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The Daily Star

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Treasury bench rejects Opposition claim of manipulation

AL walks out over Mirpur poll results

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League members yesterday staged a brief walkout, following a prolonged unscheduled debate, from the Jatiya Sangsad protesting, what they termed as, the "ruling party manipulation" of the Mirpur by-election results.

The AL members also demanded re-polling in a number of centres in which, they alleged, their polling agents were not provided with the official copies of the tabulating sheets.

During the unscheduled debate on Private Members Day, which lasted for well over an hour, the opposition members charged the ruling BNP of "interfering with the work of the Election Commission (EC) to manipulate the by-election results."

However, Treasury bench members refuted the charges saying that none of the AL leaders present or their polling agents voiced "any objections whatsoever" during the tabulation of the results at the Election Control Room in Mirpur on polling night.

Throughout the lengthy discussions on the subject, Speaker Shaikh Razaque Ali was reluctant to allow the debate to continue. "The Election Commission is a constitutional

AL calls hartal in city tomorrow, countrywide Wednesday

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League has called hartal on Saturday and Wednesday next to protest alleged manipulation of election results and police harassment during Wednesday's Jatiya Sangsad by-election in Mirpur.

The six-hour hartal would be observed in Dhaka from 6 am Saturday while eight-hour nationwide hartal until 2 pm will be enforced on Wednesday, AL Chief Whip in the Parliament Mohammad Nasim announced Thursday at a press briefing.

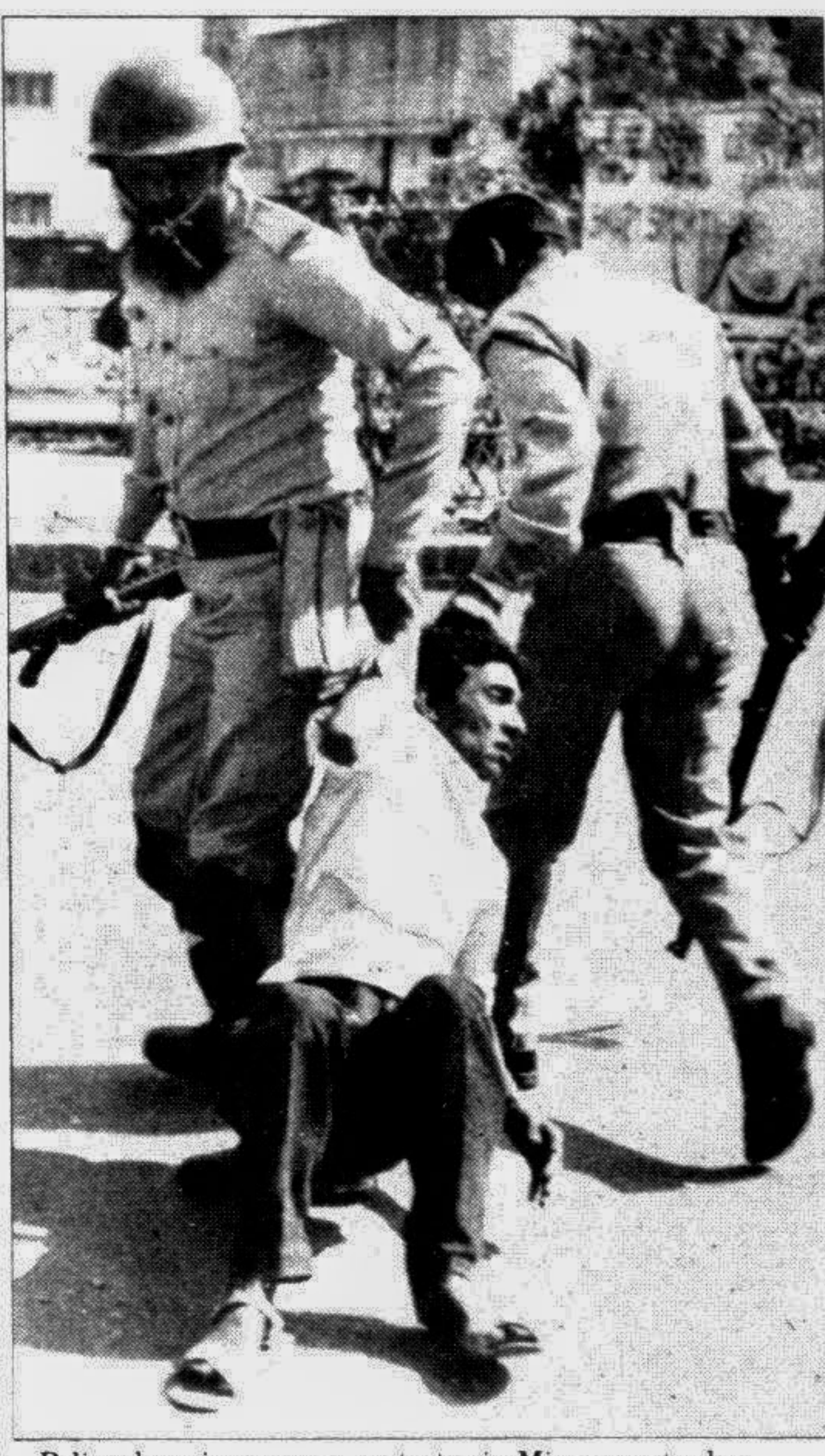
The Mirpur chapter of the AL has, however, called a

AL submits 17-point complaint with EC

By Staff Correspondent

The Awami League Thursday filed a formal complaint with the Election Commission alleging a number of "irregularities" during the Mirpur (Dhaka-11) by-election on Wednesday.

KM Jahangir, the chief election agent of the AL candidate Kamal Majumder submitted a 17-point complaint to the office of the Chief Election Commissioner in the afternoon immediately after the announcement of the result by



Police dragging away a protester in Mirpur yesterday. — Star photo

CID takes over case Rahman on remand again

By Court Correspondent

A Deputy Director of Geological Survey Department, Khandker SM Habibur Rahman and a businessman Nuruzaman Munna arrested in connection with smuggling state documents to a neighbouring country were taken on two-day police remand Thursday for further questioning.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate yesterday rejected the bail petitions on behalf of the accused persons and granted the police remand.

The case was handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) from the Special Branch (SB) of police yesterday.

Both the arrested persons were charged under the Official Secret Act, 1993. The case was lodged with Ramna Police Station.

Advocate Shamsul Islam and Advocate Noor Mohammad appeared on behalf of the accused persons yesterday.

Pak NA pledges continued support to Kashmiris

ISLAMABAD, Feb 4: Pakistan's National Assembly pledged continued support to the Kashmiri "self-determination" struggle, in a resolution adopted unanimously here today, reports AFP.

The resolution, moved by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Amir Hussain, condemned what it called Indian "brutalities" on Kashmiris appealing to the civilized world to side with the "oppressed" people.

An influential fundamentalist party, the Jamaat-e-Islami, has called for the observance of a nationwide day of solidarity Friday with the three-year old Muslim revolt in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

More than 9,000 people have died during the ongoing insurgency blamed by India on Pakistan, which says it only extends moral support to a "legitimate" struggle for "self-determination."



War of words: Leaders of the ruling and the opposition parties at the Returning Officer's room yesterday. — Star photo

EC tally: BNP 80127, AL 77535

Mohsin elected officially

By Staff Correspondent

Syed Mohammad Mohsin of the ruling BNP was yesterday declared officially elected in Wednesday's by-election to the Dhaka-11 (Mirpur) vacant seat of Parliament.

Announcing the official results at his temporary office in the Dhaka Court Building, the Returning Officer Badiur Rahman said Mohsin won the by-election securing 80,127 votes against 77,535 ballots polled by his nearest rival Kamal Ahmed Majumder of Awami League.

According to an earlier unofficial results given by the Election Commission, Mohsin bagged 93,797 votes while Kamal secured 90,684.

When asked about the difference, Badiur Rahman who is also the Divisional Commissioner of Dhaka informed the newsmen that the number of ballots polled by both the leading candidates was higher in the primary counting as one

Five different results

Star Report

Five different results of the Mirpur by poll were available so far including the one announced by the Returning Officer Thursday.

According to the Returning Officer, the BNP candidate Syed Mohammad Mohsin bagged 80,127 votes while his closest competitor AL candidate Kamal Ahmed Majumder got 77,535 votes.

The first result was announced by the private UNB news agency Wednesday at 9:17 pm that said that the BNP man secured 79,695 votes as against 75,892 of the AL candidate.

A BSS story creeded half an hour later gave the same result.

The Election Commission Public Relation Officer Wednesday midnight phoned a number of newspapers to say that the BNP nominee got 93,797 votes and AL Candidate bagged 90,684 votes. But it was not announced by the commission officially.

Clashes reign Mirpur

By Staff Correspondent

Sporadic clashes between the Awami League (AL) and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) supporters and between AL workers and police yesterday kept the city's Mirpur area tense and left a number of people injured.

The clashes began in the wake of an AL hartal in Mirpur to protest what it said rigging in by-election in the constituency a day earlier when score others were also injured in post-poll violence.

AL candidate in the Mirpur by-election Kamal Ahmed Majumder at a press briefing yesterday evening claimed that at least 100 people were injured in fresh clashes. Police also arrested 40 AL activists, he added.

The Mirpur Awami League has also called a series of half-day hartals from Saturday through Thursday excepting the Shab-e-Barat day.

Yesterday, first clash took place as early as 7 am as transport workers tried to bring out their vehicles in the face of AL resistance.

Another clash followed at 8 am in Pallabi area between the BNP and AL supporters. One person was injured in bomb blast here. Witnesses also reported hearing gunshots during the clash.

Police lathicharged the picketers who put up barricade on the main road in Section 11 at 9 am and rounded up 20.

JCD activist shot dead in Mirpur

By Staff Correspondent

Mohammad Asad (22), a JCD activist of Mirpur Bangla College was allegedly murdered by unidentified gunmen Thursday.

