

Majority Israelis for Romney, Palestinians indifferent

GUARDIAN ONLINE

Polls of all Israelis, not just immigrants from the US, have shown a majority in favour of ousting Obama and installing Romney in the White House.

The Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, is widely perceived to be rooting for a Romney victory, against all protocol. Many commentators have accused

him of interfering in internal US politics in his eagerness to see an ideological soulmate in the White House.

The opposition leader, Shaul Mofaz, publicly accused the prime minister of trying to influence the outcome of the election.

Some commentators have warned that a re-elected Obama could seek a payback for what is regarded as Netanyahu's transparent

support for his opponent. Netanyahu rejected accusations of interference, saying they were "completely groundless".

Palestinians are watching the election campaign with cynicism. Many feel badly let down by Obama's failure to force progress towards a Palestinian state, but they also know that Romney is unlikely to be a friend to their cause.

Pundits predict

FROM PAGE 1 Talking Points Memo puts Barack Obama on 303.

A handful of websites that choose not to predict a result in "toss-up" states see a small advantage for Obama. The New York Times and the Washington Post both think Obama is able to rely on at least 243 electoral college votes, compared with 206 for Mitt Romney. Charlie Cook gives Obama 237 to Romney's 191, while Real Clear Politics leaves a full 146 electoral college votes in

the toss-up category, with Obama on 201, and Romney on 191.

Ezra Klein, a columnist at the Washington Post, as well as a contributor to MSNBC, thinks President Obama will win with 290 electoral votes. He is, however, not extremely confident in the precision of that estimate: Some swing states are close enough that it's entirely possible for a good ground game to tip, say, Florida into Obama's column, or Colorado into Romney's.

"Virginia is basically tied, and I'm giving it to Romney based on the assumption that challenger wins in a tie, but it could easily go the other way. So if Obama ends up winning with 303, I won't be surprised."

That said, Klein adds, 290 is what a conservative read of the polls says, as of this moment. "And I trust the polls more than I trust my intuition, or the fragmented, impressionistic reporting on the two GOTV efforts. So I'm going with that."

ACC quizzes Gautam

FROM PAGE 1 The ACC summoned Gautam, chief executive officer of Green Printers, to its office nearly two months after The Daily Star through an independent investigation had divulged the scam.

At that time the embezzled amount was Tk 53 crore, but now it has soared to Tk 71 crore, said Sonali Bank officials.

In response to queries from the ACC investigators, Gautam claimed that he was none in Green Printers.

"It is natural that he will deny his involvement, but it is his job to dig into the scam," an ACC official told The Daily Star.

Gautam BNP opened ILCs for procurement of yarn and other accessories for the local market and took acceptance in these bills by the Agargaon branch of Sonali Bank. He then sold those bills

to 26 branches of 16 banks and pocketed Tk 71 crore, which the state-owned bank is liable to pay to other banks.

Many of these bills bear no original signatures of Agargaon branch officials. Gautam forged those bills and withdrew the money from those banks, according to Sonali Bank officials.

He took every step so cunningly that in the event of Green Printers failing to repay the loans, he would not be charged first and the responsibility would be on the "owner" of the company.

Investigation by this newspaper found that Gautam is the chief executive officer of Green Printers and chairman of Global Associates, the mother company of Green Printers.

Though Gautam operated the business solely, he showed one Abul Hossain, a small

garment trader in Narayanganj, as the proprietor of the company on paper.

Some banks where Gautam sold the ILCs also confirmed that it was Gautam who had dealt with them, not Abul.

The ACC, said an official, will now summon Abul Hossain and later bring Gautam face to face with him.

Hailing from Shingasulpur union of Sadar upazila in Narail, Gautam enrolled at Dhaka University in the mid-1980s. He got involved in student politics and became the convener of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's DU unit in 1990.

He bagged BNP's nomination from Narail-1 constituency in the 1991 parliamentary polls. Though his party came to power winning that election, he conceded a heavy defeat to Awami League's Dhirendra Nath Saha.

Sayedee's counsels boycott

FROM PAGE 20 the defence did not want to give any time for that. At this point of disagreement, the defence boycotted the courtroom around 1:15pm and did not return after lunch break.

The three-member tribunal chaired by Justice Md Nizamul Huq asked the prosecution to start their arguments in the absence of the defence as it had been fixed earlier.

Sayedee was in the dock during the arguments.

Before leaving the courtroom, the defence and Sayedee's relatives raised a hue and cry.

Defence counsel Mizanul Islam told the tribunal their witness Sukharanjan Bali, who was in a vehicle with him, had been "abducted by a group of plainclothes police" before the main entrance of the tribunal premises yesterday morning.

