

Trouble-prone UZs

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would be deployed at the most troubled centres.

Following are the constituencies under which 64 thanas and upazilas were marked as vulnerable: the constituency comprising part of Barisal and another from Pirojpur district, Barisal-2, Bhola-1, 2, 3 and 4, Jalakathi-2, Patuakhali-2, Pirojpur-1, Chandpur-1 and 2, Chittagong-3, 4, 6, 7, and 12, Feni-1, 2, and 3, Laxmipur-4, Noakhali-5 and 6, Comilla-3, 8, 9 and 12, Dhaka-3 and 9, Mymensingh-10, Munshiganj-4, Netrokona-1, Narayanganj-4 and 5, Tangail-8, Bagerhat-2, Jessore-3, Khulna-4, Kustia-2, 3 and 4, Bogra-1, Naogaon-6 Rangpur-3, Sirajganj-2 and 5, Pabna-1 and 2, Sylhet-1, 2 and 3.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission yesterday postponed its scheduled meeting supposed to take place the same day due to some "unavoidable circumstances". The commission on Sunday at a meeting decided to sit at least once a day till the election to review its preparation.

But, two delegations -- one from the Asia Foundation and the other from the Jamaat-Islami -- separately met the Chief Election

Commissioner at the latter's office yesterday.

The Asia foundation discussed the deployment of foreign polls observers, while the Jamaat placed a nine-point demand to the commission including transfer of some officials already assigned electoral duties.

'Sheaf of paddy' lifters!

UNB, Rajbari

Farmers in the district have been suffering from a campaign phobia passing sleepless nights to protect paddy fields from sheaf lifters.

Farmers alleged that supporters of BNP-led alliance tear off paddy sheaf whenever they bring out processions in favour of their candidates. Farmers of Pangsha and Machpara areas have been mainly affected.

Some farmers came to Rajbari district court area to lodge complaints with the authorities but they said they were not yet ready to start court cases.

Kidnapper held

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Bijoyagar Road at 12:30 am. Sadek, 23, who masterminded the crime, was held along with a pistol.

When contacted yesterday, Aktaruzaman said, "There were great risks involved in the entire operation. My priority was to rescue the child unhurt."

He also said, "I called my detective team and set out on the hunt at 11:00 pm in four separate vehicles. The kidnappers asked Dr Nayeem to send the money in a white microbus. He was also instructed to give a cell phone to his driver they knew before and follow their instructions."

First, the kidnappers asked the driver to pull up his car somewhere near Farmgate. Later, they changed the decision and asked the driver to wait at Bijoyagar.

The driver kept three cell phones with him one for communicating with kidnappers, one with police who were trailing the microbus from afar and the other was kept on all the time during the operation.

When the microbus reached Bijoyagar, kidnappers emerged from an auto-rickshaw. The police instantly surfaced on the spot and arrested Sadek who had the child with him before other members of the gang escaped.



Awami League president and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina (inset) waves to the party activists and supporters at an election rally at Mohammadpur in the city yesterday. She introduced party candidate Alhaj Mockbul Hossain, who is contesting the upcoming election for Dhaka-9 JS seat, to the crowd.

CA inaugurates new central jail in Gazipur today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Advisor Latifur Rahman will inaugurate the newly constructed Kashimpur Dhaka Central Jail in Gazipur tomorrow.

The work of only one unit out of three has so far been completed. The completed high security unit will accommodate three hundred convicted prisoners.

The incomplete two units include one vocational trade unit for 2,000 convicts and the other for 300 female ones.

The work of Tk 126 crore project started in 1998, and only Tk 22 crore has been allocated for the project so far.

On the inaugural day, the jail will accommodate 200 convicted prisoners who will be shifted from the central jail at Nazimuddin Road.

At present, nearly 68 thousand prisoners are detained in 64 jails across the country against the total capacity of more than 21 thousand.

In the Dhaka Central Jail, 9,600 prisoners are detained now against its capacity of only 2,632.

Bagerhat blast Bomb was remote-controlled device: experts

BSS, Bagerhat

The powerful bomb that exploded here Sunday at the election rally of Awami League was a remote-controlled device and the nature of the explosive was quite similar to the powerful explosive shell that exploded at Awami League office in Narayanganj recently, experts said.

The device containing at least 6 to 7 kilograms of explosives was covered with a plate of cast iron that ultimately turned into thousands of shooting splinters after the explosion, visiting explosive experts of army and police told journalists at the spot yesterday.

