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The World On Time

No scope for rigging polls, says Prof Yunus

By Staff Correspondent

Adviser for Education, Science and Technology Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said that the caretaker government left no scope for anyone to rig the elections.

Addressing a press conference, Prof Yunus expressed his full confidence in being able to conduct a free, fair and festive election and dispelled all rumours about any possibility of rigging by any quarter.

He further expressed his confidence in ensuring a peaceful and order situation.

A total of 42,027 people have been arrested since the police launched the illegal arms recovery drive and 1,402 have been arrested under the Arms Act.

"We assure you that all ways to rig the election are closed," he said. Responding to a question, he added, "I don't know how the armed forces can be used by anybody to rig the election."

Election Commission Secretary M Faizur Razzak, Foreign Secretary Faruque Sobhan, Cabinet Secretary Aiyubur Rahman, Information Secretary Kazi Rakibuddin and Additional Secretary of the Home Ministry Faizur Rahman also spoke at the conference.

Cabinet Secretary Aiyubur Rahman said, "Rigging is done when an election is not fully contested. But this election is fully contested, voters are aware and the parties are on their guard. Therefore, there is small chance of any rigging."

He further said that if election in any centre was interrupted, the polling officers were instructed to stop polling in that centre.

Secretary of the Election Commission M Faizur Razzak pointed out that among the steps to ensure a free and fair election, the EC had given extensive training to the polling officers to make them aware of their responsibilities and they

were given manuals on rules and regulations.

"The political parties have been encouraged to send as many as five polling agents to each of the polling centres and the polling agents have been encouraged to witness counting of votes," Razzak said.

Prof Yunus further pointed out that the government had tremendous support from different organisations including NGOs to guard the centres.

Assuring the press of a satisfactory law and order situation, Dr Yunus said, "We think the police have done a very laudable job in the illegal arms recovery drive."

He added, "The issue is not whether people are free to use arms. We have by and large closed all paths for the terrorists to terrorise."

From the past experience, the police found that the terrorists usually use speedy vehicles like motorbikes or motorcycles, pickups and jeep for raiding the polling centres. Prof Yunus said that although it would be inconvenient for some citizens, the authorities have restricted the use of these vehicles on the election day.

The caretaker government also had contingency plan to face post election violence, if there would be any. Prof Yunus said.

Dr Yunus appealed to the news media to keep their eyes and ears open and report objectively on the election in order to make it successful.

"You can help us a lot in creating an environment where rival candidates would be hugging each other," he said. "If we have a good election tomorrow, we will have peace in the country."

Dr Yunus expressed his hope that the people would vote for a strong parliament, not a weak one.

Cast votes peacefully: Khaleda

BNP chairperson and former prime minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday greeted the countrymen on the eve of seventh Jatiya Sangsad election and emphasised the need for holding a free, fair, peaceful and impartial election, reports BSS.

Exchanging views with a group of newsmen, Begum Zia said the entire nation is poised for today's polls in a peaceful atmosphere despite the fact that in some places impartiality is not being observed.

She hoped that even if there is inclement weather or heavy downpour today, the peace and democracy-loving crores of voters would cast their votes in a festive mood as she has witnessed a growing and unprecedented interest among the people across the country during her electioneering, which ended Monday.

Begum Zia, who looked confident, said the nation is poised to march forward along the superhighway of development to face the challenges of the 21st century to build a terrorism-free, poverty-free, illiteracy-free and chain-free modern Bangladesh.

She said crores of farmers, workers, women, teachers, employees, entrepreneurs, youths and elders are now ready to translate their dream into a reality.

She called upon all to cast their votes peacefully today and reiterated her party's full support and cooperation to the non-party caretaker government and the Election Commission in holding a free, fair, peaceful and impartial election.

EC to allow one representative from each party to observe results

The Election Commission has taken steps to broadcast the unofficial results of the parliamentary election over radio and television directly, a press release of the EC said here yesterday, reports BSS.

One representative from each of the political party participating in the election will be given permission to observe the election results at the Election Commission.

Interested political parties have been asked to collect the passes with the recommendation letters of the President and General Secretary of their respective political parties by 2 pm today.

