

Focus on election-'91

People are enthusiastic to cast their votes

By Nazmul Ashraf

People are more enthusiastic about participating in polls this time than before as they feel they will be able to exercise their franchise freely. Strict measures announced by the caretaker government to ensure free and fair polls has increased their confidence.

This feeling was clearly observed when this correspondent visited different areas of the capital's two neighboring districts — Narayanganj and Narshingdi — on Saturday. Cross sections of people of the area whom this correspondent talked to, said they were very happy that they would be able to exercise their voting rights, snatched by the autocratic government. Both male and female voters of different ages more expressed their eagerness to vote for the candidates of their choice.

Lot of the commonmen will be changed if a democratic and patriotic government is elected, most of them said

while others differed. They said although their right to vote has been ensured, the social structure where exploitation and negligence by the rulers are a common feature is yet to be changed. "We are happy to know that we will be able to cast our own votes and one's vote won't be cast by another this time", was the common statement by the interviewees.

In Rujganj and Bholta under Narayanganj district and Raipura, Polash, Ohorashal and Sadar of Narshingdi district, this correspondent found a peaceful coexistence among rival political parties.

Hectic election campaigns by BNP, Awami League (AL), Jatiya Party (JP) and other parties were going on round the clock as only two days are left for the polls. The candidates and their supporters were carrying out house-to-house campaign specially at night.

This time the voters were

found very cautious to make best use of their voting rights. M. A. N. Oltullah, a lawyer of the Raipura upazila court, said though the activists are engaged in their respective party campaigns, they are more willing to vote for the right candidates irrespective of party affiliation. Even they are working for rival party candidates they find more competent, he said.

"We will resist any armed violence during the polls if the administration is with us," he added.

A tea stall owner, Arju Mia (55) of Masampur village under Narshingdi thana, said this is for the first time I hope to cast my own vote.

A farmer of Rujganj, Abdul Latif (60) informed that he had advised his family members and neighbours to go to the polling centres unlike the previous years. His hope of getting a better life led him doing so, he added. Khaleq Mia of Jalmakandi village of Narshingdi compared this year's election

with that of the pre-independence period. He hopes to experience similar peace during the polls in future.

Abbas

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pliot people. The next two governments of BNP and Jatiya Party also continued the same by using the black laws to protect vested interests, he added. It is only his party which is committed to implement the Quaranic laws by inducting honest persons, he said.

The Jamaat leader also urged people to vote for his party in the ensuing election which, he said, will be the only neutral one in the country. No polls during last 20 years were free and fair, he remarked.

"We want Allah's rule, because rule by the mankind cannot bring peace for the people on the earth created by Him", he said.

Two killed

From Page 1 Col 8 and counter-chase began.

At one point NDP workers allegedly attacked an AL poll camp with fire arms. The AL workers also returned shots, police said. Md. Mansur, 17, a NDP activist, was killed in the firing.

About 30 persons, most of them NDP supporters, were injured in the clash.

A number of camps, mostly belonging to NDP, were also burned down. Later Raizan police arrested seven AL workers. Police forces have been deployed in Raizan.

UNB adds: At least 24 people were injured, 10 of them seriously in a clash between the workers of BNP and Jatiya Party at Ashashunt Sunday afternoon.

Police and witnesses said the clash occurred when processions of the two parties confronted each other on the same road with provocative slogans.

Sticks holding posters and portraits were freely used by both the groups leaving 16 BNP workers and 8 JP activists injured.

At least 23 people were injured including three women in two separate clashes at Alampur and Kanta Nagar in Kazipur upazila of Sirajganj district, police said Sunday.

The first incident occurred Saturday night when an election procession of BNP was passing through the meeting of Awami League at Alampur High School Maidan.

The Midnight File

Devi Lal rules out mid-term poll

BELGAUM, Feb 24 : The Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Devi Lal, said yesterday that the Janata Dal (J) government would last a full term and ruled out a mid-term poll as no party was ready to face the electorate now. "Mr Rajiv Gandhi will not withdraw his party's support to our government as his party has been discredited during the last elections", he told newsmen, reports PTI.

Dange's condition critical

BOMBAY, Feb 24 : The condition of veteran communist leader S A Dange, who underwent a "tracheostomy" operation yesterday, continues to be critical, doctors attending on him at PD Hinduja Hospital said today, reports PTI.

Trial of Bulgaria's dictator today

SOFIA, Feb 24 : The former communist dictator in Bulgaria, Todor Zhivkov goes on trial on Monday charged with nepotism, corruption and misusing some 800 million dollars of state funds during his 33 years of iron rule, reports AFP.

Krzaklewski replaces Walesa

GDANSK (Poland), Feb 24: Marian Krzaklewski, a little-known, politically independent member of the Solidarity Trade Union, replaced Lech Walesa as its leader Saturday after winning 51.3 per cent of the votes at a special congress in this Baltic city, reports AFP.

Lanka to help Maldives govt

COLOMBO, Feb 24 : Sri Lanka will take firm action against any attempt by Maldivians to plot against the Maldivian government, Foreign Minister Harold Herat said. Herat made the remarks in an interview with local paper "The Sunday Times" as his Maldivian counterpart Fathula Jameel flew into Colombo Saturday for a five-day official visit, reports Xinhua.

Rally in support of Yeltsin

MOSCOW, Feb 24 : About 100,000 people rallied Sunday in support of Boris N Yeltsin after he was blasted by Communist Party hardliners for demanding the resignation of President Mikhail S Gorbachev. After chanting Yeltsin's name, the crowd turned against the Soviet President, chanting "Gorbachev resign" and "Gorbachev, go away", reports AP.



BNP leader Khaleida Zia addressing a meeting at Keraniganj on Sunday. —Star photo



Acting Ameer of Jamaat Abbas Ali Khan addressing a meeting at the Shapla Chatter in city. —Star photo

Last-minute poll survey reports

By Staff Correspondent

The Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) are taking increasing interest in the parliamentary elections on February 27. These organisations are using their grassroots level machinery to conduct opinion polls about the elections. The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) took the lead in this matter.

The BIDS' survey indicated that Awami League and BNP were going neck and neck in the elections. The Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad also made the same observations. The Ganatantrik Uddyog conducted a survey revealing that 63 per cent candidates in the elections favour parliamentary system of government while 47 per cent favour Bangladesh nationalism. Thirty five per cent favour Bengalee nationalism. The Coordination Council on Human Rights in Bangladesh also made a survey.

All of them predicted that

no party will get an absolute majority. Smaller parties may play a vital role in forming coalition government.

But the Research Centre for Democracy and the Citizens' Election Committee predicted victory for BNP. Some of the organisations however, forecast Awami League victory. The reports are mostly based on random survey. In earlier elections the opinion polls were not conducted. As such the accuracy of these surveys are yet to be fully credible.

Two separate opinion poll surveys show that the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) would lead the results.

The opinion survey conducted by the Research Centre for Democracy and Development (RCFDD) showed that BNP would win in 145 constituencies of them, 43 would be in Dhaka division, 40 in Chittagong division, 32 in Rajshahi and 30 in Khulna.

Awami League would capture 108 seats which include 37 in Dhaka, 27 in Chittagong, 25 in Rajshahi and 19 in Khulna.

Jamaat would bag 25 seats which include five in Dhaka division, seven in Chittagong, eight in Rajshahi and five in Khulna. Other political parties will be elected in 21 constituencies, the survey results added.

On the question of trial of the deposed President Ershad, 81 per cent demanded it immediately while 14 per cent want the punishment through due process.

Sixty two per cent opined against participation of the Jatiya Party in the polls while 21 per cent favoured it.

The survey results from the Dhaka-6 constituency shows that BNP candidate Major (Retd.) Abdul Mannan is supported by the 47 per cent of the voters as against 34 per

cent for the AL chief Sheikh Hasina.

In the Dhanmondi-Mohammadpur areas, BNP chief Begum Zia would bag 54 per cent of the votes while the AL candidate Begum Sajeda Chowdhury 29 per cent.

The RCFDD survey was conducted on 11,400 people in 115 constituencies through Bangladesh.

Another opinion poll survey conducted by the Citizens' Election Commission upon 3,525 voters within the constituencies in Dhaka and its adjoining areas reveals that BNP candidates would bag 42.18 per cent of the votes as against 29.53 per cent by the AL candidates. The survey results say the AL would be followed by Jamaat (5.84 per cent), Jatiya Party (2.24 per cent), Freedom Party (1.16 per cent) and Zaker Party (1 per cent).

Foreign observers meet Shahabuddin, Hasina

Members of the Commonwealth Observers Group and SAARC Observers Team separately met with Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at the President's Secretariat Sunday morning, reports UNB.

Details of discussions with the Acting President are yet to be released. Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina said Sunday she feared rigging in about 100 constituencies in the February 27 parliamentary polls.

She was exchanging views with the SAARC Observers Team which called on her at Bangabandhu Bhaban Sunday morning prior to her departure for Jessore and Khulna.

ISS adds : The 30-member Non-Governmental observers mission drawn from four SAARC countries will look at the fairness of the elections and prepare a report on the findings.

The delegation, comprising members from India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, will focus on the electoral campaign, organisation and conduct of the elections, voting and counting process, and post-electoral developments, including electoral offences and complaints, the delegation members told newsmen in Dhaka Sunday.

Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam of Sri Lanka, replying to questions, said the group would split into 15 sub-groups and visit 60 to 70 constituencies. They would reassemble in Dhaka on February 28 and prepare their report.

Trouble makers

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outlying districts indicate that the atmosphere is by and large peaceful.

So far only a few violent clashes have taken place.

The Deputy Commissioner of Khulna told The Daily Star Sunday night that arrest of suspected trouble-mongers is continuing in the district. Raids are being conducted simultaneously in all the upazilas.

The Deputy Commissioner of Dinajpur said the police authorities have already started taking steps to round up trouble-mongers. The Superintendent of Police of the district has distributed log books to the thanas for recording election offences, he said.

In Natore police are checking motor vehicles and conducting raids to put suspected criminals in custody. On Saturday night police recovered two revolvers during such a raid, the Deputy Commissioner of Natore said.

The Deputy Commissioner of Bagerhat said some illegal arms have been recovered. In Mymensingh steps are underway to take steps against suspected criminals.

Bush sees swift, decisive victory

WASHINGTON, Feb 24: President George Bush announced late Saturday night that a massive ground assault had begun to oust Iraq from Kuwait.

"I have complete confidence in the ability of the coalition forces to swiftly and decisively accomplish their mission," he said.

A well-placed Defence Department official said, "this is the end game."

The President said the decision to move into a new phase of the Gulf War came after extensive consultations with coalition leaders who have committed forces to reverse Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

Not long but fierce: Major

Meanwhile British Prime Minister John Major said early Sunday that British forces would join a "massive ground attack" begun to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait.

In Paris, the French government announced in a communique that President Francois Mitterrand had "given the order to engage French ground troops in the liberation of Kuwait."

were quick support President Bush's decision to launch a ground war for control of Kuwait, even though many had pleaded publicly for him to continue the air campaign as long as possible.

Action unavoidable: Japan

Xinhua adds: Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu said here today that the launching of the Gulf ground war was very regrettable, and he hoped that the fighting would end as soon as possible.

Hasina

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country's independence will be traded if Awami League voted to power. Hasina said her party, which wrest independence, cannot sell it.

Hasina also scoffed the critics of secularism, saying "religion traders" are again trying to bluff the innocent people for their political mischiefs in the name of religion.

Despite orchestration of false propaganda by the erstwhile Pakistani regimes, the people voted for boat and Awami League in the Jukta Front election in 1954 against Muslim League and general elections in 1970. They will again vote for boat in 1991 for restoration of democracy, Hasina hoped.

Victory will be Iraq's : Saddam

BAGHDAD, Feb 24 : Iraqi President Saddam Hussein exhorted his troops to stand up to the onslaught of US-led forces which launched a ground war today warning that Iraq would otherwise descend into a deep darkness, reports Reuters.

"Fight them, fight them, fight them, he appealed to his troops repeatedly in a 10-minute radio address in which he acknowledged that Iraqi forces were under attack.

Khaleida

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his misrule. "His trial must take place", she said adding that the time had come to take account of all the money Ershad had misappropriated and take revenge of the killing of innocent people by his forces during the 1982-90 black rule.

Begum Zia said the government of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman had introduced the politics of production to retrieve the country from the debris of the 1972-75 regime. Shaheed Zia had successfully led the country towards gradual development through his programmes like canal digging, gram sarker, rural medicare, rural electrification, increased incentives to agriculture and construction of rural communications network, she said.

These mass development programmes were stopped when Ershad took away power from the elected government of BNP in March, 1982 again plunging the nation into a dark era, Begum Zia said adding that Ershad's rule had made the country import-oriented rendering the industries

not have your values otherwise you will be pushed into a deep pit and a lengthy darkness will prevail over Iraq, Saddam said.

Saddam said that the attack coincided with a meeting of the UN Security Council scheduled to look into a Soviet peace plan, described US President Bush as "treacherous".

Saddam said victory would be Iraq's. "Fight them you Iraqis with all the values that you carry."

Moscow regrets

AP from Moscow adds: The Soviet government criticized US President George Bush on Sunday for escalating the Gulf War and said it regretted that a chance to end the war peacefully had been missed.

Disturbing : China

AFP adds : China said today it deeply regretted the start of the ground war in the Gulf and called the escalation disturbing.

