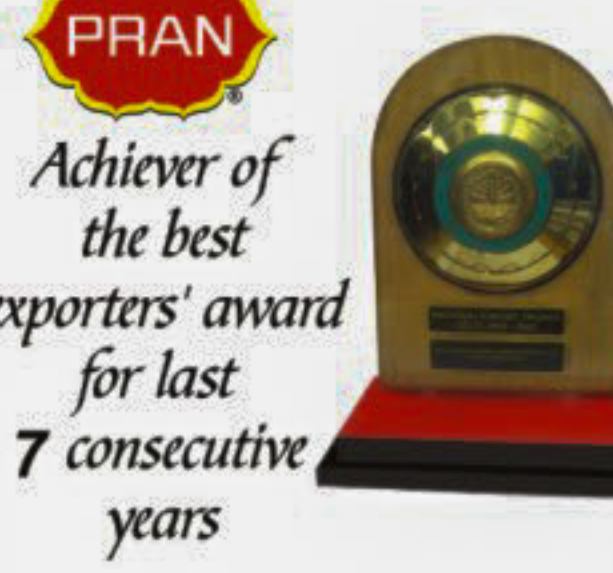


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CEC happy with Bhola by-polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the by-election to Bhola-3 constituency was free and fair. The election results reflect the people's verdict, he told journalists at the EC Secretariat last night. Referring to the BNP's demands for cancellation of the poll and resignation of the CEC and two election commissioners, he said they took a number of measures to make sure that the election is held freely and fairly. "The overall election atmosphere was congenial except for one or two sporadic

AL wins in 'peaceful' polls

Polling in 9 centres postponed; BNP claims voters intimidated, polling agents driven away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The ruling Awami League candidate won yesterday's Bhola-3 election by a big margin, inviting a renewed political threat by opposition BNP, which took no time to reject the poll results. Nurunnabi Chowdhury Shawon of the AL tallied 93,209 votes, overshadowing his only rival ex-minister Hafizuddin Ahmed, who received 41,489. The margin of difference was almost four times greater than the AL victory in the December 29,



While one polling centre in Bhola-3 constituency is brimming with voters during yesterday's by-election, the other is just waiting to see its first voter.



PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

Bangladeshi seamen get something to eat, finally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Bangladeshi seamen stranded in ships offshore Benin received some food early yesterday after two days of starvation. The sailors breathed a sigh of relief for now, but their survival is still threatened as they have already run out of fuel. "After starving for two days, we have a good meal today," Ashraful Alam, chief officer of ship, MT Paloma, told The Daily Star yesterday evening. "The company provided us with 10 kg chicken, 20 kg potato, 50 kg rice and nine trays of eggs, each tray contains 24 eggs," he added. The sailors, caught in a faraway country, were in panic as their employer earlier expressed inability to supply food. Ashraful Alam, who moored his ship to the coast of Benin, around 10 miles away from the port of Cotonou, said there are 31 Bangladeshi sailors in eight ships and they were also provided with food. "However, the company did not give us gas or oil. We had a little oil that we used in cooking today [yesterday]. We talked to Michael of the supply department...he said he will see, but nothing was done yet," Ashraful said. The 31 crew went to Benin in December last year to work in the ships owned by the Greece-based company, Golden Shipping SA, which operates 37 ships there. The vessels are used in transporting oil to Europe from Nigeria. The ships are old and the company was trying to sell them, said Zahirul Islam, a marine engineer. He returned from the same ordeal two weeks back. The sailors have been stranded on the coast of the West African country for more than a month. Ashraful said what they now want from the company is air ticket. But the company was assuring them of the tickets for long. It was only "a promise". He said, "We can't stay in such a situation. This is like a hell. Our government should immediately contact Greece, so that its authorities push the shipping company to arrange our due salaries and tickets to return home."

Polls free, fair: AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The ruling Awami League yesterday claimed that Bhola-3 by-election was held in a free, fair and credible manner and urged the main opposition BNP to accept its result. Addressing a press conference at the party president's office in Dhanmondi at 4:00pm, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said people cast their votes in a peaceful environment. He rejected BNP candidate Maj (ret d) Hafizuddin Ahmed's demand for cancellation of the polls. Hanif said Hafiz tried to make the by-election controversial by committing some

