

Metropolitan

I've no stake in polls, says Shahabuddin

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed said in Dhaka on Sunday that all were now set for holding the coming parliamentary elections in an orderly manner, reports BSS.

He was talking to a seven-member Commonwealth group of election observers who called on him at the President's Secretariat Sunday morning.

"I have taken all measures both legislative and administrative for holding the polls in a free and fair manner," the Acting President asserted.

He said, "I have brought back normalcy in the country by restoring law and order following the recent mass-movement as the first step for holding elections peacefully."

Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed said, the Election Commission had also been reconstituted with three sitting Supreme Court Judges and made an independent body with massive powers vested on it for the first time to conduct free, fair and impartial parliamentary elections.

Besides the normal security arrangements, the local bodies of Union Parishads and Pouroshavas have been made collectively responsible for peace and order during the elections, he emphasised.

The Acting President said, "neither myself nor my advisers have any stake in the coming elections excepting that it should be above any question. I have repeatedly said this."

He emphasised that "I have not come to stay in my present post a moment longer than necessary nor do I have any future political ambition."

He also stated in clear terms that re-election would take place in polling centres wherever disturbance marred

normal voting.

The Commonwealth observers group told the Acting President that they had a feeling that his interim government had a great sense of commitment for holding the coming elections in a free, fair and impartial manner.

They said they had witnessed a great mass enthusiasm about the elections which

Faults in voters' list found

By Staff Correspondent

Some faults in the voters' list have been found in a recent survey conducted by Co-ordination Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB).

The organisation released the findings of its survey in press conference at Jatiya Press Club on Sunday. The CCHRB conducted a survey on two wards under Dhaka 10 constituency.

In Ward No. 71, about 1,000 eligible voters have not been registered. At the Postal Training Centre of the Ward No. 334, voters out of a total of 2,007 have already left the area, 10 have died, 10 have been enlisted in more than one area, eight enlisted twice in the same area and one female voter's name has been found in the male voters' list.

Some mistakes were found in the names and fathers' names of 30 voters.

In the Bailey Road area of Ward No. 65 under the same constituency, number of the total voters is 1,000. Of them, 150 have left the area, 20 names remained in the voters' list who have died 10, the enlisted in more than one area and 89 eligible persons were not enlisted in the voters list.

Father RW Timm, President of CCHRB told the conference that the observers of the organisation reported that code of conduct was being violated by different parties. The maximum limit of electoral expenses fixed by the government was also not being followed in many area, he said.

Father Timm complained that the government has denied the local observers entry into the polling centres during the voting.

He said the Election Commission has rejected their application seeking no objection certificate. There was, however, no objection in observing the polls from outside the centres, he said.

they hoped would lead to fulfilment of public expectations.

The Commonwealth group of election observers which is led by Dato K. Pathmandan, a former Deputy Minister of Malaysia, comprises jurists, legal experts, high election officials and public leaders from Britain, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Jamaica and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Later, a 30-member group of election observers from the SAARC countries also called on the Acting President at his office.

Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed also told them about the elaborate measures taken by his government for holding the coming polls.

He said, his government had not only created a congenial atmosphere for fair elections but also strengthened and allowed unrestricted freedom to the press to facilitate election campaigning by contesting parties.

Milad Mahfil at DU

A Milad Mahfil will be held on March 2 at the Masjidul Zamia of Dhaka University after the Asr prayer on the occasion of Shah-e-Barat, a University press release said.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Montruzaman Mia will attend the function as the chief guest. Pro Vice Chancellor Prof. Oakli Ahmed will be present as the special guest.

It will be presided over by Prof. Abdullah Farook.

Ph D awarded

Dhaka University Syndicate has conferred Ph. D degree on Mr. Golam Mostafa of Zoology Department for his thesis 'Composite Culture and Biology of Some Indigenous Fishes of Bangladesh.' Prof Mahmud-ul-Amin and Dr. Gulshan Ara Latifa were his research guides.

The syndicate also awarded M. Phil degree to Mahfuzur Rahman Sarker of Bio-Chemistry Department.

Labour Secy off to Geneva

Secretary, Nooruddin Ali Masood left Dhaka on Sunday for Geneva to attend the governing body meeting of International Labour Organisation being held from February 24 to March 2, an official handout said.



