



GRAB FOR ARCTIC

WikiLeaks reveal that nations are racing to "carve up" Arctic resources

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MALDIVES AT CROSSROADS

Prof Selina Mohsin writes about the recent anti-government movement

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BAPPA @ DS CAFÉ

Bappa Mazumder speaks to fans over the phone

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WEST BENGAL POLLS

Trinamool triumphs over Communists

Wave for change ends 34-year CPI-M era; Mamata to become chief minister

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA,
New Delhi

Riding the crest of a wave for *paribartan* (change), Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress stormed to power in West Bengal defeating the Communist government that had been in power since 1977.

With the historic election victory, she is set to become the state's first woman chief minister. Her rival West Bengal chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee resigned soon after losing his seat in Jadavpur of south Kolkata.

As vote counting of elections to legislative assemblies in five Indian states was



Mamata Banerjee

being completed, Trinamool Congress and Congress secured three-fourths majority in West Bengal while India's ruling Congress headed by Sonia Gandhi retained power for a third consecutive term in Assam. Congress wrested back the reins from Left parties in Kerala with the help of Indian Union of Muslim League.

In the southern state of Tamil Nadu, Congress' ally at the Centre Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), led by Chief Minister M Karunanidhi, was routed by its arch rival All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), which

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Behind the fall of Left Front

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The fall of the Left Front from power in West Bengal has been on the cards for the last three years, ever since the alliance did badly in panchayat elections.

Thereafter, the Front badly lost the civic body elections and parliamentary elections in 2009.

The main reason behind the success of Mamata Banerjee, who quit Congress and formed Trinamool Congress in 1998, was her unwavering campaign against the Communists, calling what she alleged their "bluff" in maintaining democracy and carrying out development of West Bengal.

She emerged as the most dependable rallying point for anti-Left, as people of the state have over the years got

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TOTAL SEATS 294
TMC + CONGRESS = 226
CPI (M) + ALLIES = 60
OTHERS = 8

Hopes for better ties

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
New Delhi

As Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee braces to take up the reins of power in West Bengal, there is optimism of an upswing in relations between the Indian state and its next door neighbour Bangladesh, given Mamata's chemistry with

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CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT PM for following SC verdict on CG

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the parliamentary special committee to prepare its final report on future constitutional amendments following the recent Supreme Court verdict.

The verdict declared the caretaker government system illegal.

The committee will eventually place its report along with a draft bill for bringing changes to the constitution in the next parliament session that begins on May 22.

The committee had a marathon meeting with the prime minister at Gono Bhaban last night. The meeting discussed the SC judgement with the prime minister who wanted to learn more about different aspects of the

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Blasts in Pak police training centre kill 80

Taliban claim the attack was to avenge bin Laden killing

AFP, Shabqadar, Pakistan

senior military officer General Khalid Shameem Wynne had cancelled a visit to the United States.

Pakistan has vowed to review intelligence cooperation and one local security official denied a CNN report that US intelligence agents had interrogated three of bin Laden's widows, who were apprehended in the raid and taken into custody.

CNN said the women were interviewed as a group despite Washington's desire to question them separately, and were openly "hostile" to the US officials.

Pakistan's intelligence agency,

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PHOTO ON PAGE 20

Lake City lacks fire safety

Massive apartment complex in city poses fire risk

TAWFIQUE ALI

The developer of Lake City Concord Housing scheme in the capital's Khilkhet area has sold and handed over most of its apartments to about 5,000 occupants defying fire safety rules.

The law clearly states that high-rises as those in the housing complex must have special fire safety provisions.

The 17-acre Lake City project, a satellite town developed by

Concord Real Estate and Development Limited, now has 10 sixteen-storey buildings.

At least 1,200 of a total of 1,600 apartments here are occupied by around 5,000 residents, said Rousana Parvin, a resident of the complex who had been the supervisor of the recently concluded population census in that area.

The apartments vary in sizes from 750 square feet to up to 1,300 square feet, she said, adding that there are nine to 11 apartments

on each floor.

Mobarak Hossain, chief operating officer of Concord Group, said the number of apartments would be more than 900, of which 600 with 3,000 residents are occupied.

As per Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC), a high-rise has to have special fire fighting facility including designated fire lift, escape route protected with fire-rated door, refuge area, standby generator, fire alarm

system and fire fighters' access facility. The Lake City lacks those.

Although the buildings have three staircases and two lifts each, they are not fire protected as required by the BNBC.

The other basic fire safety provisions including fire fighting pump, smoke and heat detectors, raiser (sprinklers), hose reel, designated underground and overhead reservoirs for fire fighting, vents and extinguishers

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Yunus might be emeritus member of GB

Muhith tells BBC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is thinking about offering Nobel laureate Prof Mohammad Yunus the position of emeritus member of

Grameen Bank in recognition of his contribution to the institution, reports BBC Bangla service.

However, it is not taking into consideration Grameen Bank employees' demand for making Prof Yunus chairman of

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AMNESTY INT'L REPORT Extrajudicial killings slated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Excessive use of force by security agencies, especially Rab, and the government's failure to stop extrajudicial execution are major impediments to ensuring human rights in Bangladesh, Amnesty International has said in its annual report.

The international human rights organisation yesterday published the report on the state of human rights across the world.

"The government failed to fulfil its pledge to end extrajudicial executions," the report said in a chapter on Bangladesh.

It pointed out violation of human rights through arbitrary arrests and detentions, extrajudicial executions,

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WE APOLOGISE... In the second edition of our yesterday's issue we had two stories on the Supreme Court verdict on fatwa -- one was the lead story and another reaction story. But due to a computer error the reaction story in the first column was repeated as the lead story. We apologise for this mishap. We are also running yesterday's lead story on the SC verdict here.

Fatwa legal, not to be imposed

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Supreme Court Thursday declared fatwa or Islamic religious edict legal in "religious matters", but it categorically said fatwa cannot be used to punish anyone.

Fatwa also cannot be issued to violate or affect the rights or reputation or dignity of any person which are covered by the law of the land.

"No punishment including physical violence and/or mental torture in any form, can be imposed or inflicted on any body in pursuance of fatwa," the Appellate Division of Supreme Court (SC) said in its verdict.

The SC ruled that only "properly educated persons" may issue fatwa, but may not force anyone to accept it.

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Around 5,000 people live in the Lake City Concord Housing complex with no mentionable fire-safety provisions required for such high-rises. A fire in Japan Garden City, a similar housing complex, in Mohammadpur claimed the lives of seven of a family in February last year. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN