

Campaign for Delhi polls ends, voting today

AGENCIES

People in the Indian capital, New Delhi, will head to polling booths today to elect a new government after weeks of aggressive campaigning by the principal players Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), BJP and Congress who are hoping to rewrite the capital's electoral history.

Around 1.56 crore people are eligible to vote and are spread across 70 Assembly constituencies where 699 candidates are seeking the mandate. Voting will take place across 13,766 polling stations, amid a strict vigil kept by personnel of Delhi Police and other forces, including the paramilitary.

The counting of votes will be held on February 8.

AAP is seeking a third term, BJP hoping to return to power after a gap of 27 years

after a gap of 27 years. Congress, which has not won a single seat since 2015, hopes to win a couple of seats and increase its vote share, which had been captured by AAP riding on an anti-corruption movement, reports Deccan Herald online.

Officials said 220 companies of paramilitary forces, 35,626 Delhi Police personnel, and 19,000 home guards have been deployed for voting. Around 3,000 polling booths have been identified as sensitive and enhanced security arrangements, including drone surveillance, have been made.

Meanwhile, Election Commission of India (ECI) yesterday alleged that there were "deliberate pressure tactics to malign" the polls body in the Delhi elections after AAP accused it of indulging in "hooliganism" by not taking any action against BJP's Ramesh Bidhuri and kin for "violating" the MCC, reports TNN online.

Earlier yesterday, Delhi CM Atishi had criticised the polls body for not taking any action against Ramesh Bidhuri's family members for "violating" MCC.

During the high octane campaign, the parties had taken on each other. AAP had alleged that all its social security schemes will be stopped if BJP comes to power, a claim which it has denied.

19-year-old girl dies

FROM PAGE 12

restaurant in the town, he added.

"When she returned home in the afternoon, she told us that she was harassed and assaulted by a man named Hridoy Raifan in public," Samir told this correspondent.

Hridoy, aged around 30, is the son of Mohsin Howladar, the president of Bauphal Upazila Jatiya Party.

"She then went to her room. When we knocked on her door at dinnertime, there was no response. After a while, we broke into the room and found her hanging from the ceiling," said Samir.

"We took her to upazila health complex where doctors pronounced her dead."

Subrata Roy, medical officer at Bauphal Upazila Health Complex, said some marks on her body indicated that she had died by suicide.

Contacted, Hridoy said, "I saw the

HC rejects Chinmoy's bail

FROM PAGE 12

Kumar Bhattacharjee, told The Daily Star.

Earlier in the day, additional attorney generals Md Arshadur Rouf and Aneek R Haque opposed the bail petition during the hearing, saying that the government issued an order for filing the sedition case against Chinmoy as there is a specific allegation against him for disrespecting the national flag.

Advocate Apurba Kumar submitted the bail petition on behalf of Chinmoy to the HC on January 12.

Then the lawyer told this correspondent that the sedition case against Chinmoy is unacceptable as there is no government order for filing the case.

A government order is mandatory for filing a sedition case under Section 196 of the Code of Criminal Procedure against a person, and only a government officer can file such a case under the government order.

But there is no government order for filing a sedition case against Chinmoy, he said, adding that a non-government officer has filed the case in violation of the relevant section of the CrPC.

Section 196 of the CrPC says, "No court shall take cognisance of any offence punishable under Chapter VI or

