

WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

STAR WEEKEND

BANKS TO LEND MORE

Two guidelines have been revised to let them disburse more loans

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CANDID MAHATHIR

The Malaysian PM says most of his top officials are corrupt

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Imran Khan claims victory

Seeks to improve ties with US, India; his rivals cry foul over irregularities in Pakistan polls

REUTERS, DAWN

Pakistani cricket legend Imran Khan yesterday declared victory in a divisive general election, and said he was ready to lead the nuclear-armed nation despite a long delay in ballot counting and allegations of vote-rigging from his main opponents.

His success in Wednesday's election is a stunning rise for an anti-corruption crusader who has spent much of his political career on the fringes of Pakistan politics, but now stands on the brink of becoming the country's prime minister.

"God has given me a chance to come to power to implement that ideology which I started 22 years ago," Khan, 65, said in a televised speech from his house near the capital Islamabad.

Supporters of jailed former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who accuse Khan of colluding with the still powerful army, said the vote count was rigged in what it termed an assault on democracy in a country with a history of military rule.

Oxford-educated Khan, in the past a fierce critic of US policy in the region, called for "mutually beneficial" ties with Pakistan's on-off ally the United States, and offered an olive branch to arch-foe India, saying the two nations should resolve their long-simmering dispute over Kashmir.

In a speech peppered with populist pledges, Khan promised to create jobs for the poor and said he would turn the palatial prime minister's official residence in the capital MORE ON PAGE 9 SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A Pakistani man reads morning newspapers at a stall in Islamabad a day after the general election. Pakistan woke to electoral chaos yesterday with the outgoing ruling party denouncing "blatant rigging" in the general election.

PHOTO: AFP

3 more 'drug dealers' killed in 'shootout'

STAR REPORT

Three alleged drug dealers and one "criminal" were killed in separate incidents of "shootouts" with Rab and police in Chittagong and Tangail yesterday.

With the deaths of the "drug dealers", the number of deaths since the anti-narcotics drive began on May 4 has risen to 202.

In the incident in Chittagong, two of the dead "drug dealers" were identified as Jakir Hossain, 31, and Md Dalim Sheikh, 29, both from Morrelganj of Bagerhat district. The identity of the other "dealer" could not yet be confirmed, Rab said.

According to Rab, Jakir was accused in one case involving drugs while Dalim in two.

Mimtanur Rahman, an assistant director of RAB-7's media wing, said the "gunfight" took place at Ambagan Railway Canteen Gate area after a Rab team signalled a private car coming from Comilla to stop. SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BUSINESS

DHL - Star

Business Awards today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 17th edition of the Bangladesh Business Awards will be held in the capital today.

Two companies and two individuals will be felicitated at a ceremony at the Radisson Blu hotel in recognition of their financial success and contribution to the economy.

This year's awards will be handed out in four categories: the Best Financial SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

Special panels to cut case backlog

Law minister tells DCs about govt plan; home boss asks them to work towards free, fair polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With some 3.4 million cases pending with courts across the country, the government plans to form a high-powered committee for their speedy disposal, Law Minister Anisul Huq said yesterday.

The district judge, the deputy commissioner, the superintendent of police (SP) and other top officials of a district will be in the committee, styled District Case Coordination Committee.

"The committee will help investigators produce witnesses and complete investigations in the shortest possible time, thereby expediting the disposal of cases," the minister told journalists after meeting with the DCs on the concluding day of the three-day conference at the secretariat.

There are many reasons behind the huge case backlog; top among them are a lack of government initiatives and absence of witnesses, he added.

The government has already taken some steps, including SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

BNP voices concern over police role

Alleges party men being picked up, harassed

ANWAR ALI, DWOHA CHOWDHURY, SUSANTA GHOSH and M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL

The BNP is now more worried about the role of police than about its archrival Awami League in Monday's three city corporation polls.

Its leaders allege that law enforcers have been picking up, arresting and harassing their activists. Many of them have been advised by the party leaders to stay out of their homes.

The High Court yesterday directed the law enforcers not to harass or arrest the activists, supporters and campaigners of any mayoral candidate until the election was held in Barisal City Corporation. The court gave similar orders before the recent elections in Gazipur and Khulna city corporations.

But yesterday's directive did not relieve the BNP mayoral nominees as they remember how their party activists were picked up from Gazipur before last month's city polls and later produced before courts in other districts, BNP leaders in Rajshahi said.

The bench of Justice Moeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Md Ashraf Kamal passed the order and issued a rule following a writ petition filed by Mujibur Rahman Sarwar, BNP mayoral nominee in Barisal.

The HC issued the rule asking the government to explain in four weeks why the alleged mass arrest of BNP leaders, activists and election campaigners in the Barisal City Corporation area in violation of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division judgment should not be declared illegal. SEE PAGE 17 COL 2



Yaba inside brinjals!

DB arrests man with 2,000 pills hidden in 2 brinjals in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Detectives of Chittagong Metropolitan Police yesterday arrested a man while he was allegedly carrying about 2,000 yaba pills hidden inside two brinjals.

The arrestee, Ali Ahmed, 46, is from Teknaf of Cox's Bazar, said police.

Acting on a tip-off, a DB team frisked Ahmed on the ground floor of Jalsha Shopping Complex in Chittagong city's SEE PAGE 7 COL 3



Road accidents claim 14 lives in 4 districts

STAR REPORT

At least 14 people were killed and six others injured in road accidents in four districts yesterday.

Quoting witnesses and locals, police said two accidents took place in Barguna and Sylhet apparently due to poor visibility amid rain while the two others happened in Lalmonirhat and Chapainawabganj for reckless driving.

In Barguna, seven people, including a child, were killed and three others injured as a bus and a three-wheeler, locally known as Mahindra, collided head-on on Patuakhali-Kuakata road around 11:00am.

The accident took place in Amtali upazila's Manikjuri area, reports our Patuakhali correspondent.

Of the victims, six died on the spot while another at a hospital.

The bus was heading to Patuakhali from Kuakata SEE PAGE 17 COL 2



People gather near the mangled wreckage of a truck and a microbus that collided head-on on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Iilaspur area of Sylhet's Osmaninagar upazila yesterday. The accident left five people dead.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Road crash, then what?

Accidents recur as root causes not addressed

TUHN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Violation of rules by transport operators and drivers remains the main cause of fatalities and injuries on roads across the country.

People responsible for the accidents, especially the drivers, often get away scott free due to a poor government monitoring system and loopholes in the legal system, said road safety campaigners.

Take for example the road crash that took place in Narayanganj's Sonargaon upazila on February 26.

A bus driver was talking over phone and arguing with passengers as he was recklessly driving the vehicle on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway after hitting a rickshaw.

Within a short while, the Chittagong-bound bus from Dhaka hit a parked lorry after overtaking a microbus, killing 10 people and injuring at least 25, all bus passengers.

The body and chassis of the bus were widened changing the specifications provided by the manufacturer. Its fitness certificate and tax token had expired around three years ago.

A report of a probe committee commissioned by Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) revealed the fact.

It is a glaring example why and how the accidents, around 3,000 every year, have been taking place in Bangladesh, claiming thousands of lives and dealing a blow to the economy (Tk 40,000 crore annually).

Causes of most of the accidents are almost similar -- reckless driving, over-speeding, operating unfit vehicles and dangerous overtaking.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 2