



Trying to turn BPL into a brand, again

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'Domestic gas exploration is most economical'

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Sharply split US makes its choice

Counting begins as millions vote

AGENCIES

Counting began in the US after millions of Americans voted yesterday in a presidential election defined by drama and uncertainty, with Kamala Harris and Donald Trump left to await the outcome of a desperately close race after months of intense campaigning.

The result -- perhaps coming overnight, or not for several days -- will



US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2024



either make Harris the first woman president in the country's history, or hand Trump, a convicted felon, a comeback that sends shock waves around the world.

The bitter rivals spent their final campaign day trying to get supporters out to the polls and courting any last undecided voters in the swing states expected to decide the outcome.

But, Democratic Vice President Harris, 60, and Republican former president Trump, 78, were in a dead heat in opinion polls despite the most volatile White House contest of modern times.

After head-spinning twists -- from Harris's dramatic entrance when President Joe Biden dropped out in July, to Trump riding out two assassination attempts and a criminal conviction -- tens of millions of

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PHOTO: AFP

People wait in line to vote at a polling station at Martin Luther King Jr Library in Washington, DC on US Election Day yesterday.

When will we know who won?

AFP, Washington

As Americans voted yesterday, officials are calling for patience as they tally ballots in what could be a historically close presidential race -- and warning that it could take days to find out who has won.

Under the US system, citizens do not vote directly for their leader. Instead, their ballots elect the 538 members of a group called the Electoral College, which then elects the president and vice president.

Each state casts its Electoral College votes for the candidate that won its popular vote. Bigger states, with more representatives in the US Congress, get a larger share of the 538 Electoral College votes on offer.

Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris and her Republican rival Donald Trump will be vying

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ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES Inquiry commission finds 8 detention centres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The inquiry commission on enforced disappearances found eight secret detention centres in Dhaka and its surrounding areas.

At a press briefing at its office yesterday, it refused to disclose which agencies ran most of those centres "for the sake of investigation".

"We found a cell operated by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) measuring just 3.5 feet by 4 feet. There was no source of light, except a small peephole, and no sanitation system except an open drain, forcing the detainee to perform all basic functions there. People had been confined to such cells for years," said Nur Khan Liton, a member of the commission.

The cell is so small that a person would not have been able to lie down or even sit properly, said Liton.

"We found evidence of extended durations of confinement. For example, those held captive had kept count of days by etching on the walls," he said.

The detention rooms were well-hidden and, in some instances, separate from the holding cells meant for other detainees or arrestees.

"We believe that we will find many more detention centres," said Nabila Idris, another member of the commission.

"We have not found any detainees held at the detention centres we visited. They were empty," she added.

After August 5, lawyer Mir Ahmad Bin Quasem,

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1,600 complaints filed with Enforced Disappearance Commission

400 complaints scrutinised,

140 people interviewed

172 complaints are linked with Rab

37 linked with CTTC unit

26 related to DGFI

55 against Detective Branch

25 linked with police

68 complaints against unidentified people

BNP for polls roadmap in 2 to 3 months

The party may take to streets if govt doesn't do so, say BNP leaders after standing committee meeting

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Unless the interim government issues a roadmap to the next election in two to three months, the BNP may take to the streets in March or April next year, say top leaders of the party.

Members of the party's standing committee made the decision at a meeting on Monday night participated by BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman through a video link.

"As there is no roadmap to the election, we see chaos in almost every sector. Prices of essentials are skyrocketing while the law and order situation has not improved," Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, a standing committee member, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Several other leaders said at the meeting that the government should take what can be considered a logical duration of time, preferably not longer than a year, to hold the election, according to sources.

Most of the standing committee members then said the BNP must put pressure on the government to hold the election by March or April. But one of them said the August-September period would be more logical.

BNP delegations have met the chief adviser three times and demanded election. The party earlier told

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Freedom of press still under attack

Says Editors' Council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing deep concern, the Editors' Council yesterday said that press freedom in the country is still under attack from certain quarters of society despite the interim government's promises to uphold it.

