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No stone left unturned to sway polls

Oikyafront leaders claim in 'mass hearing' over the Dec 30 election; cite ghost cases, police harassment, arrest without warrant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League used party men, police and administration officials to influence the 11th parliamentary polls, BNP-led Jatiya Oikyafront leaders said yesterday at a "mass hearing".

The alliance leaders said ghost cases were filed against its activists and they were harassed and detained without warrants.

"There was no voting on December 30 and so the government formed from it is not valid," said Maj Gen (ret) AMSA Amin, who had run with Dr Kamal Hossain-led Gonoforum ticket from Kurigram-2.

The Oikyafront arranged the "mass hearing" on "so-called parliamentary election" at the Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium. A number of the alliance candidates had filed election petitions with the High Court challenging the December 30 polls results.

At least 41 candidates testified during the over seven-hour-long session of the "mass hearing" before a panel that included Dr Kamal and former Dhaka University vice-chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed.

Leaders of the BNP and its political allies said they, by taking part in the December 30 polls, had "unmasked the ruling party". Top BNP leaders, including its Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Vice-Chairman Abdullah Al Noman and Standing Committee Member Abdul Moyeen Khan attended the programme.

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Language movement veterans, from right, Kamal Lohani and Rawshan Ara Bachchu impart first lessons to children at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday. Karak Natya Sampradaya organised the programme marking the Language Martyrs' Day.

PHOTO: PABIR DAS

Myanmar man among 6 killed in 'shootouts'

The Myanmar citizen was accused in a murder case

STAR REPORT

A murder suspect, an alleged robber and four alleged drug peddlers were killed in separate "gunfights" with law enforcers and BGB men in five districts yesterday.

The dead are Hazrat Ali of Dhaka; Bellal Hossain, 25, of Laxmipur; Al-Amin, 38, Cumilla; Abdur Rashid, 50, of Mymensingh; Masud Rana 35, of Khulna; and Nurul Alam, 34, of Myanmar.

Maj Mehedi Hasan, company commander of Cox's Bazar Rab, said the Myanmar citizen Nurul was accused in a case filed over the murder of Ansar barrack commander Ali Hossain in Teknaf's Nayapara Shalban Rohingya camp.

A group of criminals murdered Ali on May 13, 2016 and a looted two MSGs, five Chinese rifles, four shotguns and 670 bullets, Mehedi said, adding Nurul was one of the suspects in the case and had been untraceable since then.

Acting on a tip-off, BGB raided Damdamia area of the district where Nurul was killed in a "gunfight", Mehedi added.

SEE PAGE 12 COL 5

Noakhali mourns

Dozens of the fire victims from different villages of the district

STAR REPORT

A pall of gloom has descended on many villages of Noakhali as 13 of the 67 victims in Chawkbazar fire already identified hailed from the district.

Locals suspected as many as 34 people of the district's Sonaimuri, Begunganj and Kompaniganj upazilas were killed in the inferno.

The victims' relatives started gathering at local police stations after being informed about the fire. Many of them informed police about their relatives who have been missing since the incident happened.

Tanmay Das, deputy

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Pak PM approves military response

Islamabad authorises decisive reply if attacked; Indian SC orders protection for Kashmiris

AGENCIES

The Pakistani government has authorised its military to "respond decisively and comprehensively to any aggression or misadventure" by neighbouring India, as tensions soar between the nuclear-armed rivals.

India has vowed a "jaw-breaking response" to a suicide bombing in the disputed Kashmir region last week that killed 40 Indian soldiers - the worst such attack since the start of an armed rebellion in 1989.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan announced the order in a government statement released after a meeting of his National Security Committee on Thursday.

It said Pakistan was "not involved in any way, means or form" in the attack which it said was "conceived, planned and executed



indigenously".

In the statement, Pakistan reiterated its offer to help investigate the attack and to take action against anyone found to be using the Pakistani soil for attacks on India.

Pakistan also offered to hold a "dialogue" with India on all issues, including terrorism.

Earlier, it had demanded India provide evidence for its claims that it supports Kashmiri rebel groups.

Pakistan's military yesterday warned India against any "misadventure", saying it was capable of responding to any threats.

"We hope you will not mess up with us," military spokesman Major General Asif Ghafoor told a press briefing in the garrison town of Rawalpindi, the second strong message Pakistan has sent to New Delhi in as many days.

SEE PAGE 12 COL 5

Ancestor to the king of dinosaurs found



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The tyrannosaur group of dinosaurs contains some of our planet's most successful carnivorous land animals of all time. "Tyrannosaur" directly translates as "tyrant lizards" and the largest of their number - the Tyrannosaurus rex - evolved to measure up to 12.3m (40ft) in length.

But things were not always so easy for these apex predators. A newly discovered relative of the tyrant king reveals a much smaller species, which has helped paleontologists understand the development of the tyrannosaur group and narrowed a 70 million-year gap in the fossil record.

SEE PAGE 12 COL 5

Bootleg liquor kills 41 Indian tea workers

45 hospitalised

REUTERS, Guwahati

At least 41 Indian tea plantation workers have died from drinking toxic bootleg liquor after receiving their weekly wages, and 20 are critically ill in hospital, a government minister said yesterday.

The deaths come less than two weeks after more than 100 people died after drinking tainted alcohol in northern India.

At least seven women were among the dead at the plantation in the northeastern state of Assam, 310 km from the state capital, Guwahati.

SEE PAGE 12 COL 6



A man collects remnants of shanties in the city's Bhasantek area yesterday, three days after the National Housing Authority in an eviction drive knocked down dwellings at Bhasantek slum.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Supply of food under threat

Warns UN report citing drop in global biodiversity

CNN ONLINE

A drop in global biodiversity is putting our ability to produce food at risk, a new United Nations report warns.

According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, biodiversity in food and agriculture "is indispensable to food security and sustainable development."

However, in recent years biodiversity at the genetic, species and ecosystem levels have all been in decline, reducing our overall food and agriculture systems' ability to respond to shocks and stresses such as climate change.

"Many key components of biodiversity for food and agriculture at genetic, species and ecosystem levels are in decline," the report said. "The proportion of livestock breeds at risk of extinction is increasing. Overall, the diversity of crops present in farmers' fields has declined and threats to crop diversity are increasing."

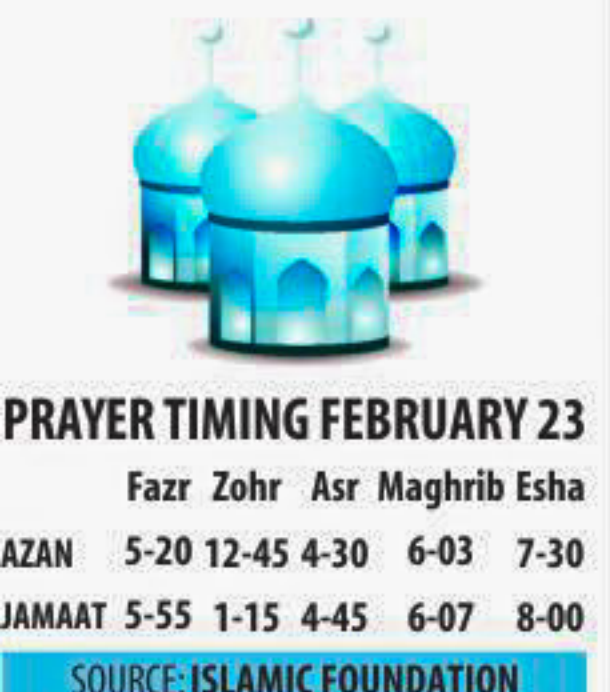
At the species level, many of those serving vital functions such as pollination or pest management are in decline "as a consequence of the destruction and degradation of habitats, overexploitation, pollution and other threats."

A report out earlier this month in the journal Biological Conservation warned more than 40% of insect species could become extinct in the next few decades -- an event it said could have "catastrophic" effects on the planet.

Even larger animals are at risk, with more than 25% of local livestock breeds at risk of extinction. Only 7% are deemed to be at no risk whatsoever, with the future for most other livestock breeds unclear.

The drop in biodiversity is being caused by a number of major global trends, the report said, including climate change, international markets and demography.

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 23

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-20 12-45 4-30 6-03 7-30

JAMAAT 5-55 1-15 4-45 6-07 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION