



YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

SECOND EDITION

THE DAILY

Star

ON FRIDAY

DHAKA FRIDAY FEBRUARY 9, 2024



REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXIV No. 27

MAGH 26, 1430 BS

www.thedailystar.net

RAJAB 27, 1445 HJRI

16 PAGES: Tk 15.00

# Irregularities, violence mar Pakistan polls

## Voting held amid cellular, internet disruptions; 9 killed in militant attacks

AGENCIES

Pakistan began counting votes after polling ended yesterday in a general election marred by militant attacks, suspension of mobile phone and internet services and widespread vote rigging claims.

Pollsters predicted a low turnout from the country's 128 million eligible voters following a lacklustre campaign overshadowed by the jailing of former prime minister Imran Khan, and the hobbling of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party by the military-led establishment.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is expected to win the most seats in the vote, with analysts saying its 74-year-old founder Nawaz Sharif has the blessing of the generals.



Clear results expected today



Analysts predict no clear winner

Former PM Nawaz Sharif seen as front-runner



Vote held amid crippling economic crisis

Adding to concerns about the integrity of the vote, authorities suspended mobile phone services just as polls opened and only began to restore them more than three hours after polls shut at 5:00 pm local time (1200 GMT).

The interior ministry said the outage was "to maintain law and order" after two blasts on Wednesday — later claimed by the Islamic State group — killed 28 people and wounded at least 30 more in southwestern Balochistan province.

The vote was held as the South Asian country struggles to recover from an economic crisis while it grapples with rising militant violence in a deeply polarised political environment.

A clear picture is likely to emerge early today as counting continues through the night.

The national assembly has 265 seats and polling in one seat was postponed due to the death of a candidate. A party needs 133 seats for a simple majority but many analysts believe the vote may not produce a clear winner.

Thousands of troops were deployed on the streets and at polling stations across the country and borders with Iran and Afghanistan were temporarily closed as security was stepped up to ensure peaceful polling.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Bangladesh players throw Mosammat Sagorika, who scored a late equaliser to see the game go to penalties after a 1-1 draw at full-time, in the air as they celebrate being joint champions with India following the SAFF Under-19 Women's Championship final that was filled with drama and chaos. India were declared champions initially at the Birshrestha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday after the match official decided to go for an unprecedented coin toss following a lengthy penalty shootout. However, the match commissioner later withdrew the decision as it went against the by-laws, casting doubts over the outcome of the event. [Inset] Earlier, India girls also celebrated the win after the initial verdict.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Bangladesh, India joint champions after chaos

Bangladesh and India were declared joint champions in the SAFF Under-19 Women's Championship following a chaotic finish owing to a controversial decision by Sri Lankan match commissioner Silva Jayasooriya Dilan. India were initially declared champions following a coin-toss, after a marathon penalty shootout where both teams converted 11 penalties following a 1-1 draw. The match commissioner later revised his decision and after a long delay declared both teams as joint champions.

STORY ON PAGE 11

## FIGHTING IN MYANMAR Residents start returning to Ghumdhum

STAR REPORT

People in Bandarban started returning to their homes along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border as the sound of shelling and gunshots have not been heard since Wednesday.

Residents of villages in Ghumdhum area of Naikkhongchhari upazila were forced to flee earlier last week as mortar shells and bullets frequently crossed the border amid fighting between Myanmar junta forces and an armed group called Arakan Army.

Officials opened makeshift shelters for the residents as bullets and explosives from Myanmar killed two people, injured several others, and caused damage to properties on this side of the border since February 4.

Officials evacuated several villages on Tuesday, a day after a woman and a Rohingya man were killed in Ghumdhum in a mortar explosion.

Some houses in the neighbourhoods were still empty last night as the families were afraid of another escalation across the border, according to Anwarul Islam, a member of Ghumdhum Union Parishad.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

## RICE, SUGAR, DATE IMPORT Taxes cut for better supply in Ramadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue yesterday cut customs tariffs on rice, sugar and dates and removed the value added tax on edible oil imports in an effort to help the government boost supply and contain prices of the four commodities during Ramadan next month.

