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UPAZILA ELECTION Second phase too marked by low turnout

1 killed in polls violence in Cox's Bazar

STAR REPORT

The second phase of the upazila elections also saw a low turnout yesterday like in the first phase.

The usual election-day fervour was missing as most of the voting centres across 156 upazilas wore a deserted look due to a poor presence of voters.

During the polls yesterday, sporadic incidents of violence left one person dead in Cox's Bazar and at least 20 others injured in other places.

After voting ended, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal said that over 30 percent votes were cast in the second phase. "It was not encouraging."

He said a major political party boycotted the polls and also discouraged people from voting.

"This might be one of the main reasons for the low turnout. This can happen in democracy," Awal told reporters at the Election Commission office.

"There is no problem with our voting system. The crisis lies in politics. I think the problem of low turnout can be resolved if politics follows a healthy process," the CEC said.

Meanwhile, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said the turnout was satisfactory and the elections were held peacefully.

BNP, TIB, and some anti-national intellectuals were

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



PHOTO: REUTERS

People attend a funeral ceremony for the late Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi in Tabriz, East Azerbaijan Province, Iran yesterday.

Iran begins funeral ceremonies for Raisi

AGENCIES

Tens of thousands of Iranians yesterday gathered to mourn the late president Ebrahim Raisi following his death in a helicopter crash, as authorities probe what caused the aircraft to smash into the side of a remote mountainside during foggy weather.

Waving Iranian flags and portraits of the late president, mourners set off from a central square in the northwestern city of Tabriz, where Raisi was headed when his helicopter crashed on Sunday.

They walked behind a lorry carrying the coffins of Raisi and his seven aides.

Their helicopter lost communications while it was on its way back to Tabriz after Raisi attended the inauguration of a joint dam project on the Aras river, which forms part of the border with Azerbaijan, in a ceremony with his counterpart Ilham Aliyev.

INDIAN OCEAN Dhaka, Canberra to collaborate on maritime security

Australia FM, Hasan Mahmud hold talks

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The coastguards of Bangladesh and Australia will cooperate and collaborate as part of maritime security in the Indian Ocean, said Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong yesterday.

"We've had quite a lot of discussion on this today. One of the things we want to do is to have deeper collaboration with our coastguards," she said after meeting Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud at the state guesthouse Padma in the capital.



Penny Wong

Earlier, she also called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan.

Wong, who is the first Australian Foreign Minister visiting Bangladesh in the last 26 years, arrived in Dhaka yesterday morning. Today, she will be visiting the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

She said she told Asaduzzaman Khan that Australia would bring the head of

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

LIFTS AT PUBLIC HOSPITALS WHERE HORROR ABOUNDS



- Lifts in at least 13 state-run hospitals in Dhaka are in poor state
- Building-3 of Mitford Hospital has only one lift that malfunctions sometimes
- All 8 lifts in two buildings of NICRH malfunction at times
- At least 7 lifts of DMCH are often overloaded

SHAHEEN MOLLAH with SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Shipon Mia (not his real name) fears for his life throughout the hours he works as a liftman at a building of Sir Salimullah Medical College, commonly known as Mitford hospital, in the capital.

The man, in his late 20s, does not know when the lift was set up. The hospital authorities too could not say anything.

The lift, with a collapsible gate, has five buttons with no floor numberings

on them. Shipon, who joined the hospital a year ago, has to press and hold a button whenever it goes up or comes down.

"Getting stuck is normal here. But what scares me is that the lift gets electrified and someone can get shocked if they touch it at that time. Sometimes the lift stops abruptly and takes at least 10 minutes to restart," he said.

Notices are displayed inside and outside the lift, cautioning people not

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION Bangladesh categorised as country 'in crisis'

Article 19 launches global report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been categorised as "in crisis" in terms of freedom of expression, according to the Global Expression Report 2024 released yesterday.

The index categorises countries as being "open", "less restricted", "highly restricted" and "in crisis".

"In 2023, the percentage of people living in countries 'in crisis' rose to 53 percent. That is more than four billion people in 39 countries," the report said.

If any country scores between zero and 19 out of 100, it is categorised as a country in crisis, where the freedom of expression is marked as the worst, the report said.

Bangladesh scored 12.

It ranked 128 out of 161 countries, flanked by Democratic Republic of Congo and Algeria.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

NETANYAHU, HAMAS LEADERS France, Belgium back ICC bid for arrest warrants

AGENCIES

France, Belgium and Slovenia released statements supporting the world's top war crimes court and its chief prosecutor's request for arrest warrants for leaders of Israel and Hamas, after Israel and the United States both harshly condemned the effort.

The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor, Karim Khan, accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and three Hamas leaders — Yahya Sinwar, Mohammed Deif and Ismail Haniyeh — of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Gaza Strip and Israel.

While Netanyahu and Gallant do not face imminent arrest, the announcement Monday was a symbolic blow that deepened Israel's isolation over the offensive in Gaza, reports AP.

"France supports the International Criminal Court, its independence and the fight against impunity in all situations", the foreign ministry said in a statement late on Monday.

The Belgian Foreign Minister Hadja Lahbib welcomed the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor's request for arrest warrants against Israeli and Hamas leaders as an "important step".

"Crimes committed in Gaza must be prosecuted at the highest level, regardless of the perpetrators. The fight against impunity wherever crimes occur is a priority for Belgium," Lahbib said in a statement.

Israeli forces thrusted deeper into the Jabalia camp in northern Gaza yesterday, laying waste to residential districts with tank and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Tigers start USA tour with defeat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's T20 World Cup preparations got off to the worst possible start as the Tigers suffered a five-wicket defeat against USA in the first-match of a three-match T20I series at Prairie Park Cricket Complex in Texas yesterday.

Chasing a modest target of 154 runs set by Bangladesh, the hosts made a brisk start, then stuttered in the middle before motoring along to the victory, thanks to an unbroken 62-run stand off 28 deliveries.

Former New Zealand international Corey Anderson smashed an unbeaten 34 off 25 deliveries while Harmeet Singh stroked 33 not out off just 13 balls to get the hosts home with three balls to spare in their first-ever international match against the Tigers.

Mustafizur Rahman was the most successful bowler

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Buses caught in traffic near the Gulistan ramp of Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover. Buses waiting to pick up passengers and those making U-turns aggravate the congestion there. Pedestrians cannot use the footpath which has been occupied by ticket counters and hawkers. The photo was taken around 2:30pm yesterday.

PHOTO: ANSUR RAHMAN

IS CTG READY FOR MONSOON?

Every monsoon, Chattogram sinks. Despite at least four ongoing projects worth Tk 14,389.36 crore, there seems to be no respite for port city dwellers. Meanwhile, project costs continue to rise with each extended deadline. With monsoon knocking at the door, port city residents are now bracing for similar suffering. In today's Page 10, we look into the current progress of the projects and people's apprehension.



Prabartak Mor area of Chattogram city after an hour's rain on May 6.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN