

WEST BENGAL POLLS

78.3% turnout in phase III

PTI, Kolkata

A total 78.3 per cent votes were cast yesterday in the third phase of the West Bengal Assembly elections in 75 constituencies in three districts.

The polling percentage might rise as reports from remote areas of South and North 24-Parganas districts were still awaited, State Chief Electoral Officer Sunil Gupta told reporters in Kolkata.

He said polling was 82.6 per cent in South 24-Parganas district, 80 per cent in North 24-Parganas districts, while Kolkata (south) registered 63.5 per cent and Kolkata (north) 61.6 per cent.

Barring for some stray incidents, the polling was peaceful, Gupta said.



PHOTO: AFP

Cambodian villagers who were evacuated from near the Thai-Cambodia border take rest at a pagoda at Samrong in Oddar Meanchey province yesterday.

Opposition warns Assad as Syrian troops tighten grip

UN Human Rights Council to hold special session

AFP, Damascus

Syrian opposition figures yesterday warned embattled President Bashar al-Assad his regime will collapse if he fails to usher in democracy, as troops kept their grip on the flashpoint town of Daraa.

Five EU countries meanwhile are summoning Syria's ambassadors over the violent crackdown on protesters, France said yesterday, saying it was joined in the move by Britain, Germany, Italy and Spain.

According to rights activists, the military assault on Daraa, 100 kilometres south of Damascus, has killed more than 30 people since Monday.

As the military assault on the agricultural town near the Jordan border entered its third day, the newly-formed National Initiative for Change (NIC) said a democratic transition will "safe-

guard the nation from falling into a period of violence, chaos and civil war."

"Either the ruling regime leads itself in a peaceful transition towards democracy... or it will go through a process of popular protests that will evolve into a massive and grassroots revolution that will break down the regime and carry Syria through a period of transition after a wave of violence and instability," a NIC statement said.

"If the Syrian president does not wish to be recorded in history as a leader of this transition period, there is no alternative left for Syrians except to move forward along the same path as did the Tunisians, Egyptians and Libyans before them," added NIC, an umbrella group of more than 150 opposition activists in Syria and abroad.

Syria has been rocked by massive pro-democracy protests since mid-

March in which at least 400 people have been killed, according to human rights activists.

In what activists decried as a military solution by Assad's regime, some 3,000-5,000 troops backed by tanks and snipers swept into Daraa on Monday.

An activist in the town said security forces shot dead six people on Tuesday, following the deaths of 25 the previous day.

Late on Tuesday, the state news agency SANA reported the army "continued to chase armed groups and extremists in Daraa who attacked military positions, cut off roads and forced passers-by to stop so they could hit them."

The UN Human Rights Council said it will hold a special session on Syria on Friday after a request filed by Washington, and 10 European states, as well as Japan, Mexico, South Korea, Senegal and Zambia.

Huji boss captured

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said Rab at a press briefing at its Uttara headquarters yesterday.

Farid, also known as Shawkat Osman, has been developing an orchid project under the pseudonym of Rashid in a remote hilly area in Cox's Bazaar for the last one and a half years, Rab said.

According to Rab, the 47-year-old Huji leader is accused in four cases -- two for Ramna Batamul carnage in April 2001, one for a grenade attack on an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21 in 2004 and the other for planting a 76-kg bomb near Sheikh Hasina's rally venue in Kotlipara in 2000.

Rab claimed that Farid is trained to operate anti-aircraft missile, tank and other sophisticated weapons. He also fought against Myanmar forces for the Arakan Muslims in 1995-96.

Farid went into hiding after law enforcers started reinvestigation into different bomb and grenade attacks that saw arrest of a number of Huji leaders including its former chairman Abdus Salam.

organising secretary and ameer of Dhaka and Chittagong district units.

Addressing the press conference, Rab Legal and Media Wing Director Commander M Sohail said it is suspected that Huji was planning for some destructive activities. Past experience shows that after organisational activities for a certain period the outfit carried out deadly attacks, he observed.

Asked about Huji funding, Sohail said Farid, during primary interrogation, told them that they get financial aid from some 3,000-4,000 associates working in different countries of the Middle East.

Afghan war veteran Farid is trained to operate anti-aircraft missile, tank and other sophisticated weapons. He also fought against Myanmar forces for the Arakan Muslims in 1995-96.

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Before that, Farid was a resident in Mirpur in the capital and was even seen giving interviews in television channels. In 2008 he played a key role in forming Islamic Democratic Party with its chief now detained Huji founder Abdus Salam.

