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2 held for currency forgery

Note-making materials seized
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in a raid recovered some counterfeit note-producing materials and equipment and held two people in this connection from the city's Rampura area yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-3 led by Capt Shofiqul Islam raided a house No-29, Block-F, Road-8 of the area at about 1:00 am and recovered one computer monitor, one printer, some inks, several sheets of paper which are used in printing fake notes and some printed sheets of forged notes.

During the raid, Zahir Hossain, 26, and Sadekul, 23,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Millions to vote as India goes to polls today

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Capping weeks of an acrimonious campaign, India heads for the first phase of staggered parliamentary elections tomorrow amidst indications of yet another fractured mandate and coalition government.

The opening phase of poll will see voters exercising their franchise in 124 of the 543 Lok Sabha constituencies spread across 16 states and federally-administered territories. As many as 1.715 candidates are in fray in the first phase for which 14.31 crore voters are eligible to cast their votes.

Nine lakh polling staff, helped by paramilitary personnel and armed police will be conducting the polling tomorrow with the help of 3,166 electronic voting machines.

All opinion polls have projected that neither of the country's two main contenders for power—ruling Congress and opposition BJP—will get majority on its own and an array of regional parties are expected to secure nearly 50 per cent of the parliamentary seats.

The results of the world's biggest democratic exercise are expected on May 16 and a hung parliament could trigger an intense period of political haggling and realignment of forces as the main parties scramble to put together a working coalition.

The final phase of polling is scheduled for May 13.

The campaigning was marked by a bitter war of words between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul on one hand and BJP Prime Ministerial

candidate L K Advani and Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi on the other.

The campaign was at times marred by alleged hate speeches with communal overtones and BJP leaders Varun Gandhi, a scion of the Nehru-Gandhi family, in Uttar Pradesh and Ashok Sahu in Orissa was jailed on that charge.

The election campaign has been devoid of a single central issue and Congress has showcased its main achievement as the country's spectacular economic growth, which has averaged more than 8 per cent in recent years.

However, Congress has also come under criticism from BJP on the handling of internal security with the opposition alleging that the government was soft towards terrorism.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Work on elevated expressway to start this year

PM pledges to ease traffic congestion in city

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina yesterday said construction work on elevated expressway on Gazipur-Tongi-Narayanganj route will be started within the current year as a way out of the nagging traffic jam in the capital.

The government may start construction of sky-rail line in the capital during this period and there is also a plan to construct modern waterway surrounding the city, the prime minister also added.

Hasina made the remarks when the executive committee members of Dhaka Reporters Unity led by its President Shamim Ahmed and General Secretary Pathik Saha called on her at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

She also told the delegation that the government has a plan to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Robbers kill Ansar aboard a launch

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

An Ansar member was killed and 25 passengers and four Ansar men were injured during a launch robbery in the river Meghna early Tuesday.

The launch MV New Mishu, destined for Muradnagar, Comilla, left Sadarghat after midnight. The robbery took place around 3:00am.

The deceased was Muzammel Hossain (35), son of late Abdul Mollah of Char Keoar under Munshiganj Sadarupazila.

Critically injured Ansar men Monir Hossain, 35, Alam, 40, Jahangir, 40, and Ansar Commander Abed Ali, 40, were admitted to Chest

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Govt to lay broad-gauge rails all over the country

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is working to have broad-gauge rails all over the country to get linked with the Trans-Asian Railway in future.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) yesterday approved seven development projects, including one for converting Bangladesh Railway's Parbatipur-Kanchan-Panchagarh and Kanchan-Birol-metre-gauge section to dual-gauge and Birol-Birol Border section to broad gauge at a cost of Tk981 crore.

Japan Debit Cancellation Fund (JDCF) is financing the work.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the Ecne chairperson, presided over the meeting in the NEC conference room that approved the projects involving Tk 3,314 crore, including Tk 326 crore in project aid.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Tremor jolts port city

CU CORRESPONDENT

A light tremor measuring 4.9 on the Richter Scale jolted the port city and its adjacent areas at around 10:57pm on Tuesday.

The quake lasted for a few seconds.

The epicentre of the tremor was 316 kilometres southeast of the seismic centre at Agargaon in the capital and near the India-Myanmar border, sources in the centre said.

There were, however, no reports of casualty from anywhere in the district, said Deputy Commissioner Fariduddin Ahmed.

Meanwhile, a mild earthquake jolted different areas in Bandarban hill district on the first day of Bangla New Year.

CTG ARMS HAUL 6 naval officers quizzed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Six naval officers who served in Bangladesh Coast Guard on deputation in 2004 were interrogated yesterday in connection with the Chittagong arms haul case.

