

AL-BNP clashes leave 50 killed in 19 days

ZAYADUL AHSAN

More than 50 people have been killed and 3,000 others injured in clashes between the Awami League and the BNP over the last 19 days at more than 200 constituencies.

Ten candidates have also been attacked in this period, from the last day of withdrawal of candidature on September 6 till yesterday. Former AL ministers Tofail Ahmed, Abu Saeed, HN Ashikur Rahman and former BNP minister Colonel (retd) Oli Ahmed are among those attacked.

Law and order continues to go out of the administration's control due to a gradual increase of political confrontations. With only five days left for the election, apprehension of violence is growing among the electorate and observers fear that it might affect voter turnout.

Incidence of murders, attacks on rallies and processions, and destruction of election camps have drastically increased over the last few days. The minority groups, especially the Hindu community, have also been targeted for harassment by a certain political quarter.

In each incident, huge illegal firearms have been used. It seems that intensified law enforcement activities and deployment armed forces have had little impact on the terrorists and their patrons - the political parties.

At a meeting Monday, the council of advisors to caretaker government discussed law and order and later asked law-enforcing agencies to be on maximum alert.

Against such a grim backdrop, Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, an advisor to the caretaker government, has nonetheless expressed optimism that the interim administration would hold the election in a peaceful environment.

"The situation did not improve immediately after deployment of army on September 22 as the forces were still being mobilised at different places. By today, however, they have taken their positions and we can expect the situation to improve from tomorrow,"

PICTURE OF VIOLENCE IN ONE DAY

September 23 (reported on different national dailies on September 24)

Constituency of violence	Area	Impact & Type
Bagerhat-1 Mollarhat		Eight killed and 100 injured in bomb explosion
Bhola-2	Daulatkhana	One shot dead, another slaughtered and 20 others injured, election office ransacked
Chittagong-13	Chandanaish	Gunshots fired in election rally of Col (retd) Oli; election camp ransacked
Sirajganj-2	Sadar Section	44 imposed
Netrokona-1	Kalmakanda	Attack on minorities
Magura-1	Sadar	AL-BNP clash; 14 injured
Sirajganj-7	Shahajadpur	AL-BNP clash; 14 injured
Patuakhali-2	Baufal	AL-BNP clash; 25 injured
Bogra-3	Adamdighi	AL-BNP clash; 20 injured
Meherpur-1	Sadar	AL-BNP clash; 20 injured
Manikganj-1	Ghor	AL-BNP clash; 5 injured
Narsingdi-2 Panchdona		AL election camp ransacked, attack on minorities; 30 injured
Comilla-2	Daudkandi	AL-BNP clash; 20 injured
Comilla-1	Homna	AL-BNP clash; 16 injured
Kushtia-1	Daulatpur	AL-BNP clash; 20 injured
Narayanganj-4	Saddhirganj	AL-BNP clash; 15 injured
Barisal-1	Gauranadi	AL-BNP clash; gunshots and bomb explosions left 10 injured
Mymensingh-2	Phulpur	AL-BNP clash; 10 injured
Sherpur-2	Nokla	AL-BNP clash; 30 injured
Sherpur-1	Sadar	AL-BNP clash; 10 injured
Munshiganj-4	Sadar	AL-BNP clash; 15 injured
Laxmipur-2	Raipur	AL-BNP clash; 4 injured
Noakhali-3	Chatkil	AL-BNP clash; 5 injured
Netrokona-1	Durgapur	AL-BNP clash; one AL activist killed
Barguna-2	-----	BNP-JP Monju clash, gunshots fired, rampage

Chowdhury said, "We are taking all possible measures to ensure a peaceful election."

These violent clashes are taking place between the AL and the BNP and the frequency of pre-election violence is much higher than that in the previous two Jatiya Sangsad elections.

The minority groups and tribal communities have become targets of repression and threats. Everyday there is one or two report in the newspapers on Hindu repression. Concerned by such atrocities, the AL has recently lodged complaints to

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Riyadh snaps ties with Taliban

AGENCIES, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia said yesterday it had severed relations with the Taliban over their links to "terrorists" in a move that leaves Pakistan as the only country that now recognises Afghanistan's embattled rulers.

The kingdom made its announcement on the Saudi Press Agency just three days after the neighbouring United Arab Emirates, the only other state to have recognised the Taliban, cut ties to the headline allies of Afghan-based dissident Osama bin Laden.

"Because the Taliban government did not pay attention to all the contacts and attempts made by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to persuade it to stop harbouring criminals and terrorists...the government of the Kingdom of Saudi

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A Pakistani policeman displays a multi-barrel rocket launcher (right), which police claim was seized at the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan as two Afghan men tried to smuggle it in on Monday. Meanwhile, US army continued its preparations for strike on Afghanistan to retaliate the September 11 terrorist strikes in New York and Washington.