A 10-member explosive expert team of CID police yesterday came to the spot at Khalilur Rahman Degree College ground at Mollahat, 40 kilometres from the district headquarters.

A similar army team from Jessore cantonment also visited the spot to detect the nature of the explosives.

The bomb which also contained five to six batteries to activate the remote control, was also made locally, experts said.

Manpower

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recruiting agencies, the media and NGOs took part in the workshop.

Barrister Ishiaq said all necessary steps should be taken immediately to render prompt services to the labour force that fetch the valuable foreign currency for the country.

In his presidential address at one of the sessions, Prof Rehman Sobhan proposed opening of 'skill development centres' in every thana to train at least 1,000 boys and girls at each of those annually, keeping an eye on job markets.

Nobody is taking the sector seriously although it alone can fetch five to 10 billion dollars annually in near future, observed Prof Sobhan. Remittances well surpass the volume of foreign aid to the country in a given year, he said "Our manpower working abroad would remain the biggest money earner in foreseeable future."

In line with Prof. Sobhan's suggestions, Director General of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Masood Aziz, said the country's missions abroad have to keep track of the job markets abroad and change their attitude. He regretted that in many cases, Bangladeshis working abroad did not even get access to their country's missions for assistance.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, who presided over another session, said the manpower sector should be recognised as an industry and there should not be too much of government regulations.

Rokia Afzal Rahman, Advisor in charge of Labour and Employment Ministry, who chaired both the inaugural and the concluding sessions, admitted that people have to cross a lot of hurdles in going abroad and in many cases, they can not even recover the money they spend.

Advisor Abdul Muidd Chowdhury said more emphasis should be given for export of skilled manpower. There should be more transparency and accountability in activities of recruiting agencies.

Advisor M Hafiz Uddin Khan said concerted efforts should be made for export of more manpower. He regretted that the money deposited in the migrant workers' welfare fund was misused.

Representatives of BAIRA, the apex body of manpower recruiting agencies, said the sweeping allegations of cheating people is not applicable in case of all agencies. They welcomed any government move to streamline the recruitment process. BAIRA General Secretary Golam Mustafa also spoke.

On the other hand, representatives of migrant workers noted that people willing to go abroad for jobs are cheated in many ways. They became subject to exorbitant fees, faulty recruitment process and harassment at airports. They often fall prey to unscrupulous middlemen. They regretted that Bangladesh failed to utilise the experience and expertise of migrant workers in nation building.

How the media, both print and electronic, focus the manpower sector also came up prominently in one of the sessions. Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam and Editor of the Prothom Alo Motiur Rahman co-chaired the session. Managing Director of Ekushey Television Farhad Mahmud also took part in the discussion.

They all agreed that the media should give more importance to manpower export, the most productive sector that fetches more foreign currency than the most robust export sector, garments industry.

Earlier, Prof CR Abrar and Dr Tasneem Siddiqui presented a keynote paper, portraying the prospects and problems of manpower sector and put forward some recommendations for solving the problems faced by migrant workers.

Labour and Employment Secretary Md Sirajul Islam gave the address of welcome. Others who took part in the discussions include Bangladesh Bank Governor Mohammad Farashuddin, Shengji Li of ILO, Shahidul Haq of International Organisation of Migration (IOM), lawyers Refaat Ahmed and Dr Shahdeen Malik of RMMRU, Syed Saiful Haque Asif, Anisur Rahman and Abdul Mannan of WARBE, a migrants' organisation, and Abdul Mannan, of Islami Bank.

Feni Jubo League leader killed

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in his abdomen, when BNP and AL clashed at Banglabazar under Chhagalnaiya thana on Sunday.

The clash erupted when AL activists allegedly attacked an election procession of BNP. Police fired five rounds of gunshots to disperse the AL and BNP activists during the clash. The police havildar was admitted to Feni Sadar Hospital.

Our Sirajganj correspondent adds, at least 50 people were injured, eight critically when Awami League and BNP activists clashed in Varitari, Shahangachha and Ram Krishna Nagar areas in Sirajganj yesterday.

The clash erupted in Varitari area of Sadar upazila at about 11 am when an AL procession was crossing a BNP rally. At least 20 of both the groups were injured. Eight were admitted to Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

The critically injured are BNP activists Selim, Khokon, Bishu, Manjur and AL activists Rezaul, Razzak, Rubel and Kayinsha. At least 30 people were injured in separate clashes between AL and BNP activists at Shahangachha and Ram Krishna Nagar.

Both the groups exploded bombs

and used sticks, brick bats and other lethal weapon.

The tense situation was prevailing in Sirajganj.

Our staff correspondent from Khulna says, Awami League activists ransacked an election campaign office of BNP at Islampur road yesterday afternoon.

The AL activists stormed into the election campaign office leaving four BNP activists injured. Two roadside shops were also looted, witnesses said.

The incident occurred in presence of police, witnesses and BNP leaders said.

UNB from Barisal adds, some 12 people were injured, four by bullets, in sporadic clashes between BNP and Awami League supporters in Gourmadi upazila yesterday.

Police and witnesses said two JCD activists were injured when a BNP procession came under attack at Chandrarah area in the morning.

Agitated BNP men ransacked houses of their opponents, including the houses of Atanta Sholee and Chitta Ranjan Halder of the area.

BCL worker Kalachan was shot when an AL election campaign team was attacked at Darial area.

Besides, clashes between BNP and AL workers took place at

Chandshi Narasinghapotti, south Bijoypur and Darial areas leaving eight people injured, three by bullets, yesterday.

BNP and AL blamed each other for the attacks.

Meanwhile, two BNP activists were injured, one with bullets, in separate attacks allegedly by Awami League workers in Lalpur upazila in Natore yesterday.

Wasim and Babu were rushed to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in critical condition.

A pre-election clash between BNP and AL activists left at least 20 injured at Garaganj bazar in Shaiklupa Sunday evening.

One of the injured, whose identity could not be known, was shifted to Dhaka in a critical condition.

Witnesses said the clash took place when election processions of the two rival parties came face to face in the area.

Twelve people were injured when AL and BNP activists clashed at Laxminarayanpur village in Sadar upazila under Rajbari district on Sunday night.

Police said the clash took place as BNP workers attacked an Awami League procession and stabbed its leader Aziz Sarder at about 8 pm.

Ctg, Mongla ports

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Lanka," the advisor said. He added that the SAARC Secretariat should look into this matter to avoid any environmental disaster.

The secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests said oil spillage is one of major causes for damage to natural resources. "Planted and mangrove forests and paddy fields are effected by oil spillage and the effect of it may extend up to 100 km."

The secretary of the Ministry of Shipping said oil spill is a serious hazard to the eco-system and any serious accident may lead to serious oil spill crisis. "In fact, the country should have a national oil contingency policy at hand much earlier."

The deputy country representative of Asian Development Bank mentioned that Bangladesh did not have any contingency plan.

The chairman of the Mongla Port Authority said Mongla port expects visit of more ships in near future and there is an urgent need to establish a regulatory body to prevent oil spill near the Sundarbans.

The government should ratify the IMO International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, the speakers added.

A good quantity of fuel oil released from a foreign vessel near Dhangmari in 1994 also consider-

ably affected the Sundarbans mangroves, marshes, fishes and shrimps, a study found. Impacts of oil spills in Golpata, Sundari and Gewa trees are being assessed.

AL apprises

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secretary Muzaffar Hossain Paltu, called on the President at Bangabhaban to apprise him of the prevailing situation.

The members of the delegation informed the president of the bomb blast at AL meeting at Mollahat in Bagerhat district on Sunday, which killed a number of people.

Series of bomb blasts at Udichi function, Ramna Batamul, Narayanganj and other places as well were the acts of fundamentalists, they said.

AL also complained against some deputy commissioners and officers-in-charge of different thanas saying that they are working in partisan line. "They should be withdrawn from their present postings immediately."

A Bangabhaban release said President Shahabuddin Ahmed gave them a patient hearing and said that he would look into the matter.

Other members of the delegation were Moneam Sarkar, Ataur Rahman Kaiser, Adv Syed Ahmed and Adv Abdul Mannan Khan.

Hartal in Bagerhat

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Helal is contesting two BNP stalwarts -- Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and AHM Selim.

Sheikh Helal also suffered minor injuries when his private security guards forced him down to the ground when the bombs exploded, some of the injured admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital said. The bombs went off when Sheikh Helal was entering the venue to address the meeting.

Meanwhile, an eight-member CID team headed by Fazlul Karim, Additional SP of CID in Khulna-Barisal zone, reached Mollahat yesterday to probe the bomb blasts.

Sources said the CID team may go into action if any FIR is lodged. But till 5-30 pm yesterday, none filed any case, said Probdh Chakravarty, OC of Mollahat thana.

The CID team collected four bomb splinters from the spot but could not ascertain the type of the bombs.

An army explosive expert said the powerful bombs may be like the ones planted at Kotalipara and at Udichi cultural function in Jessore last year. "We are digging into the matter", he said.

An intelligence official said the bombs may be like the one planted at Baniarchar church.

Awami League brought out a

procession with the dead bodies yesterday afternoon. It was led by Sheikh Helal. The namaz-e-janjaja of the dead was held at the KR College ground after Zohr prayer and bodies were handed over to their relatives.

Local Awami League leaders vowed to "drive out BNP-Jamaat axis from the soil of Bagerhat district".

At a press conference on Sunday night, Sheikh Helal alleged that alliance candidate in Bagerhat-2 (Sadar-Kachua) and president of district BNP AHM Selim masterminded the incident to kill him.

Selim denied the charge yesterday. He accused Sheikh Helal of trying to foil the election in Bagerhat and to "conceal the stigma of Kalidas Boral murder".

The entire Mollahat upazilla has been brought under tight security cordon by deploying Army, BDR and riot police.

According to BNP leaders at Bagerhat, the house of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, alliance candidate in Bagerhat-2, was ransacked and looted on Sunday night by unruly AL activists.

Mujibar Rahman, Helal's main rival in the polls race, alleged that armed cadres of AL stormed into his house at Mejera Gaola village in Mollahat on Sunday night to kill him.

Hasina to build 'New Dhaka'

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amenities in the capital and eased problems like water-logging, power crisis, traffic jam and lack of housing for the low- and mid-income groups.

She also listed her government's successes including food autarky, stable prices of the essentials, fresh employment opportunities and health facilities, low-cost mobile phones, women empowerment, increased per capita income, budgets without fresh taxes, completion of the AL government's full term and expanded IT facilities. The former PM also cited specific statistics to substantiate her statements.

"We worked round the clock to ensure everything needed for pushing the country towards development," she said, seeking vote for her party in the October 1 general election to carry on the development.

Describing the AL a people's organisation, Hasina said her party always stood for the welfare of the low income and middle class people. "Unlike other parties, we never confined our efforts to the benefits of the well-to-do section of the society."

About the steps taken for the women community, the AL president noted that her government was the first to appoint women judges in the Supreme Court, and female DCS, SPs and high civil and military officials were also appointed.

She promised to raise the num-

ber of parliamentary seats reserved for women to 60 from 30. But she regretted that her party failed to do this in the last parliament due to non-cooperation by BNP.

The AL chief also reminded the gathering that her government made cell phone available to the common people reducing their prices to taka six to 10 thousands from Tk one to one and a half lakhs.

Stating that her government had removed campus violence and fought terrorism in other areas, the AL chief promised stern action to further improve the law and order situation if voted to power again.

Referring to expansion of computer education and withdrawal of taxes on computer during her rule, Hasina sought people's support to build a poverty-free and dignified Bangladesh equipped to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Mentioning her countrywide election tour, the AL leader hoped that the people would reelect her party handing heavy defeat to the BNP-led alliance of razzaks, killers and vote riggers.

"The toiling masses are ready to vote for boat again as we ensured them food," she said adding that boat, or Awami League for that matter, had never betrayed the people. "You got independence while you voted for boat in 1970 and food autarky in 1996. Vote again for boat to have a poverty-free Bangladesh."

Criticising the BNP viewpoint

that food deficit helped the country get foreign donations, Hasina commented such a crisis might benefit the BNP leaders, but not the common people.

Ballot papers

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Secretariat, said that on the first day, ballots will be sent to the districts far away from the capital.

The districts are Panchagarah, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jajpurhat, Bogra, Nawabganj, Naogaon, Rajshahi, Natore, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Barguna, Patuakhali, Bhola, Barisal, Jhalakati, Pirojpur, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Cox's Bazar, Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban.

On the second day (Wednesday), the ballots will go to Pabna, Meherpur, Kushtia, Chuadanga, Jhenidha, Jessore, Magura, Narail, Khulna, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Rajbari, Faridpur, Gopalganj, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Sylhet, Brahmanbaria, Chandpur, Noakhali, Laxmipur and Chittagong.

The districts to receive the ballot papers Thursday are Sirajganj, Tangail, Narayanganj, Narsingdi, Mymensingh, Netrokona, Kishoreganj, Manikganj, Munshiganj, Dhaka, Gazipur, Comilla and Feni.

AL sins to sink boat: Khaleda

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the country was branded a bottomless basket."

If re-elected, the AL would turn Bangladesh into a "terrorist and corrupt state," she said while urging people to resist it through ballots.

The BNP chief also accused of the AL of ruining the country's agriculture, economy and industry by opening the border and making Bangladesh the market of a particular country. Similarly, she said, it gave arms and penshidy to young people to destroy them.

She also threw a string of questions to AL President Sheikh Hasina without naming her. "Where were you when the golden boys of your party celebrated a century of rapes at the Jahangirnagar University? What have you done against the MPs of your party who attacked processions and killed people? What steps have you taken when the son of your friend killed two persons and culled them into twelve pieces each?"

Relating her experience of the election tours to different parts of the country over the last one month, the former prime minister said an unprecedented wave had been created in favour of the sheaf of paddy (the BNP's election symbol) and the (four-party) alliance. "The

AL has thus resorted to terrorism throughout the country sensing adverse days and is now conspiring to foil the election."

The BNP chairperson urged the president, the chief advisor and the chief election commissioner to ask army to confiscate illegal arms and arrest terrorists immediately to create "an atmosphere conducive to a free and fair election." "We expect free and fair polls on October 1."

Khaleda demanded judicial inquiry into the Bagerhat blast and subsequent killing of people. The BNP also demanded judicial probe into explosions at the Ramna Batamul, the mosque in Khulna, the CPB meeting at Paltan Maidan, at Narayanganj and the church at Gopalganj, she said. "But the AL government did not listen to us as it had connections with the incidents. It did not form any judicial committee because investigation would have unveiled the true face of the AL."

She promised that the BNP-led alliance would reinvestigate all these incidents and bring the culprits to book, if elected.

The former prime minister then proceeded to Moulvibazar and addressed a number of election meetings and roadside rallies.

She briefly addressed a rally at Lalabazar organised in support of

BNP candidate Shafi Ahmed for the Sylhet-3 seat.

She then addressed a meeting at Goalabazar to seek votes for Ilias Ali, her party candidate for the Sylhet-2 constituency.

Later, the BNP chairperson addressed a huge meeting at Moulvibazar Government High School playground and sought votes for Saifur Rahman for the Moulvibazar-3 seat.

She told the people of the greater Sylhet about recovery of the Padua frontier by the BDR troops and their subsequent withdrawal for the AL government's subservient foreign policy.

If her party is voted to power, it will resolve border problems through dialogue with the countries concerned without conceding an inch of Bangladesh land, Khaleda said.

The BNP chief also addressed election meetings at Bahubal, Lakhai, Habiganj Sadar, Chunarghat, and Sarail and Brahmanbari Sadar.

She will take part in electioneering and address meetings at Kashba, Muradnagar, Burichang today and return to Dhaka and the start for Bhola by launch tonight.

India lukewarm

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joint ventures involving India and US and collaboration between scientific organisations of the two countries.

The ruling BJP, the main opposition Congress and the Communist parties view the decision as a US reward to Pakistan for its decision to co-operate in Washington's military campaign against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as a retribution for the September 11 strikes in New York and Washington.

Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha said it was good that the sanctions were waived but it was a minor issue as far as the Indian economy was concerned. Except for some defence supplies, the sanctions had no meaning, he added.

External Affairs and Defence Minister Jaswant Singh, meanwhile, said, "I hail the development. It's welcome news."

In fact, India has all along maintained that the sanctions have been counterproductive and hurt the US economy more than they did the Indian economy.

The BJP was very cautious in reacting to the lifting of the sanctions which they say had minimal impact on India. The party is waiting to see

if restrictions on high technology transfer goes.

But the head of the BJP's economic cell Jagdish Shettigar said a positive feature of the decision is that American companies tying up with Indian government's projects can now secure funds from US banks.

The BJP, some of its allies as well as the opposition parties chose to see the lifting of sanctions as US' quid pro quo to Pakistan's support to Washington's drive against international terrorism.

Apex Indian industrial and business welcomed the decision saying it would allow exports from the US and provide a psychological boost to greater trade and investment between the two countries.

Police defy

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under their illegal occupation for about five years, CAAB officials said.

The illegal occupants also organised a fair at the place last year and rented out stalls on payment. CAAB's complaint to Tejgaon police in this regard was allegedly ignored.

They have virtually turned the area into a den of terrorists and other criminals, residents alleged.

Hundi: BB governor