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Announcement

Today's issue is 16 pages instead of 20. However we include a four-colour 16-page Special on Election 2001 in tabloid form. The price, therefore, remains the usual Tk 10.

Three more Bangladeshis shot dead by BSF

UNB, Panchagarh

Three more Bangladeshis were shot dead by BSF at the northern frontier yesterday, by the Indian Border Security Force.

Official sources said one person was killed at Puratan Atwari frontier in Atwari upazila of this district and two others died in shooting at Dabri frontier in Haripur upazila of Thakurgaon district yesterday.

Two of the deceased were identified as A Haque, 23, and Abdul Quddus, 20, of Dabri village in Thakurgaon.

Bangladesh Rifles and locals said BSF men of Fatepur outpost shot dead a man at Puratan Atwari frontier in Atwari upazila in the morning and took his body over to Indian territory.

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Stern measures against code violators: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has warned of stern action for violation of the election code of conduct by any candidate.

The warning was given in a special circular issued yesterday asking all Returning Officers and the police administration to take urgent steps as per Article 87A of the Representative People's Order (RPO)-1972.

It followed incidents of violation of electoral rules by some candidates in different areas of the country.

The EC also asked the authorities concerned to "force all the contesting candidates to abide by all election rules" and to expedite the campaign across the country against violation of the code of conduct and its consequences.

Mentioning provisions of Article 44B (3) of the RPO, the EC circular reiterated that election expenditure of a candidates should not exceed Tk five lakh.

The said amount will not include

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US rejects proposals of Islamic clerics

Ulema urge Laden to leave Afghanistan voluntarily

AFP, Washington

The United States yesterday stuck to its demands that Afghanistan's Taliban hand over Osama bin Laden, bluntly rejecting an edict by Islamic clerics in Kabul urging the ruling militia invite him to leave.

Amid clear signs that US retaliation for last week's terror attacks was drawing near, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer warned the Taliban: "It's the time for action, not words" and said the edict "doesn't meet America's requirements."

US President George W. Bush and other top officials have fingered the Saudi-born militant as the prime suspect in September 11 strikes on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that left an estimated 5,900 people feared dead.

Senior religious leaders from across Afghanistan earlier urged the Taliban to ask bin Laden to leave the country voluntarily and unani

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US Army ready for sustained land combat

AP, Washington

The US Army is ready to conduct "sustained land combat operations" as part of President George W. Bush's promised war against terrorism, the army's top civilian official said Thursday.

Army Secretary Thomas E. White told reporters at the Pentagon that a deployment order signed by Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld on Wednesday includes army as well as air force troops. He said it was only the first step in a broader military plan that would unfold in the weeks ahead.

"A lot more will come," he said.

White declined to say which army forces are included in the

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While the United States keeps military options open to flush out Osama bin Laden, prime suspect for the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, from Afghanistan, there have been pleas for peace in Berlin by the anti-war initiative (left), by members of a leftist student organisation in Manila (2nd L), by peace processionists in Lima and by scores of Muslim women in Jakarta yesterday and the day before.

PROBABLE TARGETS

AP, Undated

Here are some of the sites that US forces may target if they attack Afghanistan.

The civilian-military airport in Kabul, the capital, and a Taliban garrison in the north of the city.

Training bases set up by suspected terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden across the country, including two near Jalalabad, a city in eastern Afghanistan, and five in provinces along the Pakistan border: Kunar, Nangahar, Logar, Paktia and Kandahar.

Airport in Kandahar, where the Taliban leaders are based.

The airport and Taliban military bases located in and around Jalalabad. Similar in Kunar province.

A Taliban garrison and the airport in Herat on the border with Iran.

Taliban's Shindand air base.

Laden too poor to stage US terror attacks?

AFP, Khartoum

Osama bin Laden, the top suspect in last week's massive anti-US terror attacks using hijacked airliners, is too poor and too isolated to have masterminded them, an Islamist said here yesterday.

Bin Laden "lives in mountains and caves in Afghanistan and his capabilities will not allow him to carry out such tremendous explosions which require the capabilities of a fullfledged state," said Wisa al-Mahdi, an official with the opposition Popular National Congress (PNC).

