

Mizan hails victorious party

Acting Chairman of Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, who lost Wednesday's election, congratulated the victorious party.

The JP leader, now in Chandpur, told UNB by telephone his party in the face of heavy odds contested the election and is satisfied with the results.

"Our Chairman is interned, leaders are in jail or under warrant of arrest," Mizan said, "besides, we didn't get the media facilities like other political parties."

He congratulated the countrymen for voting JP candidates and also felicitated the elected JP leaders including ousted President and JP Chairman Ershad who has won all the 5 seats he contested.

Asked about his defeat, Mizan Chowdhury, who has never suffered defeat in his constituency Chandpur-4 since 1962, said "everyone worked seriously against me and put in their all-out efforts to defeat me. I have accepted the defeat."

"No comment," said Mizan when asked whether the interim government played a neutral role.

Meanwhile, a JP press release issued in Dhaka Thursday night said Mizan Chowdhury in a statement today said although held peacefully and smoothly, the election was "not totally neutral."

"The government was not neutral about Jatiya Party from the beginning, he said.

He however, hoped all would accept the poll verdict and play their due role for the sake of the country and its people.

BNP

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Awami League (BAKSAL) -- four, National Awami Party (NAP-Muzaffar), Jatiya Samajtrantik Dal (JSD-Straj), Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), Ganatrantik Party (GP), and Bangladesh Samajtrantik Dal (BSD) -- one each. Only three independents were elected.

CBP, BAKSAL, and NAP(M) winners contested the elections with AL symbol, boat. They are the components of the Eight-Party Alliance, headed by Sheikh Hasina of AL.

New era of democracy, hopes Khaleda

Bangladesh Nationalist Party chief Begum Khaleda Zia on Thursday called for mutual cooperation among the democratic forces to consolidate the victory of democracy achieved through the parliamentary polls.

Talking to BSS here on Thursday after announcement of election results Begum Zia congratulated the people who had struggled against the autocracy during the last nine years to restore democracy in the country.

Begum Khaleda Zia thanked the members of law-enforcing agencies including armed forces, BDR, police and other voluntary workers for their cooperation in holding elections in a free and fair atmosphere.

When asked whether she had taken any decision to form a coalition government, she said, "We are yet to decide on that issue."

Referring to the irregularities in the enlistment of names of the voters' list, Begum Zia said BNP could have secured more votes if all voters were enlisted.

She said, "I have witnessed many voters who had gone back to their homes in tears as they could not cast votes because of irregularities in the voters' list."

The BNP chief hoped that the national polls would usher in a new era of democracy. She said the nation would now be saved from the indiscipline and anarchy created by the autocratic regime.

She also hoped that our children would now find themselves in an atmosphere free from terrorism and indiscipline. The dreams of the people who had sacrificed their lives during the movement against autocracy would thus be fulfilled, she said.

Shahabuddin's speech today

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed will address the nation at 7 pm today (Friday), an official announcement said. The address will be simultaneously telecast and broadcast over television and radio, reports BSS.



Spontaneous processions were brought in the city in celebration of the BNP victory in the parliament election. —Star photo

Polls free, fair: C'wealth observers

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and spontaneous enthusiasm among voters and adherence to rules governing the elections.

The leader of the Commonwealth group said events of the past weeks demonstrated that the people of Bangladesh are committed to the democratic process. The election being free and fair would be even more important than the results because whatever the results as between the political parties, the people are the ultimate winners.

The Group's twelve members visited some 300 polling centres in over 60 constituencies. The team will submit a full report to the Commonwealth Secretary General who will submit the same to Bangladesh authorities, political leaders, as well as Commonwealth government.

Dato K. Pathmanaban said, "We were struck by the care-

taker government, specifically established to conduct this election, and at the lengths it went to manifest its neutrality". The role of the security forces was impressive, he said.

He said "we were impressed by the efficiency and dedication of election officials at all levels, as well as the cooperation among party agents."

The voter turnout, and large participation of women voters was "clear evidence of the success of the Administration and the Election Commission in rehabilitating national election process which in the eyes of most had been wholly discredited," he said.

Given the size of the task, and particularly the legacy of the past, it is quite remarkable that polling may prove to be necessary in only a handful of the 24000 polling centres," the Commonwealth group observed.

Replying to a question the leader of the Group said irreg-

ularities that were noticed could only be termed as 'sporadic' and that the main weakness of the electoral process was 'imperfections in the electoral roll' prepared under the previous government.

Answering another question he said the group decided to give initial assessment as soon as possible so that its views could not be influenced by electoral developments, and to meet demands of pressmen.

He told another questioner that it was not possible for the administration to influence the election as it was the central will of the people and the government to make the election free and fair.

The group was invited by the interim government.

BSS adds: a nine-member Japan-Bangladesh parliamentary friendship delegation called on Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina at Bangabandhu Bhaban Thursday afternoon.

The delegation was accom-

panied by the Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Takao Iguchi.

The members of the delegation, during their talks with Sheikh Hasina, recalled the contributions of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in cementing the friendship between the two countries.

The leader of the delegation extended an invitation to Sheikh Hasina to visit Japan at a convenient date. Sheikh Hasina thanked the leader for the invitation.

Earlier, a team of the SAARC delegation visiting Bangladesh to observe the poll activities, also called on Sheikh Hasina.

Sheikh Hasina told the delegation that her party was committed to establish democracy in the country. She also narrated various types of poll irregularities which took place in Wednesday's election.

Delhi hails successful holding of polls

NEW DELHI, Feb 28: India welcomed today the successful completion of Parliamentary elections in Bangladesh and said, "It augurs well for the future of democracy there," reports BSS.

A Foreign Office spokesman said New Delhi looked forward to working in close cooperation with the democratically elected government in Bangladesh for "further strengthening our relationship."

Khaleda thanks Shahabuddin

BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia last night thanked the Acting President, his advisers and government officials for their efforts in holding the parliamentary elections properly, reports BSS.

"This has ushered in a new era in the country and the people," she said in a statement.

Begum Zia said the people of the country could exercise their right of franchise through this election. The BNP has emerged as the single majority party by peoples verdict in the elections, she added.

She expressed her gratitude to the Almighty Allah and sought divine blessings for carrying out the responsibilities entrusted upon her party by the people.

She congratulated all the contestants and leaders of the political parties for taking part in the polls.

Begum Zia also thanked the Election Commission, the media, members of the armed forces, police, B.D.R. Ansars, volunteers and all others for smooth holding of the elections.

Celebrations

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In the town as soon as the news of the victory of the party in the parliamentary seats in the district was broadcast by radio and television Thursday.

A large number of people came out in the road shouting slogans 'Tomar neta amar neta Begum Khaleda Zia', 'Bangladesh Zindabad and Khaleda Zia Zindabad.'

They also carried the BNP election symbol sheaf of paddy and the portrait of Begum Zia.

In Chittagong, supporters and workers of BNP Thursday brought out spontaneous processions on the victory of the party.

The processionists started parading the streets from early morning and were continuing their processions till late in the evening.

Two killed

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local people said, he was attacked by the same group and chopped to death at about 10:30 am.

The attacks were allegedly led by a Ward Commissioner of the town.

BNP activists, infuriated by the brutalities, allegedly set fire to six houses of AL supporters at noon.

Abu Zafar, an AL worker, was stabbed to death during a brawl between AL and Jatiya Party supporters at Najimajhi of the district.

Police arrested a JP activist in this connection. A case was also filed.

At least 40 people were injured, nine of them seriously, in a clash between the supporters of Awami League and BNP in Narshingdi town.

According to witnesses, AL activists armed with lethal weapons like stick, rod, ram-dao attacked the BNP supporters at a bazar in the town and beat them mercilessly allegedly for not voting in favour of Awami League.

The Awami activists also hurled at least 10 cocktails creating panic in the area.

Some 20 shops, including two belonging to district BNP President Miah Md. Moklesh, were allegedly ransacked and valuables looted during the melee.

About 10 rickshaws were also damaged during the post-election violence. Rickshaws stopped plying at 8 am until 2 pm protesting the incident at the lack of local pullers union.

Nine seriously injured including a police constable were said to be critical. Others were released after first aid.

At least five persons were wounded when the AL workers allegedly attacked a BNP victory procession at Katagani Bazar of Munshiganj district.

The seriously injured BNP worker Sanaulah (20) was admitted to the Sadar Hospital.

In the Dhaka city skirmish between the supporters of BNP and AL were reported at Mirpur area. Nobody was, however, injured. Besides, tension also gripped at Jinjira of Keraniganj thana following spilling of coloured water to celebrate BNP candidate and DUCSU VP Amanullah Aman's victory from the area.

Student leader

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Aman's victory is a foregone conclusion.

If all the registered voters of the Chunkhulia centre would cast their votes against him, Aman would still be elected, local political workers said.