All concerned have been requested to contact telephone numbers: 822021 and 822025.



A lane in the city colourfully decorated with election posters, a day before the JS polls. — Star photo

One killed, 69 hurt in pre-poll incidents

From Our Correspondent

One person was killed in bomb explosion in Barisal while at least 69 others were injured in polls related incidents in Chittagong, Pabna and Sirajganj on Monday and yesterday.

Our Staff Correspondent from Barisal adds: A student of Barisal B M University College was killed in a bomb explosion in the town last Monday night.

Police said some youths were making handbombs at about 1-30 pm Monday night in the house of one Hashem Peshker of Gorsthan Road.

As a bomb went off, Rafiqul Islam Bahar, 25, a student of M A class of B M College and Nurul Islam Nuru, 24, were critically injured. They were rushed to the Barisal Sher-Bangla Medical College Hospital where Bahar succumbed to his injuries at about 3-50 pm.

Critically injured Nuru was fighting for life at the hospital.

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong adds: At least 10 people were injured, of them six in bomb blasts and the rest in the incidents of violence in the port city and its surrounding areas yesterday, police and hospital sources said.

Police said four persons were seriously injured in a bomb explosion at Sufia Bazar area under Mirsharai thana, 30 miles off the city, at about 2 pm today.

BNP worker Mofazzal Hossain (40) and Awami League worker Batu (29) were admitted to Pabna General Hospital with severe injuries. Their condition was stated to be critical.

In Sirajganj, 13 people were injured when the supporters of Awami League allegedly attacked a BNP election procession in Raiganj-Tarash constituency on Monday.

One of the injured, Sujjan was admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital.

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PHILIPS

Hasina's call to exercise right consciously

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina has conveyed her 'salam' to the countrymen and sought their blessings for serving the nation.

On the eve of today's parliamentary polls, the AL president, in an appeal last night, made a fervent call to people of the country that "casting votes is your basic right and be conscious while exercising the right to franchise."

She reminded the countrymen that after a long struggle and sacrifices they had retained their rights to franchise and an election under a neutral caretaker government.

In her appeal Sheikh Hasina said "The future of the nation, economic development, freeing the country from the clutches of terrorism and poverty and consolidation of democracy — all depends on your valuable votes."

She urged all leaders, workers, candidates and polling agents of Awami League to keep vigil in their respective areas after offering *Fajr* prayers in the morning today.

Sheikh Hasina asked her party members to take the help of people in resisting any attempt for rigging.

She also instructed them not to leave polling centres till vote counting ends and till receiving a certified copy of result sheets signed by the presiding officers.

The Midnight Fife

12 HR activists held in Nepal

KAT THAMANDU, June 11: More than 12 human rights and peace society activists were arrested here today as they protested against China's latest nuclear test on June 8, and tried to move towards the Chinese embassy to hand over a letter, witnesses said, reports AFP.

Deve Gowda face vote of confidence today

NEW DELHI, June 11: The vote on the confidence motion moved today by Indian Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda will take place tomorrow (Wednesday), the speaker of the lower house of parliament said, according to the Press Trust of India, reports Reuters.

Gowda's weary victory when proceeding in parliament were adjourned in the evening after being dominated by allegations of corruption against former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's Congress Party.

The Congress party has promised to give Deve Gowda's minority United Front Government the backing it needs to survive the vote of confidence tomorrow.

Proceedings in parliament will start at 11 am (0530 GMT), the speaker said.

AFP adds: HD Deve Gowda today vowed to complete his five-year tenure as the head of a centre-left government, saying the country's largest democracy had entered an era of coalition.

Deve Gowda, 63, told parliament at the start of a debate on a vote of confidence his minority government believed the inauguration of the April-May general elections was not for any single party.

The mandate is for a coalition government and this government is going to survive for five years," the new prime minister said during a 40-minute speech.

"And we are going to prove that," he added.

Deve Gowda, who was sworn in as India's 11th premier June 1 after a government of Hindu nationalists resigned after just 13 days in office, pressed the opposition to cooperate with his United Front Government.

75 more arms recovered

Police recovered 75 illegal firearms and a huge quantity of ammunition from different parts of the country in last 24 hours till 8 am yesterday. The recovered arms and ammunition were one rifle, two sawed off rifles, three revolvers, one pistols, 39 pipe guns, one single-barrel gun, 28 LGs, 123 bullets and 129 bombs, said a PID handout. During the period, police also arrested six people on charge of possessing unauthorised firearms and filed seven cases against them under the Arms and Explosive Act.

CA: Franchise

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might compel the Election Commission to issue directives of re-election.

"Nobody will get away by indulging in violence," he said and referred to a decision already announced by the Election Commission to hold re-election more than once, if necessary, in case polling at any centre was failed.

The Chief Adviser said international and regional observers have come for on-the-spot observation of the holding and conduct of election in the country.

"The democracy-loving people of the world are looking forward to the trial and experimentation made by Bangladesh for holding a national election through non-party caretaker government under a constitutional dispensation."

He said "I hope, the people of the country will not disappoint our fraternal observers. They will return home with good news of a desired fair election and victory for democracy."

Habibur Rahman expressed firm faith that this year's election would set such a brilliant example of restraint, tolerance and generosity for the younger generation that it would be a matter of pride in our national history."

The chief adviser thanked the country's newspapers playing an admirable role at the crucial juncture of national life.

He hoped newsmen would rise above all partisan feelings and create a congenial atmosphere through their reports, writings and interpretations.

"A peaceful atmosphere is now absolutely essential for social, political and economic reconstruction of the country," he said.

What 2 leaders said

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The AL chief also highlighted the failures, misdeeds and corrupt practices of the Khaleda government and accused the BNP of hatching intrigues against a free and fair election.

In her bid to discredit the BNP, Hasina charged BNP for attempting to make the caretaker government weak and rig the election with the help of the President. She also blamed the President for misusing power to help the BNP win the polls through rigging.

The AL leader also charged Begum Zia, her relations and partymen of corruption and plundering of national wealth. She accused BNP government for killing voters and farmers, selling out country's interests by signing accord with India, falling to get due share of Ganges waters and giving forced retirement to government servants.

Begum Zia accused the AL of obstructing development and ruining economy through hartals and blockades in the past two years, creating famine, repressing the people through different forces and snatching people's basic rights during its rule, attempting to capture state power illegally and handing over Bangladesh to another country by signing the 25-year accord with India.

Foreign observers meet Khaleda

Three foreign teams of election observers, who are here to monitor Bangladesh's 7th parliamentary polls, separately called on former Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia at her residence yesterday morning, reports UNB.

Party sources said they discussed with the BNP chairperson various aspects of holding the election in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere.

During the meeting with the delegations, Begum Zia laid emphasis on holding a free, fair and impartial election to consolidate democracy and the constitutional process.

A three-member delegation of the Washington-based National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) which met with Begum Zia was led by Stephen J. Solarz. The other members were: former foreign minister of Australia Andrew Peacock, Eric Bjorlund and Tom Metia.

Another three-member delegation of the Commonwealth Observer Group, led by former foreign minister of Malaysia Tan Sri Mohd Gazali Shafie, also called on the BNP chairperson.

Verdict today

From Page 1

servers and diplomats attached with foreign missions in Bangladesh will observe today's polls. The monitors have come from the SAARC countries, Cambodia, Canada, Commonwealth nations, European Union states, National Democratic Institute of USA, Japan, South Africa, Thailand and some other countries. Ninety-nine diplomats of High Commissions and Embassies of different countries will also monitor the polls.

Nearly 36,000 local observers representing NGOs and institutions would also monitor the polls. The largest among them is the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA).

About 100 foreign journalists have already arrived in Bangladesh to cover the polls for the international electronic and print media.

The first general elections under a caretaker government was held on February 27, 1991. Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed headed that caretaker government formed following the ouster of the then autocratic regime of H M Ershad through a prolonged mass movement.

The present elections have generated considerable enthusiasm among the people as it is being participated by all the major political parties and a large number of candidates. All political parties, big and small, are attributing much significance to the polls as it comes following a two-year agitation spearheaded by the then opposition parties for holding elections under a non-party caretaker administration. The two-year agitation was marked by a record number of work stoppages and hartals that turned into a ceaseless non-cooperation movement. Several lives were lost during the movement.

The electronic media will announce the election results directly from the premises of the EC as they pour in from different district headquarters. The CEC yesterday expressed the hope that it will be possible to announce the preliminary results by tomorrow (Thursday) afternoon.

EC to allow one representative from each party to observe results

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Observers meet Hasina

Several election observation teams, now in Bangladesh to observe today's elections, yesterday called on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her residence here, a party press release said last night, reports BSS.

The teams are: NDI observation team led by Stephen Solarz, Commonwealth observer team led by Dr Muhammad Gazzali Shafi, non-government observers' team of SAARC led by former Indian diplomat Muckkund Dubey, representative of European Union election observers' team and British parliamentarian Peter Shore and Sri Lankan national professor B B Pillai.

Police SI hurt in bomb blast

By Staff Correspondent

A Sub-Inspector of the Detective Branch (DB) was injured when a bomb exploded in his hand while raiding a residential hall of Alia Madrasa in Bakshibazar area under Lalbagh thana in the old part of the city last night.

The injured SI, Babul Akhter, was immediately taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with injuries in both of his hands, hospital sources said. He was later shifted to the Police Hospital.

The incident occurred when police were raiding the residential hall at around 9 pm. Police recovered one stungun, one dagger and a large number of bombs, police said.

Over 100 polling centres changed

Star Report

Over a hundred notified polling centres for today's general elections have been changed in the last few days, according to official sources.

Election Commissioner Justice Mushtaque Ahmed told The Daily Star that "some of the centres were changed following requests from the local people and some others were changed on grounds of 'Act of God,'" he added.

The Election Commissioner, however, could not give the exact number of centres changed so far.

169 observers

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The 14 groups include Commonwealth 1 countries, the European Union, Non-governmental South Asian Observers group and multilateral delegations and USA and 10 other countries.

These groups comprise representatives from Cambodia, Canada, Japan, Iran, Thailand, Norway, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

Some 40 members of the Non-governmental South Asian Observers' Group from India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka have already arrived.

There are 41 representatives from the multinational delegations.

The Foreign Ministry has provided identity cards to 99 envoys of different embassies and high commissions so far.

Ershad

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Ershad had applied for his postal ballot from the EC through the jail authority, said his lawyer: Yusuf Hossain Humayun last night.

Humayun said that the postal ballot of Ershad would be sent to the Rangpur Sadar constituency for counting. Rangpur Sadar is one of the five constituencies from where the former chairman is contesting the polls.

VVIPs

From Page 1

Prof Ghulam Azam will vote at the Vigarurasa Noon School centre at 8 am.

The chiefs of three services will cast their ballots at different polling centres at the Dhaka Cantonment.

Acting chairman of Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury may not be able to exercise his right to franchise as he is a voter from Chandpur. A party press release said he is suffering from viral fever.

CEC: Results

From Page 1

be some, but the EC is ready to deal with it instantly. The moment we are informed of any irregularity at any polling centre we will decide to stop polling there," the CEC said.

The CEC, responding to a question, said he expected that every party should greet the gain or accept the loss with a patient and liberal attitude.

The CEC last night sought unstinted co-operation of the people for holding the today's much-awaited general election peacefully, freely and fairly.

In an address over radio and television he said all of us will have to play our respective role for transformation from the crucial period we are now passing through.

Describing this election as significant in the history of the nation Hena said it stood as the symbol of the hopes and aspirations of the people for keeping intact the continuity of much-desired democratic process. It was now clear that democratic system of administration could not survive without a peaceful election held in congenial atmosphere and with sincere and faithful impartiality, he added.

He was happy to say that the whole nation was now united to take this great opportunity to successful confusion. At this moment there was no greater longing of the people than this, he said.



Army patrolling a city street yesterday, a day before the JS polls. — Star photo