

# Third-phase

**FROM PAGE 1**  
 of vote rigging by the AL, he said every party had its own perception and that the EC had sought political parties' corporation in bringing down the incidents of violence. Meanwhile, at a press conference at the BNP headquarters in the capital's Nayapalton, party Senior Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed said the third phase UP polls were marked by widespread vote rigging and other irregularities by AL men. Massive stuffing of ballots, intimidation and violence took place during yesterday's elections like in the previous polls, he said. "That [vote rigging] did not come as a surprise to the people of the country as they noticed violence and vote rigging in all the elections held under the Awami League."

The EC did not take any measure to contain violence by "AL goons" because its officials did not want to lose their jobs. Meeting EC officials after the voting ended, BNP leader Nazrul Islam Khan also said violence and stuffing of ballots were as widespread as in the previous phases. Meanwhile, at the party president's Dhanmondi office, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said the third phase UP polls were held in a free, fair and peaceful manner. "Some stray incidents have taken place in one or two centres... those are insignificant."

Next elections will also be held in a free, fair and credible manner under the present government and the EC, Hanif said, adding that the BNP had tried to create anarchy and blame it on the AL rebels but that effort was foiled. Brotee, an election observer group, said yesterday's polls were comparatively peaceful while the number and intensity of violence and clashes were fewer, although the violence could not be avoided.

In a statement, the organisation said this time the EC had taken prompt action against irregularities and thus created positive atmosphere. It also said there were several instances of irregularities, including stuffing ballot, casting fake votes, snatching ballot papers and clashes, during the polls.

# Shafik arrested

**FROM PAGE 16**  
 Joy in another Facebook status posted on Friday wrote, "Shafik Rehman had direct contact with the convicted FBI agent Robert Lustyk..." Lambasting those supporting Shafik Rehman, Joy wrote, "The BNP and some of our 'civil society' have been very busy on the defensive regarding Shafik Rehman. So let me provide a few concrete facts: "According to US court records, the convicted FBI agent Robert Lustyk had written in text messages that Rizvi Ahmed Caesar wanted to 'off' me. This is slang in the US for killing someone. So Ahmed had told his co-conspirator that he wanted to kill me, well before he was arrested..."

"Shafik Rehman had direct contact with Lustyk. If a journalist is involved in criminal activity to obtain documents, then that is a crime. This was a crime in the US so Shafik Rehman can be tried by the US as well. "Finally, Shafik Rehman as a non-US citizen had obtained secret FBI files through bribery. In the US this is espionage and the sentence for that is life in a maximum security US prison," Joy wrote. Fakhru in the briefing said a case was filed against American citizen Rizvi Ahmed Caesar in 2011 for bribing a special FBI agent to collect important and confidential information about Joy. "Caesar had also got some documents and files. He committed a crime by bribing a government official and the FBI official's offence was taking the bribe and handing over the government's document to an individual without permission," he said.

Fakhru said when the case was in trial, Joy brought the allegation against Caesar of a plan to abduct and kill him. However, Fakhru said the US court in its verdict on March 4, 2015 acquitted Caesar of the allegation of planning to kill and harm Joy. "The court also denied accepting Sajeb Wazed Joy as a victim," he said.

He said there was no mention of any BNP leader or Shafik Rehman and Mahmudur Rahman in the charge sheet, in the USA government's report and in any statement of witnesses.

Even their names were not there in the FIR lodged with Dhaka's Ramna Police Station and the case filed with Paltan Police Station in this connection, Fakhru said, adding, "A plot is on to unjustly implicate Shafik Rehman and Mahmudur Rahman in a false allegation."

On the "suspicious transaction" of \$300 million (Tk 2,500 crore), Fakhru said, "Why is the government not saying anything about Joy and the suspicious transaction of \$300 million?"

"No trial is also being held for the plundering of thousands of crores of taka from Share Market and different banks. We want to say people have the right to know whether there is any link between the two matters," the BNP secretary general said. He demanded a neutral and effective investigation into the matter.

# Violence lessens

**FROM PAGE 1**  
 voters cast ballots. Voting at 24 polling stations in 17 unions was suspended due to violence and irregularities, according to EC officials. Except for the stray incidents, voting was, by and large, peaceful with a huge number of voters turning up at polling stations to exercise their franchise in the UP polls, considered the most competitive of all elections.

Polls to 743 UPs are slated for May 7 in the fourth phase and 733 UPs for May 28 in the fifth phase. Around 700 more UPs will go to polls in the sixth phase in June, said EC officials. Earlier, elections to 725 UPs were held on March 22 in the first phase and 639 UPs on March 31 in the second phase.

**VIOLENCE AND IRREGULARITIES**  
 In Pabna, the dead was identified as Emdadul Hossain, 60.

He was killed in a clash between locals and BGB personnel near Bahadurpur Government Primary School centre in Mothurapur union of Chatmohar upazila around 7:00pm when vote counting was going on, reports our Pabna correspondent.

According to police, irked by the delay in publishing polls results, a group of locals started hurling bricks at Border Guard Bangladesh men, and also vandalised a vehicle.

The BGB men opened fire to disperse the angry mob. At one stage, Emdadul, who went to the centre to know the results, was hit by bullets and died on the spot, said Subrata Kumar, officer-in-charge of Chatmohar Police Station.

Police and BGB men recovered the body from the scene, the OC said.

Five others were also injured in the incident, he said.

In Sherpur, at least 32 people were hurt in clashes over occupying polling stations and snatching ballot papers in three of the six unions under Sadar upazila.

Polling was peaceful for the first few hours. It, however, saw incidents of violence as the day progressed. Supporters of member candidates in the UPs tried to take control of several polling centres and snatched ballot boxes. Clashes also took place between rival groups, reports our correspondent.

Armed with sharp weapons, the supporters of two member candidates stormed Char Government Primary School polling station in Kamarer Char union.

They took away four ballot boxes, confining election officials to a room. Police said they fired rubber bullets to bring the situation under control.

Voting at the centre was cancelled following the incident. Abdul Warish, additional superintendent of police in Sherpur, said incidents of violence took place at some centres. "Law enforcement agencies fired 80 to 90 rounds of rubber bullets to restore order."

In Comilla, at least 50 people were wounded in clashes in 12 of 18 unions in Sadar, Burichong and Laksham upazilas over taking control of polling stations, stuffing of ballot boxes and casting of fake votes. Some of the injured were admitted to local hospitals and clinics.

Immediately after the voting at Lalmiah Government Primary School centre in Rajapur union of Burichong, supporters of Awami League-nominated chairman aspirant tried to occupy the centre.

But the followers of an AL rebel candidate for chairman post resisted it, and a clash between the two groups broke out, leaving five people injured.

In Burichong union, two assistant presiding officers were arrested for helping the supporters of a chairman candidate cast fake votes. In four unions of Laksham upazila, the BNP-nominated chairman candidates boycotted the polls, raising allegations of irregularities.

In Natore, supporters of AL-nominated chairman aspirants occupied most of the 86 polling stations in the seven unions of Sadar upazila immediately after voting began.

Our correspondent said that voters in many polling stations were forced to cast vote for "boat" symbol. AL men even tore off the ballot papers stamped in favour of the BNP candidates.

Five BNP-nominated chairman aspirants and one AL rebel hopeful boycotted the polls.

In Munshiganj, mobile courts sentenced 31 people to imprisonment ranging from three days to six months for electoral irregularities, including casting of fake votes.

The courts also fined 23 people Tk 96,000 for misconduct.

In Laxmipur, two policemen were hit by bullets when unidentified miscreants suddenly opened fire on them at Soundara Government Primary School centre in Ramganj upazila.

The injured are sub-inspector Mohammad Selim and constable Shafiullah.

In Chandpur, a policeman suffered bullet wounds in a clash between law enforcers and supporters of a member candidate at Lohagar Government Primary School centre in Balithuba Paschim union of Faridganj upazila, police said.

At least 70 people, including election officials and two Ansar men, were injured in clashes at different polling

stations, leading to suspension of polling at five centres.

Supporters of the AL and the BNP candidates got locked in a clash at Asta Mohamaya High School centre over casting of fake votes around noon.

Both groups blasted 10 to 12 cocktails, leaving 10 people injured.

Police fired 10 blank shots to bring the situation under control.

In Bogra, a policeman was wounded when law enforcers tried to quell the fighting between the supporters of two member candidates in Sonahata union of Dhunat upazila.

A presiding officer at Elangi High School centre in Elangi union of the upazila was withdrawn for allegedly assisting criminals in casting fake votes.

During visits to different polling stations in Rameshwarpur, Sonaroy, Nepaltoili and Dakkhinpara unions of Gabtoli upazila, our correspondent saw that voters were forced to cast ballots for AL candidates, and polling agents of BNP candidates were ousted from the centres by AL men.