They appeared before the investigators at the Chittagong divisional headquarters of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) at Dampara Police Line in the city in the afternoon following a notice served by the CID.

Three of the six naval officers - Lt Commander Arif, Lt Commander Tafsir and Lt

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Awami League activists and supporters blocked the road at Muktangan area yesterday (picture L) while holding a gathering in support of the government decision cancelling the allotment of Khaleda Zia's cantonment residence. BNP activists held a separate gathering to protest the decision, blocking (picture R) the Purana Paltan road.

PHOTO: STAR

Internal conflict holds back BNP reorganisation

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The process of reorganising the main opposition BNP is being greatly obstructed by serious intra-party conflicts between 'reformist' camp, and leaders who have been convicted and are known as corrupt among the party men.

Party insiders said reformist leaders are trying to get into district level convening committees of the party while convicted leaders are opposing their entry or continuation in any party committee.

And leaders who are neither reformists nor convicts want to see honest persons with organising ability in the convening committees to be announced soon for all district units of the Party.

Contacted, BNP Joint Secretary General Goyeshwar Chandra Roy said leaders of convening committees would be selected on the

basis of their performance, acceptability and capability. "It does not matter who are reformists and who are not. But sentiment of the party men will be honoured."

Sources in the party said a four-member special committee headed by Chairperson Khaleda Zia is now reviewing the list of proposed leaders of district units, and in some cases crosschecked those contacting them as well as local activists.

Grassroots party leaders from across the country in their month-long exchange of view meetings in February proposed three names for the post of convener and three or four names for joint conveners of district committees.

According to party insiders, 'convicted and corrupt' leaders are mounting pressure on the party leadership to exclude reformists from all

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

First-ever bus route franchise starts in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Country's first-ever bus route franchise (BRF) made its debut in the city's Uttara-Azimpur route on Tuesday, the first day of Bangla year 1416.

Introduction of digitalised ticket system, however, will take a few more months on the route. Only one counter was opened so far in Uttara with the digitalised system.

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain formally inaugurated the new system at a ceremony at Uttara sector 12.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Bus crashes kill 13 in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Thirteen people were killed and 30 others injured, six in critical condition, in two separate accidents on Rangpur-Bogra highway early Tuesday.

The first accident occurred around 12:30am at Bishmile under Pirganj upazila when a Comilla bound bus plunged into a roadside ditch leaving 10 people dead.

Police said six of the passengers, most of whom were day labourers, died on the spot. Two died on their way to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) and two more at the hospital.

The deceased were Jahurul, 23 of Rajarhat, Suruj Miah, 18, of Pirganj, Saiful, 40, Sayed Ali, 30, Kamrul, 25, and Noor Alam, 55, of Badarganj, Abed Ali, 35, of Mithapukur, Mohabbat Ali, 40, Nadda, 32, and Ahad Ali, 35.

The critically injured were admitted to RMCH.

In the second incident, three people were killed as two trucks collided head-on at Dulaipur under Mithapukur upazila around 1:30am.

Truck drivers Mohsin Ali, 55, and Motiar, 45, of Mithapukur and an unidentified man were killed in the accident.

Police handed the drivers' bodies over to their relatives after autopsy at RMCH morgue.

DCC polls likely in Oct-Nov

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) election is likely to be held in October-November as the city-corporation laws are expected to be passed by parliament in July.

Although the Election Commission (EC) is prepared to hold the overdue DCC polls, but it cannot go ahead for want of the necessary laws for holding the elections, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakawat Hossain told reporters at his office yesterday.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

140 more return from KL, Dubai

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 140 more Bangladeshi workers returned home from Malaysia and Dubai yesterday after being cheated by their recruiting agencies.

Meanwhile, at least 21 bodies of the workers, who died in Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Malaysia and Qatar, were received here Tuesday and yesterday.

According to sources, 92

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Fighting resumes in Sri Lanka after ceasefire