The defence counsel added the policemen asked all except him to leave the car and go to the tribunal on foot. Then the police dragged Sukharanjan into another car and disappeared from the spot, he claimed.

Talking to The Daily Star, Deputy Commissioner of Ramna Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Syed Nurul Islam said police had not arrested anyone yesterday.

Based on the defence's allegation, the tribunal, however, asked Chief Prosecutor Ghulam Arif Tipoo in the morning to inform the higher authorities and take necessary steps.

The chief prosecutor was also asked to go to his chamber immediately and enquire about the "abducted" person.

The tribunal also asked the coordinator of the investigation agency to cooperate with the chief prosecutor and inform the tribunal of the matter as soon as possible.

The tribunal then began hearing submissions on different petitions. Before

going to lunch break, the tribunal asked the chief prosecutor about the matter.

Ghulam Arif told the tribunal no such thing had happened.

The defence lawyers muttered on hearing this reply.

Justice Nizamul Huq then announced a lunch break till 2:00pm. But before the tribunal chairman concluded the session, defence counsel Mizanul said they wanted direction from the tribunal.

The tribunal chairman replied, "Let me finish. We will sit at 2:00pm. In the meantime, we will collect information regarding the matter from our own sources."

Mizanul appealed to let him give submission on the matter, while another defence counsel Tajul Islam shouted saying the one hour time might be late. The latter also tried to show some photos taken from a mobile device during the alleged abduction.

Before the media, Mizanul said they suspect that Sukharanjan would not be found. "We assume the tribunal may have involvement in it [the abduction]," Tajul added.

Mizanul said they had boycotted the tribunal following the incident as they were not feeling secure.

The defence would not return to the tribunal until Sukharanjan was handed over to them, he added.

Prosecutor Syed Haider Ali told The Daily Star the tribunal had ended taking the testimony of defence witnesses and there was no reason for one of them to be in a defence counsel's car.

He added until cancellation of vokalattama [power of attorney] a lawyer could not leave the court as per law. "If anyone does, it would be held as misconduct," he argued.

Deputy Registrar Mesbahuddin Ahmed said he had helped one of Mizanul's

assistants around 10:15am to enter the tribunal amid tight security.

Mesbahuddin added, "He [the assistant] did not tell me anything about the abduction while I was helping him in."

Though the defence claimed they were feeling insecure, two defence counsels were present at the proceeding of a war crime case against another Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah at the International Crimes Tribunal-2.

Since no defence lawyers were present at the tribunal Sayedee himself spoke out and urged the tribunal either not to continue argument without the presence of his counsels or send him to jail and continue it without his presence.

The tribunal did not accept his prayer. SIX WITNESSES TO DEFEND MOLLAH The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday allowed six defence witnesses to defend Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah in connection with the crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War.

Earlier on July 15, the defence submitted a list of 965 witnesses for the Jamaat assistant secretary general.

Iajuddin

FROM PAGE 20 lying unconscious at the hospital, reports our Munshiganj correspondent.

