

# UPAZILA PARISHAD POLLS 2 AL factions clash over party ticket

30 including 3 cops injured in Lalmonirhat

At least 30 people, including three policemen, were injured when two rival groups of Awami League clashed over the party ticket in the upcoming upazila parishad election in Aditmari upazila yesterday.

The clash broke out between the supporters of Rafiqul Islam, who got the party's nomination to run for the chairman post in the upazila polls, and Imrul Quayes Faruk, who failed to obtain the party ticket, said police.

Rafiqul is the general secretary of the upazila unit AL, while Quayes is the former organising secretary of the unit. Both of them were trying to get the party's nomination for the upazila polls.

The injured were admitted to different hospitals and clinics. Four of them were critically wounded. Maidul Islam Babu, general secretary of Aditmari upazila Chhatra League, and three others were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

The first phase of the five-phase upazila polls will be held on March 10. Election to Aditmari upazila parishad will be held on that day.

Quoting locals, police said Rafiqul's supporters, riding around 50 motorcycles, were going to the Second Teesta

Bridge area to receive him on his return from Dhaka. On their way, they met the followers of Faruk in front of the upazila AL office near Grameen Bank intersection around 10:00am.

Both the groups then were locked in an altercation. At one stage, Faruk's men attacked Rafiqul's followers and vandalised six to eight motorcycles.

Hearing this, several hundred supporters of Rafiqul marched towards the upazila AL office. Equipped with sticks and sharp weapons, both the groups attacked each other in Bhadaï Bazar area around 12:00 noon though police tried to pacify them.

Police fired 20 rubber bullets to disperse the clashing groups.

Business establishments were closed for hours.

NM Nasir Uddin, additional superintendent of Lalmonirhat police, said law enforcers rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control. Additional police had been deployed in the area to avoid further untoward incident.

Talking to journalists, Rafiqul alleged that supporters of Faruk attacked his men and vandalised some motorcycles "without any provocation".

Faruk could not be reached as his mobile phone was switched off.



A US Marine Corps V-22 Osprey on the ground at a French artillery base near al-Qaim in Iraq's western Anbar province opposite Syria's Deir Ezzor region, a few kilometres away from the last scrap of territory held by IS. This picture was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Anti-IS battle rocks Syria

FROM PAGE 16

Up to 600 jihadists could still remain inside, most of them foreigners, according to SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali.

The SDF had handled the last 10 days "patiently" as more than 20,000 civilians were evacuated from the besieged IS enclave, Bali said.

But he added the extremist group's elusive leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was likely not in the pocket.

"We do not think he is in Syria," Bali said, without adding any details about the whereabouts of the man who declared a cross-border IS "caliphate" in 2014.

**DECIMATED 'CALIPHATE'**

On the Iraqi side of the border, French members of the coalition on Saturday stood ready to pour fury on any IS diehards seeking to escape.

Dozens of 155-mm shells were lined up ready to be loaded onto three green-and-black Caesar gun-howitzers with a range of 40 kilometres (25

miles).

Coalition deputy commander Christopher Ghika on Friday said Iraqi forces had sealed the border into their country.

At the height of their rule, the jihadists imposed their brutal interpretation of Islamic law on a territory roughly the size of Britain.

But separate military offensives in both countries, including by the SDF, have since retaken the vast bulk of that "caliphate".

On Saturday, Bali said he expected the battle for the last patch of IS territory to be over in days.

The jihadists however retain a presence in Syria's vast Badia desert, and have claimed a series of deadly attacks by sleeper cells in SDF-held areas.

Since December, more than 37,000 people, mostly wives and children of jihadist fighters, have fled out into SDF-held areas, the Observatory says.

That figure includes some 3,400 suspected jihadists detained by the

SDF, according to the monitor, which relies on sources inside Syria for its information.

The SDF holds hundreds of foreigners accused of belonging to the extremist group in its custody, as well as members of their families.

They have urged Western governments to repatriate their nationals, but politicians abroad have been reluctant.

