

BUP survey shows 71.2 pc for polls under caretaker govt

By Staff Correspondent

A total of 71.2 per cent of respondents in an opinion survey felt that a free and fair election was possible only under a neutral caretaker government.

The survey also revealed that 21.2 per cent of those interviewed felt that there was no alternative but to complete the February 15 election for upholding the constitutional obligation.

But 47.5 per cent said there were other options and 31.4 per cent refrained from giving any opinion on the polls.

Conducted by a leading private research organisation, Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) under the supervision of economist Dr Qazi Khaliquzzaman Ahmed, the opinion poll was conducted in 15 Jatiya Sangsad constituencies in Dhaka, and one each in Gazipur and Narayanganj.

Fifteen thousand people from a cross-section of society were interviewed for the opinion survey.

Sixty-eight point 3 per cent said the election was a shame as most major political parties did not participate in it.

On the implications of the February 15 election, 82.7 per cent said it was pushing the country towards a grave crisis. Sixty-three point 9 per cent said the election was handled proved the validity of the demand for non-party caretaker government while 16.1 per cent did not respond.

In response to a question as to how the impasse could be resolved, 92 per cent said the ruling and the opposition parties should come to a settlement. To another question, 68.7 per cent said the President should send a reference to the Supreme Court about the February 15 election.

On the arrest of political leaders, 82.2 per cent said it was accentuating the political conflict and 74.5 per cent said the government's democratic image was adversely affected by arrests.

Asked if they would support a military government, 86.7 per cent replied in the negative while 9.5 per cent refrained from giving opinions.

About the Election Commission (EC), 62.5 per cent said it had failed to ensure neutrality while 22.7 per cent said its conduct was fair. The rest refrained from giving replies.

About the impact of the political impasse on the economy, 97.6 per cent said it had serious adverse impact. According to them the sectors most affected are agriculture (25.1 per cent), industrial production (23 per cent), buyers and sellers (21.9 per cent), development activities (10.6 per cent), export and import (6.5 per cent), foreign investment (4.4 per cent), and garments industry (3.5 per cent).



Police preventing photo journalists from entering the Secretariat yesterday morning after two bombs exploded in the area. — Star photo

Three killed in Ctg

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Rickshaws were on the roads since morning.

In Chittagong, three persons including a boy were killed in separate clashes at Pahartali, Nazhat and Sandwip. Over 20 people were injured in the clashes.

Goods handling and delivery of goods at the port remained suspended despite a minister's efforts to keep the port open as the stevedores and port workers abstained from duty.

Nizam Uddin, a motor-garage worker was fatally injured in a cross-fire when some activists of Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal and Chhatra League were locked in a gun-battle over possession of a Alankar cinema crossing at about 3 pm, police said. He died at the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Ten people were injured in the night that continued for about two hours from 2-30 pm. Scores of bombs were also blasted during the clashes and chase and counter chase.

The injured persons were admitted to the CMCH and different clinics in the city.

The clashing groups dispersed after police intervened.

Abu Taher, a Chhatra League activist, was gunned down allegedly by some Chhatra Shibir activists at noon in front of Jankar Cinema hall at Nazrat under Fatikchhari thana, police said. Taher was talking to his friends when the gunmen suddenly arrived, shot him and fled away, police added.

An unidentified boy, aged about 12 years, died on the spot when he was caught in a crossfire during a gunfight between some Awami League and BNP activists at Messapur village under Sandwip thana at about 2-30 pm, police said. The boy was a passerby.

Five persons were injured in the night. They were rushed to Sandwip health complex.

A police constable was injured when a patrol team came under bomb attack by Opposition activists at Sadarghat area at about 10 am today, police said. The injured constable was rushed to the hospital.

Bomb were also blasted by Opposition activists at Andarkilla crossing, Lalkhan bazar, Fakirhat jetty no. 3, Agabad, Chowmuhani, Momin road and Chawk Bazar area.

Most of the offices both public and private, shops and markets, business centres remained closed on the first day of non-cooperation here. All motorised vehicles stayed off the roads as pickets were active.

Police force were deployed at most of the places of the city.

BSS adds: Biman sources said all its scheduled flights to and from Chittagong operated as usual and the load was also normal.

Railway sources said, some of the inter-city trains left Chittagong station for different destinations but those were intercepted by pickets who either uprooted rail track or put up barricade at several points.

In Dhaka city, scores of vehicles were damaged at Mohakhali, Mirpur, Farmgate, Bangabandhu Avenue, Tejgaon, Sayedabad, Arambagh and some other places. At least

BNP, Opposition urged to sit for dialogue

A group of professionals and intellectuals yesterday urged the ruling party and the opposition to sit for dialogue and resolve the prevailing political crisis, reports UNB.

In a statement, 121 teachers, journalists, physicians, lawyers, former diplomats, agriculturists, engineers and cultural activists urged the politicians to avoid clash and confrontation, and go for peaceful solution of the political problem through discussion.

They congratulated both the ruling and opposition parties for requesting the President to convene a meeting of the political parties, and called upon them not to let this initiative fail.

The signatories to the statement include Prof Yajuddin Ahmed, Dr Mahububullah, Advocate Abdul Wadud Khan, Amanullah Kabir, Prof Aminul Islam, Javed Iqbal, Prof Mustahid Rahman, Prof Yusuf Haider, Prof Saifur Rahman, Ashrafuddin Ahmed Ujjal, Ariful Haq, Roushan Jamil, Selim Omrah Khan, Ahmed Zaman Chowdhury, Wahid Sadik, Subash Datta, Gazi Mahjarul Islam, Barister Moulana Hossain, Dr Tarique Shamsur Rahman, Babuna Foyez, Prof Salamullah Khan, Shamim Shikder, Shaheen Rahmatullah, Prof Mahfuzur Rahman and Prof Mobashwer Ali.

Repolling in Sirajganj-I tomorrow

SIRAJGANJ, Mar 9: Repolling in 82 centres of Sirajganj-I (Kazipur) constituency has again been fixed for March 11, reports UNB.

The Election Commission sources said repolling in the constituency could not be held on March 8 as ballot boxes and papers did not reach there due to road barricades put up by the election-boycotting parties.

Meanwhile, the EC has postponed the result of the parliamentary election of Sirajganj-4 (Ullapara) as independent candidate Shamsul Alam filed a complaint with the Commission against the ruling party candidate.

The authorities has fixed the hearing of the complaint at 12-30 pm tomorrow.

The repolling in the Ullapara constituency was held on Friday. According to unofficial sources, BNP candidate Akbar Ali was leading in the election.

Sources said voting in some 17 centres of the Ullapara constituency was not held while only one ballot was cast at the Akbar Ali College centre.

Meanwhile, a 'gayebana janaza' was held in Sirajganj town this morning for those killed on March 6 while resisting repolling in the district.

Injured AL activist dies at DMCH

By Staff Correspondent

An Awami League activist, who sustained bullet injuries during a party rally on March 7 at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday morning.

Atahar Ali Mollik, 45, son of late Abdul Goni Mollik of Nazipur, Pirojpur, received fatal wounds in his head when unidentified gangs buried crackers and fired several gunshots at the AL rally in the afternoon.

The body was sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy. A case has been filed with Mottijheel thana in this regard.

UNB reports from Khagrachhari: At least five Opposition activists were injured in attack during picketing at Matiranga yesterday.

The injured, said to be the activists of Awami League and its student front, were admitted to the Khagrachhari sadar hospital and the Matiranga thana health complex.

UNB reports from Jhenidah: Opposition activists attacked several government establishments in Kaliganj and Moheshpur thanas of the district, yesterday.

Witnesses said in Kaliganj thana offices of TNO, AC (Land) and Poursabha came under attack by the Opposition activists while in Moheshpur the TNO office was attacked.

UNB reports from Siraganj: Some 20 JCD activists were injured when a group of Jatiya Party workers allegedly attacked them at about 11 am yesterday.

20 litres of free fuel for buses plying in city

Star Report

The government will give 20 litres of fuel free of cost to buses plying in the city during the Opposition's non-cooperation movement, it was learnt here yesterday.

Compensation will also be given for damage to vehicles by pickets.

A number of buses were seen queuing for fuel at a filling station near the Rajarbagh Police Line yesterday. Most of the buses belonged to a government backed transport owners association and plied in inter-district routes, some of the drivers confided to this correspondent.

It was gathered from them that at least 150 vehicles were brought on the roads following pressure from the association. When asked they said drivers will not be given any extra remuneration for the service during the non-cooperation movement.

City AL demands cancellation of Feb 15 polls

Leaders of the City Awami League yesterday demanded the cancellation of 'farical' February 15 election and fresh polls under a neutral caretaker government, reports UNB.

Addressing a rally at the Bangabandhu Avenue the City AL leaders said they would welcome President's initiative for government-Opposition dialogue on caretaker issue if the Prime Minister joined it after her resignation.



An old man running away when police lobbed tear gas shells to disperse pickets in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. — Star photo

The Midnight File

34 US aircraft to patrol exclusive zone over S Iraq

AMMAN, Mar 9: Thirty-four US combat aircraft to be deployed soon in Jordan will take part in patrolling the air exclusion zone over southern Iraq, newspapers here reported today. Information Minister Marwan Moasher, who is accompanying King Hussein on a visit to the United States, told the press that the planes will carry out surveillance operations over Southern Iraq, reports AFP.

Rail link disrupted

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place between Kulaura and Baranchal as fish plates of the track were removed, railway sources said here. None was injured in the accident.

In another incident, the engine and two wagons of a goods train derailed as 126 feet rail track was removed at a place between Suryanagar and Belgachi in Rajbari.

Opposition activists joined by people, raised barricades, sawed off rail tracks, uprooted fish plates at different places besides ransacking some railway stations and forcing the employees out.

Movement of trains came to a virtual halt from mid-day and no train could leave Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Sylhet stations.

All the counters at the Kamalapur station were found vacant and there was none to answer queries from anxious passengers, warning there.

All the five inter-city trains which left Kamalapur station in the morning were halted at the Cantonment and Airport stations in the city as pickets

raised barricades at Tongi. Portions of the rail tracks were removed at points between Baumi and Kenduabazar near Mymensingh and between Gunabati and Hasanpur near Feni.

Staff members of railway control rooms at Pahartali, Rajshahi and Lalmonirhat and at Dewanganj, Kishoreganj and Bidyanagar stations were forced out of their offices by the Opposition activists.

Pickets also ransacked the Fatulla station and set fire to some slippers on the track.

Rab wants PM to quit

JSD leader ASM Abdur Rab yesterday called for the resignation of the Prime Minister and cancellation of the February 15 polls to provide the President the opportunity to take "a successful initiative" for the proposed dialogue, reports UNB.

In a statement, Rab said the Prime Minister's request to the President for taking the initiative for dialogue between the opposition parties and the ruling party is not enough to resolve the current crisis. "She (Begum Zia) will have to resign before the dialogue," he added.

Mannan

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Food and Agriculture Minister said we have already conceded to many things. They demanded a caretaker government and we agreed to that, they wanted early elections, which again we agreed to.

"When asked if it is a sign of the weakness of BNP that it was conceding to the Opposition demands one after another, Bhuiyan replied in the negative. "What we want is a peaceful solution to the problem," he added.

Asked whether the Opposition demand for cancellation of the February 15 elections was a negotiable one, the BNP leader said No. "If the poll is cancelled, then how will be bill for caretaker government be passed."

Prominent citizens rally today

By Staff Correspondent

Prominent citizens will hold a rally at the Shahid Minar square today to protest the government's alleged repressive actions throughout the country.

In a statement yesterday they said, the anti-people activities of the government in the name of elections have not only caused endless sorrows and sufferings of the people but are also pushing the country towards a civil war.

They demanded cancelling the February 15 election, forming a non-party caretaker government and releasing all political prisoners.

The signatories to the statement include Begum Sufia Kamal, Shaikat Osman, Professor Kabir Chowdhury, Barister Aminul Islam, Advocate Gazul Huq, Major General (rtd), C R Dutta, Syed Shamsul Hoque, Professor ATM Zahur Huq, Ramendu Majumder, Ferdousi Majumder, Hasem Khan, Asaduzzaman Noor, Shahrir Kabir and Barister Shaikh Ahmed.

AL observes hartal at Kishoreganj

KISHOREGANJ, Mar 9: A half-day hartal called by the district Awami League was observed here peacefully today demanding punishment to the killers of its two leaders, reports UNB.

Mills, factories, government offices as well as shops and business establishments were closed during the 6 am to 12 noon hartal. Train communications and vehicular traffic were off the road.

The AL and its front organisations Chhatra League and Jubo League held a rally in the town this morning demanding compensation to the families of the killed of district AL leader Sohrabuddin and Chhatra League leader Sirajul Islam Mia.

BCL leader Sirajul Islam Mia was allegedly killed by the JCD activists recently while BDR personnel killed Sohrabuddin on March 7.

The meeting also decided to hoist white flag halms and wear black badges in the next three days.

A meeting was also held at the thana sadar premises in protest of the killings. Jubo League General Secretary Rafiqul Islam Benu presided.