Earlier in August 2006, Farid along with some other top Huji leaders gathered at a rally under the banner of Sachetan Islami Janata at Baitul Mokarram Mosque although the government banned the organisation in October 2005.

The rally organisers at that time said they held the rally after a negotiation with the then BNP government.

Some Afghan war veterans led by Abdus Salam officially launched Huji through a press conference at the National Press Club on April 30, 1992.

Rab officials said Farid told them that he met former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani at the president house in 1999 and even al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden.

15 killed in Yemen clashes

Saleh clings to power

AFP, Sanaa

President Ali Abdullah Saleh said he supports "peaceful" change in line with Yemen's constitution as at least 15 more people were killed and more than 130 wounded yesterday with no let-up in protests.

Thirteen protesters and two policemen were killed in violence across the country's restive south and the capital, officials and medical sources said, as anti-Saleh demonstrators vowed they would not stop.

The deadliest clashes were fought in Sanaa as troops opened fire to break up protests, killing 12 people and wounding more than 130, medical sources said.

Some of the victims were attacked with daggers, the sources said. Government officials said "tens of supporters of the government" were also wounded in yesterday's clashes.

The demonstrators want Saleh out of power immediately.

Saleh accused his opponents of attempting a "coup against democracy and the constitution."

"We are not against change as long as it is done by democratic and peaceful means, within the constitution, and with respect to the people's will," he said in a statement carried by state news agency Saba.

The embattled leader's comments came after the president and opposition agreed on Tuesday to sign a landmark deal in the coming days for an orderly transition after three months of unrest which has killed more than 140 people.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), brokering the transition deal, said their foreign ministers would meet in Riyadh on Sunday to work out the modalities of the plan for Yemen.

No power

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Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, Shubid Ali Bhuiyan, chief of the House body, told reporters that the situation of the power sector is not good despite different measures to generate power. Many entrepreneurs could not implement their industrial projects only because of the crisis.

Power generation is far less than its demand, added Shubid Ali, also a ruling Awami League MP.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during her speeches in recent times gave an assurance that the country will overcome power crisis by 2013.

The committee and its chief Shubid Ali also told reporters earlier that the country will be self-sufficient in power within next three to four years.

But yesterday when reporters drew their attention to recent load shedding in the early morning or late at night, the chief said the fact is load-shedding problem will not be resolved within even next ten years.

About coal production, the committee reiterated its preference for open pit mining method.

The committee will visit Barapukuria coal mine on May 14 to have a first-hand experience. Later on, they will visit China and then place their recommendations before the government in this regard, Shubid Ali said.

Bemused Obama releases birth certificates

AFP, Washington



Barack Obama

In an extraordinary and surreal live television appearance, President Barack Obama on Wednesday slammed conspiracy theories that he was not American-born as carnival-style silliness.

Obama attempted to quash a

controversy that has raged since he was a little-known presidential candidate, as the White House released a long-form, formal certificate of his birth in Hawaii on August 4, 1961.

"I'm speaking to the vast majority of the American people, as well as to the press," Obama said, branding the row whipped up by conservative pundits and possible White House hopeful Donald Trump as a distraction from serious issues.

"We do not have time for this kind of silliness. We've got better stuff to do. I've got better stuff to do," Obama said

as television networks broke into regular programming to cover the statement live.

The US Constitution specifies that presidents and vice presidents must be American born, and not simply US citizens, and conservative pundits have fanned the controversy to raise questions about Obama's political legitimacy.



Donald Trump

India, Pakistan open trade talks

AFP, Islamabad

India and Pakistan yesterday began their first trade talks since the 2008 Mumbai attacks, opening a two-day session designed to boost business between the nuclear-armed rivals.

India blamed the attack -- in which gunmen killed 166 people -- on the banned Pakistan-based Islamist group Lashkar-e-Taiba and Pakistan has acknowledged that the plot was hatched at least partly on its soil.

Pakistan commerce and trade secretary Zafar Mahmood and his Indian counterpart Rahul Khullar led the talks at a five-star hotel in Islamabad.

"I believe that this meeting will take the dialogue process forward and by the end of the meeting all issues relating to facilitation and promotion of bilateral trade could be addressed with consensus," Mahmood said.

Mahmood said the talks had an "open agenda" and the two sides would discuss "all the issues" of interest to both countries.

He said improving trade would economically benefit both countries and the region. Pakistan's economy languishes far behind that of India.

"Pakistan understands that there is a great potential to further increase the bilateral trade," Mahmood said.

Strikers demand new constitution in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

A general strike called by ethnic minority groups demanding improved rights under Nepal's new constitution brought the capital Kathmandu and several other cities to a halt yesterday.

