no manufacturing and expiry dates.

Yesterday they examined the remaining 13 containers on Jetty-5 of the port in presence of representatives from the joint-forces formed taskforce, importers, the Clearing and Forwarding (C&F) agent and the pre-shipment inspection company concerned.

Abul Khaer Milk Products Ltd of Abul Khaer Group had imported the 450 tonnes of powdered milk in 18 containers.

The powdered milk was made in Australia and it was shipped to

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