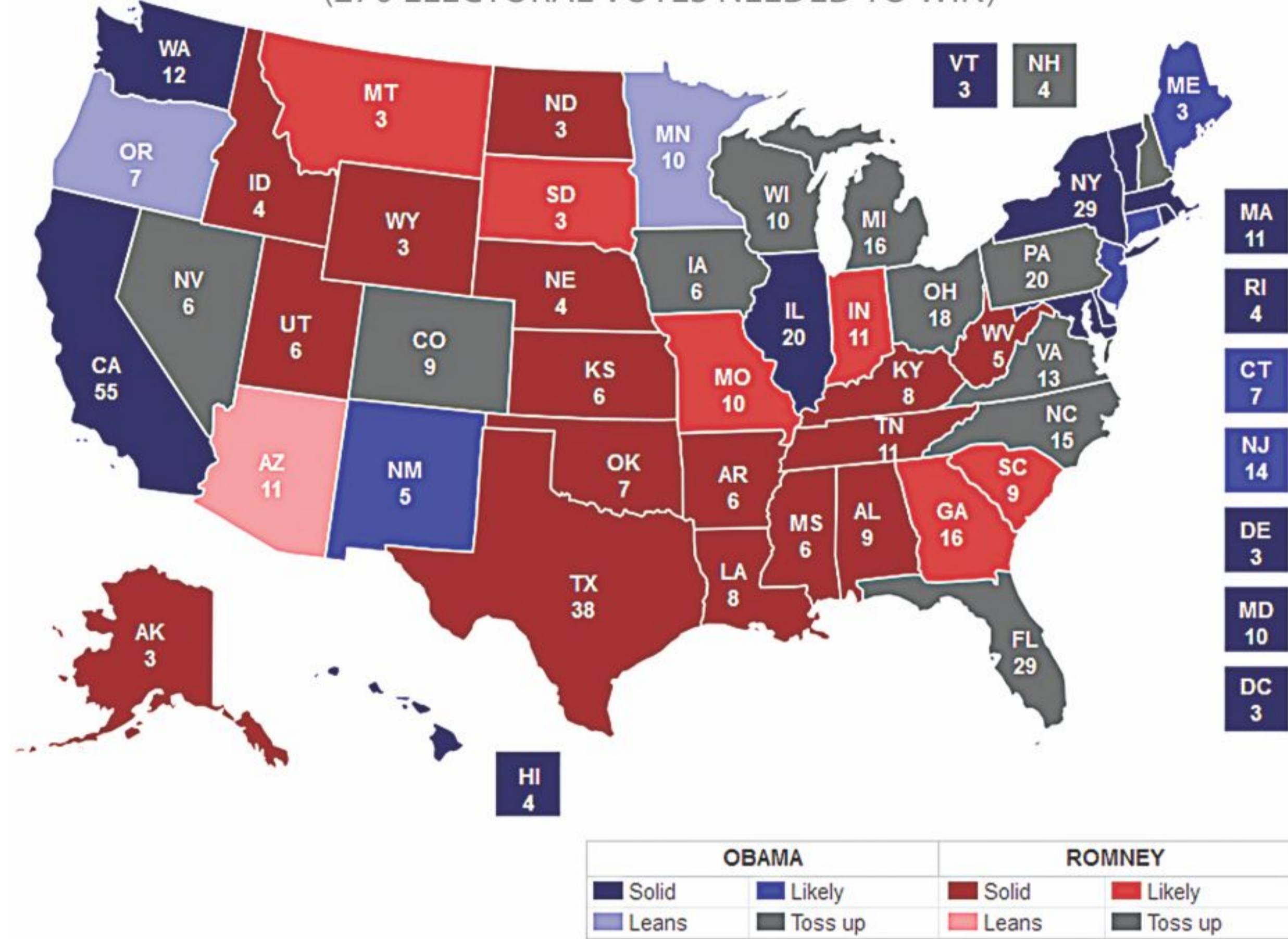
Iajuddin's condition deteriorated on Sunday after his kidney problems intensified, said his son Imtiaz Ahmed Babu.

The former president was first taken to Bangkok on September 11 last year after he fell seriously ill in August.

He was again rushed to Bumrungrad Hospital four months ago. After conducting a few diagnostic tests, the doctors recommended surgery on his heart valve, Babu added.

The battle for White House

(270 ELECTORAL VOTES NEEDED TO WIN)



America decides today

FROM PAGE 1 challenger Mitt Romney were spending the last hours of the campaign making a mad dash through battleground states in a late push to sway a closely divided electorate.

The push comes as national polls show Obama and Romney are running almost neck-and-neck. But surveys of the nine-or-so battleground states that will determine the election show Obama narrowly ahead.

The average of latest polls compiled by the RealClearPolitics (RCP), a political news and polling data aggregator, gives Obama a lead of 0.4% in the popular vote - 48.5% to 48.1%.

In terms of the Electoral College - which will decide the race - RCP lists 11 states as toss-ups, totalling 146 electoral votes.

Among presumably solid states, Obama leads Romney by only 201 electoral votes to 191, according to RCP - it takes 270 to win the White House.

Heading into the home stretch yesterday, Obama and Romney - or their campaign surrogates were to make stops in Ohio, Iowa, Florida, Virginia, Colorado, Wisconsin, Nevada, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and New Hampshire.

Obama started his final day of campaigning Monday with a late-morning event in Madison, Wisconsin, where he was introduced by rocker Bruce Springsteen and outlined why he deserves four more years in office.

"Wisconsin, you know me by now... You know that I say

what I mean and I mean what I say," Obama told the crowd. "I said I'd end the war in Iraq, and I ended it. I said I would pass health care reform, I passed it."

Obama continued: "When I say, Wisconsin, that I know what real change looks like, you've got cause to believe me because you've seen me fight for it and you've seen me deliver it. You have seen the scars on me to prove it. You have seen the gray hair on my head to show you what it means to fight for change."

After the rally in Madison, Obama was scheduled to fly to Columbus, Ohio, where he will be joined by Springsteen and rapper Jay-Z.

The president will round out his day with a final campaign stop in Des Moines, Iowa, before heading to Chicago, where he'll spend Election Day.

