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PATGRAM, LALMONIRHAT

Most Hindus skip voting

Fear of attacks keeps them away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Very few Hindus cast their votes in the election to Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat yesterday, fearing fresh attacks by BNP-Jamaat men.

However, the turnout of Hindu voters in the district's Sadar and Hatibandha upazilas in the second phase of the upazila elections yesterday was relatively high.

Most voters of the minority community of Patgram refrained from voting, fearing backlashes like those centring on the January 5 national polls.

More than 100 houses and shops, mostly belonging to Hindus, were vandalised, looted and torched in Ghoshpara and Shafinagar villages of the upazila by BNP-Jamaat men before and after the 10th parliamentary polls.

Manindranath Ghosh of Patgram's Ghoshpara village said only 15 to 20 Hindu voters out of total 220 of the village had cast their votes while others simply stayed home throughout the day.

"Some people linked with BNP-Jamaat constantly keep watch on us. We dared not go to the polling centre ignoring them," said the 63-year old sitting on the veranda of his home yesterday afternoon.

"All the Hindus here are still gripped by fear and panic after what the BNP-Jamaat people did to us before the last [January 5] election," he added.

Sunil Chandra Sen of Shafinagar village said most Hindus had lost their interest in exercising their franchise after the BNP-Jamaat attacks on them.

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Supporters of Awami League-backed chairman candidate SM Habib assaulting pro-BNP chairman candidate Zahurul Islam at Chougachha Model Primary School polling centre in Chaugachha of Jessore yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

CEC plays down polls violence

Says upazila election largely peaceful

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the polling day violence stray incidents, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad said the voting yesterday across the country was largely fair and peaceful.

"We took stern action against irregularities and violence to ensure free and fair polls. We suspended voting in 34 polling centres as well as in an upazila," he told newsmen at the media centre of the Election Commission Secretariat.

The CEC made the claim around three

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BNP raps govt for 'snatching verdict'

AL claims polls credible

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has alleged that the government used law enforcement agencies to "snatch people's verdict" to manipulate the results of the upazila elections into their favour.

However, the ruling Awami League has claimed the second phase of the upazila election was held in a credible manner. The party also hoped that the election would be acceptable to the international community.

Speaking at a press conference at BNP's Nayapaltan central office yesterday, BNP leader Ruhul Kabir Rizvi alleged that government had resorted to "a deep-rooted conspiracy" to rig the election results to make the ruling party favourites victorious.

"The government used police and Rab as party cadres to snatch people's

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'ILLEGAL WEALTH' Mannan grilled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday interrogated former state minister for housing and public works Abdul Mannan Khan over allegations of amassing wealth illegally.

ACC Deputy Director Nasir Uddin quizzed him at the ACC headquarters in the capital, said a top official there.

Coming out of the ACC office, Mannan told reporters the allegations against him were baseless and that the truth would come out through investigation.

Earlier, on February 16, the anti-graft body summoned the Awami League leader to appear before it on February 20, but he did not show up on health grounds.

His property value rose to over Tk 5.25

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Rights abuse by security forces

US report decries govt's inadequate steps

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh didn't take comprehensive measures to investigate and prosecute cases of abuse and killing by security forces, according to a report of the US State Department.

"Authorities failed at times to maintain effective control over security forces. Security forces reportedly committed human rights abuses," said the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 released in Washington yesterday.

The most significant human rights problems were arbitrary arrests, regulation of online speech, and poor working conditions and labour rights, said the report in its Bangladesh chapter.

US Secretary of State John Kerry released the report at the press briefing

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Pakistan batsman Umar Akmal takes a celebratory lap upon reaching his century with a six during his side's Asia Cup match against Afghanistan at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium in Narayanganj yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Akmal takes Pakistan home

NAIMUL KARIM

A century from Umar Akmal saved Pakistan's blushes and helped them recover from a precarious position to post a 72-run win over neighbours Afghanistan in the third match of the Asia Cup at the Khan Shaheb Osman Ali Stadium in Fatullah yesterday. The win helped Pakistan earn a bonus point and also took them to the top of the table with five points.

Off the field things were not so rosy for Akmal hwoever, as news emerged on Thursday that a Lahore court issued an arrest warrant in his name for allegedly brawling with a traffic warden on February 1.

Back to the match, Pakistan after being put in to bat had slumped to 117 for six in the 30th over before Akmal's 102 off 89 balls led a superb recovery and helped them post 248. Afghanistan, who were playing their first ever Asia Cup match, were bundled out for 176 in 47.2 overs.

Afghanistan began their chase in style as Mohammad Shahzad flicked Umar Gul for four off the very first ball. Shahzad's over-aggressive intent however led to his dismissal in the fifth over.

There were a couple of good stands in the top order which kept them in the chase for most of the innings. At first, it was the 33-run stand between Noor Ali Zadran (44) and Asghar Stanikzai (40). The introduction of Saeed Ajmal

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RAJIV'S KILLERS Court blocks release of 7

AFP, New Delhi

India's top court halted the freeing of four more killers of former premier Rajiv Gandhi yesterday after a

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PRAYER TIMING February 28	
Azan	Jamaat
Fajr 5-15	5-50
Juma 12-30	1-15
Asr 4-30	4-45
Maghrib 6-05	6-10
Esha 7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Tensions rise as gunmen seize Crimea parliament

Russian flag hoisted; Ukraine's new leader warns Moscow not to intervene


THE GUARDIAN

Fears of a major regional conflict in Crimea pitting Russia against the west have intensified after unknown pro-Russian gunmen seized the government and parliament building in a well co-ordinated military operation.

According to witnesses, the men dressed in fatigues stormed Crimea's regional administrative complex in Simferopol at 5:00am yesterday. They hoisted a Russian flag above the parliament building. About 120 men were holed up inside, armed with heavy weapons including rocket-propelled grenades and sniper rifles, witnesses said.

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The Daily Star

Integral Energy Limited

ONLINE POLL

Do you agree with BNP senior leader Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain that the government should make the probe report on BDR mutiny public?

Yes

86%

No

14%

TOTAL VOTES: 318

TODAY'S POLL

Do you agree with the National Committee for Protection of Oil-Gas and Mineral Resource that the proposed Rampal power plant close to the Sundarbans would destroy the world's largest mangrove forest?

PLEASE CAST YOUR VOTE AT

www.thedailystar.net

Nasa finds 715 new planets

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa has announced the largest ever discovery of new planets, with a total of 715 exoplanets (planets located outside of our solar system) spotted by the Kepler Space Telescope.

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