

Their world

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neighbourhood and reporters, many with TV cameras, crowded around the place covered by ashes with smoke apparently making a way out. Slum dwellers were every now and then making frantic searches through the debris, dirt and wreckage in the hope of finding bits of their belongings.

Amid this chaotic situation, Hauladar sat there in silence, a sharp contrast to the noise of crying, shouting and howling.

"I knew at that point, I would never see them again," he muttered, staring intently at the ashes that once used to be his home.

Another dweller, Mohammad Shumon, suffered 25 percent burns in the face, neck, hands and legs. He has been taking treatment in the Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital and has yet to learn that his seven-year-old son, Abdullah, died in the fire.

There was madness everywhere when the fire broke out around 2:45am. People struggled to get out through the congested place of the poorly-planned shanties. The houses did not have electricity and so the darkness further confused the already-panicked residents.

In the commotion, people fled wherever they could, however they could, often times losing track of their loved ones.

"Would the same tragedy have happened if this had been a residence in Gulshan or Dhanmondi? The fire brigade would have reached there in 10 minutes," she added.

Musharraf calls for Indo-Pak peace

AFP, New Delhi

Former Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf said on Saturday that nuclear-armed India and Pakistan need to "bury the hatchet" and settle their differences to reduce poverty and ease tensions in the region.

He added that the Pakistan army, widely seen as anti-India, was in favour of peace with New Delhi and stressed that the Kashmir issue, "the root cause of dispute", must be resolved as it provides fuel to extremism in his country.

AL sinks

FROM PAGE 1

Shahidul Islam Lebu got 44,531 votes and Jatiya Party-backed candidate Syed Abu Yusuf Abdullah Tuhin 11,684 votes.

Of the 2,71,329 voters in the constituency, 1,54,023 cast their ballots at the by-election.

The main opposition BNP boycotted the by-polls.

In his reaction after the polls, Rana said the election was free and fair. He said he was still with the Awami League and had confidence in party President Sheikh Hasina.

AL-backed candidate Shahidul Islam Lebu alleged that Rana's men had prevented his voters from going to polling centres in two unions.

However, JP-nominated candidate Tuhin said the polls were held in a free and fair manner.

Returning Officer Syed Khurshid Anwar said he had not received any complaints from the candidates. The by-election, he noted, had been held freely and fairly.

Voting began at 8:00am and continued till 4:00pm without break. A large number of female voters cast their ballots while the presence of male voters was thin at polling stations.

Shahidul Lebu, whose election symbol was the boat, cast his vote at Ratanpur Government Primary School polling centre.

Rana, with the pineapple as his election symbol, cast his ballot at the Mukul Academy centre in Ghatai municipal.

Tuhin's election symbol was the plough. He cast his vote at Gourangi Akashia Goverment Primary School centre in Anehola union.

The parliamentary seat for the constituency fell vacant following the death of ruling Awami League lawmaker Matiur Rahman on September 13.

Rana, who was religious affairs secretary of AL Tangail district unit, decided to contest the by-polls as an independent candidate after failing to get the party ticket.

This decision on his part led to his expulsion from the party on Friday.

Mollah said he believed the people, with whom he had

met, were the ones who

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deputy commissioner of

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