The move comes more than a week after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina directed the NBR to reduce import tariffs on these items to bring down the prices and overall inflation, which has been staying over 9 percent since March last year, eroding the buying power of the fixed- and low-income people.

The duty cut has raised hopes among consumers for some relief.

"It is a good initiative. But its outcome depends on ensuring adequate supply. The consumers will have the benefits only if the supply is higher than the demand," said Ghulam Rahman, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB).

**"It is a good initiative. But its outcome depends on ensuring adequate supply. The consumers will have the benefits only if the supply is higher than the demand."**

GHULAM RAHMAN, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh

Prices of rice have increased over the last few weeks as farmers completed harvest of Aman, the second largest rice crop.

The next crop, Boro, which accounts for 55 percent of total annual rice production, is being grown and its harvest will begin by the end of April.

The NBR yesterday issued separate notifications on slashing customs tariffs and lifting the VAT.

Prices of rice have increased over the last few weeks as farmers completed harvest of Aman, the second largest rice crop.

The next crop, Boro, which accounts for 55 percent of total annual rice production, is being grown and its harvest will begin by the end of April.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## Falling container kills man under Dhaka expressway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A worker of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway died after a container fell on him yesterday — a day after another person died as a steel frame from the structure fell on him — raising safety concerns.

The container fell from a crane that was moving it and crushed Shamim Mia, 39, who was working underneath the expressway around 11:00am, said Mohammad Mohsin, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station.

Shamim, from Narsingdi's Raipura upazila, died on the spot, he added.

Following the incident, police detained crane operator Azharul Islam, 29.

Shamim's co-worker Atiur Rahman said the work of the elevated expressway in Tejgunipara was completed. "That's why the materials kept there were being shifted to Moghbazar area where construction work is going on."

The empty container fell from the crane when it was being loaded onto a lorry heading to Moghbazar, he said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## Dhaka to buy defence equipment from Delhi

Says foreign minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Terming security cooperation with India "on an upswing", Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud has said Bangladesh will go for defence equipment purchase from India.

Hemadheremarkwhen asked whether Bangladesh is contemplating procuring from India indigenously-manufactured Light Combat Aircraft Tejas, Dhruv choppers, and other military hardware.

Hasan said he cannot comment on technical issues as he is not a defence minister. "But we do have defence purchases from India and we shall have defence purchases from India," he told journalists.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A woman, carrying a child, had to wear a mask while crossing the BIDC road in Khulna's Khalishpur to protect herself from heavy dust pollution yesterday. According to weather reports and the Air Quality Index, Khulna's air was categorised as "unhealthy".

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Vice-chancellors should be picked from UGC pool

Commission recommends in its report

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

University Grants Commission has proposed formulating a guideline for appointing vice-chancellors, pro-VCs, and treasurers at public universities.

The UGC in its annual report for 2022, which is yet to be presented to the president, also said a pool of qualified teachers may be formed in light of the recommendations by the commission for appointment to suitable posts.

It claimed that administrative and financial activities were not being run properly at universities due to the lack of skills of VCs, pro-VCs, and treasurers.

An UGC member yesterday said they made the recommendations as there is no guideline for who could be a VC of a public university, apart from in four universities that run under a 1973 order.

"Such a guideline will help reduce criticism that VCs, pro-VCs are being appointed on political considerations. If we can prepare a pool and guidelines, it will be made public and the people of the country will be aware who is going to sit on the top administrative positions at universities," the UGC member said.

Asked about whether the UGC wants to reduce the number of appointments of VCs and Pro-VCs on political consideration, UGC acting chairman Prof Muhammed

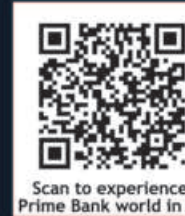
SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Expand Your Vision with Hasanah Sampad Investment Solution



HASANAH ISLAMIC BANKING

Prime Bank



Scan to experience Prime Bank world in AR