Some of the country's leading print media offices have faced threats of assault and siege, according to a press release issued by the council's President Mahfuz Anam and General Secretary Dewan Hanif Mahmud.

Newspapers like Prothom Alo and The Daily Star have requested protection from law enforcement, the release said, noting that security agencies have promptly responded to the call.

"One of the major promises of the new Bangladesh arising from the August 5 mass uprising was to ensure press freedom. This has

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IT parks drained away hefty funds

15 projects involving Tk 8,500cr fraught with faulty planning, corruption and poor execution

MAHMUDUL HASAN

The former ICT state minister, Zunaid Ahmed Palak, had boasted in 2016 that sprawling IT park in Kaliakoir would employ up to a million people over 10 years.

But eight years on and having spent about Tk 600 crore of public funds, the 355-acre Bangabandhu Hi-Tech City has managed to create employment for just 1,500 people. The industrial park remains largely desolate despite incentives like a seven-year tax holiday and duty-free facilities for raw material import.

This is not an isolated case. The Bangabandhu Hi-Tech Park in Sylhet was taken up in 2016 for Tk 324 crore with the ambitious goal of generating 50,000 jobs. Less than 100 people work there. Although long past the deadline, the park is yet to be fully operational.

Out of the 18 companies allotted spaces in the hi-tech park, less than five have started operations and several pulled out even before initiating their business activities.

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Arms recovery case raises eyebrows

Family of accused says Rab planted revolver to frame him in March

SHARIFUL ISLAM

A Rab officer mentioned in a case that he arrested two men with a firearm at the capital's Madhya Pirerbagh late at night on March 30.

Abdur Rahim Sultan Baizid and Bellal Hossain were on a motorcycle when they saw a Rab team and tried to flee, wrote Rab-4 Petty Officer Golam Rasul.

The Rab team caught them and found a revolver and two bullets in their possession around 10:30pm, said the complaint filed with Mirpur Model Police Station.

But security camera footage and other evidence seen by this correspondent suggest Baizid and Bellal were picked up and put into a grey microbus at 10:13pm from near the Islamic Foundation office, which is more than 2km away from the place of occurrence mentioned in the case.

Those who detained them also took away a Yamaha FZ v2 motorcycle from Baizid, 27, and Bellal, 35 -- both residents of Pashchim Agargaon.

In a CCTV footage from the Islamic Foundation area, a grey microbus is seen stopping near the parked motorbike at 10:13pm for one and a half minutes.

A man in a yellow shirt then rides away on the motorcycle, and the microbus follows it.

In another clip from Kamal Sarani at Madhya Pirerbagh, the man in yellow shirt with a pillion rider holding a wireless handset stops the motorcycle next to New Autocar Solution Works at 10:53pm.

Four minutes later, the grey microbus and a Rab pick-up arrive. Baizid and Bellal, both in handcuffs, step out of the microbus.

Baizid's mother Shahnaz Sultana said the Rab men rode the

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Vegetables and onions being packed into polythene bags on an OMS truck in violation of a nationwide ban on such bags. The Department of Agricultural Marketing conducted the OMS operation in Chattogram city's Kaibalyadham area yesterday. The government recently launched drivers nationwide to check the production, sale, supply, and marketing of polythene. During these drives, 15 mobile courts fined 47 firms and seized 4,044 kg polythene.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

EU calls for revision of ICT's legal framework

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Union has underlined the importance of ensuring due process at all stages of the legal proceedings as the interim government has taken initiative to hold all human rights violators accountable.

It expressed concerns over the International Crimes Tribunal's (ICT) legal framework and suggested its revision to bring it in line with international human rights standards.

The issues were discussed at the 11th meeting of the Sub-group on Good Governance and Human Rights of the EU Bangladesh Joint Commission held on October 31 in Dhaka, according to a statement issued yesterday.

Mohammad Mohiuddin, head of the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division of Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary

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