Mahdi, who is the wife of Hassan al-Turabi, the detained Islamist

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Army deployment to bolster public confidence

Chief of army staff tells The Daily Star

M ANWARUL HAQ

Chief of Army Staff Lt General Harun-ar-Rashid, Bir Bikram, has said presence of the army will create a climate of confidence and an enabling atmosphere for fair and peaceful elections so that voters can cast their votes without being intimidated by anyone.

"The presence of our officers and soldiers throughout the country will act as a deterrent to potential trouble mongers and miscreants. It will help holding of the polls peacefully," he said.

The army chief spoke about the

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Lt. General Harun-ar-Rashid

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Govt response to US request welcome

General Rashid has welcomed the government decision to allow possible use of the country's strategic facilities by any coalition forces to fight terrorism.

"A constitutionally authorised government has taken the decision. And we welcome the decision. If there is any task, we will discharge that," he said.

EC determined to hold election as per schedule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is determined to hold the ensuing general election as per schedule despite tension in the region following the recent terrorist attacks in the United States and its threat of retaliation.

"Election must be held according to the schedule and there is no constitutional provision to shift it. Now the situation is do or die," EC Additional Secretary Khairuzzaman Chowdhury said briefing newsmen yesterday.

Asked whether the Commission has discussed the latest global situation, the EC spokesman said it was not the 'Commission commission's cup of tea.' According to the Constitution, "we must complete the polling within 90 days of dissolution of parliament," he said.

The US has threatened air strikes on Afghanistan unless Saudi-born Osama bin Laden, whom they suspect for the recent

attacks, is handed over to them. In this regard, Washington also requested Dhaka to allow use of Bangladesh's strategic facilities in case of need and Dhaka agreed to it.

Against this background, there are speculations that the ensuing general election may be affected if there is a volatile regional situation.

Ruling out the possibility of an adverse situation, the EC spokesman said election would take place as per the schedule. "We must go ahead to conduct the voting peacefully on October 1, scheduled by the EC earlier."

About preparations for the election, he said the process of correction of vote list was going on and would continue till September 30. According to the latest statistics, the number of voters in the country is 7,50,49,721.

"Printing of ballot papers is also going on in full swing and it would

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Khaleda, Ershad campaigning on public funds

Hasina tells election rallies

REAZ AHMAD, from Bogra

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina has alleged that both BNP chief Khaleda Zia and HM Ershad of Jatiya Party are now spending on electioneering the public money they misappropriated while in power.

"Khaleda and Ershad made money through corrupt practices during their rule and now they are spending that money on election campaigns," Hasina said while addressing a series of rallies in Bogra, Gaibandha and Rangpur yesterday.

The immediate past prime minister, on the last day of her three-day election campaign in northern region, already addressed over half a dozen rallies in her own constituency Pirganj in Rangpur and in Gaibandha -- known as strongholds

of Ershad-- and in Bogra, a traditional stronghold of BNP.

When this report was filed last night, Hasina was still to address some more rallies in different constituencies in Bogra and Sirajganj. She is likely to return to the capital early today after covering 10 northern districts in the last three days.

The AL president said, "They (Khaleda and Ershad) are like guest birds which visit our country in winter only. They come close to the people whenever election comes, but once the polling is over they never share pangs and sorrows of the people."

Hasina told a rally at Shagata in Gaibandha "Ershad, Raushan Ershad and Khaleda Zia were involved in corruption. And there are cases of corruption against them. People should not vote for

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AL totally failed to protect country's sovereignty

Khaleda tells polls meetings

ABUL KALAM AZAD, from Dinajpur

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday called upon the people to vote for four-party alliance candidates in the coming parliamentary election to protect sovereignty of the country and ensure peace and development.

Referring to the border incursions in Roumari earlier this year, she said Awami League has no right to seek vote again as they "totally failed to protect the country's sovereignty, save people's life and solve the border problems with a neighbouring country."

The former Prime Minister was addressing a series of election meetings in different constituencies in the northern districts of Saidpur, Nilfamari and Panchagar, seeking vote for candidates of her and the four-party alliance.

"If you voted for the BNP-led four-party alliance, your life and lands will be well protected," she said.

