

FEMA urges media Give impartial coverage to political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA) yesterday urged the media to "maintain objectivity, impartiality and balance" in giving coverage to political parties to help create an awareness among voters ahead of the general election.

Addressing a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) office in the city, FEMA Secretary General Feroz M Hassan alleged that Awami League got "excellent camera angle" while BNP got "poor camera angle" in political coverage by a section of the electronic media.

The press conference was attended by, among others, Dr Shawkat Ara, Chairperson of Media Committee and Maruf Raihan, media coordinator of FEMA.

Feroz claimed that ETB, out of its total time for coverage of political parties this week, devoted 50 per cent to BNP, 14 per cent to four-party alliance, one per cent to 11-party, three per cent to Jatiya Party (Ershad) and two per cent to JP (Manju). It did not give any coverage to Jamaat-e-Islami.

ETB devoted 28 per cent for AL, 16 per cent for BNP, two per cent for four-party alliance, nine per cent for 11-party, 16 per cent for JP (Ershad), 12 per cent for JP (Manju) and 8 per cent for others during the period, he claimed.

State-run Bangladesh Betar gave 30 per cent of its time to AL, 28

Two murdered

ERED the body from the house No. 1259 at Shevarapara at about 8am yesterday, and sent it to the DMCH morgue for autopsy. Nazim has been absconding since the incident, police said.

Parul Begum filed a case with the Mirpur Police Station, accusing Nazim of killing her son.

A sweeper named Abdul Malek, who was hacked by his wife with a spade on Monday night, died yesterday at the hospital.

The incident took place when Malek had had an altercation with his wife Poly Begum in their shanty at Shimulbari, Badda at about 11pm Monday.

At one stage, Kalpana, his mother-in-law, joined her daughter in the altercation and beat him with a home-made broom, while her daughter hacked him with a spade.

Fatally injured, Malek was admitted to the DMCH where he died at about 6:30am.

When contacted, the duty officer of Badda Police Station said police went to arrest the housewife and her mother.

US appreciates Dhaka

FROM PAGE 12 and peaceful manner under the non-party caretaker government."

The Ambassador said former US president Jimmy Carter had confirmed his planned visit to Bangladesh during the elections.

Terming the recent terrorist attacks unthinkable and very shocking, the chief adviser said this was one of the greatest tragedies in recent world history.

"The loss of lives of innocent people, including Bangladeshis, during this attack deeply shocked every one of us," he told her conveying sympathies to all affected by this heinous strike.

Foreign Secretary Mohsin Ali Khan and Secretary to the Chief Adviser Golam Rahman were present during the meeting.

Mary Ann Peters yesterday also met CM Shafi Sami, Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser on Foreign Affairs, and told him that the support extended by Bangladesh would be gratefully remembered by the US.

Sam conveyed to the US envoy the government decision to extend support to the US for combating

Indo-Pak envoys

FROM PAGE 12 government observed that this was the first terrorist incident on a foreign soil where a large number of people of Bangladesh perished.

Tripathi expressed India's support to the caretaker government in preparation for the upcoming general election.

Expressing the hope that the elections in Bangladesh would be conducted in peace and harmony he said, "There is a consensus across the border in India for peace, stability and prosperity in Bangladesh."

The Indian diplomat also mentioned that India wants the border between the two countries to always remain peaceful, particularly during sensitive periods such as now.

During the meeting the chief adviser recalled tremendous contribution of India during the Liberation War of Bangladesh and strong friendship and cooperation between the two countries in all fields.

He expressed deep admiration of India's long democratic history and thanked India for its support to the efforts of the caretaker government and for India's actions to keep the border peaceful.

BTV, ETV

FROM PAGE 12 that earlier it was decided that ETV will take signals from the OB van of the BTV. Now they will have a joint operation," said Khairuzzaman Chowdhury, additional secretary at the EC Secretariat.

Chowdhury, who is also the head of EC task forces on media and election results, said the EC would be happier to entertain more private channels having the capacity of live telecast.

The IT department of the EC got the software for online dissemination of the election results and is now going through tests. Results will be available on its server.

Advisors

FROM PAGE 12 ing to the request of the government of the United States for using the airport and seaport of Bangladesh, if necessary.

The president held the view that the political parties are primarily responsible for the political clashes and that if they exercised restraint and tolerance, these acts of violence would be reduced substantially.

No Taliban

FROM PAGE 12 Officer (PIO) at his weekly press briefing at the Chief Advisor's Office, however, said the government had stepped up its surveillance of the activities of terrorist groups since the visit of former US president Bill Clinton who scheduled visit to the National Memorial at Savar was cancelled for security reasons.

