



Staff members take down the United Kingdom's flag from outside the European Parliament building in Brussels on Brexit Day, January 31, 2020. Britain leaves the European Union at 2300 GMT on January 31, 2020, 43 months after the country voted in a June 2016 referendum to leave the block. The withdrawal from the union ends more than four decades of economic, political and legal integration with its closest neighbours. PHOTO: AFP

## Man stabbed to death in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was stabbed to death in the capital's Mohammadpur area last night.

The dead is Suman Sikder, 25. No details about him could be known as of filing this report at 1:00am today.

Md Wahiduzzaman, additional deputy commissioner of Tejgaon division of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, confirmed the matter to The Daily Star.

"We would investigate if there was any political motive behind the murder," he said.

Morgue sources said police brought the dead body with stab injuries around midnight.

## Poland inks \$4.6b deal for US fighter jets

AFP, Warsaw

Poland on Friday finalised an agreement to buy dozens of F-35 fighter jets from the US in a multi-billion dollar deal aimed at revamping its air force and further strengthening close ties with Washington.

The United States in September approved the \$4.6-billion (4.2-million-euro) contract to deliver a total of 32 aircraft to NATO ally Poland.

The first batch is expected to be delivered within four years and will replace old Soviet models.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo praised Poland's "smart decision" to buy what he termed the "world's most advanced fighter aircraft," in a Twitter post on Friday, adding this would "further our partnership and bolster its (Poland's) collective & self defence."

Poland's air force already has around 50 US F-16 fighter jets.

The agreement signed by Polish Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak and US ambassador to Warsaw Georgette Mosbacher includes pilot training, flight simulators and logistical support.

"This is an important day for Polish military aviation, Poland's security and also the security of our part of Europe," Polish President Andrzej Duda said at the ceremony.

The liberal opposition has slammed the purchase, claiming the fighter jets are too expensive and unsuitable for Poland's military and critics say the army is not able to make full use of the capabilities of the state-of-the-art aircraft.

The opposition has also denounced the right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) government for choosing the F-35 without a call for tenders and for agreeing to a deal without an industrial compensation programme.

Warsaw, which considers Washington its staunchest ally, has been investing in the relationship in the hopes of securing an expanded US troop presence in Poland.

Last year Poland finalised a deal to buy American mobile rocket launchers worth \$414 million, while in 2018 it signed a \$4.75 billion contract for a US-made Patriot anti-missile system.

## AL says 'better than ever'

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the way it was held," he said, adding that the election was not free and fair at all.

BNP yesterday also submitted a written complaint to the Election Commission over irregularities centring the polls.

A BNP delegation led by the party's standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury handed over the complaint to the commission.

**PEOPLE HAVE NO FAITH IN ELECTION SYSTEM: DR KAMAL**

After casting his vote at Viqarunnisa Noon School and College yesterday morning, Gonoforum President and Jatiya Oikya Front Convener Dr Kamal Hossain expressed his dissatisfaction over the low number of voters, and hassles of casting votes through EVM.

Talking to reporters there, he said the low turnout shows that voters have no confidence in the election system.

**ONLY ONE PARTY ON THE FIELD: EC MAHBUB TALUKDAR**

Election Commissioner Mahbub

Talukdar yesterday in a statement said the no party except for one was seen on the voting field.

"The reason behind other parties' absence in the voting filed is unknown to me," he said, adding that he was shocked at the violation of the electoral code of conduct after the election schedule was declared.

There is no point of having a code of conduct if no action is taken against its violations, he said in the statement.

He said, "I visited 12 polling centers between 10am to 2pm. I did not find any agent of any other mayor candidates other than those of the ruling party-nominated mayor candidates at any of these 12 centres. Around 10 percent votes were cast since 8am to 1:30pm at these polling centres".

Mahbub Talukdar, however, said the election was very peaceful, as no clash or bloodshed other than some isolated incidents took place.

The biggest achievement is that 100 percent votes were not cast in

the election, and there was not scope to seal ballot boxes the night before election day -- due to the use of EVM in this election, he said.

**GOVT HAS FAILED TO HOLD PARTICIPATORY POLLS: CPB** Besides, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Mujahidul Islam Selim and its General Secretary Mohammad Shah Alam yesterday said in a statement that the Election Commission and the government have completely failed to hold a participatory election of people in Dhaka city.

"Most people could not get to polling centres and could not cast their votes, as the ruling political party has created panic among the people in various ways. City dwellers have witnessed another new farce staged in the name of voting," they said.

In their statement, the CPB leaders said the ruling party men have created a fearful environment at most of the polling centres, and frightened people so that they lost their enthusiasm to go to polling centres.

## Diplomats observe

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Bangladesh said they were in serious confusion until the last moment if they would include their Bangladeshi employees in the election observer teams.

"There was a meeting today [yesterday] morning and it was decided that local staffers would not be kept with the observer teams," the official told The Daily Star.

"There was dissatisfaction over the issue, but they [diplomats] did not express it," he said, wishing anonymity.

The EC approved the names of 74 officials -- 46 foreigners and 28 Bangladeshis -- from 10 foreign missions in Dhaka for inclusion in foreign observer teams.

The officials are from missions of the US, the UK, the European Union, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Japan, Denmark, Norway, Australia, and Canada.

On Thursday, the foreign ministry wrote to the missions in Dhaka, saying it would be highly appreciated if they do not include their local employees, who are Bangladeshis, in teams of

foreign observers.

The ministry said it was a violation of electoral code of conduct to include the local employees in the international observer teams.

As the confusion ran wild, Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda on Friday evening said Bangladeshis working at foreign missions in Dhaka and international organisations would be able to work as local observers, not as foreign observers, in the elections to Dhaka south and north city corporations.

## 312 return from virus-hit Wuhan

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Earlier on Friday, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said a total of 361 Bangladeshis would be flown back as part of a voluntary evacuation.

Foreign ministry officials, however, said 49 Bangladeshis did not want to return.

Later in the evening, the health minister told journalists that they had managed to complete every arrangement inside the camp.

"We have served necessary things for the returnees. Our team would solve all other problems," the minister said.

**SUSPECTED CASES ROSE TO 10** With the eight admitted to hospitals yesterday, the number of suspected case of novel coronavirus infection has

rose to 10, according to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

On Thursday, a Chinese national was admitted to a hospital with fever while a Bangladeshi software engineer with symptom of fever was sent to Kurmitola General Hospital after he returned from China.

The IEDCR has collected samples from the new eight suspected returnees for test yesterday.

ASM Alamgir, principal scientific officer of IEDCR, told The Daily Star, "We would take two to three days to know the test result."

The IEDCR has the only coronavirus test facility in the country.

Asked whether it was enough, Alamgir said when such a pandemic

case was found in 100 to 200 cases, it meant transmission to locality. In such a situation, there would be no need to test every case.

He urged relatives of the returnees to keep patience and not to gather in front of the camp.

We would brief about their health status daily in a particular time, he added.

Besides Kurmitola General Hospital and CMH Dhaka, the authorities have designated five beds to each government hospital across the country.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths from the coronavirus epidemic in China rose to 259 with 137 proven cases of transmission in around two dozen countries.

around 150 students, including 74 females, living in the hostel, said its superintendent.

The superintendent said they had to allow such political programmes in face of pressure from ruling party leaders.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Minister Bir Bahadur U Shwe Sing, among others, was present at the programme on Friday, said Mostafa Jamal, vice president of the AL in Lama upazila.

"It is unfortunate that an unexpected incident has happened there," he said.

## 'I was scared of Harvey'

Weinstein accuser tells court relationship was based on fear

AFP, New York

An actress accusing disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein of rape told a court Friday she had only stayed in contact with him out of fear.

Jessica Mann said she had been naive when she first met Weinstein and then so scared of him that she would agree to massage him, fake an orgasm or stay in contact with him even after he allegedly raped her.

Dozens of women have accused Weinstein of sexual abuse but only the cases of Mann and fellow actress Mimi Haley have led to criminal charges in a New York court.

Three other women -- Annabella Sciorra, Dawn Dunning and Tarale Wulff -- have testified that Weinstein sexually assaulted them, but their cases are not the subject of the trial, which was sitting for the eighth day of testimony.

Weinstein denies the predatory assault charges and maintains that all his relationships were consensual.

Mann, 34, grew up on a farm in Washington state and was on the streets for a while before becoming an actress. She was the only Weinstein accuser who had not heard of him before they met, seven years ago.

She began weeping Friday even before prosecutor Joan Illuzzi-Orbon's questioning started and,

at times, was so emotional she had trouble speaking.

She described her first encounters with the producer as a mixture of seduction, humiliation and manipulation.

Then, in a hotel in Los Angeles, she said she agreed to give him a massage. "He'd make me feel stupid, saying it was not a big deal," she said.

Later, when she was with one of Weinstein's assistants, he called her into a room and tried to kiss her. She said she tried to resist but he succeeded in performing oral sex on her.

"I started to fake an orgasm to get out of it," she said, adding that she escaped as soon as she could.

"I was confused about it," she said when asked about her later relations with Weinstein.

"I made the decision to be in a relationship with him," she added. "It was extremely degrading."

Several weeks later, in March 2013, when she was already in a relationship with another man, Weinstein ambushed her in a Manhattan hotel, forced her into a room and raped her, she said.

She did not tell anyone about the encounter.

"I was scared of Harvey," she told the court. "I was pretty concerned about protecting the actor I was dating."

## As we saw

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[AL men] have threatened to drive us from here if we do so," Al Amin, a BNP activist, told The Daily Star there. "They've already broken our desk on Nurjahan Road."

For the AL men, the scenario was totally different.

There was a good number of party supporters, mostly youths, in front of each polling station. They were wearing badges with photos of "boat", the party's electoral symbol.

With banners of AL candidates, rickshaws and some motorised vehicles were seen transporting people.

Supporters and followers of the mayor and councillor candidates were also seen eating snacks, and even playing cricket outside polling centres at places.

The situation inside the centres, however, was not so lively. Long queues of voters -- a common sight on election day -- was hardly seen.

Inside some centres, AL men made fake queues of voters, to pretend to have a higher number of voters.

At the Dhaka University Laboratory School polling centre, supporters of Fazle Noor Taposh, AL mayor candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), formed one such queue, one of these correspondents saw first-hand.

At Adarsha High School centre in Mirpur-10, supporters of Atiqul Islam, the party's mayor candidate for the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), also made a fake queue after locking the centre's main gate. This was seen by another correspondent who was present there.

At Cherry Grammar School centre in Kafur's Ibrahimpur, many voters expressed their frustration as they had to wait long to go in.

Talking to The Daily Star, they said although the centre was mostly empty, voters were not being allowed in. "One or two voters could go inside in every 10 minutes," one of them said.

Voters at many other centres alleged they could not cast their votes.

A man in his late 60s said he was obstructed by ruling party men from voting for a candidate of his choice. This centre was on Green Road.

**BNP AGENTS' THIN PRESENCE**

The Daily Star correspondents found agents from the BNP at only 20 of the 207 centres. The number of the agents was also very low.

There were a few agents of Islami Andolan Bangladesh.

But agents of the AL candidates were everywhere.

There were some complaints that agents from the ruling party forced agents from the BNP and other parties out of many centres.

One of these correspondents saw 10 polling agents of Tabitha Awal, BNP's mayor candidate for the DNCC, around 8:10am at a centre at MDC Model Institute at Mirpur's Pallabi.

When a reporter of this newspaper went there again around 2:00pm, there were only two of the agents left.

"We were two female and eight male polling agents. But the males were driven out around 8:30am," said Liton Hawlader, one of the male polling agents.

Around 2:30pm, The Daily Star found a polling agent of Tabitha at Motherland International School centre at Shewrapara in Mirpur.

The agent, named Mofidul, said, "Four of our men were supposed to come to this centre. But three did not show up for reasons unknown to me."

Contacted after the vote count, Mofidul said he was at the centre until the end and the candidate who hired him won at the centre.

Visiting 24 centres in Rampura,

Badda and Gulshan areas, these correspondents found no agents of BNP candidates at 13 centres.

Asked about the absence of the agents, Touhidul Haq, presiding officer of a centre at Rampura's Ideal School and College, said, "I don't know why they've left."

Wishing not to be named, some of the assistant presiding officers there said polling agents of BNP candidates were driven out.

**'UNWANTED' AID**

In the absence of polling agents from the BNP, those from the AL went inside many secret voting rooms, in the name of helping voters with EVMs.

The polling agents "helped" voters in several ways. Some agents snuck inside the curtain and told voters which polling symbol to vote for. Pretending to teach how to vote using the machine, some even pressed the buttons themselves.

Some were even standing inside the secret rooms to welcome voters.

**LOW TURNOUT OF YOUNG VOTERS**

The turnout of young voters appeared to be low yesterday.

Of the roughly 54 lakh voters, 48 percent were aged between 19 and 36 years. A further classification showed that nearly one-fourth of total voters were aged between 19 and 23 years, according to Election Commission officials.

"Turnout of young voters was too low to mention," said one of The Daily Star correspondents who visited seven centres in Uttara area under the DNCC.

Our correspondents, who visited nine centres in Dhanmondi, Mirpur, Mohammadpur Lalbagh, Nawabganj, and Azampur areas, also reported a low turnout of young voters.

There were, however, a huge presence of youths outside polling centres. Almost all of them were supporting ruling party candidates.

**FOOD DISTRIBUTED BY AL MEN**

While visiting Kalachadpur Government School and College, which housed six centres, around 2:00pm, The Daily Star correspondents saw some people, wearing AL badges, distributing water and food among polling agents and polling officials.

Polling officials were not supposed to take them.

Some voters expressed surprise at such distribution of food.

"This doesn't send a good message to people. It proves all the centres are dominated by Awami League men who are going in and out the booths at will."

Polling officials refused to make comment on the matter.

## Fourth death as protests grow in Chile

AFP, Santiago

A man died of carbon monoxide poisoning after a supermarket was torched in Chile's capital Friday, and another succumbed to injuries sustained in clashes with police, bringing the death toll in a new wave of unrest to four.

Protests that flared up in October -- initially over a rise in metro fares -- had appeared to have calmed down during the summer holidays in Chile.

But there has been a spike in violent protests this week.

A mob looted and then set fire to the supermarket in southern Santiago in the early hours of Friday.

When firefighters arrived they found a dead man aged 30 to 40 and two other people suffering from signs of asphyxiation.