

Kapasia

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MP aspirants passed hectic hours yesterday as the deadline for electioneering ended at 11:59pm last night.

Instead of holding public meetings, all the three contestants went door-to-door in Kapasia in their last-gasp efforts to woo the voters.

The Jatiya Sangsad seat fell vacant following the resignation of Awami League lawmaker Tanjim Ahmad Sohel Taj on July 7.

The only son of the country's first premier Tajuddin Ahmad, Sohel Taj also resigned as state minister for home on May 31, 2009.

The main contenders in the by-polls are AL candidate Simeen Hussain Rimi and her uncle independent candidate Afsaruddin Ahmad, an AL dissident. Simeen is also Tajuddin's daughter.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh has fielded the other candidate, Asadullah Badal, in the election.

Returning Officer Mihir said they have taken adequate measures to ensure that no outsider can stay in the constituency after midnight Friday.

"We have deployed two teams of police and Rapid Action Battalion in all the 11 unions in Kapasia. Three other teams will be ready to act as striking force, if required."

Besides, members of Border Guard Bangladesh will be deployed in different entrances to Kapasia so that no unwanted person can enter the area, he mentioned.

Talking to this newspaper, all the three contestants expressed satisfaction over the security arrangements made by the EC.

Govt plans

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produce is good," he said.

The minister was speaking at a seminar on 'Mass Media and Food Security in Bangladesh', organised by private television station Channel-I on its 14th founding anniversary in the capital.

Razzak said during the harvest season, the governments of different Asian countries purchase rice directly from farmers so that traders could not manipulate food price.

In this regard, he said the present government had taken an initiative to construct silos in indifferent regions with the financial assistance of the World Bank.

These silos would increase the overall foodgrain storage capacity of the government up to 30 lakh tonnes, he added.

Executive Director of Brac Mahbub Hossain presided over the function while director and chief of news of the Channel-I Shaikh Siraj gave the welcome address.

Swelling Padma

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Initially, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation stopped the operations of 14 ferries. But later, it found the tide intensifying and suspended the last one as well.

At Kobutorkhola channel, ferry movements already had come to a halt on Monday. The Louhojong-Hazra channel also was later declared unsafe for ferries, said Sirajul Haque, BIWTC manager at Mawa.

Every day, no less than 3,000 vehicles to and from the capital cross the river through Mawa-Keorakanda, sources said.

The Aricha-Daulatdia ferry services remained open as of 8:00pm yesterday, our Manikganj correspondent reports.

Our Jamalpur correspondent adds that most places of five upazilas in the district along the river Jamuna are inundated. Aman fields and habitats of around two lakh people have been marooned.

The people of the upazilas -- Islampur, Dewanganj, Melandah, Maderganj and Sarishabari -- face acute shortage of drinking water, food and fodder.

Political culture

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Nazmun Ara Sultana, agrees with Justice Wahhab's views and judgment.

Justice Imman Ali, who also favours retaining the caretaker government, notes: "In the context of our political rivalry, we cannot seriously expect the party in power to abstain from exerting unfair influence during election. Hence, no fair election can be held while any particular party is still in power. Therefore, there is an obvious need for a neutral interim government."

Moreover, the country's history suggests the ruling party that continues to enjoy power even after the dissolution of parliament is unable to hold free and fair election to full satisfaction, and the opposition invariably alleges undue influence on the polls process by the ruling, he adds.

This is a common phenomenon both in national and local elections, he observes in the full verdict.

The full verdict of the Appellate Division was released on September 10, more than 16 months after the seven-member SC bench headed by the then chief justice ABM Khairul Haque declared illegal the constitutional provision for caretaker system.

According to Justice Wahhab, money and muscle power will rule the election in the absence of the system. Besides, the party in power will resort to exerting undue influence upon the government machinery to rig elections and manipulate results. In the process, democracy will again be a far cry and the supremacy of the people would remain nowhere to be seen.

"It will be a mockery to say that all powers of the Republic belong to the people as enshrined in article 7 of the Constitution unless the people get a chance to practise democracy, that is, they can exercise their rights of adult franchise in selecting their own representatives in a free, fair and impartial general election of members of parliament; the 13th Amendment has ensured the said rights of the people..." he observes.

The Awami League-led government that abolished the caretaker system in June last year did little to come out of such antagonistic political culture.

In the wake of 2006-07 political violence on the

Nepal plane

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passengers and seeing flames coming from one of the plane's wings moments before it hit the ground.

"We could hear people inside the aircraft screaming, but we couldn't throw water at the plane to put out the fire because we were scared that the engines were about to explode," Tulasha Pokharel, a 26-year-old housewife who said she one of the first on the scene, told AFP.

Emergency workers lined up the corpses -- which included seven Nepalese along with the Britons and Chinese -- near the smouldering wreckage as they picked through passengers' belongings to identify the dead.

The crash was the sixth fatal air accident in Nepal in the last two years and it raises fresh questions about safety in the impoverished Himalayan country, home to challenging weather, treacherous landing strips and often lax safety standards.

Ninety-five lives have been lost in air accidents in the last two years, according to an AFP tally, with 15 people killed in the latest crash in May when an Agni Air plane carrying Indian pilgrims went down near northern Jomsom airport.

The crash is the second disaster to hit mountaineers in Nepal this week at the start of the autumn climbing season, which is the peak time for visiting Nepal, which has eight of the world's 14 highest mountains.

On Sunday, at least eight people were killed in an avalanche on Mount Mansalu in northwest Nepal. The search for three other missing climbers was abandoned on Thursday.

streets, the ruling AL in its 2008 election manifesto pledged to change that culture, which hampers good governance, rule of law and effectiveness of the House.

"Tolerance and decency will be developed in the political culture and efforts will be taken to formulate a code of conduct acceptable to all," reads the manifesto.

But thanks to AL's indifference to fulfil the promise, the situation on the ground has worsened, at least to a certain degree.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has repeatedly claimed that a free and fair election is possible under her government.

In support of her claim, she says since taking office in January 2009, the AL-led alliance has held elections to 481 upazilas, 275 municipalities, 4,431 unions, two city corporations and by-polls to 12 constituencies.

All these elections were free and fair, she told parliament on September 19.

"People were able to elect candidates of their choice... It proves that the democratic atmosphere conducive to free and fair elections has returned to the country during the Awami League-led grand alliance government. Therefore, there is no need for the caretaker government," Hasina added.

But Justice Wahhab Mia, like many other political analysts, differs.

In his dissenting verdict, he says holding one or two or more by-polls in a free, fair and peaceful manner under the ruling party in no way guarantees free, fair and peaceful national polls.

"Similarly, holding elections to the local bodies by the Election Commission under the political party in power in a free and fair manner does not make any difference, because by holding such elections a political party does not go to power," Justice Wahhab adds.

Boy loses

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1:30pm, he could not help getting on it. But he slipped and his right leg was severed under the wheels of the train.

Md Shahjalal, a passenger who arrived at the station from Sylhet almost an hour after the incident, rushed him to DMCH.

Shahjalal, also a shrimp trader, told The Daily Star, "Many bystanders were watching him [Manir] but nobody took any initiative to take him to the hospital. Later, I took him and his severed leg to Dhaka medical [DMCH] with the help of a labourer."

Doctors at DMCH moved Manir to National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (Nitor).

Nitor Director Prof KH Abdul Awal Rizvi said they were preparing to do a surgery on him. "We will take every step to ensure proper treatment of the boy," he said.

Nobody from the boy's family was seen at the hospitals as of filing of this report at 8:00pm yesterday.

Israel's threats bolster Iran's stance: Guards

AFP, Tehran

Israel's threats of military action against Iran over its nuclear programme only serve to boost the defiance of the Islamic republic, the head of the Revolutionary Guards yesterday said.

"The enemies want to stop us continuing our path... but these threats only reinforce our determination to continue in the same direction," General Mohammad Ali Jafari said in a speech to thousands of members of the country's Basij militia, according to the Guards' Sepahnews website.

"That is why, when the Zionists make military threats, they are put in their place by the United States," he said.

Jafari's comments came after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday told the UN General Assembly that "a clear red line on Iran's nuclear weapons program" needed to be set. He has said his country is contemplating air strikes on Iran's nuclear facilities.

Illegal billboards

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Patenga, said, "Tourists come here to enjoy the natural beauty of the river Karnaphuli, but billboards erected along the road between the airport and the Naval Academy area obstruct their vision."

Talking to The Daily Star, Engr Ali Ashraf, chairman of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (Chittagong chapter), questioned, "We pay tax to the city corporation, and why should we be deprived of the greenery and beauty of the city?"

"The CCC is allowing too many hoardings just to make money, sacrificing the city's prospects of becoming a popular tourist hub."

He suggested that the corporation think of alternative ways to earn revenue and penalise advertising firms for flouting the related rules.

Contacted by this newspaper, Abul Mansur, chief inspector (advertisement) of the CCC, said they would carry out an inspection visit shortly to spot illegal hoardings.

CCC Magistrate Joynal Abdin said the corporation will soon launch a drive to remove 90 illegal billboards and neon signs identified earlier.

Asked about the illegal advertising structures, Mohiuddin Bachhu, adviser to the ad firm owners' association, said the corporation should first prove that it did not permit the ad firms to install the billboards. "If any illegal hoarding is spotted, the authority can remove those."

Despite making repeated attempts, this newspaper could not reach Mayor Manjur Alam over the phone for his version on the issue.

2 workers

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contact with a live electric wire and fell off the fifth floor around 9:00 am, said constable Md Shamsul Islam, quoting witnesses.

They were carrying wet bamboo sticks from the ground floor to the fifth floor, added Shamsul, of Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) police outpost.

The workers were rushed to CMCH where doctors declared them dead around 9:30 am.

Abu Gaffar, a subcontractor of the building, said it was not clear whether they came in contact with electric wire before falling off the floor.

Cut trade

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He pointed out that non-

acceptance of quality certificates of many Bangladeshi products by the Indian authorities at the border was another bottleneck in the bilateral trade.

Accreditation of Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institute by the National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration Laboratories of India was necessary to help overcome the non-tariff barriers, he observed.

Quader told the meeting that Bangladesh was actively considering a request from Indian business community to allow investment in its exclusive economic zones.

Total trade volume between the two countries stood over \$5 billion, where India's share was \$4,743.30 million and Bangladesh's \$498.42 million.

The minister said Bangladesh is still optimistic about a Teesta river water-sharing treaty with India taking shape despite opposition from West Bengal.

"The Indian premier has agreed to the treaty in principle and is trying to resolve the matter. We are not worried and we are hopeful that it will happen," Quader said on the sidelines of the meeting.

On the ban on export of hilsa fish from Bangladesh, he said his country was continuously monitoring the supply level of the fish and once it improved, the ban would be lifted.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses the 67th United Nations General Assembly meeting at the United Nations in New York on Thursday.

PHOTO: BSS

PM for reforms

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believed in settlement of disputes through talks. She cited the example of Ganges water-sharing treaty and land boundary agreement with neighbouring India.

Hasina said Bangladesh had also resolved maritime boundary dispute with Myanmar peacefully and that it was now working with India to address concerns stemming from the proposed Tipaimukh dam.

She said, "From this podium 38 years ago, my father, the architect of independent Bangladesh, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, declared the guiding principle of his newborn country -- friendship to all, malice to none."

"This policy guides us for peaceful settlement of all disputes and situations at home and abroad."

Lauding this year's UNGA theme -- "Settlement of International Disputes or Situations by Peaceful Means" -- the prime minister said her country's commitment to global peace had been demonstrated through its contribution to the UN peacekeeping missions and in being a founder member of the UN Peace Building Commission.

She went on: "Peace prevails when justice prevails ... Justice ensures peace, and is vital for development. Justice is possible only through democracy, which empowers people."

"We are, therefore, strengthening democracy and justice by empowering people through eradicating poverty, hunger, inequality by social safety nets, job

creation, inclusiveness, sustained growth, human development and encouraging terrorism."

Referring to "People's Empowerment and Development", the peace model she presented at the 66th UNGA, Hasina sought the international community's support for its propagation. The model was endorsed by UNGA resolution 66/224 and adopted by consensus last year.

In her address, delivered in Bangla, she also highlighted what she said was social and economic progress Bangladesh made since the Awami League-led coalition came to power in 2009.

She said successes in various sectors had helped the country achieve the Millennium Development Goals on gender parity, infant mortality and maternal health ahead of 2015. The MDGs are eight international development goals that all UN member states have agreed to achieve by the year 2015.

The prime minister said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had acknowledged these achievements by including her as a member of the lead group for the "Scaling Up Nutrition" movement, and as a champion for "Education First Initiative".

Turning to the climate change issues, she called for an international agreement on limiting greenhouse gas emissions, and early operation of the "Green Climate Fund" for adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer.

She also said her admin-

istration maintained a policy of zero tolerance for terrorism.

Hasina urged the world leaders to step up efforts to resolve the Palestine issue.

She also called on them to take the plight of the autistic and disadvantaged children into consideration and adopt a resolution on Autism Spectrum Disorder in the present UNGA session.

Eleven other heads of state and government addressed the session with Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the UN Abdul Momen in the chair.

Bangladeshi

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On information of the shooting, Pine Bluff Police and emergency service personnel rushed to the scene and found Sohel shot dead inside the store around 8:45pm US time, said a report run on todaysthv.com.

Earlier on September 21, post graduate student Moin Hassan died a day after he was shot by suspected robbers inside a shop at Bridgeport city in Connecticut.

The 22-year-old from Rangpur had done his bachelor degree from the American International University of Bangladesh (AIUB), his relatives told The Daily Star.

Another victim Lutfur Rahman Tarafdar Belal, 45, was shot dead by suspected robbers at the Food Mart in Pine Bluff on August 25.

Lutfur of Moulvibazar was a sales assistant at the shop.

Eastern bypass

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experts from different ministries to review the project and submit a report by September 30.

"We might require 15 more days to submit the report," said Rowshan Ali Khan, superintendent engineer of the project. He mentioned that only 70 hectares of land out of 1,556 hectares required for the project has so far been acquired by the government.

"We are not sure how soon we may start the time-consuming land acquisition process," Rowshan said. "Prices of land have risen phenomenally and nobody wants to part with a piece of land without a long-lasting legal battle," he said, hinting at the uncertainty about implementation of the project.

In 1992, a UK consultant prepared the feasibility report on Eastern Bypass for a fee of Tk 2.25 crore. Although originally a four-lane road was planned, the PMO has asked the working committee to make provisions for a six-lane bypass considering the future traffic situation in the capital.

Casting doubt about implementation of the project, a WDB official said, "Tenure of this government (a little over one year left) is also a factor regarding its implementation ... If we start acquiring land today, it will take more than a year to complete the process."

In 2004, Tk 87 lakh was totally wasted when the army engineers tried to dredge the Turag and build an embankment for the

same project, he said. "The army engineers abandoned the work when they found that soil in the Turag river bed was nothing but sludge, unsuitable for the base of a highway."

The official noted that without the Eastern Bypass, a vast area on the capital's eastern fringe remains unprotected from recurring flooding. Moreover, the city's traffic situation in the near future might take a turn for the worse.

"Considering rapid growth of the city's fringe areas, the bypass project will soon become an indispensable one. And further delay in its implementation means costs rising to an impossible level," said the official, requesting not to be named.

Signs of watery past

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The pictures transmitted by Curiosity show the pebbles have been cemented into layers of conglomerate rock at a site between the north rim of the Gale Crater and the base of Mount Sharp, where Curiosity is heading.

The sizes and the shapes of the rocks give an idea of the speed and the depth of the stream, Nasa said.

"The shapes tell you they were transported, and the sizes tell you they couldn't be transported by wind. They were transported by water flow," said Curiosity scientist Rebecca Williams.