Shops closed and most vehicles stayed off the road in and around the capital, while police spokesman Nawa Raj Dhakal said 19 people were arrested in connection with the strikes.

"There are no reports of any major clashes, but protesters have gathered in cities to call for the shutdown," he added.

Nepal's parliament was elected in 2008 with a two-year mandate to write a new national constitution following the end of civil war.

"Our major demand is that parliament should come up with a new constitution within the stipulated timeframe," said protest organiser Malla K Sundar.

3 workers die falling

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remove a lifting machine around 9:50am.

They were immediately rushed to the Apollo Hospital where they succumbed to their injuries.

The bodies were sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy yesterday morning, said Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Badda Police Station.

Miazul Islam, head mechanic at the construction site, told The Daily Star six workers were trying to remove rusty screws of the machine installed at a corner of the roof.

At one stage of their work, Nuruzzaman lost his balance and was about to fall from the roof. As Nur Islam and Alam came to Nuruzzaman's aid to save him from falling, they also lost their balance. The trio along with the machine fell to the ground, Miazul said.

Habibur Rahman, sub-contractor of the project site of East West Property Development Ltd, a concern of Bashundhara Group, said the three had been working

at the site for last four years.

Contacted, Mohammad Abu Tayeb, spokesman of Bashundhara Group, said "Though the workers were employed by our sub-contractor, we gave monetary help to the victims' family members."

He claimed that proper safety measures were taken at the site.

According to Safety and Rights Society, an organisation working with workplace accidents, a total of 142 workers' deaths at construction sites of Bangladesh were reported in newspapers in 2010.

However, experts working on safety issues said the number of deaths at construction sites is much higher than the reported figure as the Dhaka Medical College morgue and its emergency department alone receive one or two such victims every day.

As there is no government authority to monitor safety for workers and safety measures at construction sites, the owners are indifferent to this crucial need.

**PUBALI BANK LIMITED**  
ESTABLISHMENT DIVISION  
Head Office, 26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.

**INVITATION FOR TENDERS**

Sealed Tenders are hereby invited from the eligible Tenderers as defined in the tender documents of the under mentioned works as per terms & conditions stated below.

- Procuring Entity : Pubali Bank Limited, Establishment Division Head Office, 26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.
- Tender Name : Interior and Exterior work (Civil & Electrical) of present premises of our Tejgaon Branch, Dhaka.
- Time for completion of the work : 25 (Twenty Five) Calendar days.
- Eligibility of Tenderers : i) Minimum work experience of 3(Three) years in building decoration/renovation.  
ii) The tenderer must have experience during 3(Three) years in completion of work(s) in same nature costing minimum Tk.10.00 (Ten) Lac.  
iii) Having valid trade licence, up to date Income Tax clearance certificate and VAT registration certificate.  
iv) Must be financially solvent.
- Price of Tender Document : Tk. 1000.00 (One thousand) only non refundable.
- Amount of Tender security : 2.5% of total bid amount in the form of Payment Order favouring Pubali Bank Limited Head Office, Dhaka-1000 for each tender. **No tender will be considered without tender security money (Earnest money).**
- Name and address of the office from where tender documents will be obtained and to be dropped. : Pubali Bank Limited, Establishment Division (12<sup>th</sup> floor), 26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka -1000.
- Last date & time for selling tender document. : Up to 6:00 PM (BST) on 10.05.2011
- Last date & time for tender submission : Up to 11:00 AM (BST) on 11.05.2011
- Date & time for tender opening : At 11:15 AM (BST) on 11.05.2011 in presence of bidder (if any).
- Special Instructions : Tender documents along with an MS Excel Calculation Sheet to be submitted in sealed envelope. Pubali Bank Limited reserves the right to accept partly or fully any quotation or reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason whatsoever and is not bound to accept the lowest quotation.

Sk. Golam Mohammad  
General Manager

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- Procuring Entity : Pubali Bank Limited, Establishment Division, Head Office, 26, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.
- Tender Name : Interior work (Civil & Electrical) of Proposed premises of our Goznaipur Branch, Habigonj.
- Time for completion of the work : 15 (Fifteen) Calendar days.
- Eligibility of Tenderers : i) Minimum Work experience of 3 (Three) years in building decoration / renovation.  
ii) The tenderer must have experience during 3 (Three) years in completion of work(s) in same nature costing minimum Tk. 7.00 (Seven) Lac.  
iii) Having valid trade license, up to date Income Tax clearance certificate and VAT registration certificate.  
iv) Must be financially solvent.
- Price of Tender Document : Tk. 700.00 (Tk. Seven hundred) only (non-refundable).
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