**US WITHDRAWAL**

Relatives at home fear alleged foreign jihadists may end up facing tough justice in Iraq instead, where Human Rights Watch warned they could face "torture and unfair trials".

The issue of jihadist repatriation has come into sharper focus since the United States in December announced its military withdrawal from Syria.

That announcement has seen the Kurds warn they may struggle to keep jihadists in jail, and pushed them to seek a new ally in the Damascus regime to prevent a long threatened Turkish offensive.

While the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) have been a key US ally in the fight against IS, Ankara views them as "terrorists".

Syria's Kurds have largely stayed out of the country's civil war, instead building semi-autonomous institutions in northern and northeastern regions they control.

Syria's conflict has killed more than 360,000 people and displaced millions since erupting eight years ago after a brutal crackdown of anti-government protests.

Rebels and jihadists seized large parts of the country in the first years of the war.

But President Bashar al-Assad's regime has made a military comeback with Russian military support since 2015, and now holds almost two-thirds of the country.

SDF-held areas make up a third of the whole country, and Damascus has repeatedly said it would eventually see them revert to government control.

## Scientists plan

FROM PAGE 16

several decades away from becoming a reality.

Some scientists rebuffed the research and claim not enough is known about the physical composition of asteroids to guarantee building a space station inside a huge rock would not cause it to fragment and break apart.

Thomas Maindl, from the University of Vienna in Austria, says there are two main benefits to the plan; it would allow the space station to avoid damage from radiation as well as enabling mining to take place.

"If we find an asteroid that's stable enough, we might not need these aluminium walls or anything, you might just be able to use the entire asteroid as a space station," Dr Maindl told NewScientist.

Visualisations of the potential project have not been created and it may look like anything from a simple cavern to a complex spacecraft similar to the International Space Station.

An asteroid would need to be made of solid stone and spin one to three times a minute to provide enough gravity for the project to be successful.

If this was possible, it would create

gravity similar to that of the Martian surface with approximately 38 percent of the gravity on Earth.

This, they say, would be sufficient to allow machinery to stay upright and function adequately.

Mining on the surface of most asteroids is impossible as the gravity created by the rocks renders hammers and other tools useless.

Embedding the operation inside the asteroid would enable the rapid rotation of the tumbling rock to create simulated gravity - making mining a viable option.

Details of its physical properties would need to be known beyond the limited information available for many asteroids.

"We do not know physical characteristics of the vast majority of objects in this size range," says Peter Vereš at the International Astronomical Union's Minor Planet Center.

Digging out the innards of the asteroid with complex machinery would also be likely to make the asteroid unstable and fragment.

"My gut feeling is that it will be at least 20 years before any asteroid mining happens, let alone something like this," says Dr Maindl.

## Three

FROM PAGE 16

picked up the girl from her home, "gang-raped" her in a nearby garden, and escaped the scene on Wednesday.

After the incident came to SP Md Hasanuzzaman's notice, he visited the spot on Saturday and directed the law enforcers to take actions.

The victim's father lodged a case accusing the three with Kaliganj Police Station around 9:00pm on the same day.

But the victim's father alleged that he received death threats.

"I have been receiving threats since the incident has happened. One of the rapists -- Sayed -- threatened me with death over phone if I disclose the matter to anybody," he said.

The girl was sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for tests, OC Younus said.

## No headway

FROM PAGE 16

Sagar Sarowar, told The Daily Star.

"The law enforcement agencies have been able to deal with other sensational incidents. Why are they failing in this case? It seems to me that I will not see the killers brought to book before my death," the 67-year-old woman said.

Meherun Runi, senior reporter of ATN Bangla, and her husband Sagar, news editor of Maasranga TV, were murdered on February 11, 2012.

The couple's only child Mahir Sarowar Megh, who was only five at the time, was in the apartment when his parents were murdered.

Immediately after the incident, then home minister Sahara Khatun said the killers would be arrested in 48 hours. Police officials also claimed to have made "significant progress" in the investigation at the time.

