

2 Killed, 150 injured

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clash. In Bagerhat, attack on an Awami League election projection meeting at village Kartikdia of sadar upazila yesterday left at least 15 injured, four with bullets.

Accusing BNP activists for the attack, Awami League leaders said the terrorists also torched a number of election camps and looted five houses.

Witnesses said the meeting came under attack at 11 am.

Those admitted to sadar hospital with bullet injuries are Islam Gazi, Jamer Gazi, Taherun and Shahin.

In Jhenidah, at least 10 people including four policemen were injured in a clash between the BNP and Awami League supporters in Harinakunda upazila yesterday.

Police said the clash ensued between the two rival parties at about 10 am at two election camps in Garabaria. Both the groups chased each other.

Four policemen, who rushed to the spot, were also injured. Six of the wounded were admitted to

Sadar Hospital.

In Gazipur, a clash between the supporters of Awami League and BNP left five people injured and an election camp of BNP ransacked at Barmi Sohagpara village in Sreepur upazila yesterday.

Witnesses said the violent clash erupted following an altercation over a trifling matter. The agitated AL supporters later ransacked the election camp of BNP in the village.

In Munshiganj, at least 30 Chhatra League workers were injured in an attack allegedly by BNP workers at Madhyapara in Sirajdikhan upazila yesterday.

Five of the injured BCL activists were sent to Ichhapura health complex and later shifted to Dhaka following deterioration of their condition.

Witnesses said the BCL workers came under attack by BNP supporters as they went to visit their election camp which was damaged by BNP men on Monday.

Additional police were deployed there to fend off further trouble.

Less controversy

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the EC.

The former CEC underscored the need for strengthening the Election Commission Secretariat rather than for making it independent like the parliament secretariat, as appealed by his successor M A Syed.

CEC Syed called upon the political parties to come forward to move a bill on the complete independence of the EC secretariat.

But the former CEC contradicting the idea said, "The terms of reference and the nature of job of parliament secretariat is in fact far different from the Election Commission's."

He rather suggested a high-power body headed by the cabinet secretary to take quick decisions and make easy access to government resources and manpower required by the EC for a free and fair election.

Hena feels that a committee comprising principal secretary, EC secretary and secretaries of the ministries of finance, establishment, law, justice and parliamentary affairs and others concerned can finalise the requisition of the com-

mission when necessary. It would help minimise bureaucratic tangles in allocation of necessary government support to the commission.

He also urged the government to consult the Election Commission before enacting any election-related law.

Identifying the lack of democratic perception as prime obstacle to democracy, he has said only election and enactment of laws cannot ensure democracy.

He suggested that an institution be set up to flourish democratic norms, and urged politicians to act in a democratic manner.

The former CEC urged the Election Commission to bolster the voter awareness programme so that voters enthusiastically turn up at the polling stations on the day of election.

"High turnout in the election lessens the possibilities of rigging and fraudulence," he said. He also suggested that everyone take the election positively.

About the election monitoring, Abu Hena gave a different view saying this time the polls monitoring groups seem to have gained the upper hand.

Khaleda: AL misrule

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sheaf of paddy to elect BNP candidate from Gazipur-1 constituency Chowdhury Tanveer Ahmed Siddiqui.

At the election rally at Mirzapur TNT ground, Khaleda said there was no political murder during BNP rule. "AL cannot eliminate terrorism keeping terrorists on both sides of the party chief and nominating terrorists like Joyнал Hajari and Shamim Osman for the coming election", she said.

She urged voters to elect BNP candidate in Tangail-7 constituency AK Azad Siddiqui and put an end to AL terrorism.

AT Basail, khaleda called for electing BNP nominee for Tangail-8 seat Ahmed Azam Khan.

In Tangail town, the BNP chief described 'sheaf of paddy' as the symbol of Maulana Bhasani. She said Bhasani had great affection for founder of BNP president Ziaur Rahman and presented his party's election symbol to Zia.

Seeking vote for BNP candidate from Tangail-5 Maj Gen (ret) Mahmudul Hasan, Begum Zia hoped people of the area would vote for sheaf of paddy to show respect to both Moaulana Bhasani and

Ziaur Rahman.

She asked government officials to discharge their duties neutrally and without fear and hesitation so that voters including women could go to the polling centres and cast their votes freely.

AL did not have any contribution to the liberation war and they have done nothing for the freedom fighters, she said. BNP will establish a separate ministry for them, if elected.

