



Congress dethrones BJP in Karnataka

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A resurgent Congress, India's main opposition, yesterday swept back to power in the southern state of Karnataka, dethroning the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party from its only southern perch in a boost to the grand old party ahead of the next general elections due early next year.

As the counting of votes of the May 10 legislative assembly elections nears the end, Congress secured a majority in the 224-member House by crossing the halfway mark of 113.

According to the Election Commission of India data, Congress has got 114 seats and is poised to form a government on its own under India's first-past-the-post system. Congress also led in 22 other seats.

On the other hand, BJP has bagged 50 seats and was ahead in 14 other seats.

Regional outfit Janata Dal (Secular) headed by former Indian prime minister H D Deve Gowda, was leading in 20 seats.

BJP state leader BS Yediyurappa -- a former chief minister -- conceded defeat.

"Victory and defeat aren't new to BJP," he told reporters. "We will introspect about the party's setback. I respectfully accept this verdict."

Celebrations broke out outside Congress headquarters in New Delhi and its state offices in different parts of India, including Karnataka's capital city Bengaluru, India's IT city, where party workers set off crackers and danced to drumbeats.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi termed his party's performance in the Karnataka assembly polls as "a victory of love over hate and claimed this will be replicated in other states."



Defying a High Court order, a diesel-run three-wheeler, popularly known as nosimon, plying on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway. Such three-wheelers slow down vehicles on the highways and contribute to accidents. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Tomorrow's SSC exams postponed in 6 boards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday postponed Secondary School Certificate and equivalent exams slated for tomorrow (May 15) under six education boards due to Cyclone Mocha.

Prof Tapan Kumar Sarkar, chief of the inter-education board coordination committee, said exams under the Chattogram, Cumilla, Barishal, Jashore, technical and madrasa education boards have been postponed.

On Friday, the authorities postponed the exams that were to be held today (May 14) under five education boards -- Chattogram, Cumilla, Barishal, technical, and madrasa -- for the cyclone.

"Today [yesterday] we decided that exams under Jashore education board for May 14 [today] will also be postponed," said Tapan, also chairman of Dhaka education board.

He added that new dates for the exams would be announced later.

"As each board has separate

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Let people decide who should go

Quader tells the BNP



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP should participate in the national election and let the voter decide which party needs a safe exit, said Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday.

"They [the BNP] told us to choose the safe exit by dissolving parliament and handing the power over to a caretaker government. Why? Because they want a caretaker government like that of 2001 and to hold a one-sided election," Quader said.

He was referring to BNP leaders' recent comments that the ruling AL should pick a safe exit.

On diplomats' concerns over the next election, Quader said: "Foreigners are our friends. They can give advice, but they cannot put someone in power, the people can."

About Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visits to the US, the UK and Japan, he said: "She did not go to any country [to lobby] for power or to make complaints. She went on the invitation of those countries to make the [Bangladesh] economy more stable."

The road transport and bridges minister was addressing a "peace rally" near Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard in Mirpur. The Dhaka City (north) AL organised the event aimed at counteracting the BNP's protest rally in Naya Paltan.

The AL has been holding events that coincide with the BNP programmes since December 10.

Nationwide BNP rallies start from May 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has announced countrywide rallies from May 19 to press home its 10-point demand, including holding the next polls under a non-party neutral caretaker government and to protest against the arrest and harassment of party leaders and activists in "false cases".

The programmes will start from Friday and in four phases it will be completed in all the 81 organisational districts of the party.

Announcing the programmes, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said that no election will be allowed under the Awami League government and if the demand of caretaker government is not accepted the election will be resisted.

Dhaka North and South city units of the party organised a protest rally in front of the party's Nayapaltan headquarters from where Fakhrul came up with the fresh programmes.

He said their rallies are also meant for registering the party's protest against the filing of "ghost" cases against opposition leaders and activists, soaring prices of essentials, frequent power cuts and the all-pervasive corruption by the Awami

League government.

Thousands of leaders and activists of BNP and its associate bodies participated in the rally organised by the party's Dhaka south and north units in front of its Nayapaltan central office.