Khaleda landed at Saidpur Airport in a Biman flight in the afternoon and addressed a wayside meeting at Saidpur town. Leaders of BNP and other parties of the alliance received her at the airport.

She then held a big public meeting in Nilfamari-4 constituency where she introduced BNP candidate Amjad Hossain Sarker Bhoje.

Seeking vote for BNP's election symbol 'sheaf of paddy', she said it is the symbol of peace and prosperity.

She addressed another public meeting in Nilphari-2 constituency (Nilfamari Sadar), where she called upon the people to vote for alliance candidate Abdul Latif, a local leader of Jamat-e-Islami.

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Police remove banners of candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) removed most of the banners of election candidates from different parts of the city.

The drive came after a decision taken at a meeting on Tuesday at the office of Returning Officer at Shegunbagicha.

At the meeting, political parties including the major two ones agreed to comply with the Representative of People Order (RPO)-1972.

The candidates were asked to remove their banners by Wednesday midnight.

Returning officer, polling officers, law-enforcement officials and candidates of different political parties took part in the discussion.

A top official of the DMP yesterday told The Daily Star that they got all cooperation from the political parties.

Several makeshift camps were also removed, and the rest will also be removed with the exception of one in each ward, the officer said.

As per the RPO, one candidate

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AL, BNP detached from young voters

No specific pledges, no campaign strategy

STAR REPORT

The country's two major political parties might be alienating themselves from the second-generation and first-time voters, as they have no specific campaign strategy to reach out to them.

To these prospective voters, especially who are students, arguments of the BNP and Awami League on different issues might not be as clear as the parties would like to think.

Due to absence of effective student politics across the country for years, students' affiliation or leaning towards various organisations developed more from social interactions and media exposure rather than through any effort by parties.

Editorial on page 6

Both the AL and the BNP preach that they have a modern outlook and their policies have a lot to offer to the young voters.

Shah AMS Kibria, chief election co-ordinator for the AL, admitted to The Daily Star that his party did not have specific programmes for the first-time voters but he argued that the party's aura was too strong for the young generation to ignore.

"Awami League is a progressive, secular and modern party. It is everything a new-generation voter would want to see. Its role in the liberation war is clear. Its part in consolidating democracy is also obvious. In the last five years of its rule, the AL gave a lot of emphasis on information technology, employment bank, etc to attract the youth."

BNP Joint Secretary and election steering committee member Haris Chowdhury also conceded that his party had no specific programme for the

first- and second-time voters.

"But the party has a special charm to that age group because it is modern," he said. "They would face no difficulty in embracing the BNP which believes in Bangladeshi nationalism."

Election manifestos of the two parties, which were created for all voters, contain some pledges that might attract the youth. Both parties have promised more opportunity and development in the fields of education and information technology, and create more employment scopes.

Expansion of education facilities including access to IT training, steps against campus violence, free education for female students up to certain levels, fresh employment opportunities are some of the common programmes of the two parties.

But the voters themselves have critical views of their policies and politics in general.

Khandakar Akhtar Hossain, 25, a business administration graduate, said: "It is unfortunate for us that two main political parties with the largest following have been using anti-liberation groups for their narrow political interests."

"A small number of people are engaged in communal and fundamentalist politics and I believe the young generation does not like them. The two leading parties should form a unity and reject anti-liberation and fundamentalist forces."

He observed that it would be unfortunate for the whole nation if any member of the Jamaat-e-Islami became a partner of the next government.

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Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) runs a demolition drive to recover the foreshore of Shitalakhyar river yesterday.

BIWTA pulls down 6 illegal structures

BSS, N'ganj

Four multistoried and one single storied residential building constructed illegally on the land of BIWTA on the western bank of the river Shitalakhyar at Tanbazar SM Maleh Road were partially demolished yesterday, on the second phase of illegal eviction drive by BIWTA.

According to BIWTA sources, the eviction drive started at 11 am and continued till 5 pm. Agrani Tug boat, three survey vessels, and one hundred labourers were employed to demolish the buildings.

Hundreds of people witnessed the eviction. Magistrate 1st-class M Rabbi, BIWTA Executive Engineer Juhuddin Ahmed and police officials were present during the drive. The owners of the buildings are former poura commissioner

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