Replying to a question, the spokesman said the government had clarified its position to support the US government in combating terrorism.

The PIO pointed out that the caretaker government had already discussed the matter with the leaders of major political parties and the diplomats.

When asked to comment on pro-Laden demonstrations in the streets by fundamental groups, the spokesman said that the government has no such information. He, however, said that in a democratic society everyone has the right to express their views.

US battleships

FROM PAGE 12 "unalterably committed to a direct, forceful and comprehensive response."

Bush also signed into law a \$40 billion aid package after hijacked aircraft slammed into the twin towers of New York's World Trade Center and the Pentagon in Washington a week ago, leaving nearly 6,000 dead or missing.

Bush thanked the House of Representatives and the Senate for giving him the power to wage war on "terrorists" and pledged to consult with Congress as he maps the US response.

"Those who plan, authorise, commit or aid terrorist attacks against the United States and its interests including those who harbor terrorists threaten the national security of the United States," Bush said in a statement. "It is, therefore, necessary and appropriate that the United States exercise its rights to defend itself and protect United States citizens both at home and abroad."

About her party's election manifesto, she said if voted to power, BNP would first eliminate terrorism and check corruption. It would increase Jatiya Sangsad seats to 500 from 300 and increase reserve seats for women and introduce direct election to those. Her party would expand the Food for Education programme throughout the country, nationalise all non-government primary schools, introduce free education for girls up to 12th class and increase government contribution to salary of teachers of non-government educational institutions to 100 per cent from 80 per cent now.

She said farmers would be given special facilities. She assured that her party would reduce prices of fertiliser, seeds, diesel and other agricultural inputs.

About 200 launches from southern districts touch the terminal and over 20,000 passengers use it daily.

Erosion

FROM PAGE 12 witnesses said.

High officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board, BIWTA and the DC and the SP of Chaudpur have visited the affected areas. Police have been deployed.

Meanwhile, it is reported that there is a shortage of boulders in BIWTA stock to check the erosion.

Panicked residents are fleeing the area and shopkeepers and businessmen are shifting their establishments.

About 200 launches from southern districts touch the terminal and over 20,000 passengers use it daily.

Islamic alliance

FROM PAGE 12 Among others present was Foreign Secretary Mohsin Ali Khan.

Meanwhile, the High Commissioner of Pakistan Iqbal Ahmed Khan yesterday briefed Chief Adviser Latifur Rahman on Pakistan's position on the situation arising out of the terrorist attack in the United States.

He said that Pakistan gave categorical assurance to the United States of its unstinting support to combat terrorism. Our position is very similar to that of Bangladesh, he added.

The Pakistan envoy expressed his confidence in the excellent preparations taken by the caretaker government for the upcoming election and hoped that the elections would take place in a free, fair and impartial atmosphere.

The caretaker government has done a very impressive job in neutralising the armed miscreants, Khan pointed out.

The chief advisor discussed some bilateral matters with the high commissioner including increasing Bangladesh's export to Pakistan.

Foreign Secretary Mohsin Ali Khan and Secretary to the Chief Adviser, Golam Rahman were present.

AL's 5-year rule golden era

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He told the meeting, "I'm on the move. I am seeking vote all 300 party candidates. That's why, I'm unable to go door to door in your area and seek vote for myself. Today, I'm giving you the responsibility to campaign for me. You vote for me, I'll make Pirojganj a municipality, supply power to all villages and develop road communications."

In Pirojganj, Hasina addressed rallies at Kishorgari, Jamtoli, Khejripur, Jumapara, Dherapet, Laldighi Melahat, Chotrahat, Sannashibazar, Khalaship, Vendabari, Mirzapur and Boro Dargan.

Hasina stood in an open-roof truck to wave two hands to thousands of her admirers who were standing for hours on both sides of roads in Pirojganj, where she traveled about 50 kilometres. Arches were erected at many places.

Women with minor children in their laps outnumbered men all along the roads. They waved flags and raised full-throated slogans in favour of AL's election symbol 'boat'.

She began her days programme

by offering fete at the shrine of Pir Ismail Gazi at Boro Dargan in Pirojganj.

As she reached Fatehpur, the village wore a festive look. People rushed towards her motorcade to have a glimpse of Hasina, calling her, 'Hamar Badhumata' (our daughter-in-law).

Her in-laws prepared varieties of food items including traditional pithas (cakes) for Hasina but for security restriction she could not take most of delicious items as those were not previously checked. She took bread made of rice flour and vegetables.

The AL chief travelled to remote places of the northern districts.

Everywhere people in their thousands thronged her meeting venues.