Other APSU leaders who got tickets from BNP and were defeated are: former Vice President of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), Khandaker Babul Chowdhury, Tangail-5 and JCD Dhaka University Unit Convenor Goutam Mitra, Narail-1.

Awami League nominated Chhatra League President Habibur Rahman Habib and Vice-President Zakaria Chowdhury for contesting Pabna-4 and Chandpur-6 seats but both failed.

Pro-JSD(Inu) Chhatra League (N-S) President Nazmul Huq Prodan, Panchagarj-1, President of Chhatra Maitree, the student wing of United Communist League (UCL) Zahiruddin Swapan, Bakerganj-1 and its General Secretary Nur Ahmed Bakul for Kushtia-3 also could not come out successful.

Three former student leaders, Akhtaruzzaman and Sultan Mohammad Monsur Ahmed of Awami League and Mustaque Hussain of pro-JSD (Inu) who had been office bearers of DUCSU also contested election from different constituencies but were defeated.

Guns silent in Gulf

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retary of State James A. Baker to request that the United Nations Security Council meet to formulate the necessary arrangements for this war to be ended.

If Iraq violates these terms, coalition forces will be free to resume military operations, Bush added.

World leaders in the anti-Iraq coalition declared victory and credited their resolve against Saddam Hussein as a cease-fire took effect in the Gulf on Thursday, but they said peace remains to be secured.

A leading Soviet official, however, claimed Mikhail Gorbachev's peace plan was the basis for Thursday's cease-fire.

AP from Paris says: The French government announced the end of hostilities in the Gulf War on Thursday as 24 French soldiers wounded in a minefield explosion returned home for medical treatment.

Defense Minister Pierre Joxe told a news conference that French troops would remain in Iraq as long as wished by the international community to guarantee the peace.

The soldiers are systematically destroying equipment abandoned by Iraqi troops fleeing the Allied blitzkrieg, he said.

He added, French troops in Iraq will hold their positions until the United Nations workers out cease-fire details.

British Prime Minister John Major said early Thursday he fully agreed with President Bush's announcement of a cease-fire in the Gulf War.

"The Prime Minister and President Bush talked by telephone Wednesday evening", said a statement issued by his office.

Iraqi forces AFP says have been ordered to observe a cease-fire in the Gulf war, official Baghdad radio announced at 11:00 am Baghdad time Thursday.

"Orders have been given to Iraqi forces to refrain from taking the initiative to open fire" on enemy troops, a military spokesman said in a broadcast monitored in Ni-costa.

"We are happy with the end of military operations, for that will spare our sons and other human beings bloodshed," he said.

The Iraqi spokesman said Bush's call had been in response to the "defeat" of Al-

lied troops in southern Iraq on Wednesday.

"Iraqi forces inflicted heavy losses on the enemies and taught them an unforgettable lesson in fighting Wednesday night in Basra province and other regions."

The spokesman made no mention of reports that Iraq had bowed to Allied demands and unconditionally accepted all 12 United Nations Security Council resolutions on the Gulf crisis.

Iraq remained defiant to the end, saying its armed forces "taught the allies lessons which worried them militarily and politically."

Allied forces devastated more than 40 of 42 Iraqi divisions in the four-day ground war and the surviving remnants were being allowed to return home when the cease-fire started Thursday morning, a senior US military source said.

At the 8 am (0500 GMT) cease-fire deadline, Allied forces were ordered to stop

offensive operations and go into defensive positions, the source said, speaking on condition he was not identified.

The Allied troops carried out offensive operations until the deadline, backed by continued air strikes against escape routes and strategic targets, the source said.

At least 80,000 Iraqi troops have been taken prisoner since Allied forces crossed into Iraq and Kuwait, including about 40 who initially surrendered to a pilotless Marine drone reconnaissance aircraft and were photographed by its camera, the source said.

At deadline time, the fighting was concentrated in three areas: two in northern Kuwait where demoralized Iraqi troops were trying to head home and one in southern Iraq against remnants of Saddam Hussein's best-trained Republican Guard units, the source said.

The US commander, Gen H Norman Schwarzkopf, said Wednesday night that Allied forces had "closed the gate" for Iraqi troops to escape north with their tanks and artillery. But that changed after the cease-fire started.

US Screaming Eagles infantrymen were less than 100 miles (160 kilometres) from Baghdad on Wednesday after an assault deep into Iraqi territory.

More than 8,000 infantrymen were airlifted into Iraq during more than 72 hours of continuous operations. No American casualties were reported, and they encountered little resistance.