In Narayanganj, at least 20 people, including two policemen, were injured in a post-polls clash between a group of villagers and law enforcers in Ruggan union.

The mob confined election officials to a room over "the delay in announcing election results" at Charitaluk Government Primary School centre around 8:00pm, said police.

As police charged baton to disperse them, they clashed with the law enforcers.

Later, more people joined the mob and surrounded Executive Magistrate Zakaria Hossain and members of police and the BGB. The protesters set fire to three vehicles, including the one used by Zakaria.

The law enforcers then fired blank shots and teargas canisters to disperse the protesters, said Zakaria.

In Mymensingh, police arrested an assistant presiding officer for allegedly casting votes for an AL candidate at Kandapara Government Primary School Centre in Rajgati union of Nandail upazila.

Meanwhile, BNP candidates boycotted polls in eight unions under Chatkhil upazila in Noakhali.

In Brahmanbaria, three journalists were injured in an attack allegedly by AL men while they were covering the polls at Chunta AC Academy centre in Sarail upazila.

The three are ATN Bangla's Brahmanbaria Bureau Chief Pijush Kanti Acharya and its cameraman Sumon Roy, and Jamuna TV cameraman Hasan Jabed.

Supporters of an AL-backed chairman candidate stormed the centre around 12:30pm, and started stamping ballot papers. At one stage, they swooped on the three journalists who were covering the election, said witnesses.

Meantime, at least 25 people were injured in clashes over taking control of two polling centres of Jamalpur and Netrakona.

**WOUNDED MANDIES**  
 A 60-year-old man, injured in a pre-polls clash, died last night at a hospital in Kishoreganj.

Siddique Mia of Bhairab upazila and six others suffered wounds in a clash between supporters of two UP member aspirants -- Abul Bashar and Selim Mia - in Sreenagar union on Friday evening, said police and witnesses.

Over the last couple of days, supporters of the two rivals clashed over establishing supremacy, they said.

The union will go to the polls on May 7 in the fourth phase of elections.

# Libya unity govt seeks EU accord on migrants

*AFP, Rome*

Libya's Vice President Ahmed Maetig has expressed hope that the European Union will enter into an agreement with his country similar to that between the EU and Turkey restricting the flow of migrants to Europe.

Maetig made the appeal while in Rome meeting with Italy's Interior Minister Angelino Alfano. "The vice president has asked that we proceed with an agreement between the European Union and Libya based on the one between the European Union and Turkey," a statement by Alfano read, without giving further details.

According to the March 18 agreement, Turkey agreed to take back all migrants arriving in the Greek islands, in an effort to relieve the pressure on the European Union that saw one million migrant arrivals since early 2015.

In return Europe promised to resettle one Syrian refugee for every Syrian taken back by Turkey, to grant visa-free travel to Turks within the border-free Schengen zone and to reassess Turkey's stalled EU membership bid.

Maetig "thanked Italy for aiding the Libyan people, and expressed hopes that Italy would continue to play a key role in the national reconciliation process towards the construction of a united and democratic Libya," the statement said.

# Half-day hartal

**FROM PAGE 16**  
 country to boycott their classes tomorrow.

At the press conference, Faisal Mahmud, convener of Anti-Imperialist Students' Union, said the torch procession would be a symbol of fight and protest against repression and abuse on women everywhere in the country. "There is a culture of impunity prevailing. Killers, rapists and wrongdoers are getting away. This must be stopped. Our movement is against all these. We will picket during the strike hours and take to key streets."

Victoria College student Tonu was found murdered inside Comilla Cantonment on March 20. Even though a month has passed, there has been no significant progress in identifying the killers.

The murder of Tonu triggered widespread outrage all over the country. Comments and opinions condemning the killing flooded the social media platforms. Several protest programmes and demonstrations were held as well.

On April 7, the two major alliances of left-leaning student organisations called the half-day country-wide hartal for tomorrow if the killers were not arrested by April 24.

The demonstrators also attempted to besiege the home ministry on that day but were barred by police from doing so.

They have been campaigning in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country to make the hartal a success.

According to information provided at the press conference, the two alliances, 13 political parties and other social organisations will be "on the field to make the hartal successful".

They also urged the transport leaders to refrain from bringing out vehicles on the road in the city from 6:00am to 12:00pm, and asked all to participate spontaneously in the "hartal for justice".