10 rebels killed

AFP, Colombo

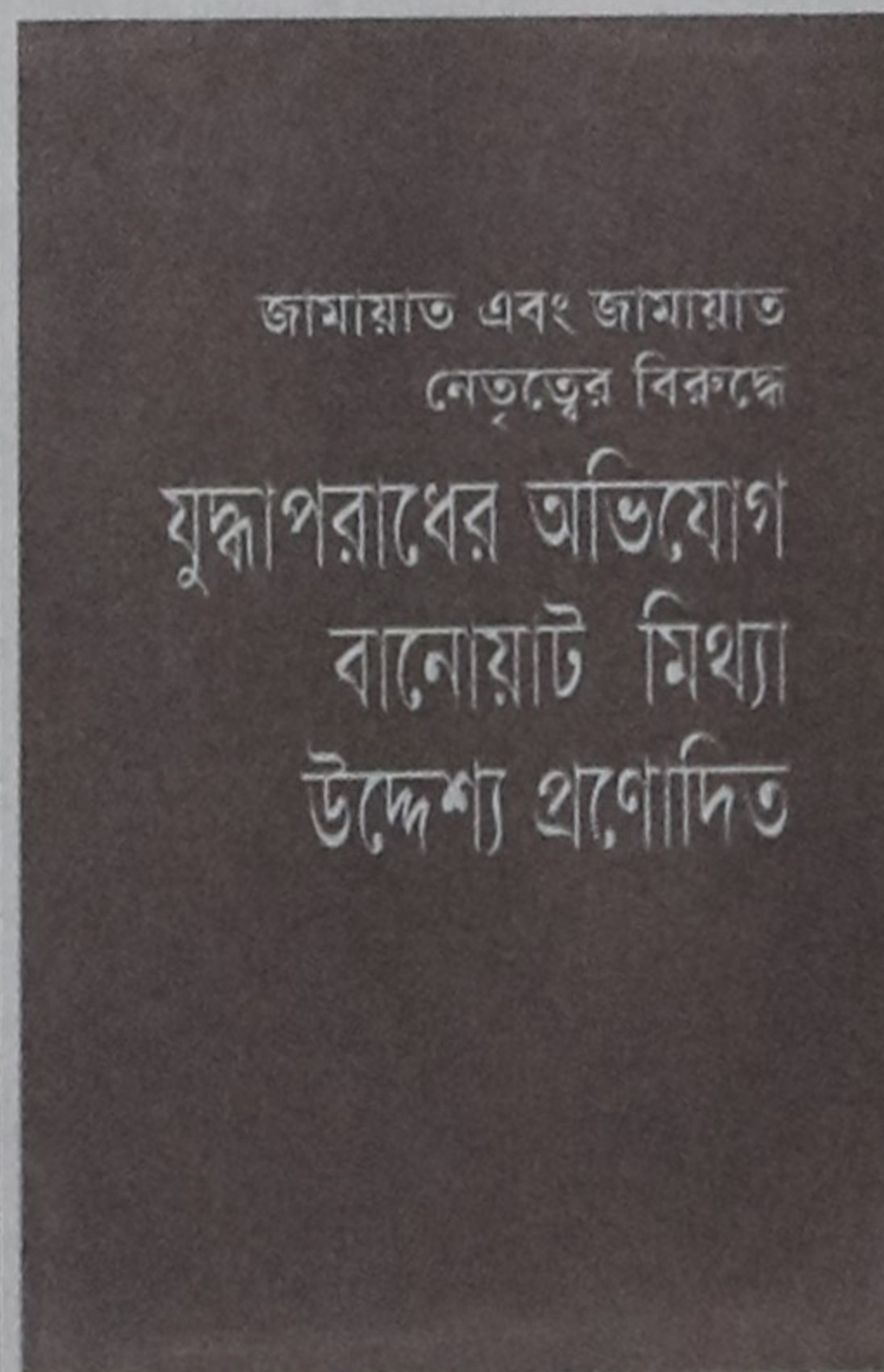
Sri Lankan security forces resumed their offensive against Tamil Tiger rebels in the north of the island yesterday following a brief holiday ceasefire, the two sides said.

The navy attacked two Tiger boats that tried to approach the coastline, killing at least 10 guerrillas, a navy spokesman said, adding that one craft was sunk and the other was captured together with a haul of weapons.

The sea battle came at the end of a 48-hour ceasefire declared by President Mahinda Rajapakse to coincide with the traditional New Year shared by both majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils.

A military official said government forces were involved in "normal operations" aimed at finishing off the last of the Tigers, who are facing defeat after 37 years of fighting for an independent Tamil homeland.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



Jamaat campaigning against govt's move to try war criminals

Booklets being distributed denying allegation of their war crimes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami has launched a countrywide campaign against the government move to try war criminals.

Terming the government move 'anti-Islamic', Jamaat has started distributing booklets and leaflets across the country claiming its party men to be innocent of any war crimes.

Meanwhile, Jamaat leader Mobarak Ali of Eklaipur village in Comilla, arrested in the capital's Pallabi while distributing leaflets and booklets on Tuesday night, was taken on a two-day remand yesterday.

Mobarak, an employee of Public Works Department (PWD) and a resident of the PWD Staff Quarters at Rupnagar in Pallabi, was caught by locals and handed over to police.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Prayer Timing		
April 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-20	6-25
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation