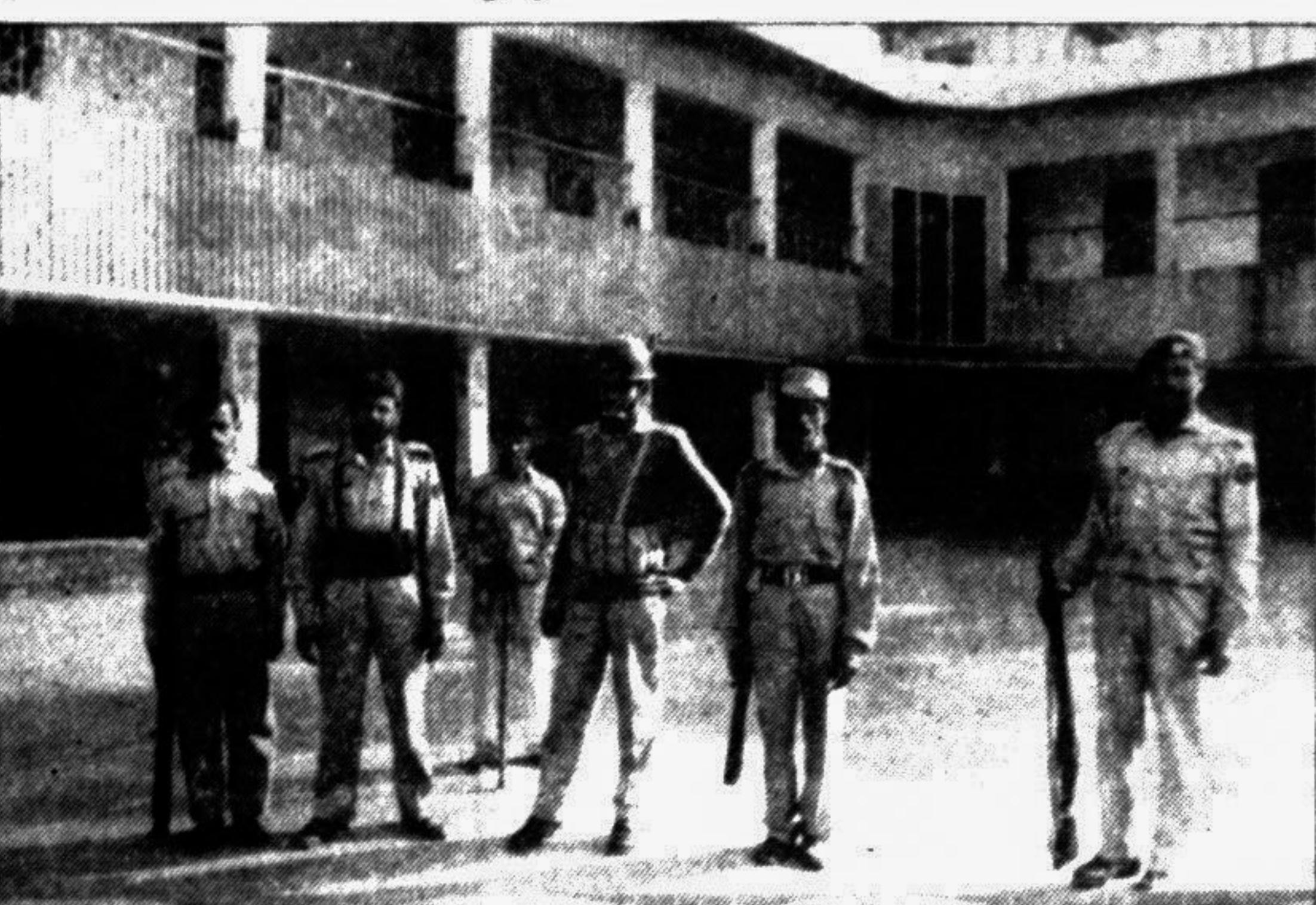




Female voters queuing at Batamul High School polling centre in the city yesterday.

— Star photo



A view of the polling centre at Kazi Alauddin Road in the city at 9 am yesterday.

— Star photo

Snapshots from polling centres

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even name his candidate when asked by The Daily Star mobile team at the Dhaka City College centre.

The Daily Star engaged three mobile teams of reporters who visited 30 polling stations in the capital during the polling.

They started visiting polling centres both in the old and new parts of the city as voting began. Some centres on the outskirts of the city were also covered.

Some of the centres were visited more than once to have a first-hand information on what happened when people went there to cast votes.

During the day-long visit, The Daily Star teams generally found that voters turn out at these centres was very poor.

Stuffing of ballot boxes with ballot papers and under-age voting were seen rampant in the afternoon. Gross violation of polling rules and helplessness of polling officials at some of the centres were also observed. Unsealed ballot boxes were seen in a number of booths.

Violation of rules such as campaigning inside the polling stations, repeated voting by the same persons, non-marking of the thumbs of voters, posterizing inside polling centres, taking ballot papers out of the centres were typical of the scenes at the polling centres.

Govt Titumir College

A group of youths was found stuffing ballot-papers into ballot boxes at the Presiding Officer's (PO) room at the Government Titumir College centre in the city yesterday. The door of outer entrance of the PO's room were shut.

The grim-faced Presiding Officer (PO), seated at the corner of the adjacent room, was seen putting his signatures on the ballot papers produced before him by the youths.

A three-member mobile reporting team of The Daily Star witnessed this while visiting the polling centre at Mohakhali under Gulshan thana at 3 pm.

The PO repeatedly requested The Daily Star reporters to leave the place and in a low voice said, "I'm in trouble and under tremendous pressure".

Avoiding questions from the correspondents, he said, "Do whatever you think best for me".

When he was asked about the turnout of voters in his centre, one of the youths asked the PO to say, "It would be some 60 per cent."

The youths, who identified themselves as voters, became angry when the reporters team entered the presiding officer's room where they were sitting around several tables put together and stamping the ballot-papers and stuffing those into ballot boxes.

"Where have you come from? Why have you entered this room? Whom do you want?", shouted one while another pointed his finger at the adjacent room and said, "Leave this room. The Presiding Officer is there."

Earlier, an assistant presiding officer, who was chatting with his colleagues, told correspondents that the presiding officer was not available. Asked about the PO's whereabouts, he suggested a search around.

The Daily Star newsmen, guided by another polling official, however managed to get into the PO's room through the connecting door from the adjacent room, the main door of which was found shut, but not locked.

Later, the reporters rushed to the Gulshan police station to inform the Titumir College incidents.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Police, Ashraf, on hearing the incidents picked up his telephone and said, "See what action I take". The reporters then left.

While contacted again at night, the AC was not available at the Gulshan thana. A duty officer said, "We can't take any action unless the Presiding Officer concerned

lodges a formal complaint". The Election Commission was also informed of the Titumir College incident but till late night, none could say whether any action was taken.

Central Women's College

Pintu, who claimed to be a student of class VIII had to return from the Central Women's College centre at Gopibagh in the city after The Daily Star reporters challenged him.

Pintu, aged about 14, admitted that he had cast vote once and returned to the centre for voting again.

He was whisked away by his companions when the Presiding Officer, being informed of the incident by the newsmen, made a search for the presiding officer.

The presiding officer told The Daily Star correspondents, "We have nothing to do here. You have come from a newspaper. Why did you not bring a newspaper with you?"

University Lab School and College

Till 3:30 pm 1500 votes were cast at the University Laboratory School and College. Most of the voters were from nearby slums, according to witnesses. Some 5400 voters were registered with the centre.

The presiding officer was not present. Some youths were seen in the centre during most of the voting time, the witnesses claimed.

City College Centre

A total of 245 votes out of 4273 registered cast their votes at the City College centre till closing time, according to the presiding officer.

When two correspondents of The Daily Star visited the centre at 4:28 pm, the ballot papers had already been counted.

Earlier when asked he said that eight out of 22 officials were absent from polls duties at his centre.

Monija Rahman Girls High School

The helpless PO at the Monija Rahman Girls High School at Gendaria in the old part of the city, when asked about the voting said, "You yourself see the free style voting here."

"Only six out of 16 officials turned up for their duties," said Sharifuddin Ahmed, the PO.

Some youths were seen campaigning inside the centre when the reporters visited it around 12:30 pm.

General Scenario

During the day-long visit, the mobile team generally found that the polling officials were not available in a reasonable strength to manage the elections.

The mobile unit of The Daily Star visited polling centres during the day which included Aliganj Government Primary School, under Fatullah thana, Bakchiar Ideal High School, under Demra thana, Faridabad High School under Sutrapur thana and City College under Dhanmondi thana.

In Aliganj Government Primary School 6 out of 22 polling officers did not turn up, while in Faridabad 7 out of 13 officials were not available. In Manija Rahman Girls School 6 out of 16 were present and in Central Women's School 8 out of 22 were absent.