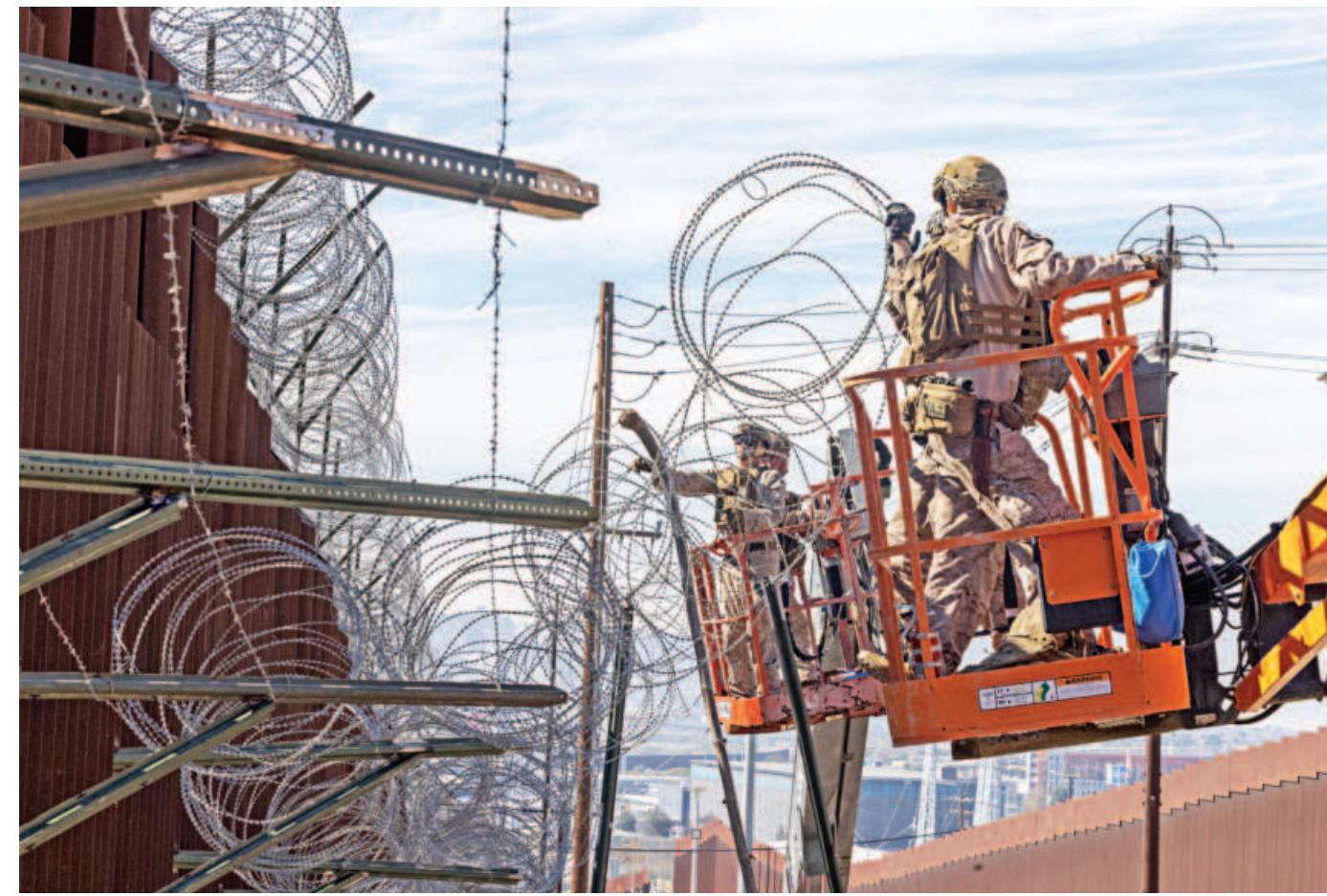


PHOTO: AFP

This picture provided by the US Defence Department shows US Marines from the 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, deploying concertina wire along the southern border wall at the US-Mexico border in San Ysidro, California, on Monday.

RUSSIAN DRONE STRIKES ON UKRAINE GRID

IAEA chief warns of nuke risk from attacks

Russian missile kills five in the Ukrainian town of Izium

REUTERS, Kyiv

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi arrived in Kyiv yesterday and inspected an electricity distribution substation, warning that attacks on Ukraine's power grid could pose a risk of nuclear accident by disrupting supply.

"I'm at Kyivska electrical substation – an important part of Ukraine's power grid essential for nuclear safety," Grossi wrote on X. "A nuclear accident can result from a direct attack on a plant, but also from power supply disruption."

Grossi posted pictures of him visiting the substation alongside Energy Minister German Galushchenko, and being shown what appeared to be defences against Russian strikes.

Moscow has regularly bombed Ukraine's energy infrastructure, including substations, throughout its

three-year invasion, although it has avoided direct strikes on Ukraine's nuclear plants.

Meanwhile, a Russian missile fired yesterday on the eastern Ukrainian city of Izum killed four people and wounded 20,

Moscow has regularly bombarded Ukraine's energy infrastructure throughout its three-year invasion.

the governor of the broader Kharkiv region said on social media.

Izum, which had a population of around 45,000 people before the Russian invasion launched in February 2022, was occupied for several months at the beginning of the war before being retaken by Ukraine.

But Russian forces are

making gains in the region and undoing the advances Kyiv's army made in their 2022 counteroffensive, while stepping up bombardments here.

"According to initial reports, the occupiers used a ballistic missile. Four people were killed," Oleg Synegubov wrote on Telegram, adding that five people had been hospitalised.

Meanwhile, Ukraine received a surge in queries last month from Russian families seeking information on missing relatives serving in Moscow's army, Kyiv said yesterday.

Ukraine last year established a hotline for Russians to learn details of missing relatives and friends as part of efforts to streamline prison exchanges.

The hotline called "I want to find" is run by the Coordination Centre for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, which said it had received 8,548 requests last month.

Taliban raid women's radio station

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's Taliban authorities raided well-known women's radio station Radio Begum yesterday, arresting two employees, the broadcaster said, calling for the speedy release of its staff.

The Taliban information ministry said the broadcaster had been suspended for "multiple violations", in the latest search by the government of local media outlets in Afghanistan.

"Officers from the General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) assisted by representatives of the Ministry of Information and Culture raided today Begum's compound in Kabul," a statement from Radio Begum said.

'Around 10' dead in Sweden school shooting

AFP, Örebro

Around 10 people were killed in a shooting at an education centre in central Sweden yesterday, including the suspected assailant, police officials said.

The shooting was the deadliest school attack in the country's history.

"Around 10 people have been killed today," Örebro police chief Roberto Eid Forest told reporters, adding that police could "not be more specific about the number due to the large number of wounded".

He provided no details about the number of wounded.

"This is a terrible event. This is exceptional, a nightmare," Forest said.

Police did not disclose any information about the identity or ages of the dead, nor whether they were students or teachers at the Campus Risbergska secondary school for young adults.

Several media reported the suspected gunman turned his gun on himself but police would not confirm those reports.

"The suspected assailant is not known to police. He has no connection to any gang," Forest said, referring to the surge in deadly shootings and bombings linked to gang violence that have plagued Sweden in recent years.

"We don't expect any other attacks," Forest said.

Myanmar junta bans possible conscripts from foreign travel

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's embattled junta has banned anyone eligible for military conscription from leaving the country without permission, as it seeks to shore up its forces fighting rebel groups opposed to its rule.

The junta has lost control of swathes of the country to ethnic minority armed groups and other opposition forces in the civil war triggered by its coup d'état four years ago.

A long dormant conscription law was enforced last year as the army reeled from a string of battlefield defeats to ethnic armed groups and civilian "People's Defence Forces" seeking to oust it from power.

A bylaw passed late last month that has only just come to light imposes new restrictions on those eligible to be called up – men aged 18-35 and women aged 18-27.

"The person who receives the order shall not be allowed to leave for foreign countries without obtaining the permission of the Central Body," section 51 of the bylaw says.

The bylaw applies to those who have been called up and also those waiting for the outcome of appeals for exemption, reduction, or postponement of military service.

Beximco lays off

FROM PAGE 12

Workers, already facing uncertainty over their salaries, grew increasingly anxious, prompting the company to take this drastic measure, Chowdhury added.

The latest development comes a week after the interim government announced that it would sell shares of Beximco Group's two running and profitable companies – Beximco Pharmaceuticals and Shinepukur Ceramics – to pay the salaries of the conglomerate's laid-off employees.

The conglomerate, which landed in hot water following the ouster of the Awami League-led government on August 5 last year, has more than Tk 40,000 crore in loans, including Tk 28,544 crore taken by its 32 textile and apparel subsidiaries.

Of those 32 factories, 16 exist only on paper. But the factories were used as collateral to take loans, said Labour and Employment Adviser M Sakhawat Hossain at a press briefing on January 28.

A large amount of the loans have been classified.

