Ruling party wins Kazakhstan vote

AFP, Astana

Energy-rich Kazakhstan's ruling party has secured a landslide win in parliamentary polls that never threatened to trouble autocrat President Nursultan Nazarbayev's long reign,

official results confirmed yesterday.

According to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) Nazarbayev's Nur Otan party won 82 percent of votes in Sunday's election and will share parliament with the progovernment People's Communist Party and Ak Zhol, who each secured just over 7 percent of the vote.

The vote -- which saw little real opposition to Nazarbayev -- came as the ex-Soviet country sees its oncebooming economy slump on the back of falling oil prices and an economic crisis in northern neighbour Russia, but the strongman's grip on power appears as firm as ever.

Celebrating the victory with supporters yesterday, Nazarbayev -- who during the poll warned outsiders "not to rush" Kazakhstan towards democracy -- said he was in a "joyful state" following the announcement of the results.

Why Manna

Gulshan Police Station on February 25 and March 5 last year, bringing charges against him of instigating the armed forces to topple the government and sedition.

Masud Chowdhury and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo came up with two rules after petitions had been filed by Manna seeking bail in the cases. Manna was arrested on February 25

An HC bench of Justice Salma

last year, a day after his telephone conversations with BNP leader Sadeque Hossain Khoka about strengthening the anti-government movement, among many issues, was leaked. On March 5 last year, Gulshan

police sued Manna for sedition. In one conversation, Manna, also former organising secretary of the ruling Awami League, is heard talking to Khoka and the other call was reportedly made to an unknown person. During this conversation, the man asked Manna if he would like to sit with top army officers to talk about

bringing a changeover in the country. Deputy Attorney General Md Bashir Ullah, who opposed the bail petitions, told The Daily Star that Manna submitted the petitions to the HC recently, seeking bail on health grounds.

BNP chief's

distorted to confuse the people," the BNP acting secretary general told the press at the party's Nayapaltan central office.

BSS reported that the prime minister on Sunday blasted Khaleda "for her ill motive to hold Hasina-free" polls in the future and alleged that the BNP leader was plotting another August 21 attack.

Fakhrul said, "We expected that the ruling party and its president would congratulate us for successfully holding the council to strengthen democracy."

AL is trying to create a controversy over the council, he added.

"We hope Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, its leaders and ministers will accept our chairperson's call...and take steps for resolving the political crisis through discussion."

Asked about a report of The Daily Star that Khaleda did not consult about her "Vision 2030" draft proposal with party standing committee members, Fakhrul said the report was

not correct. BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan said the newspaper knew nothing about the

When mentioned that a standing committee member had admitted to have known nothing about the draft,

Nazrul said the leader made the comment without knowing the matter.

Court starts

witnesses and also seized "alamats"

(evidences) from the scene. "I handed over 14 out of 16 bodies of those who died on the spot, to their relatives. The identities of the other two could not be known immediately," said Amir.

Meantime, the government decided to hand over the investigation charges to the Detective Branch of Police and in line with the decision, Amir handed over the case

docket to the DB on August 23, 2004. Earlier the court recorded state-

ments of 222 prosecution witnesses including complainant of the cases.

Twenty-four leaders and activists including Ivy Rahman, wife of late President Zillur Rahman, were killed and over 200 injured, in the attack. The then opposition leader Sheikh Hasina narrowly escaped with ear injury.

Aus prevail over

FROM PAGE 1 On the final count Australia may have raced to 158 for seven with nine balls to spare to stay afloat in the competition, but it was not before having their first scary sight of one Mustafizur Rahman. The lethal young Bangladesh pace bowler made his World Cup debut with two wickets that included Aussie captain Steven Smith and Mitchell Marsh. And both batsmen were comprehensively beaten by his venomous cutters. It could have been a third wicket for him had Mohammad Mithun not dropped Shane Watson at short mid-on.

Tamim's last minute withdrawal served as a blow for Bangladesh for a good start after skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza lost an eighth straight toss and was asked to bat on a very good wicket. Left-handed opener Soumya Sarkar, continuing his disastrous form, he was out for one in the very second over. His departure meant no fireworks from Bangladesh in the first six Powerplay overs, during which they scored 32.