Members of the SAARC non-government poll observer team holding a Press conference in Dhaka on Sunday, touting the election preparations as adequate. — Star Photo

Dateline Khulna

All set for election

From Our Khulna Bureau

KHULNA, Feb 24: With only two days left for the 5th Jatiya Sangsad election on Wednesday, local election authorities and the district administration including law enforcing agencies have taken adequate measures to hold the polls in a free and fair atmosphere in all the six constituencies of the district.

A number of 454 Presiding Officers, 2,093 Assistant Presiding Officers and 4,186 Polling Officers were appointed in all the 454 polling centres. The polling officials are by now ready to hold the February 27 election as per guidelines set by the Election Commission.

The members of the armed forces, BDR, Police and Ansars have already been deployed and election materials sent to all the centres as designed all over the country.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner and the District Returning Officer of Khulna Asaduzzaman Bhuiyan has completed the supervision of all the upazila-level election camps. The upazila-level training sessions have also been completed as per schedule. He hoped that no polls violence would occur on the election day as round-the-clock vigilance would be maintained to meet any untoward situation.

All the 56 candidates in the six parliamentary seats are reported to be awfully busy to

give a final touch to their polls preparations with gearing up of electioneering through publicity by microphones, pitched processions and door to door campaigns which will be barred from Monday midnight.

Voters of all walks of life seemed to be very much enthusiastic about Wednesday's polls which they hope will bring a scope to exercise their rights of franchise for the first time.

A little over 11 lakh voters, both male and female, with about 17 thousands new in the list, are expected to cast their votes for the candidates of AL, BNP, Jamaat, Zaker Party, JP, JSD, IOJ, CPB, 5-Party Alliance and Muslim League. Nine other independent candidates are also remaining in their preferences.

BNP, AL, JP and Zaker Party have fielded candidates in all the 6 seats while Jamaat, 5-Party Alliance and Muslim League have fielded candidates in 4 constituencies each. Islam Oikya Jote and JSD(Rab) have fielded 3 candidates each.

Having highest number of candidates in Khulna-2 constituency many alleged that the major contenders here have already exceeded the limit of Taka 3 lakhs set by the government for election expenses.

Till to date only two major poll violence took place in the district, one in Khulna-2 and another in Khulna-3 constituency. About 75 persons

were injured following clashes between BNP and Awami League activists.

Meanwhile, Khulna Metropolitan Police Commissioner in an order issued Saturday imposed ban on carrying and using of any crackers, bombs, lethal weapons, explosive materials including licenced firearms within the Khulna metropolitan city area until further order.

The KMP has also sought active cooperation from all quarters in the interest of maintaining law and situation for holding the JS election in a peaceful atmosphere.

Inter Religious Council meet March 4

Bangladesh Inter Religious Council for Peace and Justice (BICPAJ) has arranged a discussion meeting at its Dhaka office on March 4, reports UNB.

The meeting has been arranged on the auspicious visit of Cardinal Francis Arrizze, President of the Pontifical Council for Inter Religious Dialogue Commission of Vatican, says a press release.

Arrizze will address the meeting and reply to queries about his organisation.

Dateline Rajshahi

Door-to-door campaign starts

Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Feb 24: Election fever has gripped Rajshahi district where a number of national level leaders are seeking representation to the parliament.

Besides, the traditional electioneering through propaganda materials these leaders are making door-to-door visits to the voters. The candidates have also intensified their campaign in different hat, bazars and towns of the district. Meetings, processions are being held from morning till midnight. The voters are very much careful in discussion the merits and demerits of the candidates.

A total of 37 candidates are contesting in five constituencies.

In Rajshahi One Constituency Barrister Aminul Haque of BNP faces Advocate

Mohammad Mohsin of Awami League while Jamaat candidate Mujibur Rahman has emerged as a potential candidate.

Ex-RUCSU VP Fazole Hossain Badsha is in the run with Five Party Alliance ticket from Rajshahi-2 constituency. He is facing Advocate Kabir Hossain of BNP, Mahbub Zaman Bhulu of Awami League and Jamaat candidate Ataur Rahman.

In Rajshahi-3 constituency, Babu Rakkhal Chandra of Awami League faces Advocate Enamul Haque of BNP and former minister of the deposed president Ershad government Sardar Amzad Hossain.