The lightning strike began early Monday, when hundreds of helicopters moved thousands of troops in what the division said was the largest airborne assault in military history.

Within three hours, Blackhawk, Cobra, and Chinook helicopters led by Apache attack choppers, moved more than 3,000 soldiers into Iraq.

The next day scores of helicopters launched what officers said was the longest air assault ever, dropping three battalions of infantrymen about 130 miles (210 kilometers) into Iraq. On Wednesday thousands more roared into Iraq on helicopters.

Burned-out shells of civilian and military vehicles dotted the road. Bedouin tents filled the horizon, surrounded by herds of skittish sheep that sprinted in all directions as attack helicopters buzzed the fertile plain. Along the highway dozens of ragged-looking Iraqi civilians looted one burned-out truck that had been carting flour.

Women turned from the looting to expose a single

breast to American soldiers and point to their mouths in a sign troops interpreted to mean they had babies to feed.

Iraqi men also pointed to their mouths and cursed Saddam Hussein in broken English.

Scores of Iraqi tanks lay in flames, smoldering in dug-in fortifications of sand and dirt.

The Iraqi air force, though powerful was never a factor. The allies quickly established superiority in the skies and pounded Iraqi targets at will for the entire war. The Iraqi Navy was quickly sunk or disabled.

Much of Iraq's air force fled to Iran, and some Iraqi planes were destroyed on the ground despite Iraqi efforts to shelter them in hardened bunkers.

While the allies brought in high-tech weaponry, Iraq's most powerful weapons turned out to be among its crudest. It sowed the Gulf war mines and used modified Scud missiles to terrorize Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Allied losses were put at: 126 killed in action, 56 missing in action and 13 prisoners of war.

Stalwarts lose

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A.S.M.Hannan Shah of BNP by a narrow margin Zohra bagged 45,254 votes while Hannan Shah got 46,356 votes.

K.M.Obaidur Rahman, Chairman, Janata Dal lost to Begum Sajeda Choudhury, General Secretary of AL in a seesaw battle. Obaid polled 34,508 votes while Sajeda got 37,215 votes. Sajeda conceded defeat to Begum Zia in a Dhaka city constituency.

Jamaat Ameer Abbas Ali Khan was defeated by Mirza Abbas of BNP from Dhaka-6 constituency. Jamaat Ameer polled only 8,838 votes while Mirza Abbas got 60,877 votes. Jamaat Ameer also lost to Golan Rabbani of BNP from his home constituency Jaipurhat.

National Awami Party (Muzaffar) chief Prof Muzaffar Ahmed has conceded defeat to his BNP rival in Comilla district.

Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Acting President of Jatiya Party lost to a BNP candidate in a Chandpur constituency.

Maj.Gen.(Rtd) Khalilur Rahman of AL lost to Strajul Haque of BNP in Jamalpur-5 constituency. Khalilur Rahman polled 65,320 votes while BNP candidates got 70,392 votes.

Former Finance Minister and a BNP leader Saifur Rahman was defeated in both the seats in his home district Moulvibazar.

Other leading Awami League leaders who were defeated in Wednesday's elections include Abdul Mannan, Amir Hossain Amu, Zillur Rahman, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu and A.R.Khandaker.

The Midnight File

Canada against Saddam's ouster

OTTAWA, Feb 28: Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney said on Wednesday Canada does not want U.S-led coalition forces fighting the Gulf war to push for the overthrow of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. While there has been widespread speculation on how far the Allied forces might go in completing the war to push Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, Mulroney said Canada supports going only as far as the United Nations' resolutions permit, reports Reuter.

Rocket attack on Israeli post

NABATTIYEH, (Lebanon) Feb 28: Arab guerrillas launched a rocket attack on an Israeli outpost in southern Lebanon Thursday, and Israeli gunners retaliated by shelling two villages, police said. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The guerrilla attack came despite the deployment of regular Lebanese army troops in the region, reports AP.

40 killed in building collapse

CALCUTTA, Feb 28: More than 40 people were killed when a four-storied residential building collapsed in the eastern Indian city of Calcutta before dawn today. The fire brigade said. Several others were injured and believed trapped in the debris, witnesses said, reports AFP.

Dutch diplomat killed in Tunisia

TUNIS, (Tunisia) Feb 28: Gunmen ambushed and fatally shot a Dutch diplomat outside his home in a suburb of the capital Wednesday night. Witnesses said Robert-Jan Akkerman, 40, a first secretary at the Dutch Embassy in Tunis, was shot by three gunmen in a car, according to a diplomatic source, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Akkerman died in route to the hospital, the source said, reports AP.