Bangladesh's first sight of aggression came from Sabbir Rahman, who struck two fours in successive deliveries off Hastings but got out to a welljudged catch at mid-on for 12. Mithun started slowly but broke free in the seventh over, smacking Marsh for a four and a massive six over long on. He was the third batsman out, hitting a 22-ball 23, playing a rank long hop straight to mid-wicket. Shuvagata Hom, one of the three

incoming players in a completely different Bangladesh combination, was upgraded for some power-hitting. His cameo of 13 off 10 balls included a six and a four.

Shakib Al Hasan once again played the sheet-anchor role. The left-hander, along with Riyad, accelerated the runrate with some judicious hitting much to the delight of a Chinnaswamy

done at the museum or through

Nishat said it was not mandatory

Participants will also be able to

for everyone to walk the full distance;

register at the spot -- at Central

Shaheed Minar from 5:00am to

6:00am, Dhanmondi 32 from 7:00am

to 8:00am, Asad Gate from 7:15am to

8:15am, Shyamoli SOS Shishu Palli

from 8:30am to 9:30am, Mirpur

Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial from

9:00am to 10:00am, Khagain campus

of Brac University from 1:00pm to

2:00pm, and Bishmail Bus Stop on

Dhaka Aricha Highway from 4:30pm

cate from the Liberation War Museum,

Every participant will get a certifi-

some could parade only 1km.

crowd that was rooting for the Tigers. But the moment Shakib was about to cut loose, he suffered a soft dismissal His 31 off 25 balls contained three fours and a six. Riyad however was again at his best, hitting an unbeaten 49 off 29 balls that contained seven superbly-timed fours and a six. He was particularly savage in the 19th over bowled by Watson that yielded 17 runs. Riyad, along with Mushfiqur, plundered 50 runs off just 26 balls.

The Aussies started their chase in the right footing with their left-handed opener Usman Khawaja hitting the ball beautifully. Bangladesh lost the plot of getting an early wicket despite giving Mustafizur a go for two overs in the first 10 where Mashrafe tried almost all his options in vain. Australia raced to 82 for one by the

end of the 10th, despite losing Watson to a fine throw from Sabbir. It also forced Mashrafe to bring back Mustafizur in the 13th over and he duly obliged by cutting one back through the legs of Smith. Once David Warner arrived and hit a four and a flat six, Australia

appeared in the mood to finish the

match off quickly. But when Khawaja

was bowled around his legs by Al-Amin Hossain for 58 off 45 balls with seven fours and a six, and Shakib had Warner hitting a full toss straight back to him, Bangladesh sniffed an outside chance. With Australia at 121-4 after 15 overs, Bangladesh needed one good over from Saglain Sajib to make a match of it. But Glenn Maxwell pun-

ished him to the tune of 14 runs in that over, and the game as a contest was all but over despite the fall of quick wickets in the end. The defeat, Bangladesh's second in as many games, has vastly reduced their hopes of a place in the knockout

stages. Their next game is against host

India at the same venue tomorrow.

Massive Independence museum, said when the participants would march through historical places

and ride boats at some places, they would

be able to picture the sufferings of the

freedom fighters and the reality of 1971. Zakaria Beg, an initiator of the parade, said even if 10 lakh people joined the march, they would be able to manage it in a disciplined way as everyone would be united and bear the same spirit.

Sharif Reza, a volunteer of the Liberation War Museum, said during the war, 38 youths had marched 2,000km from Bangladesh to India, demanding independence and protesting genocide.

Bird expert Inam Al Haque said they expected one lakh participants in the

Anyone could call 01982100145 or visit facebook.com/walkamileforlwm Mofidul Huque, trustee of the for further details.

Nur threatens witnesses

FROM PAGE 3

to 5:30pm.

said Nishat.

FROM PAGE 5

Facebook, she said.

this year framed charges against 35 people, including Nur Hossain and three sacked Rab officials, in the two cases. Of the 35, 12 are still on the run.

The three sacked Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) officials are Lt Col Tareque Sayeed Mohammad, Maj Arif Hossain and Lt Commander MM

Yesterday, the 23, including Nur Hossain and the three sacked Rab officials, were produced before the court amid tight security. The court proceedings started around 10:15am.

Among the seven persons who gave testimony yesterday was Narayanganj Senior Judicial Magistrate KM Mohiuddin.

It was his court where the sacked Rab officials and Lance Nayek Hira Mia, Purnendu Bala and Nur Hossain's cohorts Mortuja Zaman Churchill and Raham Ali gave confessional statements under Section 164.

He also recorded the statements Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam, Rabeya Begum and SI Palash Goldar as witnesses.