'One-sided' show BNP pushed to background amid attacks, threats

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and RAKIB HASNET SUMAN, from Bhola
Sporadic attacks, widespread intimidation of voters, and polling agents of BNP, and attempts to take control of polling centres allegedly by ruling party men marked yesterday's by-election in Bhola-3 parliamentary constituency. The election seemed to be peaceful in the morning but it turned out to be a "one-sided" show by noon as BNP agents and supporters were driven out of the polling centres. As voting started at 8:00am, activists and supporters of ruling party candidate took position mainly in the BNP-dominated areas and prevented voters from approaching the polling stations. BNP supporters and voters were beaten up and attacked allegedly by Awami League men when they tried to reach polling centres at several places of Lalmohan and Tajumuddin upazilas, which left at least 100 people injured, many of whom were treated at BNP candidate's residence. BNP demanded cancellation of the by-poll and resignation of the election commission while Awami League termed the poll a

TOTAL VOTERS: 2,34,926	
VOTE CAST: 1.34 Lakh	
AL 93,209	BNP 41,489

2 contradicting observations
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Bhola-3 by-election was marked by the intimidation of voters, violence, lack of management and poor turnout, Democracywatch said yesterday. However, Brotee, an election observer group, said no

Voting farce, hold fresh polls: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The main opposition BNP yesterday demanded a fresh by-election to Bhola-3 constituency terming yesterday's voting a farce. The party also demanded resignation of the chief election commissioner and two election commissioners, labelling them as "agents of Awami League." The demands came from BNP's senior leaders at a press conference in the capital shortly after the voting ended. "From the way our polling agents were ousted from voting centres, we can predict the election results," said Mirza Abbas, a member of BNP national standing committee. The BNP leader raised allegations of widespread vote rigging and attacks on BNP leaders. "We shall meet party Chief Khaleda Zia tonight [yesterday night] to decide our next course of actions," he said. "The election could have been fair had the army been deployed to ensure a congenial atmosphere," said Abbas, flanked by standing committee member Mayeen Khan and Joint

DUCKS IN THE DRY



Long dry spell has literally reduced this canal in Chalan Bil area into a burrow, putting the ducks' instinct in jeopardy. Heat and humidity had driven these birds towards water. What they find there makes them frustrated just like people living by the water body.

540 stalled corruption cases to resume

EMRAN HOSSAIN
The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has initiated a move to proceed with about 540 stalled cases including three against the leader of the opposition and BNP chairperson following a Supreme Court ruling. ACC officials say they would begin investigation into the cases once they receive the copy of the SC order. Lawyers have also been advised to take necessary preparations to initiate trial of those cases, they add. ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam said the SC ruling also enables the commission to appeal against last month's High Court verdict quashing the proceedings of Niko graft case against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. He added the SC verdict would also have implication in the barge-mounted graft case against Hasina which is expected to have its judgement on April 13. "Now it is time for holding a real trial based on substantive allegations. The time for playing games based on procedural mistakes is over and settled," ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman told The Daily Star. "It would really be difficult for the graft-suspects or convicts to avert justice anymore. Earlier, graft-accused and convicts thought they would eventually get away. But I think there is no chance for having a case quashed and everyone must undergo a fully-fledged trial," says an ACC official asking not to be named. Legal experts believe proceedings now may

2 APPOINTED JUDGES Oath crisis left to linger on

ASHUTOSH SARKAR
The crisis over swearing in of two High Court judges persists 13 days into their appointment since neither the chief justice administered them oath nor the government cancelled their appointment till yesterday. Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said yesterday the tangle over oath of Ruhul Quddus Babu and M Khasruzzaman as HC judges will be over only if they are sworn in by the chief justice. "The government has no plan to cancel appointment of the two judges," he told The Daily Star. The law minister hoped that the chief justice would soon administer oath to the two judges appointed by the president. Replying to a question, Shafique said he does not know whether the chief justice has consulted the president about his decision regarding the matter. A constitution expert echoed the law minister's views. "I don't see any way other than administering oath to the two judges as they have been appointed by the president," said Dr M

JS body chief's remark threat to judiciary

Former chief justice Mahmudul calls for right steps to protect it
STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Former chief justice Mahmudul Amin Choudhury yesterday compared the judiciary with a "glasshouse" and said it could crumble at any moment if steps are not taken right now. Referring to the remark made by the chairman of a parliamentary body on the chief justice's not swearing in two High Court judges, he said, "It is a threat to the judiciary." He said: "The chairman at a press briefing said the chief justice disrespected the constitution and violated his own oath by not swearing in the two judges, and that is why necessary measures could be taken. "It means he threatened the chief justice that if he administers the oath, he is safe and if he does not, they will send it to the Supreme Judicial Council or take other actions," he went on to say. Chief of the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry Suranjit Sengupta on April 21 said the chief justice will breach his constitutional oath if he does not swear in the two judges. Suranjit at a press briefing at the Jatiya Sangsad media centre also said the constitution of the country does not authorise the chief justice to evaluate judges appointed. The



Mahmudul Amin Choudhury



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