

The light of education is yet to shine at Rabindra University

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When Rabindranath Tagore took his first steps in bringing his education philosophies to life he started small. In 1901, with no more than five enrolled students, he began teaching in the shade of trees in rural Santiniketan. In keeping with his holistic approach he favoured the natural environment as classroom and pupils would spend break time climbing the trees under which they studied. For Tagore, simplicity was a cardinal principle. More than a century later in Shahzadpur of Sirajganj, where Tagore spent part of his youth looking after his family's landholdings, the establishment of long-awaited Rabindra University has been anything but simple. On Tagore's 154th birth anniversary, on 8 March 2015, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina dedicated the foundation stone for the university. A year

later, and the stone is yet to be placed, being stored unceremoniously at an upazila government office. "To establish a fully-fledged university takes a long time," says Rajshahi University's former vice-chancellor Dr. Abdul Khaleque who is convenor of the Rabindra University implementation committee. "To complete all necessary tasks quickly is quite impossible." "Without an act of parliament no university can run," says Md Fardous Zaman, an additional director of the University Grants Commission. He notes that the education minister Nurul Islam Nahid introduced the Rabindra University Bangladesh Bill 2016 to parliament on 8 February. It was subsequently sent to the parliamentary standing committee to prepare a report, which on 26 April recommended the bill's approval. It is hoped the bill may pass in the next session. SEE PAGE 11 COL 5



The designated site for the Rabindra University in Rautara area has seen almost no development work. The foundation stone, inset, for Rabindra University, which Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina laid a year ago, is now left leaning on a wall at the Shahzadpur UNO office in Sirajganj. PHOTO: STAR

Nurjahan Begum on life support


STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Nurjahan Begum, the pioneer of feminism in Bangladesh, was on life support at the Square Hospitals last night. The 91-year-old was admitted to the hospital with respiratory problems on Wednesday. She was moved to the hospital's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) yesterday morning after her condition deteriorated. Nurjahan Begum has pneumonia and is undergoing treatment under medicine specialist Jahangir Alam, said Samiul Alam, a staff at the hospital. Nurjahan, the editor of the weekly Begum magazine, began her career in the 1940s and has been the editor for nearly six decades. She received the prestigious Ekushey Padak in 2011. Born on June 4, 1925, she is a daughter of prominent journalist Mohammad Nasiruddin, editor of Bangla literary journal Saogat.

Six killed as violence, irregularities mark vote

FROM PAGE 1 was influencing the elections. Although violence and irregularities were reported in many unions, a large number of voters turned up at the polling centres yesterday to exercise their franchise in the UP polls, considered the most competitive of all elections.



UP POLLS	
AL	424
BNP	75
JP	7
OTHERS	2
INDEPENDENT	129
RESULTS: 637 OUT OF 703	

Like in the previous three phases of the UP polls, supporters of chairman and member candidates yesterday indulged in irregularities, including capturing polling stations, stuffing ballot boxes and casting fake votes in over 75 unions. Supporters, mostly of the ruling AL nominees, used firearms and sharp weapons during the clashes. Some polling officials were also involved in irregularities. Eleven polling officials were detained on charges of committing irregularities. Voting at 51 polling stations in 37 unions was suspended due to violence and irregularities, according to EC officials.

In Thakurgaon, a teenage boy was killed and another man injured when police opened fire to disperse clashing supporters of two member candidates at Taldanga Majhkhuria village in Baliadangi upazila. The dead is Mahubur Rahman Poltu, 17, of Majhkhuria village in the upazila. Aminul Islam, OC of Baliadangi Police Station, said supporters of member candidates Gias Uddin and Shah Alam got involved in a clash around 3:00pm. At one stage, police fired shots at the unruly supporters of Gias Uddin when they tried to snatch ballot boxes from the polling booths at Taldanga Dakhil Madrasa polling centre. Mahubur and one Nazim Uddin were hit by bullets. Locals sent the two to Baliadangi Upazila Health Complex where Mahubur died of his wounds. Nazim was later shifted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

health complex where he died of his wounds. In Sadullapur of Gaibandha, a man was killed when police opened fire on supporters of AL rebel candidate Rafiqul Islam last night. The dead is Lebu Mia, 35, of Damdari village in Pirganj upazila of Rangpur. Farhad Imrul Kayes, OC of Sadullapur Police Station, said supporters of the AL rebel candidate blocked the Dhaka-Rangpur highway in Dhpaprat Bazar area around 8:00pm, demanding announcement of polls results at the polling centres. Trying to clear the protesters from the road, police and BGB men fired shots at them, leaving around 10, including Lebu, injured. Lebu was taken to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead. In Raipura upazila of the district, three people were injured in a clash between supporters of an AL candidate and an independent candidate at Sreenagar union. In Comilla, law enforcers detained four presiding officers at different polling centres on charges of involvement in irregularities. A mobile court awarded Mobarok Hossain, presiding officer of Jugirhat Etimkhana polling centre, and four others six month's imprisonment each on charges of vote rigging before the start of the voting yesterday morning. In Sherpur, a mobile court sentenced a presiding officer to seven days in jail and a member candidate to one month in jail over a "bribe deal" at Hatibandha union of Jhenagati upazila, reports our correspondent. Locals and police said Abdul Barik, presiding officer of Loykha Govt Primary School polling centre, went to the house of member candidate Saifuddin early yesterday for making an underhand deal. Locals caught the two red-handed and handed them over to police. Violence and irregularities were also reported in Feni, Madaripur, Chuadanga, Sylhet, Kushtia, Laxmipur, Chittagong, Munshiganj, Meherpur, Pabna, Natore and Jamalpur.

Phase-four polls held in better atmosphere

Says CEC, BNP alleges irregularities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed yesterday said the fourth phase union parishad elections were held in a better atmosphere compared to the previous three phases. However, the BNP in its post-election reaction complained of massive irregularities, violence and vote rigging by activists of the ruling Awami League, and said the election atmosphere worsened further. The AL for the first time did not give any reaction to the media after the voting ended at 4:00pm yesterday. "We are sorry to say that irregularities and violence continued," said BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan while talking to reporters after a meeting with the CEC. The overall election atmosphere

deteriorated further. Election is one of the key components of democracy, Nazrul said, adding that people would soon lose interest in the electoral process if elections were not held in an acceptable and congenial manner. The BNP would follow democratic means to resist irregularities and restore people's faith in election and democracy, the opposition party leader said. In a post-poll press conference, the CEC said, "It is a matter of sorrow that some untoward and stray incidents of violence took place in the fourth phase. Otherwise, the polls were held in a peaceful manner." He claimed that violence was less this time due to preventive measures by the EC. "We are expecting that the next two

For children with cancer

Dhaka for treatment mainly from the rural areas. It has seven more beds in another room for male attendants. Salma said most of the guardians cannot afford accommodations elsewhere in the city. "In many cases these parents do not bring the children to Dhaka again for follow-up treatment because they have no place to stay or they cannot afford the cost," said Salma. Accommodation for children and their female attendants are without cost. However, any male attendant from the same family pays Tk200 a day. The patients and their guardians are given rice and daal twice a day for free. Parents cook other items for themselves in the kitchen. The children are served free snacks in the afternoon as well. ASHIC, which has already served thousands of children, only accepts patients recommended by hospitals. Eleven children are currently staying at the shelter home. Salma suffered a stroke in 2014 but it has not dampened her spirit and she visits ASHIC often. "I enjoy being with the children. I feel extremely happy whenever I am surrounded by them," she said. She also expressed her heartfelt gratitude to those who have been donating to her cause. Her daughter Maheen Hamid lives in the US and helps raise funds for ASHIC. Asif Choudhury, Salma's son, lives in Singapore. Salma said they were going to open a similar shelter home at Dhaka city's Bangla Motor this August. She runs another institution, ASHIC Oncology and Palliative Care Centre at Dhanmondi. Palliative care is given at the last stage in a cancer patient's life to provide relief from pain and despair. "The last days of a cancer patient are quite painful. We try to give them comfort and love during those days," said Salma. ASHIC and the palliative centre also offer counselling to parents. For Salma, it is a steep hill to climb and she welcomes anyone who wants to join her in the journey. With the world celebrating Mother's Day today, this mother does cherish a dream: to establish a modern cancer hospital for children, especially who have terminal cancer. "All I want is to reduce their pain and help the parents, especially the mothers, in their fight against cancer. It means a lot to me," she said with moist eyes.