Public Prosecutor (PP) Advocate

Wazed Ali Khokon said three of the seven who gave testimony yesterday were eyewitnesses.

The witnesses told the court how seven people were abducted and the bodies were dumped in the

Shitalakkhya river, said Khokon. The complainant's lawyer, Shakhawat Hossain, alleged that Nur Hossain was seen having a conversation with the PP and they were laugh-

ing at one point. He also alleged that Nur Hossain tried to threaten the witnesses in order to keep them from giving testimony.

Advocate Shakhawat pleaded to change the PP. The PP denied the allegation, saying he did his duty with "honesty and promptness".

After the proceedings, prosecution witnesses Abul Kalam Azad and Jahangir Alam Tipu told journalists that they were not informed earlier that they had to give testimony. They said they had been told to be present at

Nur Hossain's men, including his two brothers Nur Salam and Nur Uddin, were seen on the court premises while proceedings were ongoing.

HIV patients for life, she added.

In Bangladesh, mothers with HIV

"We allow them to feed their babies

are not forbidden to breastfeed their

breast milk, considering their eco-

nomic condition," Prof Saleha said,

adding in many parts of the world HIV

positive mothers are not allowed to do

Child gives hope

FROM PAGE 3

under observation, the doctor said, adding that one baby could not be saved from the infection due to late detection of the disease of the mother. Once a pregnant woman is diag-

nosed with HIV she is immediately given antiretroviral therapy that suppresses HIV. After birth, babies, whose parents have AIDS, are given Nevirapine syrup, also a suppressive drug, for six weeks. Then babies are given co-

trimoxazole for one year when they are fed breast milk, said Prof Dr Saleha Begum Chowdhury, director of the project. A baby goes through the DNA

Polymer Chain Reaction test twice -- at six week old and at thirteen and a half month old, confirming that the baby is

free of HIV, the project director said. Apart from pregnant women,

antiretroviral therapy is given free to all

babies.

With the risk eliminated, motherhood gives hopes to HIV positive women facing the fear of death and the stigma attached to the disease. "My life suddenly lost all meaning

so as there is a risk of transmission.

as I was diagnosed with AIDS. I thought I was going to die within a short time," said the mother.

Except for her family, whoever learnt about her disease hated her, she said. "I feel so blessed whenever I look at my son's face."

The couple have been blessed with another child, a baby girl, last month.

Govt bans

the ban, saying it would pose risk to the biodiversity of the mangrove forest.

The latest prohibition order came from Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) two days after the coal-laden vessel, Seahorse-1, sank in the Sundarbans. "The ban has been imposed this

morning. It will continue until fur-

ther notice," Saidul Islam, divisional forest officer of the Sundarbans (East), told The Daily Star yesterday. Two teams of the forest department -- one at Sarankhola and another at Chandpai -- have been

monitoring vessel operation, he said Though two days passed since the incident, the authorities were yet to start an operation to salvage the sunken vessel. They couldn't even say

when the operation would begin. "We don't have the capacity to conduct such an operation. We have informed other government agencies and are waiting for their response," said Saidul.

Meanwhile, the forest department filed a case against the vessel owner and five others, claiming Tk 5 crore in compensation. The accused are vessel owner

Manira Kabir, Samata Shipping traders' owner Md Azizur Rahman, the company's manager Zamal Hossain, and vessel staffs Sirajul Hossain Molla, Ismail Farazi and Saidul Islam.

Sultan Mahmud, forester of Chandpai range, filed the lawsuit with Sarankhola Police Station.

Wishing anonymity, a member of the probe committee formed by Bagerhat district administration said primary investigation indicated that Seahorse-1 sank as it hit a sunken vessel, MV Shahi Doot. "Our primary investigation shows

collided with Shahi Doot," said the committee member. The forest department requested the Department of Environment to

the hull of the vessel cracked, as it

check whether the sinking of the coal-laden vessel has impacted the water quality of the river. In December 2014, an oil tanker sank in the river, spilling a huge

Oil was seen on barks of trees and on soil for months. IMPACT ON FOREST Prof Abdullah Harun Chowhdhury of Khulna University said the coal in the sunken vessel would affect the

biodiversity in the surrounding forest

quantity of oil that tainted the water.

areas. Since coal contains heavy metals such as arsenic, lead, mercury and nickel, these would mix with the river water and pollute the spawning ground of shrimp, crab, fish and dolphin in and around the scene of

the accident, he said. These heavy metals may also contaminate the food chain.