On May 19, the rallies are scheduled in 28 districts and cities including Dhaka Metropolitan North, on May 20 in 21 districts and cities including Dhaka Metropolitan South, on May 26 in 19 districts including Dhaka Metropolitan North and on May 27 in 15 districts and metropolitan areas including Dhaka Metropolitan South.

Mirza Fakhrul said that their protest will be held, calling for the resignation of the government, with the slogan "one point demand".

He emphasised that the movement aims to establish democracy and bring down the government through peaceful means.

Asking the government to step down from office immediately, the BNP leader said it is established that free and fair elections would not be held under the incumbent government.

Protesting the case filed against the party founder Ziaur Rahman, Fakhrul said the initiative was taken to divert the movement.



BUSINESS

Second in S Asia in bad loan ratio

Bangladesh's banking sector has the second-highest ratio of non-performing loans (NPL) among the countries in South Asia as lenders continue to face challenges emanating from scams, a lack of corporate governance and borrowers' reluctance to make instalments regularly, the World Bank said.

Only Sri Lanka is ahead of Bangladesh.

"Asset quality has deteriorated in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka," it said in a report recently.

"In Bangladesh, the NPL ratio has risen due to higher import costs, poor payment discipline of borrowers, and weak regulatory enforcement."

STORY ON BI

Humans inherited nose shape from Neanderthals

Study suggests

INDEPENDENT ONLINE

The shape of our noses may be determined by a genetic material inherited from Neanderthals, new research suggests.

A new study led by UCL researchers found that a particular gene, which leads to a taller nose (from top to bottom), may have been the product of natural selection as ancient humans adapted to colder climates after leaving Africa.



Co-corresponding author Dr Kaustubh Adhikari, UCL Genetics, Evolution & Environment and The Open University, said: "In the last 15 years, since the Neanderthal genome has been sequenced, we have been able to learn that our own ancestors apparently interbred with Neanderthals, leaving us with little bits of their DNA."

"Here, we find that some DNA inherited from Neanderthals influences the shape of our faces."

"This could have been helpful to our ancestors, as it has been passed down for thousands of generations."

TCB hikes sugar price

It'll sell for Tk 70 a kg from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State-owned Trading Corporation of Bangladesh will start selling sugar from today to the family card holders for Tk 70 a kg, a rise by 16 percent or Tk 10 from the previous price.

The price hike comes less than a week after the government gave the private refiners the nod to hike prices of the sweetener by 15 percent or Tk 16 per kg at the retail level.

The TCB in a press release yesterday said it will sell three commodities -- sugar, lentil and bottled soybean oil -- to one crore family card holders for the month of May. The state agency, however, has kept the prices of the two other essentials unchanged.

Each card holder would be able to buy a maximum one kg of sugar at Tk 70, two kgs of lentil at Tk 70 per kg and two litres of soybean oil at Tk 110 per litre.

Holders of family cards can buy the essentials either from a dealer's shop or from a spot, said the agency that sells the commodities among low-income families at subsidised prices.



Sudanese refugees, who have fled the violence in their country, wait to receive food rations from World Food Programme, near the border between Sudan and Chad, in Koufroun.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Imran back home after arrest, riots

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan returned home today after his arrest sparked days of clashes between his supporters and security forces was declared unlawful.

The one-time cricket superstar -- who has been tied up in dozens of legal cases since being ousted from power in April last year -- was freed on bail and granted protection from further arrests until Monday.

Enraged by his detention, supporters set fire to government buildings, blocked roads and damaged property belonging to the military which they blame for Khan's downfall.

At least nine people died in the unrest this week, police and hospitals have said. Hundreds of police officers were injured and more than 4,000 people detained, mostly in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, according to authorities.

"The head of the country's largest party was abducted, kidnapped from the high court, and in front of the entire nation," Khan told AFP from the Islamabad High Court after being freed.

"They treated me like a terrorist, this had to have a reaction," he said of the protests that followed.

Khan has repeatedly clashed with Pakistan's powerful military since being booted from power last April in a no-confidence vote, and told reporters that "one man, the

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