framed image of Disney's Mickey Mouse at the entrance gives a warm welcome to the guests. A lounge inside is used by the children as a small play area. They play on the mats rolled out there every day without a care for what is awaiting them. "You cannot imagine how cute these kids are," Salma, who is in early 60s, told this correspondent while giving away a toy to five-year-old Sayed, a resident in ASHIC. "Do you like chocolate?" she asked the child and fed him a piece of chocolate. The child had blood cancer. Clad in a turquoise sari and matching headscarf, Salma spoke of her work for children with cancer and her dreams about doing something more for them. Initially, her sparkling eyes and caring smile hardly revealed her own pain and trauma. There was, however, a tinge of sadness in her voice. "I started this shelter home after cancer took away my little son," said the mother who had already lost one of her daughters. Suddenly, her voice cracked and her eyes filled with tears. Her son Ashiq Husain Choudhury, the inspiration behind ASHIC, was just over 39-month old when he died in May 1993 in London. The child started to have health problems when he was just nine-months old. He was diagnosed with cancer in his kidney soon afterwards. The disease later spread to his liver and lungs. Salma and her businessman husband, Afzal Husain Choudhury, tried everything but could not save Ashiq. Their daughter, Munia, had died in 1977 in the same city of complications from an earlier home accident. She was just two. Following the tragic incidents, Salma's life changed drastically and she could not come out of her sorrow and pain in any way. It was then the idea of working for Bangladeshi children with cancer came to her mind. She decided instantly to give everything she had for the cause. She was turning her sorrow into her strength. It worked like magic for her. She returned to Bangladesh with her husband to find out if they could do anything for children with cancer. ASHIC was born after the couple found that there was hardly anything being done for cancer stricken children, said Salma. The shelter home started its journey under the ASHIC Foundation in 2000. The home has 15 beds for child patients and their female attendants who come to

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of Bagmara Police Station told The Daily Star. In the evening, several hundred supporters of Jaan Mohammad attacked two villages and vandalised houses of at least 30 supporters of Shahiduzzaman, the OC said. When they were returning to Hat Gangupara Bazar firing shots in the air, police intercepted them. The unruly men attacked law enforcers, leaving seven cops injured, added Motiar. Police then opened fire on the attackers to disperse them. A little later, cops found Siddiqur and Jahidul lying dead in the area. At least 50 people were injured in the incident. Eight of them were sent to Rajshahi Medical College while the injured cops were admitted to Rajshahi Police Lines Hospital. JOURNOS ASSAULTED Two journalists were beaten up allegedly by AL men at a polling centre at Barha union under Nawabganaj upazila of Dhaka. Tapos Kanti Das, senior reporter of the New Age, said he along with photo-journalist Indrajit Ghosh of the newspaper went to Agla Choukighata Janamangal High School polling centre yesterday. When the two entered the centre around 10:40am, some people wearing badges of "boat" symbol intercepted them and asked them why they were seeking votes for "pineapple" symbol. As the two introduced themselves as newsmen and informed that they knew none of the chairman aspirants, the AL supporters assaulted the journalists and drove them out of the polling centre. BGBMAN 'COMMITS SUICIDE' In Jamalpur, a Border Guard Bangladesh member "committed suicide" by shooting himself with his gun in a bathroom of an auditorium in Madarganj upazila town, reports our correspondent. The deceased, 22-year-old Mahmudul Hasan, was a member of 35 BGB Battalion. He came to Madarganj to discharge polls duties, said Rampada Mandal, officer-in-charge of Madarganj Police Station. He went to the bathroom around 4:00pm and shot himself with the firearm. He died on the spot. The reason for the suicide could not be known, the OC added. Police sent the body to Jamalpur General Hospital morgue for an autopsy.



Women of Dewkhoka union in Phulbaria upazila of Mymensingh brave the rain and the ankle-deep mud and stand in line at the Dewkhoka Govt Primary School polling centre to cast their votes in their union parishad polls yesterday. PHOTO: STAR