The BNP chief said AL claims credit for construction of Jamuna Bridge, but the fact is that eighty per cent work of the bridge was completed during BNP rule. A barrage would be constructed on the eastern side of Jamuna Bridge, she pledged.

In Bhuapur, she addressed an election rally for BNP candidate for Tangail-2 seat Abdus Salam Pintu at Ibrahim Kha University College ground.

The BNP chief also addressed a huge rally at Elenga Rajbari ground for Shahjahan Siraj, BNP candidate from Tangail-4.

She was scheduled to address rallies at Jamalpur, Nokla, Sherpur, Mymensingh and Fulbari last night.

Campaign at Feni

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representatives of candidates.

Although the authorities have classified all the 273 polling centers in the three constituencies in Feni district as 'extremely dangerous,' people of the areas fear that Feni-2 would be more vulnerable to violence during the election than the other two.

"If there is even the slightest sign that who is losing, his men would try to stop polling in about a dozen centers so that re-polling is held," said a businessman. In the 1996 election, Hazari got elected using the same tactic, he alleged seeking anonymity.

Next to Feni-2, Feni-3 comprising Sonagazi thana and three other unions is vulnerable to violence. There is a large number of Hazari's men in the area. Mahbul Alam Tara, former president of Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal and BNP lawmaker and whip during 1991-96, will contest this time as AL candidate against former MP from the area BNP's Mosharraf Hossain.

Following a series of clashes between AL and BNP recently, people fear that there might be 'serious' violence in Sonagazi during the coming election. AL's hold in Sonagazi is now so strong that its activists have prevented Mosharraf from visiting his own village, Ahmedpur. He is learnt to have rented an accommodation near Sonagazi thana and is conducting election campaign from

there.

Observers see Feni-1 as the least vulnerable constituency. Khaleda Zia is contesting from there. Zafar Imam, a former minister and Jatiya Party MP who recently joined AL, is her rival.

"If there is a free and fair election in Feni district, there will be a tough competition in two constituencies. But these areas are extremely vulnerable to violence because armed cadres of both the major parties are now hiding and may come out any time," said an elderly man.

The authorities have however decided to deploy a large number of army, police, BDR and Ansar personnel at all the polling centers in the district.

AL to 'rethink'

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first day it assumed office."

Kibria said the caretaker government tried to bring about changes in electoral laws. "But fortunately the President intervened and some of the laws have been dropped."

He said it is not very pleasant to speaking against the caretaker government. "But truth must be said, and said in advance."

He however dodged a question on his party's possible stand after announcement of the polls results.

"Why do you want to take away all the suspense," Kibria said in a lighter mood.



PHOTO: STAR

A workshop on 'Fire Prevention in Garments Factories' was held at a city hotel yesterday. Picture shows BGMEA president Kutubuddin Ahmed addressing the workshop.

AL, BNP to lose some seats

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As a last resort, both the parties are sending delegations representing central leaders to negotiate with the rebels.

AL rebel candidate Haji Mujibur Rahman Chowdhury is contesting against party nominee Abdus Shaheed in Moulavibazar-4. Abdus Shaheed was elected MP in the last election. Haji Mujibur has reportedly spent a lot of money and is campaigning vigorously.

Four other AL rebels in the constituency have also withdrawn their candidature in favour of Haji Mujibur, making his position stronger, sources said.

In Jessore-3, Kazi Shahed Ahmed sought AL nomination though he was never an AL leader. He is contesting as an independent candidate as AL refused him nomination. Sources said, he might be a problem for AL nominee Ali Reza Raju who won the seat in '96 election with a margin of 10,000 votes.

The sources also claimed that Kazi Shahed enjoys the support of a section of local AL leaders and workers.

AL is also facing threats from rebel candidates Prof Amin Ahmed Khan Ratan in Mymensingh-4, Baharuddin Bahar in Mymensingh-8, Hemayetullah Awranga in Shariatpur-1, Engr. Mohammad Ali in Jamalpur-5, Abdur Rouf in Nilphamari-1, Khairul Majid Chandan in Narsingdi-4, Delwar Hossain in Barguna-1, Shahryear

Rumi in Faridpur-5, and from Dr. Md Selim in Sirajganj 1, 2 and 3. Selim is the elder brother of AL leader and former home minister Mohammad Nasim who is also contesting from the three seats in Sirajganj.

In addition, there are AL rebel candidates in Jamalpur-3, Gopalganj-1, Bogra-1 and 6, Nilphamari-4, Gazipur-4, Jessore-2, Chittagong-2 and 3 and in Chittagong-15. Central leaders of AL however does not consider these candidates as threats, the sources said.

An AL source here said that in a couple seats, the rebels may bag more votes than party nominees. As a strategy, the AL central leadership is thinking of giving these candidates "a last moment party support". If they win they will be taken in the party.

On the other side, BNP nominee Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury will face problem in Chittagong-7 constituency. In this constituency, BNP had initially nominated Nurul Anam. Anam is campaigning in full swing.

A similar picture can be seen in Rajshahi-5 where BNP had initially nominated Azizur Rahman but later declared Kabir Hossain as the party candidate. Azizur has not withdrawn his candidature.

Many other BNP leaders, being refused party tickets, resigned from the party and are contesting as independent candidates. Notable among them are Prof Abdul Mannan in Gazipur-2, Barrister Rafiqul Islam

Mia in Comilla-3 and Prof Mohammad Abdullah in Chandpur-4. Sources said, these candidates might not win but would be factors in the defeat of party nominees.

BNP nominees will face threats from rebels Chowdhury Akmal Ibne Yusuf in Faridpur-4, MM Shaheen in Moulavibazar-2, Advocate Badshah and Mashur Rahman in Rangpur-6, Towhidul Idris in Chapainawabganj-1, Khurshid Alam Bachchu in Chapainawabganj-2, Rafiqul Islam in Chapainawabganj-3, Aminul Islam Panjab in Rajshahi-1, Moulana Shakhawat Hossain in Jessore-6, Harun-ur-Rashid in Patuakhali-3, Mustafizur Rahman in Patuakhali-4, Engr. Shamsuddin in Mymensingh 6, MA Malek in Sunamganj-3, Abdul Gafur Montu Tangail-1 and from Habibur Rahman Habib in Pabna-4.

In a development last night, BNP has decided to "oust" the following rebel candidates from the party: Moulana Shakhawat Hossain (Jessore-6), Mohammad Azizur Rahman (Rajshahi-5), Engr. Shamsuddin (Mymensingh-6), Abdul Gafur Montu (Tangail-1), Khorsheed Alam Bachchu (Chapainawabganj-2), Syed Mokbul Hossain (Sylhet-6) and Shafi Mahmud (Brahmanbaria-1).

AL has already expelled Syed Ekramullah (Brahmanbaria-1).

CEC assures AL ETV to telecast live election results

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League Election Steering Committee's Chief Coordinator Shah AMS Kibria yesterday said that the Chief Election Commissioner has agreed to allow ETV to telecast live poll results.

Kibria, during his regular press briefing at the party election office here told newsmen that the CEC conveyed this decision to a six-member AL delegation that called on him at this office yesterday.

Kibria said the CEC assured the delegation that the Ekushey Television would also be permitted to telecast the results live when his attention was drawn to press reports that the CEC would allow only BTV and Bangladesh Betar the live transmission of election results.

Kibria said they also handed over a video cassette of Jamaat leader Delwar Hossain Sayeedi along with a protest letter. They also demanded confiscation of this cassette and prosecution of Sayeedi for his "vulgar" remarks.

He alleged that the caretaker government, in violation of the election rules, is transferring the deputy commissioners and superintendents of police without consulting the CEC.

AL backs US

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one in the fight against terrorism. "Bangladesh Awami League is totally against terrorism. Don't make a mistake about it. So we will support the US in its fight against terrorism," Kibria said.

"In the wake of fanaticism and Taliban attack, secularism in politics has become necessary for Bangladesh," Kibria said. The tactic of using religion is a vicious ploy against Awami League, he added.

"Unfortunately, this is the kind of politics being practised in Bangladesh by them. But they don't focus on the economy," he said.

On the contrary, his party is highlighting the achievements during its five-year rule, Kibria said. At the meeting, he also presented booklets his party is using in its election campaign.

He said AL is focusing on the CHT peace agreement, Ganges water sharing treaty with India, women's empowerment, achievements in growth rate keeping inflation under control but not resorting to propaganda.

"We are trying to highlight the achievements and going to the electorate so that they can judge," the AL Chief Election Coordinator said.

National Bank

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look into the matter.