AL complaint A certain group intimidating minority voters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) has alleged that a particular political group is intimidating the country's minority voters, known as its vote bank, into turning away from the October 1 election.

A six-member AL delegation lodged this complaint with the Election Commission (EC) at a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) M A Syed at the latter's office yesterday.

"In this situation, the forthcoming election cannot be peaceful," delegation leader Mozaffar Ahmed Paltu told newsmen after the meeting.

The AL leader informed that the CEC assured them of immediate steps to ensure the franchise of the minorities.

The EC at the one-hour meeting decided to allow the candidates to give names of polling agents to respective presiding officers until

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Bagerhat blast: One more dies, 6 held, case against 166

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A case has been filed accusing 166 persons including two four-party alliance candidates in Bagerhat-1 and 2 constituencies for their involvement in Sunday's bomb blast at Awami League's election meeting at Mollahat.

Six persons have so far been arrested, three of them named in the FIR. The FIR-named accused arrested from Bagerhat town yesterday evening are BNP activists, sources claimed. But police refused to disclose their names for the sake of investigation. Their arrest sparked tension at Bagerhat town.

The arrested three others, not named in the FIR, are Shahadat Hossain, President of Bagerhat district unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir,

Towhid and Moniruzzaman. They were arrested with one pipe gun when they were passing through the rail crossing in a microbus on Monday evening, police said.

Meanwhile, the death toll from the incident rose to nine yesterday as Romeza Khartoon, 45, succumbed to injuries at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Romeza's husband Ismail, a day labourer at Kharpa village in Mollahat, alleged that his wife had gone to the election rally under pressure from local AL leaders.

Ziaul Islam Chowdhury, General Secretary of Mollahat upazila Awami League filed the case with Mollahat thana at about midnight Monday. He complained that the bomb was planted at the meeting venue -- KR

College ground-- to kill Sheikh Helal, AL candidate in the two constituencies.

The two alliance candidates named in the case are Bagerhat district BNP President AHM Selim who is contesting from Bagerhat-2 and Mollahat upazila president of the party Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Bagerhat-1.

The accused also include sixty unidentified people and some local leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student front Islami Chhatra Shibir.

The case was transferred to CID yesterday for investigation.

A home ministry team headed by Additional Secretary Rafique Bhuiyan and a CID team led by DIG (Headquarters) K N Chanda reached Mollahat on Monday to probe the incident. Army explosive experts are examining bomb splinters collected from the spot.

One of the army explosive experts said the powerful bomb was made of 'cast iron' and it weighed not less than seven kilograms. It

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War or Nobel Peace Prize, a choice for Bush

AFP, Oslo

US President George W Bush should be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize if he manages to respond to the terrorist attacks on the United States without starting a war, 12 Norwegian academics, who nominated Bush, said yesterday.

"We hope that this will serve as a preventive alert, a change of tone from the simplistic talk of revenge and retaliation," Inge Nilsen, head of studies at Lofoten Islands University, told AFP.

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AL rebels still defiant, may escape harsh decision

REAZ AHMAD

The Awami League rebels are still defiant about contesting the October 1 parliamentary polls beyond party approvals.

None of the 26 rebels, whom party President Sheikh Hasina asked for the last time to withdraw from the race against party nominees three days back, responded positively till last night, the AL sources said.

With just four days to the election, the AL leadership is now trying to avoid taking the harsh decision of expelling the rebels.

An AL central committee leader told The Daily Star last night, "We are still hopeful that they (rebels) would eventually not run against the party candidates."

The rebels, campaigning in favour of their independent candidature till yesterday, had earlier twice

turned down requests from the party hierarchy urging them to stay off the race. Irritated by their continued defiance, the party chief issued the final letters on them last Saturday, sources said.

This is not the first time that the AL is facing such a delicate problem though; however, the party has so far showed much more restraint in terms of taking actions against the rebels compared to what other major parties have done in such cases. Only last week, the BNP expelled half a dozen rebels from the party on charge of contesting the polls against the party nominees in different constituencies.

The AL central committee leader acknowledged that the party leadership had been under tremendous pressure from the different district units that had taken firm stands against the rebel.

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Villagers yesterday stand outside the cordoned area (left) where a powerful explosion during an Awami League election meeting left nine people killed on September 23. As relatives and friends mourn for the victims (right), the AL has blamed BNP for the blast.



EC warns 18 more candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday warned 18 more candidates contesting the October 1 general election for violating the election code of conduct.

They include nine from BNP, five from Awami League, three from

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AL-BNP neck to neck contest in Sylhet presumed



Security personnel keep watch as employees of BG Press at Tejgaon in the city loads ballot papers onto trucks yesterday, to be carried to different districts of the country.

Ballot papers being sent to dist hqs

UNB, Dhaka

Election Commission yesterday started sending ballot papers to the district headquarters.

Officials said ballots were sent to 29 districts on the first day of a three-day dispatch. On the second day, ballots will be sent to 22 districts while to the rest 13 districts on the third day.

The ballot papers are being dispatched from the three government printing presses.

The destinations of ballots on the first day were Panchagarah, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, Bogra, Nawabganj, Naogaon, Rajshahi, Natore, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Barguna, Patuakhali, Bhola, Barisal, Jhalakathi, Pirojpur, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar, Habiganj, Cox's Bazar, Khagrachhari, Rangamati and

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Bldg collapse kills 7 at Comilla BNP rally

UNB, Comilla

At least seven teenage boys were electrocuted and more than 50 injured when a tin-shed building of Ershad Degree College collapsed under the weight of enthusiastic supporters of BNP attending a public meeting at Burichong yesterday afternoon.

The accident took place at 4 pm, about an hour before BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia reached the venue.

Witnesses said seven young boys died on the spot as they came in touch with live electric wire snapped after the collapse of the tin-shed building.

The boys were rushed to Burichong health complex where doctors declared them dead.

The dead were identified as Mamoon, 14, Joynal, 16, Majidul Islam, 18, Nazmul, 16, Monir Hossain, 15, Iqbal, 15, and Mazharul, 16.

Of the injured, four were admitted to Comilla Medical College Hospital and 32 in Burichong Health Complex. Condition of the seven were stated to be critical.

Khaleda Zia addressing the public meeting expressed her grief at the tragic incident.

12 die as boat sinks in Habiganj haor

UNB, Habiganj

At least 12 people were killed and several others went missing after a boat sank in a haor at village Chikanpur in Lakhai upazila on Monday night.

Five others were also injured in the accident, police and villagers said.

The victims were returning from an election rally addressed by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at Kalauk in the upazila earlier in the night.

Police said most of the victims were electrocuted after an electric pole broke as their trawler with over 50 passengers rammed into it at 11 pm.

Twelve bodies were recovered from the spot. The identity of the deceased are Masum, 22, Ahid, 10, Mustafa Ali, 15, Golap Mia, 38, Sukur Mia, 35, Zahur Uddin, 18,

Idrish Mia, 17, Siraj Mia, 29, Murshed Mia, 35, Din Islam, 32, Shahjahan, 15, and Kayes Mia, 15, all from Swajan village of the upazila.

Rescue efforts were continuing for those who were still missing.

BNP expels 2

BSS, Dhaka

BNP yesterday expelled two leaders from the party for violating party disciplines.

The expelled are Mostafizur Rahman Patuakhali-4 and Aminul Islam Rajshahi-1.

They are contesting elections in violation of party disciplines, a party press release said.

Samar Das passes away

BSS, Dhaka

Eminent composer and music director Samar Das died of a heart attack at Samarita Hospital in the city yesterday afternoon. He was 72.

Das, who was born on December 10, 1929, at Laxmibazar in the city, left behind his wife, four sons, one daughter and a host of grandchildren and relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

The National Swadhinata Padak recipient, Das will be buried at Wari Christian cemetery today.

The maestro of performing arts of Bengal, Samar Das was the third of five children of late Jitendranath Das and late Kamalini Das. During his early childhood, he got himself attached to music and started his lessons from family members.

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Terrorists in Ctg becoming active again

ABDULLAH -AL MAHMUD, Ctg

With only five days left for the general election, listed terrorists and criminals have started to surface again and become active in the city.

They went into hiding since beginning of the countrywide special police drive to arrest terrorists and recover illegal firearms on August 18.

Besides, terrorists who were put behind the bar are also desperately trying to come out, reportedly with the help of their political godfathers,

to help their political parties or candidates win the polls by occupying polling centers and rigging, if necessary, police sources said.

Many of the listed terrorists belonging to Awami League's student front BCL and BNP's front JCD were seen in election processions of some candidates in the city in the last few days, the sources admitted preferring anonymity.

The BCL terrorists seen in public include Sunil Dey, Mohim, Babar, Rinku and Shafi. Mohim who went to Australia in the middle of last month

recently come back home to take care of his group (Mohim-Babor group) based at MES College. Sunil Dey was seen in Ashkerdighi area four days back.

JCD terrorists like Jasim, Bakkor, Habib and Shah Alam are also in the field to work for their party candidates.

Listed terrorists belonging to Jamaat-e-Islami and its student front Islami Chhatra Shibir -- Sajjad, Habib Khan, Gittu Nasir and Delwar -- were seen in the city on Friday night. They are working in different

areas of Rangunia.

One renowned political leader in the city reportedly requested for release of ward-commissioner Shahidullah who was arrested a few days back for terrorism. Being refused, the leader was "very much shocked and stopped keeping relations with his friends in the police department", one source said.

Another leader also reportedly tried to get JCD terrorist Don released. But he was also refused.

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