

RACE TO WHITE HOUSE
Romney set for New Hampshire win

AFP, Concord

Republican White House hopefuls faced New Hampshire voters yesterday in a first-in-the-nation primary which is all but certain to strengthen frontrunner Mitt Romney's hold on the nomination.

Analysts were eager to see how well the former Massachusetts governor and millionaire venture capitalist does compared to polls that have consistently given him a big lead in the bellwether state and to see who comes in second.

Romney hopes a romp -- after a narrow win in the Iowa caucuses last week -- will propel him into South Carolina's January 21 primary -- the first in the South, where his more conservative rivals sense their best shot at a victory.

By tradition, the first ballots in New Hampshire were cast shortly after midnight in two tiny towns with a combined turnout of 32 voters.

In Dixville Notch (population 75) Romney tied former US China envoy Jon Huntsman with two votes each out of nine cast. In Hart's Location (population 42) Romney was the most favoured Republican with five votes.

Voting began at several statewide locations at 6:00am.

New Hampshire officials expect around 325,000 voters to head to the polls, most of them Republicans because Democratic President Barack Obama is running unopposed for his party's nomination ahead of the November 6 elections.

Gilani not an 'honest' man

Pak SC warns PM as rift widens with govt

PTI, Islamabad

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani is not an honest man as he had not lived up to his constitutional oath, Pakistan's Supreme Court said yesterday, as it warned of action against him for failing to act on an order to reopen graft cases against President Asif Ali Zardari.

Piling pressure on PPP-led beleaguered government, a five-judge bench, which had taken up the issue of implementing the apex court's verdict striking down a graft amnesty that benefited Zardari, said in its order that Gilani was not an "honourable man" as he had not lived up to his constitutional oath.

The premier had shown loyalty to his political party rather than the Constitution, the bench said.

"Prima facie, the prime minister is not an honest man and violated his oath," the bench said in its order.

The bench contended that the Pakistan People's Party-led government's refusal to write a letter to Swiss



authorities to reopen cases of alleged money laundering against Zardari went against the Constitution and the Quran.

The bench listed six options for the government, including action against the premier for contempt of court and declaring Gilani ineligible to be a member of parliament for five years and referred the case to Chief Justice Iftikhar Gilani. The bench recommended that the Chief Justice form a larger bench to hear the matter on January 16.

The apex court struck down the National Reconciliation Ordinance

(NRO), a graft amnesty issued by former President Pervez Musharraf that benefited Zardari and over 8,000 others in 2009.

Since then, the court has been pressuring the government to write to Swiss authorities to reopen the money laundering cases against Zardari.

The five-judge bench headed by Justice Asif Saeed Khosa had earlier set January 10 as the deadline for the government to implement the apex court's order on the NRO.

The government has refused to act on the court's orders, saying the president enjoys immunity from prosecution under the Constitution.

During an interview last week, Zardari made it clear that the government would not approach the Swiss authorities as long as he was in office.

The confrontation between the PPP and the judiciary over the NRO comes at a time when the Supreme Court is pressuring the government over an alleged memo that had sought US help to stave off a feared military coup in Pakistan last year.

RIFT WITH GOVT
Kayani meets top army officials

DAWN ONLINE

Chief of Army Staff General Ashfaque Pervez Kayani held an informal meeting with senior military officials at the Army General Headquarters (GHQ) yesterday following his return from China, DawnNews reported.

The Army chief was briefed about Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani's recent interview to a Chinese newspaper concerning Kayani and DG ISI

Shuja Pasha's statements to the Supreme Court.

According to sources, a detailed statement is expected soon from the Pakistani military on the PM's interview. Sources also say that the following 24 hours are extremely important as far as civil-military relations are concerned.

Malnutrition a national shame: Manmohan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

As a survey made public yesterday reported high level of malnutrition among children in India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said the problem of malnutrition "is a matter of national shame".

Despite impressive growth in our GDP, the level of under-nutrition in the country is unacceptably high. We have also not succeeded in reducing this rate fast enough, he said while releasing the Hunger and Malnutrition report in New Delhi.

There are, Singh pointed out, nearly 16 crore children in the country below the age of 6 years. "In the years to come, these children will join our work-force as scientists, as farmers, as teachers, as data operators, as artisans, as service providers. Several of them will become social workers like many of you in this hall."

"The health of our economy and society lies in the health of this generation. We cannot hope for a healthy future for our country with a large number of malnourished children", he said.

"I have said earlier on a number of occasions and I repeat that the problem of malnutrition is a matter of national shame. Despite impressive growth in our GDP, the level of under-nutrition in the country is unacceptably high. We have also not succeeded in reducing this rate fast enough", prime minister added.

The survey carried out by the Citizen's Alliance against Malnutrition, the Nandi Foundation, Mahindra and Mahindra and other partners and supporters of the Alliance covered more than 73,000 households in 112 districts across 9 states.

Egypt election enters final leg

REUTERS, Cairo

Islamists aimed to cement control over Egypt's lower house of parliament as a final phase of voting began yesterday, while a secular party's plan to boycott elections for the upper chamber threatened to weaken the liberal bloc.

Banned under Hosni Mubarak, the Muslim Brotherhood has emerged as a major winner from the uprising that toppled him, exploiting a well-organised support base in the first free legislative vote in decades.

Islamists of various stripes are expected to win 60 percent of the 498 elected seats in the assembly's lower house, with the Brotherhood taking some 41 percent, by its own count.

Its showing will give it a stronger role in shaping a new constitution and make it a force to be reckoned with for the country's military rulers, but the Brotherhood has promised for now to cooperate with the army-backed government.

Keen to present itself as a potential government-in-waiting, the Brotherhood has portrayed a moderate image, distancing itself from street protests by pro-democracy activists demanding the army relinquish power immediately.

Egypt's staggered three-stage parliamentary election began on November 28 and drew an unprecedented turnout.

Under a complex system, a third of the seats are reserved for individuals, and some of these will be decided in the runoffs. The other two thirds are decided by proportional representation among party lists.

The lower house will hold its first session on January 23.

Bereavement raises heart attack risk

BBC ONLINE

The newly bereaved are at greatly increased risk of heart attack after the death of a close loved one, US researchers say.

Heart attack risk is 21 times higher within the first day and six times higher than normal within the first week, a study in the Circulation journal of nearly 2,000 people shows.

Symptoms to watch for include chest pain and shortness of breath.

Experts say intense grief puts extra strain on the heart.

The psychological stress associated with loss can raise heart rate, blood pressure and blood clotting, which, in turn, can increase the chance of a heart attack.

A person's sleep and appetite are also likely to be disrupted.

SYRIA UNREST

Assad blames on conspiracy

AFP, Damascus

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad blamed foreign plotters yesterday for the deadly 10-month-old protests against his regime and vowed to crush their "terrorism" with an iron fist.

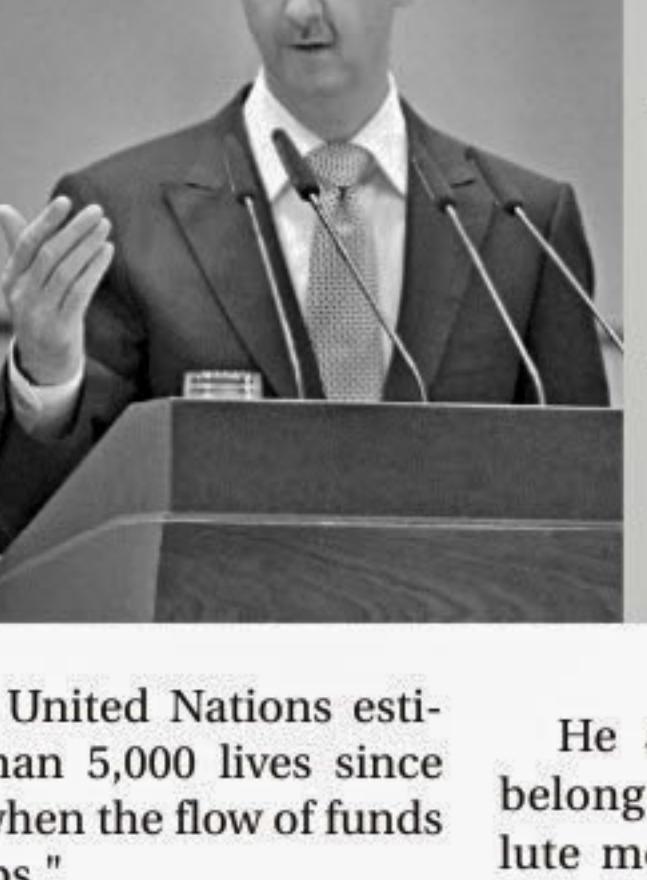
In a rare speech just hours before the UN Security Council was to discuss Syria, Assad denied that security forces had orders to open fire on civilian protesters, even as activists reported 10 youths were shot dead by regime gunmen at a peaceful rally.

Assad said the unrest, which the United Nations estimated last month has cost more than 5,000 lives since March, would only come to an end "when the flow of funds and weapons coming from abroad stops."

"Regional and international parties who are trying to destabilise Syria can no longer falsify the facts and events," the embattled leader said in the nearly two-hour televised speech.

He hit out at emigre opponents of his rule, accusing them of being tools of foreign powers.