Although Hazari and most of his armed cadres are now absconding, people believe they would return to Feni and again unleash terror once the tenure of the caretaker government ends.

Meanwhile, Barrister Ishiaq, advisor of the caretaker government, yesterday inaugurated the new court building at the centre of the town.

Only a few months ago, Hazari had threatened to remove "each and every brick of the new court building" if the court is shifted from his area to its new premises. The authorities on two occasions had failed to lay the foundation of the new court building.

Sources said the area where the old run-down court building was situated was "fully controlled" by Hazari's armed cadres.

"Everyone coming to the court had to pay these men. Judges were in constant fear. The clerks did exactly what these men wanted because they knew what awaited them if they refused to comply," said an official of the district administration.

Concrete evidence

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he said.

"China, by the same token, has reason to ask the United States to give its support and understanding in the fight against terrorism and separatists," he said.

Zhu also reiterated that Beijing had no formal links with Afghanistan's ruling Taliban government.

Reuters adds: Iran has sent a message to the United States via Canada saying it will not oppose targeted military strikes against those believed responsible for last week's terror attacks, a Canadian newspaper said yesterday.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Monday officially condemned the attacks but said punishing Afghanistan which seems an increasingly likely possibility might cause a human catastrophe.

But the National Post daily said senior Iranian officials had contacted Canadian Foreign Minister John Manley and asked him to pass on the message to Washington that Iran would not condemn US retaliation against those responsible.

"They (the Iranians) feel the tragedy as well and they support any targeted military action, but it must be targeted ... But the Iranians can't call the Americans and say that, so they are looking for other friends and allies (to do so)," the paper quoted one Canadian officials as saying.

Manley spokesman Sanjeev Chowdhury told Reuters that the minister had spoken to Iranian officials on Monday but said he was not aware of the final outcome of the conversation.

Army deployed

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their hands".

Meanwhile, armed forces started their vigilance in the areas with a hope to work with the law-enforcing agencies for controlling law and order for peaceful holding of the October 1 polls.

With the deployment of army, local people gained confidence about their ability to exercise their franchise, the district reporters said.

Over 150 army personnel led by Lt Col Kamrul Hossain drove into Narayanganj district headquarters at about 7:45 am in eight lorries.

Senior officials of the team in a meeting with the district administration discussed recovery of illegal arms, arrest of terrorists and overall law-and-order situation.

Lt Col Hossain told UNB that his team would provide "all-out cooperation to the law-enforcing agencies in maintaining law and order".

More members of the army will join the team "to ensure that people can go to the election centres and cast their vote in a peaceful atmosphere," he said.

The team is identifying the most vulnerable areas and "depots" of illegal arms, said a reliable source.

Local people said they heaved a sigh of relief with the presence of army in the town, where residents were terrorised by a devastating bomb attack on the Awami League office on June 16, besides unabated acts of violence.

A big contingent of 600 army troops camped in the worst troubled district of Feni yesterday morning as the Election Commission declared all the 273 vote centres of three constituencies there "most vulnerable".

"People lined up on both sides of the road in front of district collectorate building, welcoming the convoy of army personnel carriers as they were driven in."

Led by a Lt Colonel along with over 10 commissioned officers, the troops will monitor the situation in Feni, an official source said.

The armed forces of first Bengal Regiment from Comilla cantonment took position at different points, including Zila Parishad rest house, Shaheed Zahir Raihan auditorium, Salam community center and

Sonagazi College.

District administration sources said, army camps would be set up also at Feni Government College due to shortage of place.

Permanent camps of army will not be set up in frontier upazilas Chhagalnaiya and Parashuram, but it was learnt that the army would give logistic support to the paramilitary BDR over there.

It seems a sense of relief is prevailing among the people of Feni with the posting of military as hardly any day passed by when violence was not reported from the district.

Army led by Lt Col Zahidul Islam reached Munshiganj yesterday and 200 troops were deployed in the district town while 150 in each of five thanas Gazaria, Tungibari, Louhajong, Sirajdikhan and Srinagar.

Local sources said the "terrorists have now gone into hiding after army's appearance in the district".

The army men took their position at the Bangabandhu Academy Bhaban and other institutions in the Upazila headquarters.

Army will be deployed across the country from September 22 and stay in the field up to October 6 on election duties.

Relocation

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halls across the country before long, he said.

The BGMEA vice-president also underscored the need for more scientific fire safety measures -- computerised methods -- for instance, to show the workers how to escape blazes.

Dr. Nizamuddin Ahmed explained various ways of fire safety. Referring to various studies on garment factories, he said most of the factories were set up without any plan and in violation of government rules.

Many residential buildings have been used as garment factories, he noted.

The workshop agreed on the regular training for the garment workers in implementation of fire safety measures in the factories.

Taliban hit back

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an anticipated surge in support from the United States in the wake of last week's terror attacks.

Ordinary Afghans were fleeing the main cities in fear of a US strike, with thousands massing near the Pakistani border. Those who stayed behind were becoming increasingly anxious over possible civil unrest or conflict between rival factions of the ruling Islamic militia.

In neighbouring Pakistan, a crucial US partner for any attack on Afghanistan, hundreds of police and paramilitaries had to be deployed in the teeming port of Karachi to prevent more than 5,000 radical Islamic students marching on the US consulate.

It was the largest anti-US demonstration in the current crisis and also the biggest since military ruler Pervez Musharraf seized power two years ago.

Troops remained on alert but there was no movement out of barracks pending the outcome of the talks in Kabul, which Pakistan is desperately hoping will produce some sort of compromise.

Pakistani radicals have vowed to join any Afghan jihad and warned the government that helping the US in any attack will mean civil war.

Pakistan President Musharraf has promised his "unflinching cooperation" with any US action. But political leaders have warned him that this must stop short of letting Pakistan be used as the launching pad for an attack.

"If the government agrees to let American ground troops into Pakistan there will be a hell of a reaction," a former senior army officer, retired Lieutenant General KMAzhar, told AFP.

The meeting of the ulama in Kabul had been due to start yesterday but was delayed because many scholars had not been able to get to the city in time.

The unexpected decision to seek a ruling from the scholars was announced by Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar after a high-level Pakistani delegation visited him

Monday in the southeastern city of Kandahar, where bin Laden is also based.

The ulama includes many non-Taliban scholars who could be prepared to countenance some sort of deal - although any decision, or fatwa, will have to be approved by Omar, who is married to bin Laden's eldest daughter.

A team led by the head of Pakistan's intelligence services, the Taliban's main backers, gave Omar a blunt warning Monday that the country could be bombed back to the stone age if bin Laden is not handed over.

US President George W. Bush has warned that Americans will not rest until they secure justice.

"There's an old poster out west that says, as I recall, 'Wanted dead or alive'," he said during a visit to the Pentagon, a target in last week's suicide attacks along with the World Trade Centre in New York.

The Taliban consider bin Laden an honoured "guest" and have repeatedly rejected his extradition in the past, despite UN sanctions following the twin US embassy bombings in East Africa in 1998 which he is accused of masterminding.

The last Afghan jihad was issued against the Soviet Union after its 1979 invasion of the country and resulted, a decade later, in the Red Army beating a humiliating retreat.

President

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R Subramanyam thanked the president for receiving him and the members of his team.

He recalled the development of training cooperation between Indian and Bangladesh armed forces and hoped that such cooperation would be strengthened.

Indian Deputy High Commissioner in Bangladesh PR Chakravarty was, among others, present on the occasion.

3 murdered in city

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lqbal was rushed to Bangladesh Medical College Hospital (BMCH) where doctors declared him dead. The motive behind he killing could not be known.

Delwar was taken to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH). Mohammadpur police said he was out of danger.

Awami League candidate from the area for the coming general election Mokbul Hossain and BNP nominee Advocate Khandaker Mahbud Uddin Ahmed went to see the body of lqbal and both claimed he was their activist, sources said.

Separate cases were filed with Mohammadpur thana in connection with the incident. None was arrested till last night.

In another incident, unidentified miscreants killed one person at West Shewrapara in Mirpur area.

Mirpur police recovered his body from the ground floor of an under construction building in the

evening. An identity card recovered from his pocket identified him as Fayed Ahmed, 25, son of Abdul Haq Mollah and employee of a garments factory at Savar.

Police suspected that he might have been strangled or stabbed to death. There were stab injuries in his body and tendons of both his legs were cut off.

Details could not be known immediately.

A case was filed with Mirpur police station in this regard.

Besides, Tejaon police recovered the body of an unidentified man from VIP road near the old airport in the early hours of yesterday. He was wearing lungi and T-shirt.

DMCH sources said the body bore stab injuries. But police said he might have been killed in road accident.

A case was filed with Tejaon thana.