Scientists estimate the water was moving at a brisk pace of three feet per second,

somewhere between ankle and hip deep.

"This is the first time we're actually seeing water-transported gravel on Mars," said Curiosity science co-investigator William Dietrich of the University of California, Berkeley.

"This is a transition from speculation about the size of streambed material to direct observation of it."

Some of the rocks are rounded, indicating they travelled a long distance from above the rim, fed from a channel named Peace Vallis, Nasa said.

And thanks to imagery previously captured from Mars's orbit, the scientists said they can see an alluvial fan of material washed down

from the rim -- with many apparent channels uphill of Link and Hottah.

The high number of channels between the rim and the newly-discovered rock bed suggests the stream wasn't a one-time occurrence, but that many streams flowed or repeated over a long period of time.

Curiosity is on a two-year mission to investigate whether it is possible to live on Mars and to learn whether conditions there might have been able to support life in the past.

The \$2.5 billion craft landed in Gale Crater on August 6, opening a new chapter in the history of interplanetary exploration.

Dhaka under

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The researchers yesterday revealed their findings at a press conference in the Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium. They recommended saving water bodies including rivers, canals, marshland (beels) and other surface water sources.

The groundwater in the coastal areas of southern Bangladesh has already become salty. Now it is intruding northwards as excessive extraction of groundwater is creating vacuum in the groundwater system, said irrigation and groundwater expert Iftekhar Alam.

He said rain recharges groundwater but the rate of extraction was greater than the natural recharging.

The groundwater level has dropped 18 to 20 feet below the sea level in Rajshahi, the northern metropolis, said Iftekhar, adding that the country extracts almost 80 percent water for irrigation from below.

"We can grow Boro rice more as it requires less irrigation. The yield can be the same as IRRI rice and the move will significantly save groundwater," Iftekhar said.

Almost six crore people of the southern part of the country are suffering from salinity problem.

According to Iftekhar, if the problem is not dealt with properly the number of people affected by saltwater would increase.

Present at yesterday's press conference, Prof Firoz Ahmed of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) said use of groundwater in irrigation decreases land fertility. He stressed using surface water source for the purpose.

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) organised the press conference. Eminent groundwater expert Prof Mollah Azfarul Haque also spoke on the occasion.

SM Shajahan, president of Bapa and also former adviser to a caretaker government, was present at the press briefing as the chief guest while Bapa Secretary Abdul Matin delivered the welcome speech.

Sahara

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complicated by.

Sahara began raising the money four years ago from 22 million small investors, many of them in rural India.

The group is involved in a range of activities, including finance, housing, manufacturing and the media.

It is run by flamboyant businessman Subroto Roy Sahara who styles himself as a "worker's friend" and has a rags-to-riches story. He is a household name in India.

Watson blows

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Pathan came on to bowl the 10th over, Watson greeted him with a sequence of 6, 6 and 4 to bring up Australia's 100 in the same over.

Watson fell in the 14th over when just eight more runs were needed for victory, caught in the covers off Yuvraj Singh.

Watson's match-winning display followed his 51 and 3-26 against Ireland and 41 not out and 2-29 in the second game against the West Indies.

Australia join Pakistan, who beat South Africa by two wickets earlier on Friday, at the top of group two with one win each.

Earlier, makeshift opener Pathan made 31 and Suresh Raina boosted the total towards the end with 26 off 19 balls after Indian captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni won the toss and elected to bat.

Raina put on 30 for the sixth wicket with Dhoni and 33 for the seventh with Ravichandran Ashwin, who remained unbeaten on 16 off 12 balls.

India dropped seasoned opener Virender Sehwag to play five specialist bowlers, including three spinners, and sent all-rounder Pathan to open the innings with Gautam Gambhir.

Pathan hit two fours and a six, but India lost three wickets in seven balls to slip from a comfortable 70-2 to 74-5.

Watson claimed two wickets in one over, forcing Yuvraj to hole out in the deep before getting Pathan caught in the covers.

In the next round of matches on Sunday, Australia take on South Africa and India clash with Pakistan at the same venue.