Moreover, soil fertility would decrease as the forest floor in the area would absorb these heavy metals during high tides.

Some impacts may last long, as natural degradation of heavy metal is very slow, added Abdullah.

China

FROM PAGE 3

"Road & Belt Initiative".

China and Bangladesh recently reached consensus on building the eighth China-Bangladesh Friendship Bridge and the China-Bangladesh Friendship Exposition Center in Purbachal while China would assist in renovating Bangabandhu International Conference Centgre, he added.

About military cooperation, he said both sides were willing to strengthen cooperation.

Fakhrul

FROM PAGE 16

Amanullah Aman, Habibunnanbi Khan Sohel and Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas -- are among the accused.

Of the accused, Shimul, Sohel, Bulu, Khokon and 17 others were shown fugitives and the IO appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants for them.

Fakhrul, Aman and 10 others are now on bail in the case.

Court sources say the hearing on

whether the charges will be taken into

cognisance will be held on April 22. ARREST WARRANT FOR KHOKA Another Dhaka court issued arrest warrants against former Dhaka City Corporation mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and 23 other BNP men in a case filed for throwing petrol bombs at a passenger bus in November 2013.

Hossain Mollah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court accepted the charges against 37 BNP leaders and activists, including the 24. Fakhrul, Mirza Abbas, Aman and

Earlier in the day, Judge Md Kamrul

Gayeshwar are among the accused. The case was filed with Ramna

Police Station for throwing petrol bombs at the bus that left one dead at the city's Malibagh intersection on November 30, 2013. On August 17 last year, detectives

submitted two charge sheets -- one for blasting petrol bombs and the other for killing a person -- against Fakhrul and 36 others.

Dummy explosives

FROM PAGE 16

before signing of a deal with a British firm to upgrade the airport's security.

Contacted, a senior ministry official told this newspaper, "The mock test took place in January. The UK team member was posing as a passenger with dummy explosives and arms in his baggage and cargo. Our screeners could detect none of those." The minister in his briefing also men-

tioned another incident when operators screened eight items but recorded 24 in the logbook. "After these anomalies were found, they [UK team] got extremely annoyed and said if things go on like this, we will

while explaining why the British company, Redline Aviation Security, was being hurriedly appointed. Later in the afternoon, Shahjalal's acting director Md Nurul Islam and Redline Chief Executive Officer Paul Mason signed the deal in the presence of the minister and top officials of the

ministry and Civil Aviation Authority

of Bangladesh (Caab).

be bound to take measures," he said

Under the two-year agreement, Redline will provide advisory, supervisory and operational services under the authority of the airport director, said Menon. According to officials, the company

will find the scopes of improvement in overall airport security and place recommendations accordingly, train local screeners and security personnel and man the cargo complex and passenger terminal for supervision. Earlier on Sunday, the cabinet committee on economic affairs and the cabi-

Tk 73 crore, paving the way for the deal without any tender. In a press release issued by the Caab, Redline CEO Paul Mason said, "Redline

net committee on purchase approved a

technical project proposal (TPP) of over

including manning screening points at passenger terminals and the cargo complex for a short interim period."

Redline will put in place all necessary training for airport screeners and the security personnel of Caab who will

David Cameron in a letter to her Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina

meeting with Bangladesh government representatives on March 13 suggested hiring a foreign company for security

high commissioner at the meeting. Yesterday, the civil aviation minister

completed within the next three days. The company will assign 29 of its staff, including 15 screeners who will work along with Caab screeners. "Redline said they will be able to

withdraw their 15 screeners within a

Menon added he had already talked to Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, who said that after the deal "we'll do everything to get the ban withdrawn".

to keep our airport secure."

'Change is going FROM PAGE 16

did not serve our interests or the interests of the Cuban people," he said. WHY IS IT GROUNDBREAKING?

Jose Marti airport in Havana and be warmly greeted by Cuban's foreign minister was until recently unthink-

1959.

But President Obama undertook two years of secret talks which led to the announcement in December 2014 that the two countries would restore

Since then, there have been a series of symbolic moments, such as the first in Havana and Washington DC.