The murder triggered widespread outrage in the journalist community.

Different courts have expressed dissatisfaction over the investigation on several occasions.

The case is being investigated by Rab now, said Maj Hussain Roisul Azam Moni, deputy director of Rab's media wing.

## 3 college boys

FROM PAGE 16

three people, only one helmet was found on the spot, he added.

Police seized the bus and detained its driver after the accident. A case was filed with Bason Police Station in this connection.

The bodies were handed over to family members after conducting autopsies at Gazipur Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital.

## ACC to charge

FROM PAGE 16

Months after the floods, ACC sued that the accused, being well aware of the timing of flash floods, had not constructed the dams at the right time and misappropriated Tk 8.14 crore of government funds.

"Their negligence and embezzlement had triggered the floods that caused immense loss and suffering to the people of this region," it added.

The ACC will soon submit the charge sheet before court, sources said.

Between March and April of 2017, thousands of people were affected by the devastating floods in the haor areas of Sunamganj, Netrakona, Sylhet, Moulvibazar and Kishoreganj with nearly three lakh people requiring immediate relief from the government and NGOs.

As embankments got damaged badly, more than two lakh hectares of agricultural land were submerged, causing a loss of nearly a million tonnes of Boro crops.

## 1MDB SCANDAL

# Najib Razak to go on trial

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's toppled leader Najib Razak will go on trial this week over an extraordinary financial scandal that contributed to the downfall of his long-ruling coalition and reverberated around the world.

The former prime minister and his cronies are accused of stealing \$4.5 billion from Malaysian sovereign wealth fund 1MDB in a mind-boggling fraud that stretched from Switzerland to the Seychelles.

The money was purportedly used to fund a global shopping spree -- a \$250-million super-yacht, high-end real estate, and Monet and Van Gogh artworks were among the items allegedly bought with cash plundered from public coffers.

The scandal ensnared celebrities, with the fraud's suspected mastermind seen partying with Leonardo DiCaprio and Paris Hilton, while the new Malaysian government has accused Wall Street titan Goldman Sachs of stealing billions during its work with 1MDB.

Public revulsion at the graft allegations played a large part in the election defeat of Najib -- who set up the fund -- and a coalition that had ruled Malaysia uninterrupted since independence from Britain in 1957.

Since his shock poll loss in May, the 65-year-old has been arrested and hit

with 42 charges linked to the scandal. He has vehemently denied any wrongdoing.

Far from keeping quiet, the aristocratic ex-leader has mounted a publicity blitz, seeking to present himself as a man of the people and constantly hurling jibes at the new government.

This week's trial, starting Tuesday, centres on allegations that 42 million ringgit (\$10.3 million) was transferred from SRC International, a former 1MDB unit, into Najib's personal bank accounts.

The case involves three counts of money-laundering, three of criminal breach of trust -- where someone is accused of dishonestly using something entrusted to them -- and one of abuse of power. Najib has pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

It is just one of several trials Najib is expected to face over 1MDB and involves a fraction of the total purportedly stolen from the fund, and the \$681 million that allegedly ended up in his personal accounts.

But the start of the first trial is nevertheless a key moment, and may relieve pressure on the new government following criticism that it has been slow to act over 1MDB.

"It's an important moment, albeit a very delayed one," said Cynthia Gabriel, who was a member of a government committee set up to investigate the scandal.

## Ex-principal

FROM PAGE 1

of Central Command Council of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad, was not at the flat on the 15th floor of Sukonnya Tower at the time.

Her two sons do not reside in the flat. Gama told police that he returned home around 6:00pm and found Mahfuza lying face down on a bed with valuables scattered all over the room.

There were three domestic helps in the house. Of them, Reshma and Shopna have been missing from the flat, said Maruf Hossain Sarder, deputy commissioner (Ramna) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

A third help, an elderly woman, was detained for questioning, he told The Daily Star.