Romney who would become the first Mormon president of the US if he wins began his day yesterday in Florida, where polls suggest he has the edge, and then went to Virginia, New Hampshire and Ohio. He struck a big-picture tone at his first event. Though there were a few attack lines directed at the president, the Republican candidate spent a great deal of time outlining what he would do from the Oval Office.

"Tomorrow, we begin a new tomorrow. Tomorrow, we begin a better tomorrow. This nation is going to begin to change for the better tomorrow," he told the excited crowd. "We can begin a better tomorrow, tomorrow. And with the help

of the people in Florida, that's exactly what's going to happen."

According to a campaign senior adviser, Romney's message on this last day will be focused on "those last few undecideds."

After his Florida event, Romney's stops were to include Lynchburg, Richmond and Fairfax, Virginia; Columbus, Ohio; and a finish in Manchester, New Hampshire, where Kid Rock is set to perform, before making the short trip to Boston, where he'll spend Election Day.

With polls showing a tightening race, Obama's top advisers and like-minded pundits are openly confident in their certitude that a slight advantage in the public opinion polls will translate into a comfortable Electoral College victory on Tuesday night. By contrast, the attitude at Mitt Romney's headquarters might best be described as cautiously hopeful.

The Electoral College map has not been as expansive. For most of the 2012 cycle, the two nominees have mainly competed in eight states: Nevada, Colorado, Iowa, Ohio, New Hampshire, Virginia, North Carolina, and Florida. Romney's selection of Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan as his running mate added the Badger State to the list. Late forays in the last week by Republicans into Pennsylvania, Minnesota, and Michigan expanded the map even further.

The race has been most intense in Ohio - no Republican has ever made it

to the White House without winning there.

Republican election officials were preparing to go to court here to defend an 11th-hour directive to local election officials.

Last month, a federal appeals court reinstated early voting on the last three days before Tuesday's election.

The ruling overturned a state law saying early voting should end on the Friday before the election, making an exception only for voters living overseas and for military personnel, who tend to favour Republican candidates.

Critics say this potentially favours the Obama camp.

A final poll published on Sunday by Ohio's Columbus Dispatch newspaper gave Obama a 2% lead - 50% to 48% - over his rival, within the margin of error.

The US election is decided by the Electoral College. Each state is given a number of votes based on a mix of population and representation in Congress. The candidate who wins 270 Electoral College votes becomes president.

The race isn't all that's at stake this November. In the election for control of Congress, Democrats would need to reap a net gain of 25 districts to take over the House; privately, party strategists say they expect half that number - or less. The US Senate, once considered a juicy takeover target for Republicans, now seems much less likely to change hands, although races are too close to call in a handful of states.

Factbox

FROM PAGE 1 million others.

• They include about a half million voters from the 3.12 million strong Indian American community.

• Besides electing the president, the voters would be choosing 435 members of the House of Representatives and 33 of the 100 senators, one third of whom retire every two years.

• Democrats are defending 23 of the 33 seats up for grabs in the Senate where they currently have a majority of 53, including two independents who caucus with them.

• Five Indian-Americans, four Democrats and one Republican, are seeking election to the US Congress.

• A young Democrat woman from Hawaii is considered a shoo-in to become the first Hindu-American woman in the Congress.

• Eleven governorships are also up for grabs besides thousands of state and local officials.

• Voters will also tackle more than 1,000 local ballot issues.

• These include right-to die in Massachusetts, gay marriage in Maine, abortion in Florida and Montana, death penalty in California and segregation in Alabama.

• There are currently 29 Republicans, 20 Democrats, and 1 Independent holding the office of governor in the states.

• There are 27 Republican-controlled and 15 Democratic-controlled legislatures besides seven split legislatures and one officially non-partisan (Nebraska).

• More than 45 million US voters, or one out of every four who go to the polls, will cast a ballot on a machine that stores votes electronically, but doesn't create a paper ballot, according to VerifiedVoting.

• First of the Polls close at 7:00pm on Tuesday (local time) in six states including the battleground state of Virginia (13 electoral votes) followed by all-important Ohio (18 electoral votes) half an hour later.

• The last of the polls close in Alaska at 1:00am on Wednesday (local time).

(Source: IANS, Washington, Nov 5)

Jamaat leader

FROM PAGE 20 College, said Sahed Uddin, sub-inspector of Cox's Bazar Police Station

A joint team of police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested him from the bus around 5:30pm.

Police sources said Bahadur led a mob in vandalising the Buddhist temple at Khurulia village in Cox's Bazar Sadar upazila and also in Ramu on that night.

He was also accused of barring the law enforcers from performing their duties.