Benu who was arrested by the members of law enforcing agencies during countrywide illegal arms recovery drive on January 22, was released on bail from district jail on Friday.

India win a thriller

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Raju took one each.

Akram opted out of Pakistan's first match on Indian soil in seven years, with a strained back muscle sustained in the previous match against New Zealand.

"It was a big disappointment missing the match," Akram said. "I took two injections in the morning, but the pain refused to go away."

"My level of fitness was in doubt. There was no point in playing the match and being a burden on my team," he said. Stand-in captain Amir Sohail lost the toss and the Indians took advantage of Akram's absence to come to the depleted Pakistani attack in perfect batting conditions.

India, struggling at one stage on 230 for five in 46 overs, hammered 57 runs in the final four overs to set Pakistan the tough victory target.

Ajay Jadeja blasted a quick-fire 45 off 23 balls with four boundaries and two sixes in the slog overs before becoming Waqar Younis' 200th one-day victim in the final over.

Sidhu and the in-form Sachin Tendulkar gave India a flying start by putting on 90 for the first wicket by the 22nd over.

Tendulkar's preliminary legs' highest score with 427 runs, made an unusually sedate 31 before he was bowled by Akram's replacement Ataur Rehman.

Batting with a runner in the later part of his innings because of cramps, Sidhu was bowled by leg-spinner Mushtaq Ahmed in the 37th over when just seven short of his sixth one-day century.

Younis, the other half of Pakistan's deadly pace duo, took his 199th and 200th one-day wickets by removing Azharuddin and Jadeja in his second spell.

India slipped from 200 for three to 236 for six by the 47th over as Mushtaq bowled Vinod Kambli for 24 and Nayyan Mongia was run out for three, after a misunderstanding with Jadeja.

But Jadeja and Anil Kumble took India past the 250-run mark, hammering 22 off Younis' 48th over — including a six over mid-wicket by Jadeja. (See scorecard on Page 11)

President invites

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shan residence of Mizan Chowdhury.

"We have problems," said Mousud Ahmed, JP Presidium member, "we have to discuss the invitation issue keeping in mind that our Secretary General is in jail," he said.

The JP leaders are scheduled to call on the President at 12-30 pm today.

Meanwhile, opposition sources said that Jamaat would also hold a meeting this morning before going to the Bangladesh.

Workers Party leader Rashid Khan Menon told The Daily Star that he had received the invitation letter at about 11 last night and would attend the meeting with the President.

Pak-Egypt accord to combat violence

CAIRO, Mar 9: Pakistan and Egypt signed an accord today on combating political violence and drug smuggling, reports Reuters.

The Egyptian interior ministry said in a statement Pakistani interior minister Naseerullah Babar, who arrived in Cairo on Friday, and his Egyptian counterpart Hassan Al-Ali agreed on exchanging expertise and data to foil "organised and international crime."

The Egyptian government, which has for the past four years been battling Islamic militants, aiming to overthrow

Shop owner beaten to death in city

By Staff Correspondent

A shop owner at Bangabazar, reportedly beaten up by a group of extortionists near his home in the old part of the city Friday, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday.

Manik Mia, 25, son of Ali Sarder of Soritola, was picked up by a gang of about five extortionists from Bangabazar Friday night after he refused to give toll.

The gang took Manik near Chitra Mahal cinema hall under Kotwali thana and assaulted him severely. He succumbed to his injuries at around 6 am yesterday. However, police could not confirm the incident.

Khaleda climbs down

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ing to compromise instead of carrying on the conflict.

It is to see a demonstration of the same spirit that we now turn to the opposition. It must also be for the sake of the country, its poor millions and for the sake of the economy which is on the verge of collapsing, come forward to COMPROMISE.

For too long our political parties have thought of 'compromise' amounting to defeat, and thus they shunned even a hint of it. Begum Zia's climb down, however late, and here let us not mince words, it is devastating and almost unforgettably late — should set the tone for a totally new political spirit that will help us build and not destroy our country.

Let us examine where we stand as for the issues that have been dividing us for the last several years. We have agreements:

a) on non-party government to supervise all elections in the future;

b) on next elections being held the 'soonest' (opposition suggests May '96)

c) that dialogue will be held at the initiative of the President.

Agreement on the above issues is a very significant advance in our political debate, and should in no way be underestimated as to their significance.

The questions that remain to be solved are:

a) when exactly will the next election be held;

b) when will the non-party government be formed;

c) when will Begum Zia's government hand over power to that non-party government.

Vitiating the debate on the three above issues is the ques-

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