Generally the polling agents of candidates excepting the BNP candidates were not present. The polling officials complained that they received documents for the polling agents of the BNP from the Election Commission offices.

The secrecy of balloting was not seen to be maintained, ballot boxes were found here and there of the people.

One Mohammad Senu claiming himself as the polling agent of an independent candidate could not even name his candidate when answering the questions of The Daily Star mobile team at the centre of Dhaka City College.

Voters' Comments

Arts Building Centre, DU

Only one voter, out of 1998 registered with the Arts Building Centre at Dhaka University, cast his vote till 11 am.

However at about 11:35 am, a group of 10 to 12 youths arrived and after that the number of votes cast increased to 500.

At 3:30 pm, half an hour before the closing time, number of votes cast was only

When the Presiding Offi-

CEC on polls

From Page 1

the army on polls duty at different parts of the country.

The CEC replied that the army was deployed under a constitutional provision, the army has their own code of conduct and they go by it," he said.

The CEC expressed his deep regret on the Opposition boycott of the elections and claimed that he had taken every possible step to make it a free and fair election.

"All this allegation of irregularities could have been much easier to handle if there was an all-out participation," Justice Sadeque said adding that he was suspending some results of the elections because there had been allegations of irregularities.

"We have received allegations of rigging from Gopalganj-3, Nandail-9, Mymensingh-9 and from Nabi-

nagar.

The CEC on polls and bomb blast in the port city.

Shohag, 16, son of a police official, was shot dead in front of his residence near Rampura Primary School polling centre during a clash between anti-poll activists and police.

An unidentified youth was also killed, at Feroz Shah Colony in the city when a bomb went off yesterday morning. The 100 injured people included 10 police personnel, one BDR man and a couple identified as Swapan, 25 and his wife Rani, 18.

BCL activist Quamrul Islam received serious bullet injury at North Pahartali polling centre during a gunfight with rival JCD activists.

News Agency UNB said that three persons were killed in Chittagong. UNB also reported that Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman, who is contesting the election from Kotwali constituency, could not cast his vote at the Dewanbandi C&B Colony school centre due to the absence of presiding and polling officers there.

Barisal: Our Staff Correspondent reported that a young man Saiful Palwan, 20, was gunned down when he was caught in a crossfire between anti-poll activists and police at Dakshin Kazir Char Primary School polling centre around 1:45 pm.

Police opened fire when a group of anti-election activists reportedly attacked the polling centre.

A police constable, Abdur Razzak was also injured in the violence, police said. The activists hurled several cocktails and fired gun shots as they reportedly tried to snatch ballot papers, boxes and other election materials.

Dinajpur: Our Correspondent reported that a young man, Enamul, 22, was gunned down near Birganj thana in Dinajpur when a group of anti-election activists clashed with troops who were carrying election materials at around 10:55 am, police sources said.

At least 100' shots were exchanged between security personnel and anti-election activists during the clashes.

A police officer, Rafiqul Islam, was stabbed by anti-poll activists at Harinakunda and an Ansar personnel came under bomb attack at Raghu-

12 deaths

From Page 1

country should now rest with the President.

The administrative machinery, law enforcing agencies and other lawful authorities including the Armed Forces should take orders directly from the President.

UNOs, TNOs, DCs, divisional commissioners, SPs, police commissioners and other lawful agencies of thanas, districts and divisions should take orders directly from the secretaries concerned.

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A good number of people cast votes: B Chy

From Page 1

BNP leader AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday

said that a good number of people cast their votes in the 6th parliamentary election, braving the threats and intimidation by the three main opposition parties, reports UNE.

He claimed that turnout of

the voters would have been

higher if there was no violence and acts of terrorism.

The former deputy leader

of the House was briefing

newsmen on general election

at Hotel Sheraton soon after

the voting closed.

Chowdhury informed the

newsmen that out of the total

21,000 polling centres, voting

could not be held in 306 centres due to violence let loose by the opposition activists.

Referring to oppositions' hartal and 'people's curfew', the BNP leader said that the three main opposition parties did not only boycott the election but tried to disrupt the polls process.

The people have ex-

pressed their will through

the election that they love

democracy and want to con-

tinue the constitutional pro-

cess," Chowdhury said.

In a statement, he said, "I

sincerely congratulate the

people of Bangladesh for

casting their votes in the

general election. We are

glad to see that a good num-

ber of people are casting their

votes. It is a good sign that

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