BSF detains

FROM PAGE 20 around 3:00am when he was crossing the Indian border near Dabri outpost, said Mozammel Haque, company commander of Molani border outpost of Border Guard Bangladesh.

Taleb is now in the custody of Karamdighi police in the Indian state of West Bengal, BGB officials said, quoting BSF personnel.

The two forces held a flag meeting yesterday following the incident. The BGB has also sent a letter to the BSF to enable Taleb to return.

4 fined

FROM PAGE 20 of two brick kilns in the city's Lohagara upazila; Hasan Jahidul Islam, an engineer of Nirmata Builders and Abdul Gani, an employee of Bangladesh Railway's east zone.

The DoE summoned them to its Chittagong office in this connection yesterday and imposed the fines.

Foyez Ahmed was fined Tk 7.04 lakh, Ahmed Kabir Tk 6.12 lakh, Jahidul Islam Tk 10.87 lakh and Abdul Gani Tk 1.50 lakh, said a DoE press release.

They have already paid the amount, which will be deposited in the government's coffers, said the director.

JSC EXAMS 25 students expelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 25 students were expelled for adopting unfair means while some 46,340 candidates were absent on the second day of Junior School Certificate (JSC) and Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) examinations yesterday.

Among the students expelled on charges of cheating, 24 were from Madrasa Board and one from Dhaka Board, according to the education ministry's control room.

The number of students expelled yesterday is almost double the students expelled on the first day of the examination. On the first day, 13 students, of them 10 from Madrasa, were expelled.

Besides, five invigilators under Jessore Board were expelled as they tried to help students cheat in exam.

The highest number of absentees was 14,592 from Dhaka Board. Of the rest, 8,664 from Madrasa; 4,361 from Rajshahi; 2,192 from Comilla; 5,869 from Jessore; 3,539 from Chittagong; 1,131 from Sylhet; 2,683 from Barisal; and 3,309 from Dinajpur Board.

Jamaat activists clash

FROM PAGE 1 of Jamaat leaders, including the nine arrested on war crimes charges.

The other districts where the Jamaat-Shibir men clashed with the police are Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Bogra, Sirajganj, Noakhali, Moulvibazar, Chittagong, Narail, Kushtia and Khulna.

Police said these attacks on the law enforcers were pre-planned and were aimed at destabilising law and order.

On Sunday, the Jamaat, a key ally of the main opposition BNP, announced a weeklong protest programme across the country, which was supposed to begin today. Interestingly, the Jamaat-Shibir supporters took to the streets yesterday.

In Dhaka, at least 100 people, including 22 policemen, were wounded as the Jamaat-Shibir supporters fought with the law enforcers, turning Motijheel, Dilkusha, Paltan, Dainik Bangla and Topkhana Road areas into a virtual battleground, police and witnesses said.

The demonstrators also vandalised some 50 vehicles, torched three motorbikes, a tempo of police and several roadside shops, halting traffic on all the adjoining

roads for around two hours since around 4:00pm, police said.

Police fired more than 150 teargas canisters and charged batons to disperse the agitators, who responded by throwing bricks.

Across the country, police arrested around 120 Jamaat-Shibir men on charges of assaulting the law enforcers. Of them, 33 were arrested in the capital.

Shibir in a written statement, however, said about 500 of their leaders and activists were injured in the clashes while 300 were picked up. The statement, signed by publicity secretary Abu Saleh Mohammad Yahya, also condemned the "police attack on and arrest of Jamaat men across the country".

Witnesses said the clash in the capital began when some 600 Jamaat and Shibir leaders and activists brought out a procession at Motijheel after Asar prayers, demanding that the government set free the detained Jamaat leaders, including its chief Motiur Rahman Nizami and Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed.

The Jamaat-Shibir men in their dozens joined the procession coming out of

different lanes in the area. Many were standing at tea stalls and bus stops posing as customers or commuters, and later swooped on the police when the clash began, added the witnesses.

As the procession came near Dainik Bangla intersection police intercepted it, prompting the clash. The Jamaat-Shibir men, equipped with sticks and brick chips, attacked the law enforcers who responded by charging batons and firing teargas shells.

Anwar Hossain, deputy commissioner of police (Motijheel division), told The Daily Star that 22 police personnel were injured in the attack by the Jamaat-Shibir activists.

At least 13 platoons of additional police were deployed to bring the situation under control, said Syed Nurul Islam, deputy commissioner of police (Ramna division).

In the 10 other districts, at least 160 people, 32 of them law enforcers, were injured in the running battles between the police and Jamaat-Shibir supporters, report our district correspondents.

Police arrested at least 86 Jamaat-Shibir men from those districts.