"We primarily suspect it's a murder. The cause of her death will be known after the post-mortem."

Police suspect that the missing helps, who had been working there for one and a half months, have killed her and fled with the valuables.

However, officers are yet to ascertain what valuables are missing from the flat.

The body will be sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

Meanwhile, a 35-year-old woman was stabbed to death and another woman injured at a flat in the capital's Jatrabari yesterday evening.

Salma was a resident of a flat on the third floor of a five-storey building in Kutubkhali area, said Kazi Wazed Ali, officer-in-charge of Jatrabari Police Station.

Her sister-in-law Rabeya was also stabbed, he said.

## SSC timetable

FROM PAGE 16

10,64,892 girls -- from 28,682 institutions registered for the exams.

The four-day Biswa Ijtema, a congregation of Muslims, will start on February 15 on the bank of the Turag river in Tongi.

## PM to visit

FROM PAGE 2

In the UAE, the PM will also pay a bilateral visit and hold meetings with top UAE leaders, including Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE's Armed Forces Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed.

During the meetings, both the sides are expected to discuss a wide range of issues, including fight against terrorism, peace and security in the Middle East, cooperation with each other to expand the scope of partnership in the fields of trade, business and investment in infrastructure.

Hasina will return home on February 20.

## PM for master plan

FROM PAGE 1

need to do such work," she said while visiting the ministry at the secretariat.

"If we go ahead formulating master plans for grassroots levels as well, we'll be able to gain faster development."

The PM directed the ministry officials to perform their duties properly so that Bangladesh can gain further success in poverty alleviation. "Our country will march forward quickly when we'll get rid of poverty."

Mentioning that Bangladesh is a very densely populated country, Hasina said it was a big challenge to fulfil all the demands of so many people living in a small area. "But we'll have to do that."

Bangladesh has now graduated to a developing country from the group of least developed countries as her government has been able to complete a lot of development work in the last 10 years after coming to power in 2009, she said.

"Now, it's our job to build Bangladesh as a developed country. To achieve this goal, all our plans will have to be taken focusing on fulfillment of basic needs of grassroots people and improvement of their living standard. If we can do this, the entire country will be developed gradually."

Describing the LGRD and cooperative ministry as the most important ministry to accomplish the goal, she said it receives the highest allocation from the national budget.

Alongside ensuring safe drinking water, sanitation and development of rural roads for the rural people, the ministry has also many tasks, including ensuring drainage and waste management and stopping environment pollution in the urban areas, the PM said.

Hasina asked the ministry officials to finish work speedily in a planned and proper way for the country's development.

She said the government was considering giving responsibility to the district administrations gradually to prepare their own budget focusing on

local expectations and demands, which would be reflected in the national budget so that every penny of the public money is utilised in the development of the people.

Noting that her government is giving much importance to strengthening the local government, the PM said the government's future plan was to decentralise the government gradually to make the local government bodies stronger so that those could contribute largely to the development in their areas.

The "one house, one farm" project has been initiated in order that every fallow land is cultivated, and rural people sell their produces under a cooperatives system to help them find a source of income, Hasina added.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Md Tajul Islam delivered the welcome speech, while State Minister Swapan Bhattacharya, PM's Principal Secretary Nojibur Rahman, Local Government Division Senior Secretary SM Ghulam Farooque and other high officials of the ministry and the Prime Minister's Office were present.

## A school

FROM PAGE 16

seem enthusiastic," said Abdul Zabbar, president of the school governing body.

Abu Hena, a farmer in the village, said his eight-year-old son Musabbir studies in class-III. "He happily goes to school every day with his friends."

Rajon Ali, a student of class-IV, said, "We are learning on large screens and we are seeing many new things every day that we never saw before."

Head teacher Jannatul Ferdous said, "Every day the people from different villages visit the school and show interest in enrolling their children."

Washimul Bari is elated by the response of locals. "This is just the beginning," he said, hoping that the school would do even better in future.

The entire school is under CCTV surveillance.