Muslim League leader Ayenuddin is seeking polls from Rajshahi-4 constituency. His rivals are Abdus Sattar Mondal of BNP and Tazul Islam

Faruque of Awami League. In Rajshahi-5 constituency Awami League candidate Doctor Alauddin faces Azzur Rahman of BNP and Professor Abdul Monnan of Jamaat.

High-level meet to ensure fair polls

A high level meeting attended by all the candidates for the parliament election, heads of the Law Enforcing Agencies, upazila chairman and elite of the town was held recently in the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner, Chapalnawabganj.

Kazi Shamsul Alam Secretary Ministry of Planning presided over the meeting.

Mr. Alam asked all concerned to take all possible measure to make the election impartial, free and fair.

Dateline Chittagong

1 killed in AL-NDP clash

Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 24: One person was killed, twenty others were injured and ten election camps were damaged in a clash between supporters of rival political parties at Munshighata under Raozan Upazila here Saturday night.

The victim Mohammed Alamgir, a health department employee was claimed by both National Democratic Party and Awami League as their workers.

Gun shots were exchanged in the hour-long clash in which ten election offices of both NDP and Awami League were damaged. Police brought the situation under control by dispersing the warring mob.

The clash ensued when both the parties tried to hold projection meetings at a local school ground. NDP and Awami League blamed each other for launching attack.

In protest against the incident, NDP declared hartal at Raozan on Sunday. Transport Owners' Association said, road communication between Chittagong and Rangamati had remained suspended since Sunday morning through Raozan due to road barricade raised by picketers.

In another clash at least fifteen persons were injured at Fakirahat under Hathazari Upazila Saturday evening. Police said the clash occurred when a procession of BNP was attacked by a group of people.

Both Awami League and BNP blamed each other for the clash. Goutam Dewan, Chairman, Rangamati Local Government Parishad, Saturday called upon all concerned to maintain impartiality in the election on February 27, reports BSS.

Addressing a press conference at Rangamati Press Club, he reiterated that the Local Government Parishad would remain neutral. He said any official of the Parishad found violating the neutral stand, would be punished.

Goutam Dewan said, every citizen including government officials of the Parishad, should work hard for a fair election to pave the way for a democratic government.

'BNP workers assaulted in 861 Dhaka incidents'

By Staff Correspondent

Lt General (Retd) Mir Shaukat Ali, President, Dhaka City Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), on Sunday alleged that BNP workers were assaulted in 861 incidents by the workers of a big political party in eight Dhaka city constituencies.

At a press conference in Jatiya Press Club on Sunday he said the party which introduced one-party rule in the past was now trying to snatch away the rights of the people to vote by unleashing terrorism.

As BSS adds: Expressing his apprehension of large scale poll violence and vote rigging, the BNP leader alleged that there existed no effective mechanism to implement the directives issued by the Election Commission and the government to hold a fair and free election.

He said the care-taker government would lose its credibility if it failed to hold the election perfectly and hand over power to an elected government, which was its main task.

He alleged that despite the claim of the care-taker government to maintain impartiality, his party noticed some short comings in the process of implementation of a neutral approach.

Shaukat Ali alleged that some parties had been violating constantly the code of conduct framed by the government to hold a free and fair elections. In this connection, he pointed out that in the metropolitan area, the 'opponents' committed 861 incidents against his party

nominees during the last fortnight which were clear violation of the democratic norms and the code of conduct.

He said, in these incidents at least 88 activists of his party were injured and 117 election camps of paddy sheafs were destroyed. He further alleged that some 'identified quarters' being afraid of the tide in favour of paddy sheaf, were hatching conspiracy to disrupt the elections. They were taking terror tactics to frighten the voters particularly the women voters so that they did not turn up in the voting centers on the election day, he added.

He called upon the government to take measures to stop such terrorist activities so that the people could exercise their right of franchise freely.

Bangla, German poetry recitation festival begins

A three-day Bangla and German poetry recitation festival began in Saturday at the German Cultural Center in Dhaka, reports BSS.

The festival, organised in observance of the Amar Ekushey, was participate by the eminent reciters.

Education Adviser Zillur Rahman Siddiqui inaugurated the festival. Jointly organised by German Radio Fan Club and Meghdoot Recitation Sangsad, the inaugural function was addressed by poet Syed Shamsul Haq as special guest while Moyud Mannan presided.

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