According to the deceased's family source, he was murdered by gunmen around 9:30 am yesterday at Section No 6 in Mirpur. (He received bullet wounds in his abdomen, witnesses said.

Asad was immediately rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

While contacted, Mirpur police failed to give details of the incident.

Huda hails AL for 'better performance'

Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda yesterday reiterated government's sincerity for giving democracy an institutional shape, reports BSS.

Participating in an unscheduled debate on Wednesday's announcement of unofficial results of Mirpur-by-elections, the Information Minister congratulated the opposition Awami League for their better performance in the by-election belying his firm belief that Awami League would be defeated by 25,000 votes.

Barrister Huda also congratulated the people of Mirpur for supporting BNP candidate in the election for carrying forward the positive politics of BNP.

Referring to the allegation of the opposition about the results announced by radio and TV, the Information Minister said that he himself and also the government had never tried to interfere with the media.

Shantibahini kidnaps 4

CHITTAGONG, Feb 4: The outlawed Shantibahini terrorists kidnapped four Bangladeshis from Nayapara, Kaptai, under Rangamati Hill District last night, reports BSS.

Arjun Singh quits cabinet body on Babri Mosque

NEW DELHI, Feb 4: A top Indian minister has quit a cabinet committee probing the razing of the Babri Mosque, amid mounting disaffection in the ruling party against Premier PV Narasimha Rao, an aide said today.

Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh, long seen as an aspirant for the Prime Minister's office, stepped down on Tuesday during a meeting here, stunning two other ministers and officials, one of his aides said.

Arjun Singh resigned after another minister disagreed with his criticism of Rao's role ahead of the December 6 demolition of the ancient mosque in Ayodhya by Hindu zealots, the aide said.

"The minister has told the PM that he cannot continue with the committee," the officials added.

IFC chief due today

By Staff Correspondent

Sir William Ryrrie, Chief Executive of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), arrives in Dhaka, Friday on a five-day visit to Bangladesh.

During stay, the IFC Chief is scheduled to call on the Prime Minister, Energy and Telecommunication Ministers, meet top business leaders and high government officials.

He is also expected to visit the Chittagong Export Processing Zone, the Bata Shoe Factory and three textile mills.

Sir Ryrrie's visit is focused on IFC's willingness to pursue investment opportunities in Bangladesh.

IFC's Asia Department Director Varel Freeman, acting Chief of IFC's South Asia Regional Mission Antonio David and IFC-Asia Investment Officer Deepak Khanna will accompany the IFC Chief.

IFC is a member of the World Bank group and is mandated to stimulate the growth of emerging economies through financing of private business in developing countries.

5 countries to evacuate diplomats from Kabul as fighting on

NEW DELHI, Feb 4: China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Turkey have decided to evacuate their diplomats from Kabul because of fighting between government and rebel forces, an Indian spokesman said here today, reports AFP.

The decision was taken following heavy rocketing of the Afghan capital by forces of renegade Mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the official said.

The External Affairs Ministry spokesman described the closure of the Indian High Commission (embassy) as temporary, saying plans were being made to try to evacuate the mission chief and his 17-member staff.

The heads of the five missions met earlier today and decided to close down temporarily, the spokesman said.

In the Afghan capital, diplomats said today that representatives from the nine remaining foreign missions in the beleaguered city met daily to assess the uncertain security situation.

Due to danger from the daily rocket bombardment which has not let up since early January, all embassies have already cut back on non-essential staff, and most are now contemplating a total pullout, the sources said before the Indian announcement.

"We are virtually confined within the perceived security of our embassy compounds, said one Asian diplomat.

Within the last week, the Pakistan, Indian, Chinese, Turkish and Iranian missions have suffered direct rocket hits and some Iranians were evacuated Wednesday. The other missions still operating in the capital are from Saudi Arabia, North Korea and The Palestine Liberation Organisation.

One junior Indian staffer was killed Tuesday, the same day another rocket landed in the street in front of the Pakistan embassy, and blew in most of the facing windows.

Pakistan said Wednesday that around a dozen non-essential diplomatic personnel were being evacuated from its mission in Kabul, but added that a skeleton staff would stay on.

Some commercial flights are still functioning out of Kabul while a land route could be taken via Tashkent, the Indian spokesman said.

He did not disclose details of the evacuation plans of the missions named. Some of the resident expatriates still have families in strife-torn Kabul.

Rohingya repatriation US refugee body hails govt decision

Star Report

A powerful US lobby group for refugees has lauded the government decision to allow UNHCR to interview the returning Rohingya refugees in the recently resumed repatriation process.

In a letter addressed to Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, on February 3, the US Committee for Refugees (USCR) said: "We welcome your government's decision to allow UNHCR to interview all heads of families, and to continue to provide asylum to those who did not wish to repatriate."

The latter noted the January 31 repatriation of 204 Rohingya families to Myanmar "and that representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees were allowed to interview the heads of those families, and of 73 other families who chose not to repatriate."

However, the USCR expressed concern about the "well-being" of the returning refugees "because of the absence of international monitoring in their home areas".

But went to "respect and