Presidents Obama and Castro shook hands at the Palace of the Revolution in Havana ahead of their bilateral

than at their first official meeting at a regional summit in Panama just around a year ago and smiled broadly.

first stop on President Obama's tour had been the newly re-opened US embassy in Havana, where he told staff it was "wonderful to be here". But it was the visit to Havana's old

since the thaw was announced 15 months ago. While the plan to interact with Cubans in the streets was disrupted by a tropical storm, the image of the US president and his family braving the

WHAT ELSE IS IN STORE? The two leaders' meeting at the Palace

of the Revolution will be closely scrutinised for signs of how much practical progress has been made.

is going to happen here and I think that Raul Castro understands that". He also told US broadcaster ABC that he would be announcing that

Google had made a deal with the Cuban authorities to expand Cuba's poor wi-fi and broadband access. There have been a series of other agreements between the two countries

since the thaw was announced, including commercial deals on telecoms and a scheduled airline service, increased co-operation on law enforcement and environmental protection. Many Cubans are hoping their

economy will receive a further boost from further openness and reforms as well as US investment. Cuban officials are banking on a

the first US firm to agree a deal with the

eventually take full control, he added.

On March 8, the UK government imposed the ban on direct cargo flights

The same day, British Prime Minister

also said Redline will start deployment of its manpower from today and it will be

month."

Asked whether there was any pressure

For a US president to touch down at

For decades, the US and Cuba were engaged in a bitter stand-off, triggered by the overthrow of US-backed Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista by Communist leader Fidel Castro in

The US broke off diplomatic relations and imposed a trade embargo.

diplomatic relations.

formal meeting of Presidents Obama and Castro at a regional summit in Panama and the opening of embassies HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VISIT SO FAR

meeting yesterday. They seemed visibly more relaxed

Following his arrival on Sunday, the

town which brought home the long way US-Cuban relations have come

rain demonstrated to many Cubans his commitment to the new, warmer relationship.

Ahead of the meeting, President Obama said he believed that "change

growth in US tourists visiting the

of 1959.

island as restrictions on US citizens travelling there are eased further. On Sunday, US hotel company Starwood announced it had become

from Dhaka, citing security concerns.

called for a visible improvement of airport security by March 31 to avoid further measures like banning of Biman's direct passenger flights from Dhaka to London. Against this backdrop, British envoy Alison Blake leading a UK delegation at a

management at the airport. The government primarily picked two firms -- Redline and Restrata -- from the list of four companies suggested by the British

to sign the deal so hurriedly, the minister said, "We have done whatever is required

The company said it would be making a "multimillion-dollar investment" to bring three Cuban hotels "up to our standards".

WRONG?

cials, one thing the White House has insisted on is a meeting between the president and Cuban dissidents, whether the Cubans like it or not. Among them are expected to be

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO

While President Obama's agenda was

carefully discussed with Cuban offi-

members of the Ladies in White, a group which campaigns for the release of political prisoners. Only hours before Obama touched down, dozens of their members were

arrested during their weekly protest in

Havana. The meeting between the dissidents and Obama is scheduled for Tuesday. Another main sticking point

between the two countries is the 54year-old US trade embargo. While strolling through Havana's old town on Sunday, one Cuban

shouted: "Down with the embargo!"

The problem for Obama is that it can only be lifted by the US Congress, which is controlled by Republicans who have expressed their opposition to its removal.

On the Cuban side, analysts say

there are conflicting sentiments within the Communist Party over hosting Obama. The Director General of the US division at the Cuban Foreign Ministry told the BBC's Will Grant that "matters

of sovereignty of the Cuban people" would remain firmly off the agenda. Many observers have also noted that Obama is not scheduled to meet Raul Castro's older brother, the leader

of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro. The elder Castro has only made one official statement about the thaw in relations, and it was hardly a ringing endorsement: "I don't trust in the United States' policy, nor have I exchanged a word with them".

Rampaging elephants kill five villagers in India

AFP, Kolkata

Five people have been killed by wild elephants that went on the rampage, triggering panic in a village in eastern India, a local official said yesterday. Another man was critically injured by the four elephants, who entered the

village of Bhatar in West Bengal state

on Sunday morning after apparently straying from their herd. West Bengal forest minister Benoy Krishna Burman said the victims were trampled after angering the elephants by throwing stones to try to scare them off.

The male elephant died when it was hit by a tranquilliser dart fired by forestry officials summoned to help, and the other three -- a female and two calves -- ran away, Burman said.

Wildlife experts say encounters between humans and elephants are increasing in India's rural areas due to the destruction of the animals' habitat. Last month a wild elephant went on

Cuban authorities since the revolution homes, shops and other buildings.

an hours-long rampage in a town in eastern India, damaging about 100

will deploy nearly 29 of its team across a variety of aviation security functions,