"While the hopes for a peaceful settlement of the Gulf conflict were recently raised, the war that the world's people loathe to see has nevertheless escalated," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

Teheran neutral

A report from Islamabad adds : Teheran will remain neutral in the Gulf war and only the Iraqi people can decide their fate, Iran's visiting First Deputy Foreign Minister said in an interview published today.

India regrets

Meanwhile, the Indian government released a brief statement expressing "deep regrets" over the allied ground offensive against Iraq.

Kuwait city freed

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Iraqis had been taken prisoner and field commanders report "many hundred more north of our positions with white surrender flags."

Reuters from Baghdad says : Iraq said Sunday that it had repulsed the US-led ground offensive.

The statement, issued at 2 am (1100 GMT) denied a Kuwaiti report that Allied troops had seized the island of Failaka which commands the sea approach to Kuwait City.

Allied forces struck Iraqi troops before dawn Sunday with what European and Arab sources said were massive land assaults against occupied Kuwait and Iraq.

Bush appeared on US television Saturday night to announce that he had ordered the military to use "all forces available, including ground forces, to eject the Iraqi army from Kuwait."

Thousands of French Foreign Legionnaires and other French forces punched at least 30 miles into Iraq early Sunday and met little resistance, a western military source said in Dhahran.

The report said the US 2nd Marine Division and 18th Airborne Corps stormed over the border into eastern Kuwait. To the west, US Army troops moved into Iraq in a flanking operation, Press Association

reported.

Arab military sources in Riyadh, reached by telephone from Bahrain, said the coalition forces pushed in three assaults from land and sea into Kuwait and one from Saudi Arabia into Iraq.

Saudi Arabia, the launching pad for the ground offensive, said Sunday the battle was going well for the allies.

Earlier Reuter report says : Saudi forces in the Allied coalition pushed into Kuwait today and met no resistance from Iraqi troops, Britain's Independent Television News (ITN) said in the first television report from Kuwait since the land offensive began.

He said the Saudis had captured an unspecified number of Iraqi troops without resistance.

Another report says : Egyptian forces serving in the US led anti-Iraq coalition thrust into occupied Kuwait as part of the Allied ground offensive on Sunday, state-run Cairo radio reported.

Earlier report says : Four or five towns in Kuwait have been liberated and Iraq's elite Republican Guards are under attack from Allied troops, a Kuwaiti air force captain said Sunday.

Heavy Allied bombing had sliced into the high sand berms Iraqis had constructed into two concentric circles. At

strikes also exploded many of the mines carpeted across the desert.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi military claimed Sunday its soldiers had contained the Allied offensive. President Saddam Hussein accused the United States of treachery and defiantly urged his troops to "show no mercy".

In Baghdad, militiamen set up checkpoints for the first time during the war at key intersections and bridges. Some residents passing through the checkpoints were asked to join the militia.

Another report says : Intense diplomatic efforts by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to end the ground war never altered plans decided two weeks ago on the timing of the final phase of the Gulf war, a US administration official said late on Saturday.

Fitzwater said that Allied commander General Norman Schwarzkopf chose a series of dates for the start of the land attack and that 8 p.m. EST on Saturday (0100 GMT) was his main recommendation.

Stage set

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and order in the hill tracts.

The local administration may seek help from the armed forces posted there to maintain peace.

The administration has also deployed naval forces in five upazilas which are located in the coastal areas. The upazilas are Manpara, Sandwip, Kutubdia, Moheshkhali and Hatiya.

The armed forces will stay at the upazila level for eight days from yesterday (Sunday).

A total of Taka 17.57 crore has been allocated for expenditure for the security purpose. The expenditure for this election is much higher than the allocation made in the budget which was only Tk 7 crore. The government has treated the present election as special one and as such sanctioned additional funds for ensuring all arrangements.

The Election Commission has already despatched all necessary materials including ballot papers, seal and ink to all districts and upazilas throughout the country.

DUJ seeks cooperation in polls

The Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) Sunday called upon all concerned quarters to extend their sincere cooperation in establishing firmly the coveted foundation of democracy through successful holding of the Jatiya Sangsad polls in a free, fair and neutral atmosphere, reports BSS.

In a resolution adopted in the joint meeting of outgoing and newly elected executive committees, the DUJ observed that physical presence in the polling centre of each and every voter and the exercise of adult franchise in a peaceful atmosphere could only ensure free and fair polls.

Held at the Jatiya Press Club, the joint meeting was presided over by the new DUJ President Zahurul Haq, who also took over the charges from the old committee.



Peace workers including five US nationals attended a peace rally on Sunday organised by Service, Civil International. —Star photo