Beximco Group had previously laid off nearly 32,000 workers across 15 of its apparel units due to a persistent shortage of orders in its export-oriented garment and textile factories in Gazipur.

Advocate Apurba Kumar also said, "The allegation against Chinmoy is completely false, as he never disrespected the national flag."

On October 31 last year, Firoz Khan, former general secretary of Chattogram's Mohora ward BNP, filed the case with Kotwali Police Station, accusing Chinmoy and 18 others of disrespecting the national flag during a rally of the Hindu community on October 25 in the port city's New Market area.

On November 26, a Chattogram court sent Chinmoy to jail, rejecting his bail prayer after he was arrested in the capital the previous day.

On January 2 this year, Chattogram Metropolitan Sessions Judge Md Saiful Islam denied bail to Chinmoy in the sedition case.

He said BB officials are permitted to maintain personal lockers at the central bank for keeping their valuables.

Yunus seeks Canada's help

FROM PAGE 12

"Begum Para" neighbourhood.

He sought help to identify, freeze and recover the assets during his meeting with the Canadian High Commissioner.

The Canadian High Commissioner appreciated the efforts of the Prof Begum-led interim government to bring the stolen money back.

He assured Canada's support for the asset recovery efforts, noting that Canada has a "mechanism" to freeze siphoned-off money for recovery from persons identified by the interim government to the government of Canada.

The Canadian High Commissioner also offered the country's support to the interim government's reform initiatives

in its transition to democracy. "We support the great thing you are doing. We appreciate the progress that has been made. We are keen to know what we can do," Ajit Singh said.

He said Canada was keen to expand trade with Bangladesh and invest more in the country. A Canadian minister would visit Bangladesh soon to discuss issues of mutual interest, he added.

In response, Prof Yunus said, "Bangladesh is ready for business. We want to expand trade with your country, and we want Canadian companies to relocate their factories to Bangladesh."

The chief adviser said many Bangladeshi people now live and study in Canada, and Ottawa should make a move to set up its visa office in Dhaka.

GP staffers

FROM PAGE 12

principal amount but used legal maneuvers to evade penalties, the protesters claimed.

In response, Grameenphone stated: "Some former employees of GP have been gathering in front of GP House over the last few days, raising various demands related to employment and benefits. To our knowledge, most of them separated from Grameenphone a long time ago and have already received their lawful entitlements. Additionally, the demands raised by these individuals are currently the subject of various cases before the Hon'ble courts.

Grameenphone has high regard for the judicial process. Therefore, any legal proceedings will eventually be resolved through the court system. Grameenphone remains committed to providing uninterrupted communication services to its customers across Bangladesh.

While Grameenphone respects the right to peaceful assembly, these individuals have been blocking the entry and exit points of GP premises illegally, hindering the free movement of our employees and customers. Grameenphone respects the law of the land and considers the safety and security of its employees and customers as its highest priority. Law enforcement agencies have deployed personnel around GP premises to protect individuals and property."

Former BSEC chairman

FROM PAGE 12

decision last week to cancel the passports of nine individuals, including Shibli Rubayat-Ul Islam.

In early September last year, the ACC launched a formal inquiry into allegations of corruption against Shibli, accusing Shibli and eight former and present BSEC officials of amassing approximately Tk 1,000 crore worth of wealth through the abuse of power.

country's healthcare system. It also recommends health insurance for marginalised people.

Additionally, the BNP plans to empower the Bangladesh Medical Research Council and strengthen research activities in medical universities and colleges.

It emphasises the need to protect healthcare workers, suggesting that violence against them be considered a punishable offence under the Health Protection Act.

Mosharraf said various irregularities, including financial corruption and promotions based on political consideration, took place during the Awami League government's rule.

For this, people were deprived of expected healthcare services, and many were forced to take costly treatment at private facilities. A proper investigation is necessary to ensure the culprits are punished, he added.

Prof Farhad Halim Doner, a member of BNP chairperson's advisory council, alleged that the aim of the previous government was to damage the health sector by sending patients to a neighbouring country for treatment.

Without naming that country, he said, "Ten billion dollars go there each year for treatment purpose. This is the reality."