He said a new constitution being drawn up by a committee set up in October to replace the current one, which enshrines his Baath party's dominant role, could be put to a popular vote as



- ⇒ No order given to fire on civilians
- ⇒ March vote on new Syria constitution
- ⇒ Vows iron fist against 'terrorists'

early as March.

Assad said restoring security was the "absolute priority" for Syria and pledged his government would tackle terrorism with an "iron fist," after a Damascus suicide bombing killed 26 people on Friday.

"There can be no let-up for terrorism -- it must be hit with an iron fist," he said.

He also hit out at the Arab League involving the withdrawal of troops from towns and cities and the opening of negotiations with the opposition.

He asked what right governments whose countries belong to the pan-Arab organisation, including the absolute monarchies of the Gulf, had to lecture Syria about democracy or reform.

The Syrian National Council, the largest opposition umbrella group, branded Assad's speech an "incitement to violence," indicating "more criminal behaviour" by the regime.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 11 civilians were killed by security force fire yesterday, 10 at a demonstration in Deir Ezzor in the northeast and the other at a checkpoint in the central city of Homs.

Nigeria fuel strike hits 2nd day

AFP, Lagos

Gangs set up burning road-blocks, police fired tear gas and businesses shut in Nigeria yesterday, the second day of a national strike that has paralysed the country and left six people dead.

As thousands took to the streets to protest soaring fuel costs, youth gangs set up roadblocks of burning tyres along major roads in Lagos and threw stones at cars while extorting cash from drivers.

The indefinite strike follows the government's controversial move to end fuel subsidies on January 1, which caused petrol prices to more than double in a country where most of the 160 million population lives on less than \$2 a day.

While the demonstrations were going on, the university administration led by the VC sat in a meeting with leaders of the dem-

Tension over protest

FROM PAGE 1

kinds of demonstrations on campus until further notice. The ban will be effective from 10:00am today, Vice-chancellor Mejbah Uddin Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday.

At least 600 students under the banner of "Pragotishel Chhatra Jote" joined a prescheduled agitation in front of the vice-chancellor's office around 10:00am and stayed there till 3:30pm.

Several marches were also brought out on the campus, as yesterday was the last date for admission to first-year honours courses.

While the demonstrations were going on, the university administration led by the VC sat in a meeting with leaders of the dem-

onstrating students, but the meeting could not reach a settlement.

The student leaders said they will continue their agitation until the administration cancels the Tk 5,000 development fee.

"We again requested the VC to cancel the extra fee at the meeting, but he and other officials didn't pay any heed," a student leader said.

"So we decided to boycott classes and exams for an indefinite period," he added.

Assistant Proctor Dr Ashok Kumer Saha told The Daily Star that the decision of imposing a ban on demonstrations on campus was made following the meeting, as some leaders of left-leaning student organisations threatened to create

anarchy and hamper academic activities.

"We asked the students to carry ID cards, no one will be allowed to enter the campus without ID cards, so that outsiders can't create any chaos," he said.

Several hundred police personnel were deployed on the campus to maintain law and order, said Syed Faruq Hossain, public relations officer of the university.

The university administration has been charging freshers Tk 5,000 on top of their admission fees for the institution's development purposes since 2005 when Jagan Nath University College was upgraded to the status of a full-fledged university.

The administration started charging the devel-

Sayedee was treasurer of looted goods

FROM PAGE 1
valuables. Sayedee served as the treasurer of that fund," said the lawmaker from Pirojpur before the International Crimes Tribunal.

Awal, the 12th prosecution witness, said he learnt it through "civilian sources" appointed as spies to help freedom fighters gather information on the movement of Pakistani soldiers and collaborators in Pirojpur during the Liberation War.

The three-member tribunal led by its Chairman Justice Md Nizamul Huq completed recording Awal's deposition. Sayedee's defence also began cross-examining the witness.

The cross-examination will continue today.

Jamaat's Nayeb-e-Ameer Sayedee was present in the dock during the proceedings. He is among six Jamaat and two BNP leaders facing charges of crimes against humanity committed during the War.

Earlier, the court began its proceedings at 10:42am after Sayedee was taken to the dock.

Awal, 58, started his deposition three minutes later.

Awal, alias Saydur Rahman, told the court he and other freedom fighters learned what was going on in different parts of the district through these civilian sources, said the legislator.

He added Pakistani soldiers came to Pirojpur in May 1971.

It was after that, he said, in the end of May, that initiative was taken to form the peace committee in Pirojpur. The committee was formed afterwards, he said.

"However, I can't remember the exact date as I don't remember it."

The peace committee at Parerhaat was formed under the leadership of Sekandar Sikder. The collaborator force was constituted after that, he said.

Though Awal could remember that Danesh Molla held important position in both committees, he could not recall which post

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