At the rallies, the AL chief renewed her pledges that if voted to power, her party would make female education free up to degree-level, supply power to all villages and nationalise all registered private schools and madrassahs.

She also addressed rallies at Rangpur town, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Gangachara last night.

On the last day today of her three-day tour of northern districts, Hasina will address meetings at different places in Gaibandha, Bogra and Sirajganj district.

She is scheduled to reach Dhaka by road Friday morning.

US wants Dhaka

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parent and peaceful.

"I want the elections now more than a week ago. I want to be here in Bangladesh working to solve the global terrorism problems. It is good to work for a government that enjoys the confidence of the people in a free and fair election."

Whether Bangladesh harbour terrorists

"Bangladesh is a moderate Muslim country. It is not known to harbour any known group of terrorists. My feeling is that in the present globalised world, we have travel opportunities. Being what they are, terrorist activities are being put in place anywhere, but this is different from harbouring terrorists, which certainly Bangladesh does not do."

Bangladesh dilemma

Asked if before offering facilities Bangladesh may face a dilemma because it is bordered by India, Myanmar and neighbouring China, she replied, "Yes, but it is a hypothetical dilemma at this point in time."

Compensation

Asked if Bangladesh joined the coalition efforts and offers its facilities, would it be offered any compensation Peters replied, "This is really too speculative. We see this as a common effort. What particular kinds of assistance will be sought or offered or what particular help the US will give, I do not know. As you know that the US has provided substantial development assistance to Bangladesh."

Carter and robust role of opposition

Former President Carter, when he was here, spoke with the caretaker government and the leaders of the parties to reach an agreement to discourage violence. He reached an agreement that no hartals will take place and a more robust role for the opposition.

"Neither of the two major political parties wants to think about being in the opposition. And that is natural. Everybody wants to focus on the coming elections, which is their natural right."

"But I want to emphasise that these (were) the major points that the leaders agreed (during the Carter visit) that after the elections, there should be a dignified and serious role for the opposition which has a lot to contribute to the future of Bangladesh."

"In the meantime, I remain confident that Bangladesh will hold the elections peacefully. From my contacts with the parties, I have the impression that they have acknowledged (the Carter plan)."

International and domestic observers

"We also look forward to a robust presence of domestic observers. Domestic observation is being practised in the world. In the last Indonesian elections (1999), there were several thousand domestic observers."

Who will win?

Asked about her assessment as to which party will win the polls, the ambassador laughed heartily and replied, "You really think I would answer this question. The parties are focused on winning now. I don't think I will answer that on October 2."

Will the opposition accept the results?

"If the elections are reasonably free and fair, and I expect it to be. There is a popular feeling throughout Bangladesh that if the elections are free and fair the results will be accepted."

"Another element will be the observers international and domestic who will be able to comment on the procedures and to report some irregularities, if there are any irregularities. That is another element."

"But I do not want to forget the people of Bangladesh. In the end the leaders of all major parties will accept the position of the people."

Pre-election clashes: 3 killed

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Later in the evening, the BNP activists put up barricades on the road and attacked the motorcade of Rafiqul Anwar who went there for electioneering.

In the attack, the BNP activists reportedly set ablaze two trucks and damaged four Jeeps (locally known as Chander Gari) and one private car. Several rounds of shots were also fired, leaving two persons injured.

During the attack Rafiqul Anwar took refuge at Dantmara police camp.

Our Feni Correspondent says: At least 10 people were injured in a clash between AL and BNP activists at village Nairajpur in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The clash ensued when AL activists attacked a BNP election

camp at the village.

Of the bullet injured, Saiful, 22, Nurul Huda, 32, Abul Bashar, 45, and Ayub Khan, 40, were admitted to sadar hospital.

In Rangamati, six people were injured in a clash between Awami League and BNP supporters at Omda Miah Hilly area of the town yesterday noon.

Witnesses said rivals traded gunfire during the hour-long clash. Police intervened and opened blank

fires to disperse them.

Five of the injured were identified as Mamun, 22, Zahir Ahmed, 25, Manik, 23, Helal, 25, and Ayub.

In Pabna, armed terrorists yesterday opened gunfire targeting the vehicle of former state minister for information and AL candidate from Pabna-1 Prof Abu Sayeed at Jashobanta Dulia of Santiha upazila

yesterday.

but none was hurt.

Prof Sayeed told newsmen that 10-12 terrorists laid an ambush at the area and opened fire at about 4 pm when he was returning to his sader hospital.

In Rangamati, six people were injured in a clash between Awami League and BNP supporters at Khetupara of the upazila after addressing an election meeting there.

Hearing