600 die of cholera in Zambia

LUSAKA, Feb 28: Cholera sweeping Zambia has killed nearly 600 people in the worst outbreak of the disease in the country, officials said today. Deaths are being reported on an escalating scale. The disease is spreading from area to area and is not being contained," a senior official of the Zambia Red Cross said, adding, "It is a crisis and it is getting worse," reports Reuter.

US soldier shot in Turkey

ANKARA, Feb 28: Gunmen shot and wounded an American soldier on Thursday in the western city of Izmir, officials reported. He was the second US military employee shot in Turkey in a month. Two assailants followed the American into an apartment building and shot him in the face, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported, says AP.

200 arrested in Albania

VIENNA, Feb 28: More than 200 people have been arrested in Albania since tens of thousands of demonstrators tore down statues of Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha last week, an Albanian opposition leader said Thursday. Arben Imami, a Democratic Party leader reached by telephone in Tirana, said between 170 and 200 people were arrested in the Albanian capital and another 70-80 in the town of Korca, reports AP.

Hasina

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other conspirators have felled people's aspirations for democracy through influence and black money.

"The conspiracy has not only felled the aspirations of the people, but it has also made the future of democracy uncertain", she said and mentioned that the hope of the nation was to establish parliamentary form of government accountable to people. She urged people to remain vigilant for establishing democracy on a permanent footing.

Regarding results of the February 27 elections, Sheikh Hasina said, "I can firmly say that people voted for us, but the identified undemocratic forces have deprived them of getting the expected results". She alleged that those undemocratic forces did this through rigging and terror.

She cited some examples of irregularities during polling in some constituencies in Dhaka and claimed that the unholy forces violated the code of conduct for the election and succeeded in changing the desired results in many constituencies.

She said it was unbelievable that people of Bangladesh did not vote for Awami League which had been fighting relentlessly against the autocratic rulers for the last 15 years to establish their rights.

The irregularities during polling in Dhaka city, which Hasina mentioned, were false voting against Awami League at different centres. She alleged that some of these take voters were caught by the polling agents of her party, but they were released later by the au-

thorities concerned.

She said, in some areas, her voters were terrorised by the opponents who did not allow them to cast their votes. She said, in some centres, trouble makers were assisted by the persons on duty to maintain law and order. "We complained to the Election Commission in writing, but there was no immediate remedy", she said.

Sheikh Hasina also mentioned irregularities in the voters list and informed that she had asked the district leaders of her party to send reports within five days on the activities of 'identified conspirators' during the elections.

Hasina said the reactionary forces worked against people through an entete, but their defeat is inevitable.

When asked whether she accepts her party's defeat in the election, Hasina said, "I was not defeated in the elections, since people voted for my party". She added that it was rigging by BNP which was responsible for such results. She mentioned that there was rigging by her opponents in at least 100 seats.

In reply to another question, Hasina said she had been fighting against the vested interest group which captured power after the killing of Bangabandhu in 1975. "That interested group wants to keep such force in power which would serve their purpose," said Hasina.

"Our struggle for establishing a true democratic government in the country would continue till we achieve the goal," she said.

Hasina loses

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the two constituencies which she had lost.

Hasina was defeated by Major (Rtd) Abdul Mannan of BNP in Dhaka-10 constituency. Mannan polled 45,065 votes while Hasina got 29,120 votes.

Sadeq Hossain Khoka of BNP leading by a wide margin in Dhaka-7 constituency over Sheikh Hasina. Results of one centre were postponed but Khoka was elected as the margin of vote is wide and re-polling will not be needed in the constituency.

Awami League chief, however, won from her home constituency Copalganj-3. He defeated Hafez Omar Ahmed, of Khilafat Andolon by a wide margin. Hasina polled 67,945 votes while Hafez got 17,257 votes.

Maj (Rtd) Mannan refutes Hasina's allegation

Major (Rtd) Abdul Mannan of BNP on Thursday refuted Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's allegation that his workers had resorted to false voting and terrorism in Ramna-Tejgaon constituency, reports UNB.

In a statement, Mannan, who beat Sheikh Hasina in Wednesday's polls in the seat, termed Hasina's complaint as "false, baseless and in contravention with the election code of conduct".

He said the Awami League workers had resorted to false voting and violence in different polling centres including Shahbag Public Library, Eskaton Ladies Club and Kakrail Primary School.

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