Meanwhile, Sammilita Sankritlek Jote yesterday held a protest rally and lit candles on the last day of their five-day-long programme at the central Shaheed Minar in the city, seeking justice for Tonu.

# Trial of two cases

**FROM PAGE 1**  
 The delay in holding the trial was mainly caused by the labor ministry's refusal to give permission for accusing in the charge sheet three of its officials -- Deputy Chief Inspector (mills and factories) Jamsedur Rahman and inspectors (engineering) Yusuf Ali and Shahidul Islam, said a source in the Session Judge's Court in Dhaka.

The court finally used its inherent jurisdiction to take into cognisance the charges against the three and other accused on December 21 last year.

According to law, an approval from the government is required to name a government official in a charge sheet.

Meanwhile, the fear for not getting justice has become stronger with the trial procedure delayed, said Noor Khan, acting executive director of rights body Ain o Salish Kendra.

"While this delay reflects the prevailing culture of impunity, it also shows how difficult it is to bring wealthy and politically influential people to justice."

People are eagerly waiting to see justice done for the victims of Rana Plaza, and the state should not let them down, Noor added.

Rehana Akhter, a Rana Plaza survivor who lost both her legs in the disaster, said she lost hopes of ever seeing justice for the loss inflicted upon her.

"I wish those responsible for my misfortune were punished. It would have set an example for other factory owners."

The Criminal Investigation Department accused 42 individuals, including the building owner, Sohel Rana, in the charge sheets submitted to the court.

Forty-one were accused in the murder case, 17 of whom plus one were named in the charge sheet of the other case. One of the accused, Belayet Hossain, the then deputy chief inspector of the labour ministry, retired after the tragic incident.

Of the ministry officials, Shahidul and Yusuf were granted bail on February 10 after they surrendered before the court.

Rana's parents Abdul Khaleq and Morzina Begum and the then mayor of Savar municipality Refat Ullah are among the 23 who are on bail while the prime accused Rana, Jamsedur Rahman and four others are in jail and 13 are absconding.

At least 1,136 people, mostly garment workers, were killed and more than 2,500 injured in the building collapse on April 24, 2013, which sparked worldwide criticism of the standards of labour and human rights in Bangladesh.

# Teacher hacked

**FROM PAGE 16**  
 Locals rushed him to Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital for treatment. The OC said they arrested Rana and the school authorities filed a case with Adabor police in connection with the incident.

# School-goers

**FROM PAGE 16**  
 Joye had a high fever just after reaching school, said Asma. "I suspect it was the heat that made her sick."

"I always worry if my children are okay at school in this unbearable heat," said the mother of three.

Sanjida Yasmin Moly, headmistress of the school, said: "Not only Joye, but also many other students of my school are sick due to the hot weather over the last two weeks."

"But what can we do? The monthly tests are going on and we cannot close the school right away," she said.

There are 80 students at Rajapukur Primary School in Kawgaon under Dinajpur Sadar upazila and they feel dehydrated almost every day while attending the classes under the corrugated iron sheet-roofed classrooms with poor ventilation.

Visiting the school last week, our local correspondent found the children attending classes under a tree outside the classrooms.

"It is so hot inside the rooms that

students often become sick. That is why we are taking classes here," said Joygun Nahar, headmistress of the school.

The Sahapur Government Primary School of Gomostapur upazila in Chapainawabganj has no ceiling fans and children suffer a lot when they attend the classes there.

"Our students mostly come from poor families and we cannot afford ceiling fans for them. The children suffer a lot," said Razia Sultana, a teacher of the school.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, however, he did not receive any reports from anywhere that children were becoming sick due to the heat.

"The way the weather is changing, the temperature is likely rise. We need to learn to adjust ourselves to it."

The minister said he would take steps if he received any such reports. "But I do not think the [weather] condition is so bad yet that we need to initiate a school recess."

*[Our correspondents from the districts concerned contributed to the report.]*

# Obama lands

**FROM PAGE 16**  
 to the country this weekend he believed the proposed Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) would strengthen trade and create jobs in the US and the EU.

Tens of thousands of opponents of the proposed trade deal poured onto German streets yesterday on the eve of a visit by Obama.

Anti-EU campaigners in Britain, like London Mayor Boris Johnson, have made the claim the country could sign free trade deals with global allies a key plank of their campaign.

Obama's comments fuelled a controversy ignited earlier Friday by an article he wrote in The Daily Telegraph newspaper at the start of his four-day visit. The president argued that Britain's place in the EU magnified its global influence.

Johnson, the leading face of the eurosceptic campaign, said it was "downright hypocritical" of Obama to intervene as the United States would not accept the same limits on its own sovereignty as EU members do.

"For the United States to tell us in the UK that we must surrender control of so much of our democracy is a breathtaking example of the principle of do as I say, not as I do," Johnson wrote in The Sun tabloid.

Richard Whitman, professor of politics and international relations at the University of Kent, said Obama was "making a very strong appeal from the heart" in his remarks on Brexit.

"It will be difficult to say from the polls whether his intervention made a significant difference but I think that it creates a narrative which appears to be favouring the 'Remain' campaign," he said.

A Sky News television survey found 57 percent said Obama's intervention would make "no difference" to their vote.

While experts warn many people have not yet decided how to vote, the "Remain" camp currently has 54 percent support compared to 46 percent for "Leave", according to an average of the last six opinion polls calculated by the What UK Thinks project.

# Dhaka signs

**FROM PAGE 1**  
 received in Dhaka. The opening session was addressed, among others, by the presidents of France, Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Democratic Republic of Congo; the prime ministers of Canada, Italy and Tuvalu; the deputy prime minister of the Russia, special envoy of the president of China, the US secretary of state and the UN secretary general.

The Bangladesh statement at the event highlighted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's personal commitment to combating climate change. It reaffirmed her government's readiness to continue to work towards mobilising greater international efforts in support of comprehensive implementation of the Paris deal.

"Collective wisdom and commitments are essential to implement the Paris Climate Agreement... We all must consider the urgency of acting now," the statement reads.

Bangladesh also flagged various initiatives taken by the government to adapt to climate change in a pro-active manner with its own resources and

international cooperation. It was particularly mentioned that a roadmap for implementing Bangladesh's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) was currently in the making.

"All countries need to be united in our collective journey, keeping in mind that one's non-compliance may threaten the existence of all. However, developed countries have to take lead in this case," said the statement.

Following the signing of the deal, Manju exchanged greetings with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Bangladesh minister also had a bilateral meeting with Fatma Guldemet Sari, minister for environment and urbanisation of Turkey. The two ministers agreed to work together during the lead-up to UNFCCC COP22 in Morocco in November this year to promote the issues of common interests, with focus on climate-vulnerable LDCs.

# Being a widow

**FROM PAGE 16**  
 Dr Caterina Trevisan, of the University of Padova, said the presence of a wife may bring benefits for men in terms of household management and healthcare, whereas women are 'more likely to feel stressed and find their role restrictive and frustrating.'

She explained: 'Since women generally have a longer lifespan than men, married women may also suffer from the effects of caregiver burden, since they often devote themselves to caring for their husband in later life.'

Dr Trevisan said these factors may be behind the lower risk of depression in unmarried women following research revealing women had more marital problems and less wellness in marriage than men.

The same study also found single women experienced less discomfort than bachelors, greater job satisfaction and higher activity levels at work, and a lower risk of social isolation, as they maintained stronger relationships with family or friends.

It is well known fact that married people generally live longer than their single counterparts, who are said to have a worse diet and drink more alcohol.

But the study of almost 2,000 over 65s shows the well accepted association between marital status and fitness has 'gender specific differences' among older individuals.

Most notably, widows were about 23 per cent less likely to be frail than married women, reports the Journal of Women's Health.

has traditionally been associated with reduced risk of disability and death.

The study followed 733 and 1,154 Italian men and women respectively for four and a half years and found the prediction held true for elderly men.

Bachelors and widowers were almost four and about one and a half times more likely, respectively, to be frail than their hitched peers.

Journal editor Professor Susan Kornstein said: 'This study adds to our understanding of how marital status influences the onset of frailty in older people, but reveals surprising gender specific differences.'

# Syria Kurds, regime to press talks

*AFP, Qamishli*

Syrian regime officials and Kurdish representatives were to meet on Saturday for a second day of talks on ending deadly clashes in the northeastern city of Qamishli, a senior security source said.

A truce agreed on Friday held through the night, an AFP correspondent reported, and no gunfire was heard in the mainly Kurdish city, where control is split between Kurdish militia and the Syrian army and its allies.

The army and the Kurds have coordinated on security in Hasakeh province against Islamic State jihadists, but tensions have built up between the sometimes rival authorities.